

Robertson COUNTY

BY STEPHANIE VOZZA

PHOTO BY HARRISON McCLARY

Adams Cedar Hill Coopertown Cross Plains Greenbrier

Is this county just north of Nashville the next big thing?

Orlinda Millersville Portland Ridgetop Springfield White House



Springfield, Robertson County's seat

The next big thing? Robertson County, according to its officials and residents.

“Robertson County is growing rapidly,” says County Executive Howard Bradley. “We’re the tenth fastest growing county in the state, growing 11% since 2000. That means 6,000 people are here who weren’t five years ago. What happened in Rutherford, Wilson and Williamson counties is happening here.”

Jobs often follow people, and the case holds true for Robertson County.

“We have a lot of projects going on that put us in the ballpark for development,” says J. Mark Lowe, executive director of the Springfield/Robertson County Chamber of Commerce.

One of the newest is an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course called Bear Creek at Burrus Ridge. Located in White House just off I-65, the course will include a 16,000-square-foot clubhouse, swimming pool, fitness center and nature trails. The 426-acre property will feature a wide variety of housing options, including town homes, villas, single-family homes and estates.

“We’ve already received several calls about housing and [at press time] lots are not yet for sale,” Lowe says. “The project is already being compared to Fairvue Plantation” (a million-dollar golf and housing development in Gallatin).

“[Bear Creek at Burrus Ridge] will provide us with our first true upscale housing development and will allow us to bring in a group of people we have

not been able to recruit before,” Bradley says. “We hope to recruit retirees to the area as well as other folks. The project will have between 400 and 500 units.

“Developer Chip Hellmann is very forward thinking and progressive. We believe the golf course will be a success, and that the project will not be just an asset for Robertson County but an asset for all of Middle Tennessee.”

Made up of 11 incorporated cities—Springfield, Greenbrier, White House, Cross Plains, Coopertown, Ridgetop, Orlinda, Millersville, Cedar Hill, Adams and Portland (which lies mostly in Sumner County)—Robertson County boasts some of the most scenic highways in Tennessee.

Bear Creek at Burrus Ridge is just one of the new developments that is attracting new residents from Nashville, Hendersonville, and beyond.

“They’re trying to escape high traffic,

high taxes and high prices,” he says. “We’re just 20 minutes from the capitol, and have a city/country atmosphere.”

Lowe agrees. “The misconception among many people in Middle Tennessee is that we are far away,” he says. “But we’re just a half hour from downtown Nashville and easily accessible by I-65 and I-24.”

While growth is inevitable, the upper half of the county’s 476 square miles is primarily agriculture, and Lowe says officials intend for that to stay as it is.

“You’ll find crops like dark-fired tobacco and soybeans, and cattle farms,” he says. “We also have strawberry and blueberry farms where people can come and pick their own fruit. We even have farm-raised fresh water shrimp.

“Robertson County is one of the state’s top agricultural counties. We want to capitalize on that by making tourism a real industry here through agri-tourism opportunities. We’re one of the few places near Nashville where you can see working farms. Having a strong agri-tourism county will also help us protect our environment.”

Robertson County is home to several farms that have their own markets as well as farms that allow you to pick your own produce. The county has wineries, tobacco farms with production tours, and farms that host seasonal festivals, such as hayrides and corn mazes.

“We are surrounded by counties rich in tourism. We are the last piece of that pie. It’s regionalism at its best.”



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SPRINGFIELD/ROBERTSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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From left: Kathy Harris, Assistant Vice President, Greenbrier; John R. Wallace, Chairman; William S. Strain, President/CEO; Don Williams, Vice President, Springfield

