

# BY CANDACE MOONSHOWER Williamson County





“All over the country, folks know Williamson County,” says Bob Iannacone of Tennessee’s fastest growing county. Iannacone, director of economic development for the Williamson County Economic Development Council and a member of the board of directors of Williamson Works, should know. The goals of the Williamson County Economic Development Council include helping existing businesses expand, workforce development, recruitment, permitting needs, and attracting wealth and investments to Williamson County. The council has three staffers and sixteen members that represent the chambers, mayors, landowners and citizens of the county.

Williamson Works, a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit community foundation, was funded in 2000 to support and educate the community on quality economic development. Iannacone is a driving force in the organization. For Iannacone, Williamson County is not just a beautiful place to live; it’s a profitable place to work, too.

Since 1991, Iannacone has been directly involved or assisted in corporate relocations and expansions to and in Williamson County valued at nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars. His involvement includes the attraction of LDM Technologies and PRIMUS/Ford Motor Credit to Franklin, utilizing innovative strategies to attract key business investors and site consultants to the county. But as times change, so do strategies. “Ten years ago, we discovered we were losing our traditional manufacturing base,” Iannacone says. “In 1980, 20% of the economic pie in Williamson County was manufacturing. Today, we’re down to 7%. The rest is service-oriented industries including retail, restaurants and health care. That’s a dramatic change!”

Iannacone and his colleagues on the Williamson County Economic Development Council and Williamson Works knew that the answer was to attract more industry. “After

studying the demographics, which show that there are 78 million Americans age 60 or older, we began to concentrate on health care. We need research and development, biotech, pharmacology, medical devices—all the life sciences that are driving the cures of tomorrow,” he says. “Now we have over 100 health care organizations in Williamson County from new-age biotechnology to hands-on health care.

“A recent phenomenon in biotech is the regeneration of bone and tissue, and we’re pushing a regional effort on that,” Iannacone says. BioMimetic Therapeutics has begun clinical trials of a new product that uses human growth factor to aid in the treatment of bone fusion procedures. Founded in 1999 by Samuel Lynch, BioMimetic Therapeutics received approval from the Food and Drug Administration for its GEM21S product and is working to expand its presence in the market.

BioMimetic Therapeutics is the anchor tenant in the new Cool Springs Life Sciences Center (CSLSC), a 10-acre campus founded by local life-sciences entrepreneurs and developed by Noblegene Development, which bills itself as “Tennessee’s premier



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bioscience business address.” According to its Web site, CSLSC is committed to providing a state-of-the-art bioscience business environment that will benefit its tenant companies by providing a unique campus. The CSLSC is dedicated to life sciences research and development, and is specifically designed to accommodate the unique needs of bioscience and biotechnology firms, particularly those engaged in biologics, pharmaceuticals, therapeutics and medical devices.

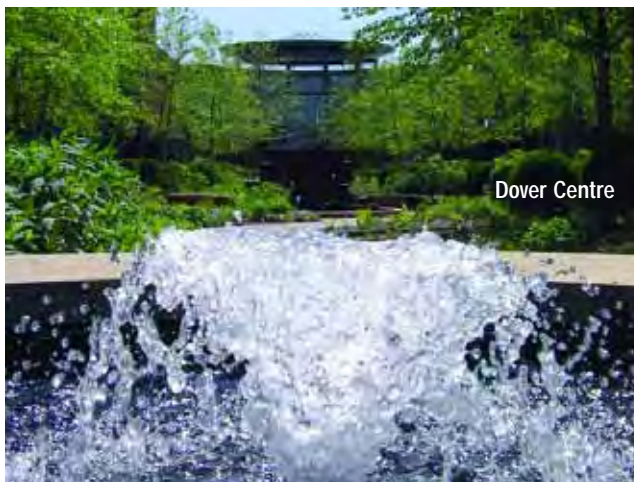
In the future, this facility will house high-tech biotech, pharmaceutical, and medical device manufacturing space built to suit the unique needs of the tenants. At full build-out, the three buildings of the CSLSC will encompass over 140,000 square feet.

The Williamson Medical Center recently underwent an \$83 million expansion. Williamson Medical is a JCAHO-accredited hospital that provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient care, including emergency services, with board-certified physicians in 39 specialties. The facility will add approximately 30 beds and continue to offer a wide range of wellness

services, screenings and classes. “While we’re performing a physical expansion that people can see,” says Laura Bustetter, director of public relations for the hospital, “we are also pursuing advances on the technological front that people may not be aware of yet.”

