

# List is long for economic achievements in 2006

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It was no fluke that a big new industrial plant came to Bardstown in 2006, said Kim Huston, president of the Nelson County Economic Development Agency.

“A lot happened by virtue of Nelson County being as strong economically as it is,” Huston said.

The announcement on Derby weekend by Gov. Ernie Fletcher that NPR, Inc. would build its new North American piston ring plant in Bardstown, takes center stage on a long list of economic and business achievements for 2006.

Ground breaking for the 200,000-square-foot facility took place in September in Wilson Industrial Park. The NPR plant, which will employ about 150, is on target for completion this summer and production is expected to start in October.

While the NPR announcement was a highlight, Huston said, there were several other notable achievements for the year.

Also topping the list was the announcement in January by American Greetings that it would expand Bardstown operations by closing a Tennessee plant and moving that work here, adding 100 new jobs locally.

Moving another division here added to the long-term sustainability of the local American Greetings plant while pointing out the competitiveness of Bardstown as an industrial location, Huston said.

“We were in direct competition with another state — we fought hard for it,” Huston said.

The American Greetings announcement came in early January and “got the year off on a nice footing,” she said.

There were a total of 10 expansions for industries in Nelson County of facilities or employees during 2006, Huston said. This says a lot about the economic vitality and bodes well for the future, she said.

“We had more expansions than any other county in our region,” Huston said. “This points to a healthy set of industries.”

Another notable event in 2006 was the securing of private funds at My Old Kentucky Home State Park for a million dollar renovation project there.

“My Old Kentucky Home has gained us national notoriety,” Huston said. “People like to visit things that are new,” and the renovation has received a tremendous amount of positive attention in publications throughout the country, Huston said.

That kind of attention helps attract interest in the area and could result in more success for Nelson County in coming years.

There are no new additions “directly in the works,” but “several companies are looking at us ... we had quite a few visits in the last quarter of '06,” Huston said.

The new Nelson County Industrial Park has gained a lot of attention and has vaulted Nelson County into a new league for industry, Huston said.

Construction on the park started in 2006 and included the first phase of a new roadway into the park and addition of a water tower.

The park is more than 400 acres in size and “tabletop flat,” Huston said. Those factors, plus the roadwork and water tower help make the park especially attractive.



TOM DEKLE/The Kentucky Standard - Dennis Fuller, a pipefitter with Hussung Mechanical, Louisville, solders a fitting Thursday, for a water pipe that will serve the employee break area at the NPR piston ring plant under construction in Wilson Industrial Park.

“It puts us in another category as far as recruiting efforts,” Huston said. The largest industrial tract previously available was 40 acres, Huston said.

In addition to good prospects for industrial expansion, Huston said there also is increased interest in downtown Bardstown.

“(In 2007) I think we’ll see a lot of the implementation of the vision plan ... I think we’ll see a lot of people investing in downtown,” Huston said.

In a list itemizing economic achievements for 2006, Huston also mentioned:

- The sale of the NPR project allowed the Bardstown Industrial Development Corp. to pay off the debt for the purchase and construction of Wilson Industrial Park;
- Johnan America announced an expansion project at its facility in the Wilson Industrial Park that will add more than 25 jobs and require the doubling of its facility;
- Farmer’s Market in Downtown Bardstown was dedicated and opened for business in the summer;
- The Bardstown Downtown Vision Plan was unveiled by Rick Hill of Village Solutions as a plan for the redevelopment and growth of downtown Bardstown;
- Bardstown was declared a great place to live by Where To Retire Magazine;
- New Brown Sign program implemented by local economic development agencies including Tourism and Mainstreet;
- Heaven Hill unveiled its new PAMA Pomegranate Liqueur in a national rollout in January;
- The opening of several new businesses at the intersection of U.S. 150 and KY245;
- Bardstown, New Haven and Bloomfield were successful in gaining funds for projects during the General Assembly;
- Tourism premiered its new DVD in HD to visitors;
- Redevelopment of the old Wal-Mart Building (Peebles, Dollar General Market, Hibbett Sports, Wilson and Muir Bank);
- Redevelopment efforts of 31-E corridor/ North Third Street (Jack Barnes property); and
- The new Nelson County Library began its construction efforts. The old library was sold with a proposed plan of antique/retail/restaurant and guest rooms.