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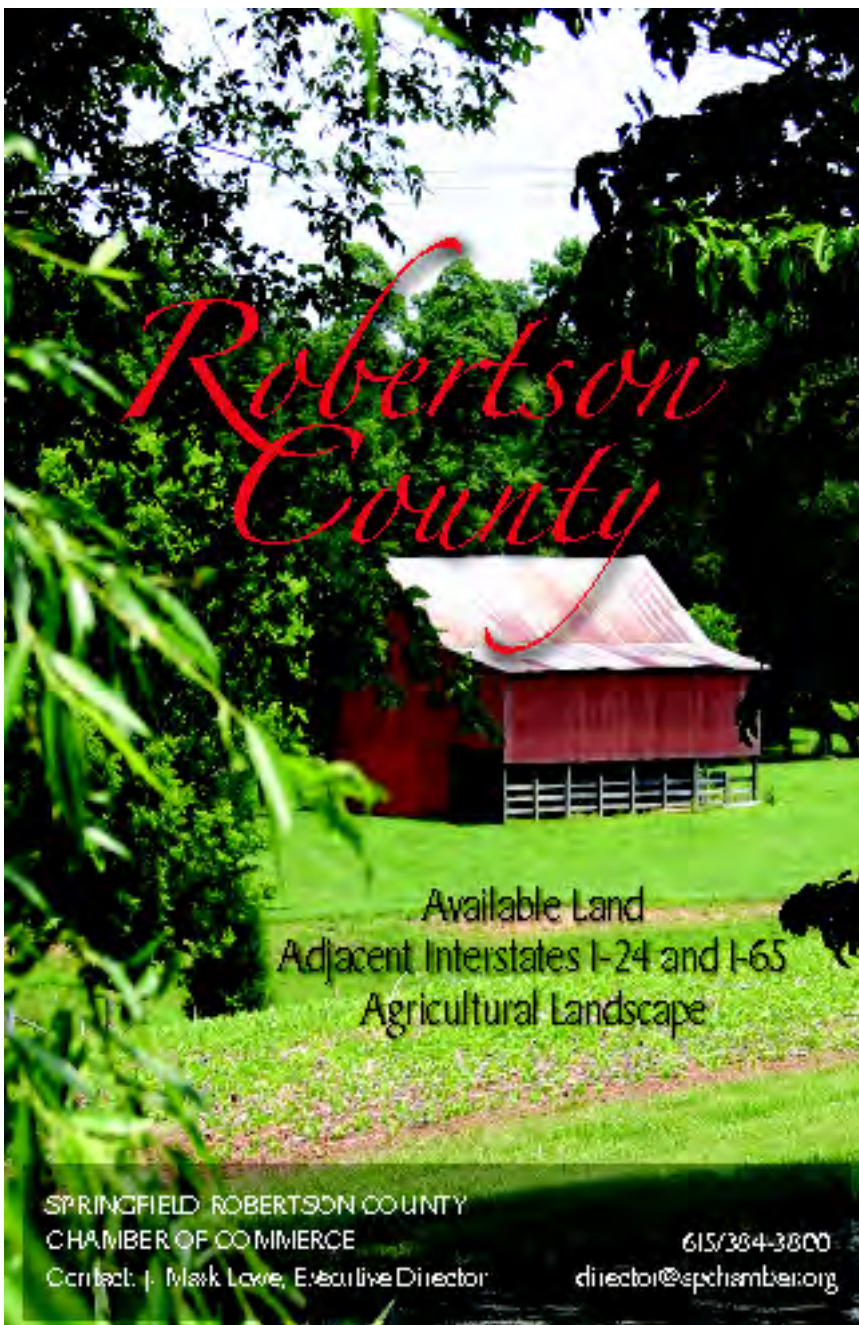




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Robertson County

Available Land
Adjacent Interstates I-24 and I-65
Agricultural Landscape

SPRINGFIELD ROBERTSON COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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Lowe is working with Sumner and Montgomery counties, which flank Robertson, to promote attractions in his county worth a visit from sightseers passing through on the way to visit those counties. He's working on a brochure that highlights Robertson's attractions.

With the slogan "Top of the Ridge," Robertson County is "working with Sumner County to create a food and agriculture tour from Westmoreland to Adams," Lowe says. "We are expanding the Highway 52 yard sale from Highway 52 in Orlinda to Hwy. 49 through Springfield, ending at I-24 in Coopertown."

