

# HUMPHREYS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

## 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

There was a time in Humphreys County when an organized economic development program was relatively unimportant. During the 1960s and 1970s, the people of Humphreys County were basking in their new-found prosperity as a “sunbelt” manufacturing center. By 1970, Humphreys County ranked third in the state in terms of average weekly rates. By 1980, the county had dropped to sixth in the state, but the average annual wage was still 70% higher than the next county in its Economic Trade Area.

But the economic climate which contributed to this prosperity changed. Some economists have suggested the construction of I-40, labor problems of the 1970s, and the emergence of a global economy affected the economic stability and structure of the county. By 1982, the county’s unemployment had reached almost 25% because of massive layoffs and plant closings. Humphreys County found itself now ranked in the top five counties in Tennessee for unemployment. The structural integrity of the county’s economy had become unstable and, without the continuing presence of two or three large manufacturers, the county bordered on serious economic failure.

Jobs and income-generating opportunities were harder to come by, and elected officials were increasingly called upon to develop more sophisticated programs for economic development. In early 1991, a group of private citizens banded together to form the Humphreys County Economic Development Council. This council, funded primarily through private monies, created a new interest group within the county whose primary purpose was to generate new ideas and strategies for the economic enhancement of the community.

The charter of the Humphreys County Economic Development Council was filed on October 16, 1992. The charter stated that the primary purpose of the corporation is to “foster, encourage, promote and develop the social, economic and cultural development and expansion of Humphreys County in the State of Tennessee and to create and facilitate the providing of jobs for the citizens and residents thereof by encouraging, fostering and promoting private enterprise to locate manufacturing and industrial facilities and service businesses therein.” The

charter was signed by William J. Peeler, Jean Thompson, Melvin Durham, Anthony Dwayne Ross, Odell Nichols, Andrew Dodson, Jr., Robert Reid, and Hoyt Wiser.

In 1993, a full-time staff was hired. Their mission was to lead, support, and encourage a growing and diverse economy through practical and effective economic development programs involving government, business, civic leaders, and citizens to enhance Humphreys County as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

In late 1993, the Council was successful in recruiting Aqua Glass to the undeveloped McEwen Industrial Park. Aqua Glass was part of MASCO, a Michigan-based Fortune 200 company. The company looked at five states and 25 cities before announcing they had selected McEwen. Records indicate Aqua Glass took applications through the Department of Employment Security and received 508 applications for the first 65 positions. Nashville Wire soon announced they would also move into the McEwen Industrial Park by purchasing the county's spec building.

Thirty years later, the Humphreys County Economic Development Council has been established as the economic development authority in Humphreys County. Over the years, the council has helped local industries receive millions of dollars for expansion and job creation. The Executive Director is currently working with local industries that are considering expansion. He is also involved in several other crucial projects:

- Participating in the Tennessee Downtowns Revitalization Program (Waverly)
- Contributing to a county-wide wastewater assessment
- Serving as chairman of the Economic Development Subcommittee of the Waverly/Humphreys County Flood Recovery & Mitigation Task Force
- Maintaining the State's ThreeStar Program for Humphreys County
- Working with various industries as well as educational and government agents to advance workforce development initiatives.

The impact of the Humphreys County Economic Development Council is most apparent when considering unemployment rates and median household income in the county.

December 1992

Unemployment rate – 17.6%

Median household income – \$25,997

December 2022

Unemployment rate – 3.3%

Median household income – \$49,745

We look forward to a bright future for Humphreys County and are honored to participate in the growth of our community.