Three important technological advances are now available at Williamson Medical Center, including the da Vinci Robotic Surgical system. The Center is the first suburban hospital in the United States to have the system, which allows for surgery using robotic tools guided by doctors, decreasing many painful side effects and increasing positive surgical outcomes. The Center was also one of 15 investi-

gational devise exemption (IDE) sites in the country, participating in a two-year clinical trial for an artificial spinal disk replacement procedure as an alternative to spinal fusion. And advanced equipment in the Cardiac-Cath lab includes a digital imaging system that provides resolution four times greater than the conventional system. “We had our system before neighboring urban or tertiary care facilities,” Bustetter says.



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Founded in 1799, historically rural Williamson County isn't all about business, says Rogers Anderson, mayor of the county and a Tennessee native. "We have a balance of things in our county," he says. "Development, business, history and agriculture are all important parts of our heritage. We are committed to maintaining Williamson County as a corporate Mecca and a healthy and diverse place to live, too."

Mayor Anderson says that in recent weeks, the city of Franklin and Williamson County have voted on a land swap that will help both entities. "Inside the county limits, there is some property that serves their needs, and Franklin had some property that would help the county, so the two legislative bodies agreed to the swap."

The county will be acquiring approximately 300 acres known as "Old Springs" or "Franklin Springs," an area in the southwestern part of the county that contains more than 100 springs once used as the city of Franklin's primary water source up until the early 1900s. "That's an area we'd like to

