

Perryville, Missouri

Perryville, Missouri is located on Interstate 55 between St. Louis, a major metropolitan area in the lower Midwest and Cape Girardeau, a regional hub in southeast Missouri. In 2000 the population of Perry County was 18,132. The city of Perryville, population 7,667, is the commercial center for Perry County. Perryville's local government body includes a mayor, board of alderman and city administrator. Robert Miget was elected mayor in 1984 and continued to hold the position until his death in January 2008.

A controversial issue occurred in Mayor Miget's his first year of office regarding residential street development. Developers were opposed to a new policy that would raise the standards for streets in new subdivisions. Homeowners were also asked to share in the cost of curbing, improving streets and adding sidewalks in existing neighborhoods. Although it was a politically hot issue with significant opposition, ordinances were passed by the city board of alderman for new and existing street standards. The bold action of political leaders during that time set the tone for future development. Today, citizens in the community take pride in the appearance and quality of the city's streets and sidewalks. The mayor acknowledged the key to the city's success was maintaining a professional administrative and technical staff with expertise to direct projects and keep the public informed.

Perryville has a total of 3,473 housing units. There is no unsightly property and even the most modest of homes were well maintained. Two major intersections in the city are constructed with roundabouts. Perryville's daytime population grows by 3,000 people commuting from the county to jobs within the city limits. This method is used in

place of the traditional traffic light and four-way stop approaches, allowing a slower, consistent traffic flow and a lower incident of dangerous wrecks.

A Progressive Community

The Perryville Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1923 and initially raised funds by selling building lots to citizens in the community for \$300. Chamber funds were used to seed the construction of the International Shoe Company in 1925. In exchange for the building, the company pledged to spend \$2 million in wages over the next ten years. A second effort was launched in 1939 with residential lots selling for \$250 to construct an additional International Shoe facility in return for an annual payroll of \$100,000.

Industrial development continues to be an important growth strategy. Perryville has approximately 2700 people employed in manufacturing jobs. TG Missouri Corporation manufactures steering wheels and other auto parts for Toyota and Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation is a food preparation center for dry products including cake mix, cereal and popcorn.

Other major employers include the Perry County Hospital (360), Wal-Mart Supercenter (246), Semco Distributing (159), Bucheit, Inc. (154). The Perryville Industrial Park has 133.7 acres with all utilities on site, is accessible from Interstate 55 and has a 40,000 square foot building available.

Perryville's higher education center partners with Southeast Missouri State University and Mineral Area College. The center provides a general education track and customized programs for area business. General education courses are available through the traditional classroom setting, internet and instructional television (ITV).

Parks, Recreation and Schools

Perryville City Park is a 96-acre site with six baseball and softball fields, basketball court, sand volleyball court, four pavilions and playground areas. The Perry Park Center houses an indoor swimming pool, a 417 seat movie theater which shows first run films and classics while also serving as home to First ACT Community Theater Group. A unique feature is the location of the city's library within the center. The center provides a one-stop place for family recreation and entertainment needs. The cost of the center was approximately \$9 million dollars and financed with a sales tax bond issue. The most recent addition to the city's park system is a 31-acre soccer complex that includes 10 fields, three parking lots, pavilions, concession stand and restrooms.

Perry County has two public and six private schools. Perry County School District 32 includes the Perryville Elementary School with grades K-4, Perry County Middle Schools serves students in grades 5-8 and Perryville High School includes grades 9-12. Altenburg School District 48 serves students in grades K-8. Private schools include a Catholic school for grades K-12, and three Lutheran schools that serve students in grades PK-8. Mayor Miget stated that one public high school in Perry County had proven to be a major uniting factor.

Development Organizations

The Perryville Chamber of Commerce, Perryville Development Corporation and the Perry County Industrial Development Authority work in unison to advance economic growth. The chamber specializes in promoting the city and growth in the retail sector. The Perryville Development Corporation was established in 1954 to relieve the chamber of the growing demands of industrial recruitment. In 1980, a third entity, the Perry

County Industrial Development Corporation was formed as an alternate approach to the Perryville Development Corporation, an organization run solely by volunteers. A county-wide organization also provided the means to utilize public monies from the city and county in the development process. The Perryville Development Corporation continues to exist and is the legal entity for securing and disposing of land to business prospects. The Perry County Industrial Development Authority assists the other two organizations with economic development projects and is the lead for industrial development marketing. The chamber and the county's industrial development authority both employ a professional staff.

The Perry County Industrial Development Authority is funded by the city of Perryville and Perry County through an annual contract of \$66,950 from each entity. The authority has the capacity to issue development bonds. The Perryville Development Corporation has approximately 6 million dollars in total assets. This includes \$600,000 in checking/savings and land worth approximately 1.3 million dollars.

Perryville has experienced steady growth during a time when many communities similar in size and characteristics lost population and jobs. From 1970 to 2006, Perry County had a 30.6 percent gain in population and has experienced a 2 percent growth in its labor force every five years. Its proximity to Interstate 55 has no doubt been a factor in developing a strong industrial base and all three organizations have worked jointly to leverage resources needed to develop infrastructure and land - but the work didn't stop there. As impressive is the city and county's commitment to excellence and it is evident in all aspects. A combined library, movie theater and recreation center are unique, creative touches that appeal to young families. The vision and courage to develop new

policy in the housing development sector led to sidewalks, walking trails and paths that connect the community and are important features that fit today's lifestyle choices. These attributes all add up to building a place where people want to live and today's jobs follow the people as opposed to people following jobs. Perryville's practice of a well-rounded community and economic development program has prevailed for nearly a century. There is clear evidence the tradition will continue for many years to come.

Source: The Arkansas State University Delta Center led an Arkansas delegation to Perryville, Missouri in October 2007 to meet with local officials regarding the county-led economic development program. Information in this report was gathered during interviews and meetings and prepared by Frankie Gilliam, CEcD Economic Development Specialist