Another tourist destination in the county is in Adams, Tenn., home of the Bell Witch, a legend concerning the family of John and Lucy Bell in 1818. Several movies have been made about the Bell Witch, the most documented haunting in U.S. history. The latest, *An American Haunting*, was released in May 2006 and stars Donald Sutherland and Sissy Spacek.

Each fall, a play is held that tells the story. "The play is a popular attraction for our county," Lowe says. "We anticipate the new movie will boost tourism in Adams, too."

Several other festivals and special

TAX RATES

Property Tax
per \$100 assessment

Residential	25%
Industrial & Commercial: Real Estate	40%
Industrial & Commercial: Personal Property	30%
COUNTY	\$2.66
Springfield	\$1.00
Greenbrier	\$1.05
White House	\$1.34
Adams	\$0.32
Cedar Hill	\$0.33
Ridgetop	\$0.85
Millersville	\$1.00
Portland	\$1.15

Coopertown, Cross Plains and Orlinda do not have a property tax.

Sales Tax

Local	2.25%
State	7.00%
TOTAL	9.25%

(6% for food and food ingredients for human consumption)
SOURCE: State of Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

events also attract people to the county. The Robertson County Fair is a week-long event held each August. The Tennessee/Kentucky Thresherman's Show is a two-day event that honors old farming traditions such as blacksmithing, steel wheel tractors, horses and mules. The county is also home to a Bluegrass Festival and the Robertson County Heritage Festival.



Lowe says the one hitch in the county's new tourism push is a lack of hotel rooms. "The only hotel accommodations are in Springfield, Greenbrier and White House."

Lowe says the county could also use a hotel on the east side near Orlinda or Cross Plains.

"A new horse racetrack is proposed in Kentucky near the border, and this could impact our communities," Lowe says. "Cross Plains is much like Leiper's Fork, with shops popping up. We had three new stores opening in the past two months. It's just three miles off of I-65, but it feels like you're entering the past, especially Thomas Drug with its old-fashioned soda fountain. If the racetrack comes, I expect visitors to also come to stop at places like Cross Plains."

While tourism is a growing industry, the county's industrial base is also expanding.

"Robertson County's economy is changing," says Hugh Braddock, president of the Springfield-Robertson County Chamber of Commerce and publisher of the *Robertson County Times*. "We are seeing the agricultural base evolve into an industrial one."

Four companies have made announcements—all to be located in the

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Kentucky/Tennessee Industrial Park just west of I-65 at the state border in Robertson County—this past year, creating about 800 new jobs in the area.

Federated Department Stores is building a 600,000-square-foot distribution center to serve Macys.com, replacing the company's current facility located in Atlanta.

"This new facility will bring 600 new jobs to our area," Lowe says. "They chose us for our location and the fact that Tennessee is a good business state."

Lowe says Federated Department Stores projects a doubling of capacity within the next four years, which should result in a doubling of jobs, as well.

Gastite, a division of Titeflex Corp. and makers of stainless steel tubing for natural gas systems, is also opening a

manufacturing facility. Lowe says the plant is near completion and will employ between 60 and 85 workers.

Olhausen Billiards Manufacturing, makers of handmade pool tables, is moving production from San Diego during the first quarter of 2007.

"This company ships its pool tables," Lowe says. "Our location is geographically more advantageous and will reduce their shipping costs."

Dorman Automotive Products is leasing a 268,000-square-foot distribution center to ship its after-market automotive parts and hardware. The facility can be expanded to more than 400,000 square feet. The company expects to be fully operational by the end of the year.

Currently, a new interchange is being planned to serve the industrial park and connect to Highway 109.

In addition to recruiting new industrial, Lowe says retail entrepreneurs are "a wanted commodity."

"We have a thriving marketplace, especially in our downtowns," he says. "People from Nashville are starting to look at us for housing. Residential and commercial growth is coming."

According to Low, within 10 years, his county has the potential to grow by 40,000 jobs.

"We are prime for the distribution and service areas," he says. "This is a fun time to be in Robertson County."

