

2001 Annual Report Executive Summary

Fayette - Haywood Enterprise Community

Calendar Year 2001 was a pivotal year for the Fayette - Haywood Enterprise Community. Approximately seven and a half years after requesting designation as an Enterprise Community from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Enterprise Community actively began taking steps toward becoming an independent non-profit entity. The Enterprise Community developed and adopted a new set of by-laws and incorporated as a non-profit organization recognized by the State of Tennessee.

In the process, the Enterprise Community reaffirmed its commitment to improving economic development, education, health care, housing, infrastructure, and quality communities. Since becoming operational in late spring 1995, the Fayette - Haywood Enterprise Community has traveled the irregular path inherent in this type of community empowerment. The stages of "What's Next?", "The First Project" and "Retaining Active Participation" have given way to "New Directions." While the pace of action may have been slower than desired, the direction of the community and its commitment has remained constant. The community's original strategic plan 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. For example, the need to assist preschool children was expressed in the 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 in the Enterprise Community. The program has been such a success that the Board of Education has explored how to expand its availability. Preschool education has been identified as an important part of any educational system and there have been discussions on how well preschool 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 has 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 the Fayette - Haywood Enterprise Community has undertaken in recent years. Actions taken within the last year include: Census Tract 603 and 605 Community Centers: Architectural plans were drawn and bids were submitted by three contractors to build a joint Civic Center/Ambulance Center in Census Tract 605. Also this past year, a site was selected and purchased for a community center in Census Tract 603.

Small Business College: This year-long series was undertaken through a collaborative effort of the Enterprise Community, the Brownsville-Haywood County Chamber of Commerce, the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, BellSouth, and the University of Tennessee to aid local business owners. The courses were designed to teach new entrepreneurs basic techniques in starting and maintaining a successful business.

Fayette County Career Center: The rehabilitation of the 3,000 square-foot building housing the Fayette County Career Center for use as a satellite career center linked to online employment data and human services was completed and officially opened.

Capacity Building: The establishment of long-term community capacity-building through the initiation of leadership development began. In addition to the two participants from Fayette County in 2000, an additional participant successfully completed the WestStar Regional Leadership Program in 2001.

Restructuring: In addition to taking steps towards becoming an independent non-profit entity, the Fayette – Haywood Enterprise Community restructured its steering committee by reducing the size from 20 to 15. Another major change was the move to elect a single chairperson instead of electing two co-chairs. This will enable the EC to address issues and concerns quickly and thoroughly.

As stated, the pace of implementing the Strategic Plan has varied; however, significant progress has been achieved and will continue to be achieved. Those involved in the process realize that the achievement of goals through the EC initiative will take time and this acknowledgment is expressed in the ten-year planning and implementation period. The obstacles facing the Fayette-Haywood Enterprise Community are the ones any initiative would face in addressing the overall goals formed in the strategic plan. However, individuals from the community are a potent force; the strength of the initiative in Fayette and Haywood Counties lies with the active involvement of the Steering Committee representing each Census Tract in the Enterprise Community.