

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

First Quarter 2025

We appreciate the continued support from the City of Jonesboro and Craighead County. The first quarter of 2025 has brought meaningful progress across all areas of economic development, thanks to strong collaboration and shared goals. This report highlights just a few of the positive developments we've seen so far, with many more to come this year. This is a great time for our region, and we're excited to keep the momentum going together.

Sincerely,

Al M. Heringer III, Chairman

INFRASTRUCTURE

Welcoming Arkansas' Newest Highway Commissioner

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders appointed Jerry L. Halsey, Jr., to the Arkansas Highway Commission in January. Jerry is the founder, CEO and President of Halsey Thrasher Harpole Real Estate Group in Jonesboro. He has been a long-standing leader in Jonesboro, Craighead County, and the state, and we are



excited that he has started a 10-year term on the Commission. As quoted in the Arkansas Highways Magazine (Issue 2 – 2025), Jerry stated, “You know, I am a firm believer that good roads bring good industry.” We couldn’t agree more!

Infrastructure Development in the Craighead Technology Park

Jonesboro Unlimited was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Arkansas Site Development program to be used for infrastructure development in the Craighead Technology Park. In partnership with the County and City Water & Light, the water line infrastructure will be extended to serve Craighead Technology Park South. A groundbreaking was held May 28, 2025.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & TALENT ATTRACTION



Industry & Education Align for Regional Growth

In January, Arkansas State University's Neil Griffin College of Business and the Delta Center for Economic Development co-hosted the inaugural Catalyst: NEA Economic Development and Leadership Forum. The event brought together over 600 leaders from across the state to discuss workforce development and regional growth, with panels featuring experts in steel, healthcare, education, mental health, and leadership. Catalyst emphasized the importance and power of collaboration between business and education.

Elevating Jonesboro's Talent Strategy



Jonesboro Unlimited's talent attraction campaign continues to put a spotlight on Jonesboro, both in-state and throughout the country. During the first quarter, the first phase of a LinkedIn Campaign was initiated to promote Jonesboro to Arkansas State University alumni in selected counties.

In addition, Always Jonesboro's Talent Ambassadors are connecting with newcomers and promoting Jonesboro's cool factor! Throughout the year, Ambassadors are planning meet and greet events to welcome our newcomers and share their interests to get them plugged into our great city. More to come! Check out the Ambassadors on the AlwaysJonesboro.com website and @alwaysjonesboro on Instagram and Facebook.



Developing Financial Sector Leaders

Hosted by the A-State Delta Center for Economic Leadership, the Leadership in Banking Series is a professional

development program designed for regional banking professionals. Six in-depth sessions cover contemporary banking issues and essential leadership skills. Throughout the series, participants expand their professional network, develop leadership and management skills, and enhance their understanding of the banking industry. Developing this program is part of Jonesboro Unlimited's goal to strengthen our financial sector by fostering leadership and innovation. To the left are the banking leaders from the 2024-2025 class, which held their final session in February. Fifteen area banks participated this year!



ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Delta Center for
Economic Development

Investing in Tech Talent

The Workforce Development Committee of the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce awarded three \$1,000 scholarships to ASU-Newport students Ashley Hathcock, Ian Holland, and Dawn Phillips in February. The committee's annual scholarship supports students at ASUN Jonesboro as they train in high-demand industries such as welding and advanced manufacturing.





Building the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

The annual Thrown to the Wolves competition, hosted by the A-State Delta Center for Economic Development, plays a vital role in talent development by engaging high school students in entrepreneurship and real-world business skills. To participate, competing High School teams submit business plans for an idea or product ahead of the event and then pitch their idea live in front of judges during the competition. Through both components of the competition, students gain experience in communication, critical thinking, and teamwork. Thrown to the Wolves strengthens our region's talent pipeline and builds connections between schools, higher education, and the business community. This year six regional high schools participated – The Academies at Jonesboro, Midland, East Poinsett County, Paragould, Cross County, and Walnut Ridge. First Place went to Walnut Ridge, second to Cross County, and third place to Paragould High School.



Launching Careers through Industry Connections

The 2025 Be Pro Be Proud Draft Day event, held in February at Nettleton High School. Over 2,000 students from 33 regional high schools participated. There were 23 companies present, offering students an opportunity to explore careers, have real-life interviews with hiring companies, and to connect with potential employers after graduation. Hytrol Conveyor Company was a premier sponsor for the event, with support from Frito-Lay. This was the fourth annual Draft Day held in Jonesboro.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION & DEVELOPMENT

The international team for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission recently visited Jonesboro to get a closer look at our city, county and the region. Joined by regional leaders, the delegation included the Director of the Asia office, Neal Jansen; Director of the Europe office, Cam Napier, International Business Development Manager; and Dunnis Hwang, Director of the Korea office. While here, the group got a good overview of our region.

A-State College of Veterinary Medicine Breaks Ground



In March, Arkansas State University officially broke ground on the state's first public College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Heidi Banse has been named Dean, and pending accreditation, the school will open in the fall of 2026. The \$33.2 million project will bring a new 56,000 square foot facility to A-State's campus. It will feature cutting-edge labs, surgical training spaces, and 24/7 clinical skills spaces. We're excited to see this new chapter unfold for the University and our region!