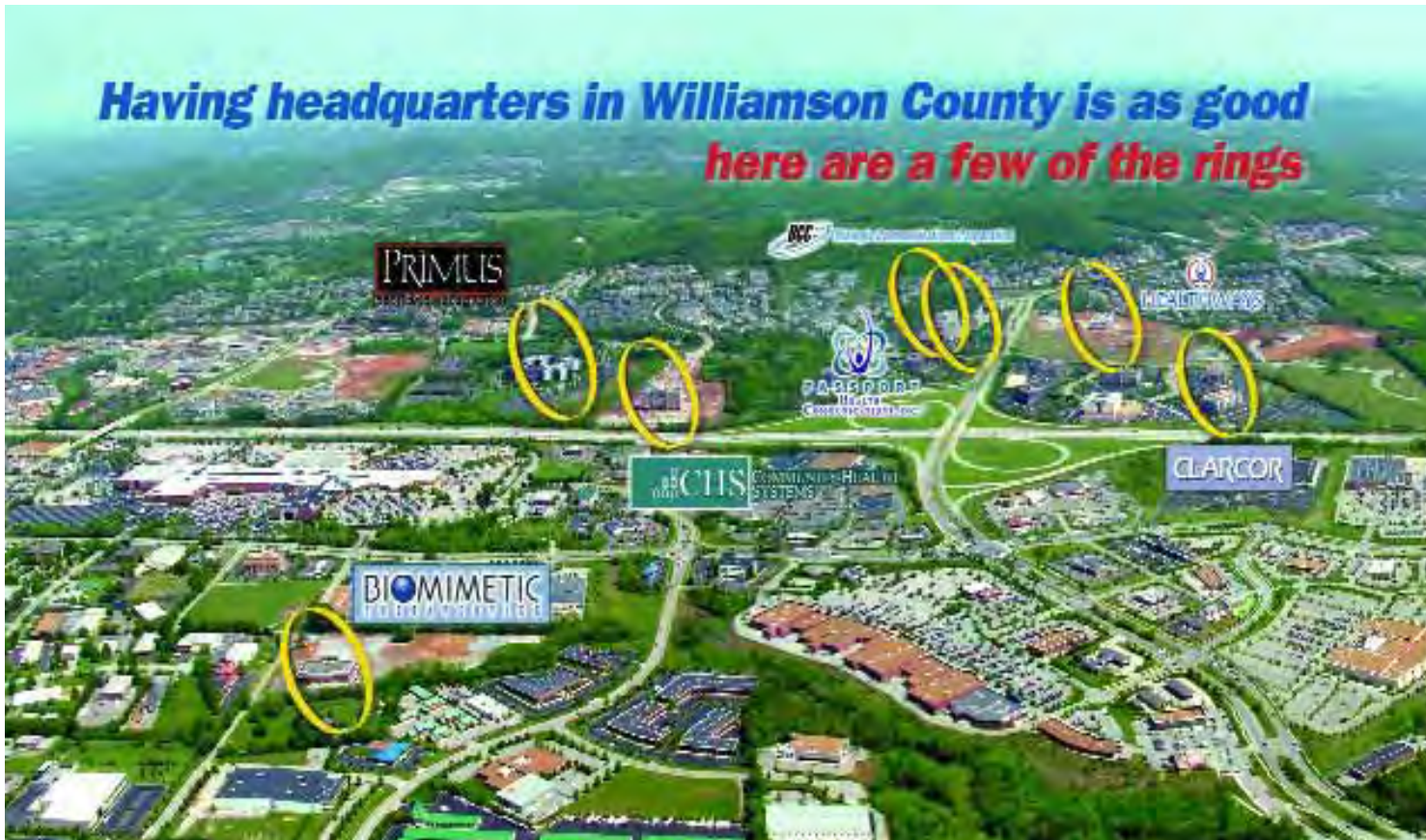


develop over the next several years as a park area—an area that would best serve the region."

Coupled with that news, Anderson says, the Governor has announced that he'll be pursuing a state park in the triangle area of Williamson, Hickman and Maury counties. "This benefits our county with regard to tourism dollars," Anderson says, "but it also preserves an important part of our county. We're not just rooftops! And that balance is what makes our county unique and makes people want to move here."

Originally carved out of a part of the south end of Davidson County, Williamson County encompasses 584 square miles and includes the cities of Franklin, Brentwood, Thompson's Station,

Nolensville, Fairview and Spring Hill. "Location is one of our greatest advantages," says Nancy Conway, president and CEO of the Williamson County-Franklin Chamber of Commerce, a chamber that covers all of Franklin and all of Williamson County as well. "We are centrally located in the heart of Tennessee, with an extensive interstate system, and





Franklin Town Square

we're within approximately 500 miles of over half the density of the population of the United States."

Education is a big recruiting tool for Williamson County. "Quality public education is one of the top priorities of businesses and people looking to relocate to Williamson County," Iannacone says. Conway agrees. "Our schools, both public and private, rank among the highest in the state and offer educational opportunities from preschool through the university levels." According to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the high school graduation rate in Williamson County is over 90%, and almost half the residents of the county ages 25 and over hold a bachelor's degree. "Education and an experienced workforce dovetail as priorities," Iannacone says. "With both, we achieve the same goal. We attract wealth and

investments to create jobs so that our future generations will return to the county."

Quality of life isn't just a catchphrase in Williamson County. In a recent business survey conducted by the city of Brentwood, employers responded positively on their city, county and the state, with a combined 90% finding their quality of life either good or excellent. Residents are overwhelmingly happy with their quality of life, with 93% ranking it as good or excellent.

According to Brentwood City Manager Mike Walker, Brentwood is averaging 450 new housing starts a year and has averaged an impressive 4.7% growth a year over the last 15 years. A new continuum care retirement community called "The Heritage" will be available for occupancy in 2007



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Jay Johnson, City Administrator  
City of Franklin  
100 Third Avenue South • Franklin, TN 37064  
jj@franklin.gov • 615.791.8217 • [www.franklin.gov](http://www.franklin.gov)



Williamson County Office of Economic Development  
200 North Main Street • Franklin, Tennessee 37067 USA  
C. Robert Iannacone, Director  
Bob@WilliamsonWorks.com • 615.261.2880  
[www.WilliamsonCounty.org](http://www.WilliamsonCounty.org)



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Brownstones in Historic Downtown Franklin

and is being touted as unlike anything in the area.

In an effort to maintain the charm of Brentwood while continuing to grow the area, in 1999, the City of Brentwood adopted the Brentwood 2020 plan to guide the city leaders through future growth and development decisions. According to its stated goals, part of the vision of the Brentwood 2020 plan was to maintain a sense of rural character in the area while maintaining adequate areas for environmental conservation, recreation and scenic purposes. Teresa Miller, the new president of the Brentwood Cool Springs Chamber of Commerce, points to the building of the new Town Center, of which the new road, a roundabout and the first two buildings have reached completion, as an example of the plan in action. Brentwood continues to focus on providing controlled growth while continuing its 16-year history of no increases in the effective property tax.