"With I-24 and I-65 bordering the county, growth along those corridors is a given," Braddock says. "Millersville to Orinda, along I-65, is bustling with residential, industrial and retail growth. Cheatham County's Pleasant View and Coopertown areas along I-24 are seeing residential growth.

"The lack of an east-west corridor connecting the two interstates has limited growth in Springfield and throughout Robertson County," Braddock says.

"As other Middle Tennessee counties have experienced phenomenal growth, Robertson County has had steady but controllable growth. With proper planning, Robertson County will be Middle Tennessee's next big thing."

While Robertson County has the most number of cities of any Tennessee county, Lowe says each city has its own identity. "Each city has its own library and its own community park," he says. "Several have greenways and recreational areas. This county has a strong idea of who we are, and residents know why we live here. We may be a bedroom community, but we're growing, we know where we want to go and we want to work together."

Bradley says the county is working on projects that will add to the quality of life in Robertson County.

"The county and three water entities are combining forces to do a comprehensive water needs assessment," he says. "We're forming a water authority because water is going to be a crucial issue in the years ahead." Bradley says the water authority will address issues

MAJOR NON-GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS

Electrolux Home Products <i>electric & gas ranges</i>	3,225
NorthCrest Medical Center <i>health care</i>	600
Osh Kosh B'Gosh <i>children's clothing</i>	500
Wal-Mart Supercenter <i>retail</i>	500
Collins & Aikman <i>insulated & acoustical products</i>	400
UNARCO <i>material storage racks</i>	350
TKA Fabco <i>automotive stamping</i>	225
Saia-Burgess <i>automotive actuators</i>	215
Ingersoll-Rand Co. <i>power tools</i>	180
Hinkle Chair Co. <i>wood furniture</i>	150
Trico Electronics <i>truck flashers</i>	128

SOURCE: State of Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development



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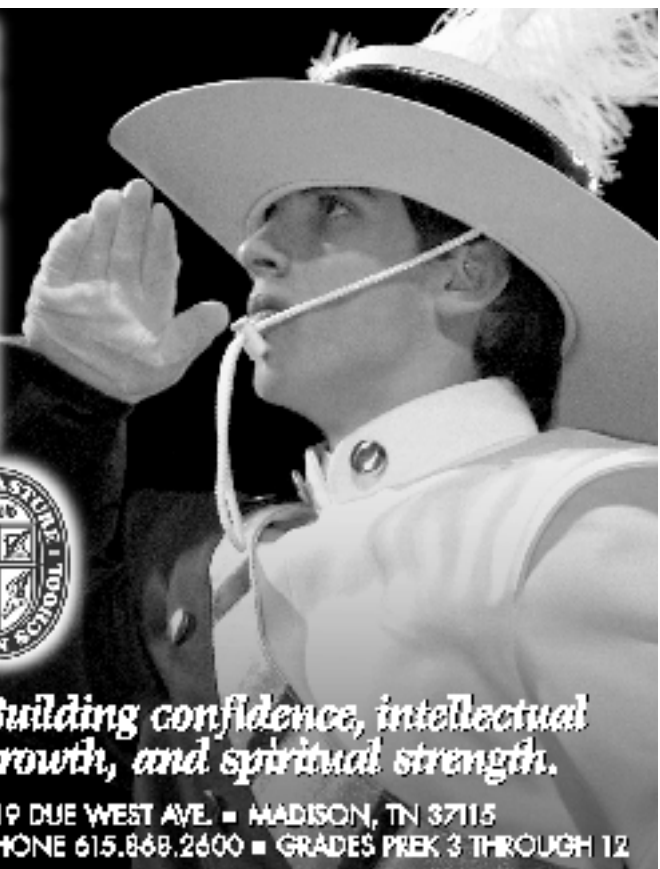



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such as sewers and storm water.

“The authority won’t own the assets, but it will make planning decisions and serve as an advisory board,” he says. “Dickson County pioneered the idea, and we’re following their model.”

“The lack of accessibility to water and sewers presents additional challenges to growth,” Braddock says. “Communities are and working together to resolve these challenges.”

A new Emergency-911 center is being built to consolidate the county’s emergency services. “We want a seamless way to dispatch emergency personnel,” Bradley says.

