

1999 Annual Report Executive Summary

Fayette-Haywood County Enterprise Community

Approximately five and a half years have passed since the request for designation as an Enterprise Community was sent to the Department of Agriculture by the governments of Fayette and Haywood Counties. Since becoming operational in late spring 1995, the Fayette - Haywood County Enterprise Community has traveled the irregular path inherent in this type of community empowerment. The stages of "What's Next?" to "The First Project" to "Maintaining a Sense of Direction" and "Retaining Active Participation" have been experienced. While the pace of action may have been slower than desired, the direction of the community and its commitment have remained constant.

The community's original strategic plan as written had an emphasis on projects and programs that invest in the individual "persona" of the community and less on "bricks and mortar." Although the Strategic Plan has been amended to include new infrastructure projects, such as water lines and industrial park improvements, the emphasis of the Enterprise Community remains on people, programs, and facilities that serve the public. The flexibility of amending the Strategic Plan over the course of the initiative has allowed the original objectives to be accomplished by new means.

In the past, for example, the recognized need to assist preschool children was contained in the expressed desire to assist the Head Start program. When the need was refined, it was determined that the best action would be to partner with the Fayette County Board of Education in developing a preschool classroom. As a result, a classroom was jointly developed at the Jefferson School, located in the Enterprise Community. The program has been such a success that the Board of Education explored how to expand its availability. Preschool education has been identified as an important part of any educational system. There have been discussions how this instruction may work in a rural setting. In Fayette County, the answer is it works well.

The use of EC Funds to match Tennessee House Program Funds had a far-reaching leverage effect in the city of Brownsville. The city received \$800,000.00 in state funds as a designated "Bicentennial Neighborhood." Also, \$100,000.00 in EC Funds resulted in \$500,000.00 in state housing rehabilitation funds. This neighborhood initiative has become a model of cooperation and illustrates what can happen when diverse groups come together for a common purpose.

The two previously described actions are only two of many actions that the Fayette -Haywood County Enterprise Community has undertaken. Other actions within the last year include:

- The re-programming of health care services provided by the Stanton Medical Center and the recruitment of physicians, nurse practitioners, and a physical therapist which has increased the availability of health care services in Haywood County, Tennessee.
- Continued progress on the development of three community centers in Tracts 603, 605, and 606 in Fayette County.
- The completion of the first Habitat for Humanity house in Somerville in May of 1999 using 25 volunteers per day over a period of six days. The Habitat Chapter of Greater Memphis has raised funding for the construction of two more houses in May 2000.
- The establishment of long-term community capacity-building through the initiation of a leadership development in conjunction with the WestStar Regional Leadership Program.
- The continuation of housing rehabilitation and new construction within the Enterprise Community to improve housing conditions in both Fayette and Haywood Counties..
- The ribbon-cutting and construction of the Fayette County Career Center for use as a satellite

career center. Additionally, involvement with the Junior Achievement Curriculum in the Fayette County School System continued.

- The opening of the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center in Haywood County to serve as a welcome and information center for individual and group excursions to attractions in the service area.

As stated earlier, the pace of implementing the Strategic Plan has not always been as quick as desired. However, significant progress has been achieved and will continue to be achieved. Those involved in the process knew that the goals of the Empowerment initiative would take time and this acknowledgment is expressed in the ten-year planning and implementation period.

Obstacles facing the Fayette -Haywood County Enterprise Community are the ones any initiative would face in addressing the overall goals of the Empowerment Initiative. Individuals from within the community are a potent force and the strength of the initiative in Fayette and Haywood Counties lies with the active involvement of the Steering Committee members representing each census tract in the Enterprise Community.