

Nelson County grows commercially in 2004

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The Kentucky Standard

Growth in Nelson County was predominately commercial during 2004, according to Janet Johnston, director of the Joint City-County Planning and Zoning Commission.

During the year, the Commission approved 946 zoning requests. The approvals were made up of commercial, industrial, agricultural and residential requests.

However, 2004 saw 24 fewer zoning requests than 2003, when 970 were approved.

Despite that fact, developers invested a far greater amount of money into the Nelson County area in 2004, Johnston said.

"Our permits decreased, but overall construction cost was up," she said.

Last year saw the investment of more than \$110 million into Nelson County. That number is up from \$78 million in 2003.

While the vast majority of permits approved for 2004 -- 875 -- were non-commercial, more commercial money went into the community than anything else, about \$4 million greater.

More than \$57 million worth of commercial property was developed. All other zoning combined totaled just more than \$53 million.

Much of the commercial investment could be attributed to some of the larger commercial projects developed last year, Johnston said.

The Wal-Mart Supercenter was by far the largest of the projects, Johnston said. The store opened in October near the intersection of KY 245 and U.S. 150.

The area in which it opened is expected to become the town's newest economic corridor.

"I think if someone were to leave Bardstown right now and didn't come back for a year, they wouldn't recognize it when they returned," said Kim Huston, president of Nelson County Economic Development Agency.

Two businesses have already made announcements of their plans to grow there.

Hardware superstore Lowes announced in December its plans to build a new 94,000-square-foot store in the lot neighboring Wal-Mart.

Additionally, Wilson & Muir Bank has applied to build a new, full service, branch-banking center.

The second largest area of commercial development in Nelson County, the new location of Flaget Memorial Hospital, is still under construction.

The site, farther north on KY 245, is expected to open in summer 2005. More businesses are expected to spring up in that area as well, Huston said.

Another reason for the boom in investment into Nelson County, Johnston said, is the small commercial centers that have begun to speckle Bardstown since the beginning of 2004.

Many have popped up throughout Nelson County, several on KY 245.

Developer Charles Hayden's property, near Keystone Cinemas on KY 245, is one of the newest.

"We think it's really going to turn out to be a good looking building," Hayden said.

The building is more than 6,000 square feet and houses five units. So far only one business, Bardstown Hair Styling, is confirmed to move into the complex.

The styling business is on Bloomfield Road, but expects to move into the new development by the end of January.

The remaining units, each about 1,250 square feet in size, will be built-to-suit for the businesses that move into the complex.

The center does not yet have a name.

Huston attributes 2004's commercial success to the residential development seen in years previous.

"It's been a couple of years coming," she said. With the growth in population, she added, people need more service industry type business in town.

"Development is at an all time high," Huston said, "I think we are going to see that trend continue in 2005."