At press time, a new indigent primary care center was scheduled to open at the Health Department. “The Governor’s initiative dropped 1,200 Robertson County residents from TennCare rolls,” he says. “We have several thousand county residents with no insurance. NorthCrest Medical Center is supplying the building. The county is supplying a physician and two physician’s assistants. It’s important to provide health care for our residents.”

Education & Workforce

With a student body of just under 10,000, Robertson County Schools includes 10 elementary, three middle and five high schools.

Opening for the upcoming school year is the new Jo Byrns Elementary School, serving Cedar Hill and Adams. The current Jo Byrns school serves grades K-12. The current facility will house grades 6-12 this fall, with elementary students moving to the new facility.

“We are also looking at a significant renovation to Springfield High School,” Bradley says. “The project will be about \$15 million, and we hope to get started before the end of the year with completion in 2008.”

Bradley says White House is the next area in need of a new school.

“With the anticipation of the new golf course opening, we will need a new high school,” he says. “White House Heritage School, which was the old converted elementary school, is bursting at the seams (serving grades 6-12). Within three years, we’ll need a new high school.”

The county is home to one of the pilot preschool programs and is looking at expanding it to every school in the county. The preschool program is located at Bransford Elementary School and offers instruction for 40 students.

“From an economic development standpoint, it’s good for the workforce,” Lowe says. “There is value in working with students a year before school starts, especially with Spanish-speaking families.

Workforce development is an important focus for the Chamber and it begins by looking at the school system.

“Robertson County’s public school system competes favorably in testing with most systems in Middle Tennessee,” Braddock says. “Schools, wherever one lives, always need to be better and our county system has room for improvement.”

Services & Infrastructure

WATER & SEWER: City of Springfield, (615)382-1600; City of Greenbrier, (615)643-4125; City of

White House, (615)672-4110; Adams-Cedar Hill Water System, (615)696-0667. NATURAL GAS: Springfield Gas Co., (615)382-1621; Nashville Gas, (615)734-1793.

ELECTRICITY: Springfield Electric, (615)384-6770.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: BellSouth, (615)557-6500.

HEALTH CARE: NorthCrest Medical Center, located in Springfield, is a 109-bed hospital serving Robertson

County as well as surrounding counties in Tennessee and Kentucky. The staff includes 180 physicians, with 23 medical specialties including obstetrics, radiology, cardiology, family practice, internal medicine, and general and vascular surgery. The NorthCrest Medical Imaging Department became the third facility in the state to receive accreditation for CT scans. The hospital is recognized as a Center of Healthcare Quality from the American Heart Association and as an Accredited Chest Pain Center from the Society of Chest Pain Centers.

Transportation

ROAD: Interstates 24 and 65; U.S. Highways 41 and 431; and State Routes 25, 49, 52, 76 and 161.

AIR: The Springfield-Robertson County Airport has a 5,000-foot runway, with hangar space and an aircraft maintenance center. The

airport, which has earned the Front Door Award since 1992, offers flight training school.

Robertson County is located approximately 30 miles north of the Nashville International Airport.

RAIL: The County is served by CSX railroad.

WATER: The Cumberland River has a nine-foot channel depth with the nearest port facility in Nashville. tn



DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

YEAR	1980	1990	2000	ESTIMATED 2004
COUNTY	37,021	41,492	54,433	59,322
Springfield	n/a	11,227	14,329	15,530
White House	n/a	2,987	3,085	8,530
Greenbrier	n/a	2,873	4,940	5,373
Coopertown	n/a	n/a	3,027	3,510
Cross Plains	n/a	1,025	1,381	1,498
Millersville	n/a	2,575	5,308	6,085
Ridgetop	n/a	1,132	1,083	1,861
Orlinda	n/a	469	594	594
Adams	n/a	587	566	582
Cedar Hill	n/a	347	298	308

Labor Force in County • 31,450 Annual High School Graduates • 485
Unemployment Rate • 4.5%

(SOURCE: Springfield-Robertson County Chamber & Community Development)