



Frank Altizer/The Herald-Dispatch

Noah Stephens of Huntington cleans up debris from an old home he is remodeling for an office and storage area. He is developing a tract of land near Louisa, Ky., with homes selling in the \$150,000 to \$250,000 range.

## Lawrence County, Ky., works to keep growing

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**Today's spotlight** LOUISA, Ky. — Huge farms and tranquil pastures in Lawrence County, Ky., are becoming a sign of times past as new growth takes hold of the region.

New housing developments, new industry and new recreational facilities are taking the place of the rural hillsides as the county continues to experience a population boom.

"There's more people moving in than out," said Judge-Executive David Cumpton. "People are coming back home."

Lawrence County's residential growth, up 11.8 percent since the 1990 Census to 15,008, makes it the second-fastest growing county in the region, just under Putnam County, W.Va.'s, record growth of 19.4 percent.

While people continue migrating into the county, economic development officials are looking for ways to keep them.



Frank Altizer/The Herald-Dispatch

Developers have been clearing a road through farm land near Louisa, Ky., being developed for the Noah's Landing.

"It's a wonderful area. It's a clean town and has a low crime rate, but I think we need a lot of industry to keep them," said David Roberts, a Lawrence County native who now lives in a newly developed subdivision in the county that once was farmland.

County officials are preparing to break ground this spring on a \$210 million natural gas-

fired power plant that will create 15 to 20 new jobs, Cumpton said. Nearly 250 workers will be needed to construct the plant, he said.

Dynegy Inc., a Houston, Texas-based marketer of energy products and services, plans to break ground this spring on a 20-acre site on the banks of

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# Growth

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the Big Sandy River. The company expects its riverside generating project to be up and running during the summer of 2001.

The Dynegy plant will join American Electric Power's Big Sandy plant, Brown's Food Service and the Lawrence County school system as one of the county's major employers.

Huntington developer Noah Stephens said he is taking advantage of the county's growth as he prepares to start construction on Noah's Landing, a 120-home subdivision off Kentucky 3 just outside of Louisa.

"Once I saw the property, I had to have it," he said. "It's the best piece of property around Louisa." Cumpton agrees.

"It's the last large tract of land in Lawrence County that has everything available," he said. "It will be a great asset to us, not only the revenue from the property taxes, but the people."

Stephens' 48 acres, known locally as the Nellie Smith farm, has city water, county sewer and a spectacular view of the Tug Fork River, with homes starting in the \$150,000 range. The development also will include jogging and walking trails, a heated and cooled building for the school bus stop, dusk-to-dawn security patrol, picnic areas along the river, a boat landing and lighted fishing boardwalk.

Stephens said he picked Lawrence County for the project because it is centrally located for people living in Huntington and Ashland.

"It's easy to get to," he said. "Huntington and Ashland aren't more than 30 minutes away."

While the county is only a short drive for people commuting to work, hundreds of tourists from all over the region are driving into the county to check out its hidden jewel, Yatesville Lake. Along with boating and swimming activities, the 2,300-acre lake offers some of the best bluegill, crappie and bass fishing in the region.

"The lake has brought a lot of tourism dollars," said Bob Kise, assistant judge-executive.

Now, county officials are hoping to expand on their popular attraction to encourage more people to visit the county, including the development of a 150-acre bathing beach this year, complete with tons of sand and shower houses for men and women.

Also in 2000, the state plans to begin construction of a new \$6 million golf course, designed by

golf pro Arnold Palmer, adding another attraction to the Yatesville Lake area.

Camping facilities recently opened near the proposed golf course, Cumpton said. A bed and breakfast also is located near the lake, and officials

hope to see a lodge built soon, he said.

"We have the land available," he said. "There are also tax incentives from the state that would allow a developer to get 25 percent of his money back after 10 years. It's a good deal."

County officials also are anticipating more population growth with the expected opening of a state prison in Elliott County, a federal prison in Martin County and the development of EastPark, an 860-acre industrial site in Boyd, Carter

and Genesee counties.

Lawrence County will share the tax proceeds from the industrial park, but Cumpton said he also wants the people.

"We're hoping those workers will move here, too," Cumpton said.

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