

Bardstown honored by magazine for economic success

By Randy Patrick
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Bardstown has been honored as the seventh-best micropolitan in the U.S. for economic development.

Site Selection Magazine, the Atlanta-based national trade publication for corporate site selectors and companies, announced last week that Bardstown was ranked in the top 10 for economic development activity for 2016 among micropolitans — statistical areas with populations of 10,000 but less than 50,000. Two years ago, it was ranked in the top 100.

According to Kim Huston, president of the Nelson County Economic Development Agency and the Bardstown Industrial Development Corporation, nine companies invested more than \$233 million in projects in Nelson County in 2016, a record number for the county in a single year.

“We knew we were extremely busy in 2016, but we had no idea that our efforts would land us in the top 10 in the country,” Huston said in a statement. “Nelson County has become a truly desirable place to do business for many reasons, including location, great industrial land and most important, the quality of the life you can have by living in our community. That factor is tops on any company’s list of priorities.”

Some of the projects that helped land Bardstown on the top-10 list include the Thai Summit automotive industry plant, the new Lux Row distillery and Legend Lumber Lee. Those three accounted for \$148 million of the investment dollars. Six expansion projects, for Heaven Hill Distilleries, Tower Automotive, Barton 1792 Distillery (Sazarec Distilleries), Demipac, NPR and HEC were also contributing factors in the decision.

Bill Conway, chairman of the Bardstown Industrial Development Corporation, said the award was “fantastic news and a great honor.”

“It’s tremendous, but it’s been a lot of hard work,” Conway said in an interview Thursday. “We’ve been in it before, but we’ve never been number one in the state or seventh in the country.”

Conway credited Huston, the NCEDA, BIDC and local governments for their efforts in making Bardstown an attractive community for development.

David Mandell, president and CEO of Bardstown Bourbon Company, said that means everything to companies looking to invest.

“The awards are great, but at the end of the day, it really is about your political and economic development leadership,” he said, and the awards are a reflection of that.

David Bratcher, president of Luxco, one of the companies that played a big role in this year’s award, echoed that thought.

“The city of Bardstown and the economic development team made it easy for a company like Luxco to choose the location for expansion,” he said. “They worked with us and supported our company every step of the process.”

Bardstown City Councilman Dick Heaton, who has served on the BIDC board for a decade, said the award “speaks volumes.”

“It shows that we’ve got a healthy economy, a skilled workforce and a community that’s willing to work with businesses to make sure they prosper,” he said.