Miller reports that on November 8, the Board and staff of the Brentwood Cool Springs Chamber spent an entire day in a planning retreat with a majority of the time devoted to finalizing the 2007 Plan of Action and beginning work on a Long Range Strategic Plan for the community.

"All our municipalities are growing



at a rapid pace and bringing numerous assets to the county as a whole," Conway reports. "Residential and business growth is up in the Spring Hill, Nolensville and Fairview areas, while Thompson's Station continues to offer its quiet charm in a new, growing business atmosphere. And the corporate faces in Cool Springs have added a new and exciting aspect to the county."

Williamson County began its history as an offshoot of Davidson County, and it continues to be part and parcel of the Davidson County Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), but Williamson is no longer a placid bedroom community. The growth of the business community in the county has shaped how people are working and living as incomes in the area continue to rise. Williamson County now ranks in the top 15 wealthiest counties in the United States, according to a 2005 U.S. Census Bureau survey that measures economic data in the nation's largest counties.

Conway sums it up this way: "With the diverse face of our residents and our businesses, we continue to find a spirit among all the people that makes this the most desirable place to live, work, raise your children and retire."

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**KEY CONTACTS**

**Rogers Anderson** ▫ County Mayor  
 WILLIAMSON COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX  
 1320 West Main St., Ste. 125, Franklin, TN 37064  
 (615)790-5700 | [www.williamsoncounty-tn.gov](http://www.williamsoncounty-tn.gov)  
 countymayor@williamson-tn.org

**Bob Iannacone** ▫ Director of Economic Development  
 WILLIAMSON WORKS  
 389 Nichol Mill Lane, Ste. 101, Franklin, TN 37067  
 (615)261-2880 | Fax: (615)261-2885  
[www.williamsonworks.com](http://www.williamsonworks.com) | Bob@williamsonworks.com

**Tom Miller** ▫ Mayor  
**Jay Johnson** ▫ City Administrator  
 CITY OF FRANKLIN  
 109 3rd Ave. South, Franklin, TN 37064  
 (615)791-3217  
[www.franklin-gov.com](http://www.franklin-gov.com) | mayor@franklin-gov.com

**Joe Sweeney** ▫ Mayor  
**Michael Walker** ▫ City Manager  
 CITY OF BRENTWOOD  
 5211 Maryland Way | Brentwood, TN 37027  
 (615)371-0060 | [www.brentwood-tn.org](http://www.brentwood-tn.org)  
 sweeneyj@brentwood-tn.org | walkerm@brentwood-tn.org

**Kenneth E. Brison** ▫ Mayor  
**Shirley Forehand** ▫ City Manager  
 CITY OF FAIRVIEW  
 7100 City Center Circle | Fairview, TN 37062  
 (615)799-2480 | [www.fairview-tn.org](http://www.fairview-tn.org)  
 cm@fairview-tn.org | cityhall@fairview-tn.org

**Beth Lothers** ▫ Mayor  
 CITY OF NOLENSVILLE  
 7240 Nolensville Rd., Ste. 103, Nolensville, TN 37135  
 (615)776-3633 | [www.nolensville-tn.com](http://www.nolensville-tn.com)  
 town.hall@nolensville-tn.com

**Danny Leverette** ▫ Mayor  
 CITY OF SPRING HILL  
 199 Towncenter Pkwy., Spring Hill, TN 37174  
 (931)486-2252 | [www.springhilltn.org](http://www.springhilltn.org)  
 mayor@springhilltn.org

**Nancy Conway** ▫ President/CEO  
 WILLIAMSON COUNTY-FRANKLIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
 P.O. Box 156, Franklin, TN 37065  
 (615)794-1225 | Fax: (615)790-5337  
[www.williamson-franklinchamber.com](http://www.williamson-franklinchamber.com)

**Teresa Miller** ▫ President  
 BRENTWOOD/COOL SPRINGS CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE  
 5211 Maryland Way, Ste. 1080, Brentwood, TN 37027  
 (615)373-1595 | Fax: (615)373-8810  
[www.brentwood.org](http://www.brentwood.org) | teresa@brentwood.org