

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

3rd Quarter 2021

Jonesboro and Craighead County lead the way for Northeast Arkansas. With a population growth from 2010 to 2020 of 16.8% (city) and 15.3% (county), it's apparent that we are creating jobs and a quality of life that are attracting residents to our city/county. Jonesboro's leadership realizes, however, that we will continue to work and take deliberate actions to take Jonesboro and Craighead County to higher levels of excellence. We are an ever-growing and ever-changing region, and we will continue to adapt in order to grow and continue to thrive. Please read below for details on activity in the 3rd quarter.

Sincerely,
Al M. Heringer III, Chairman

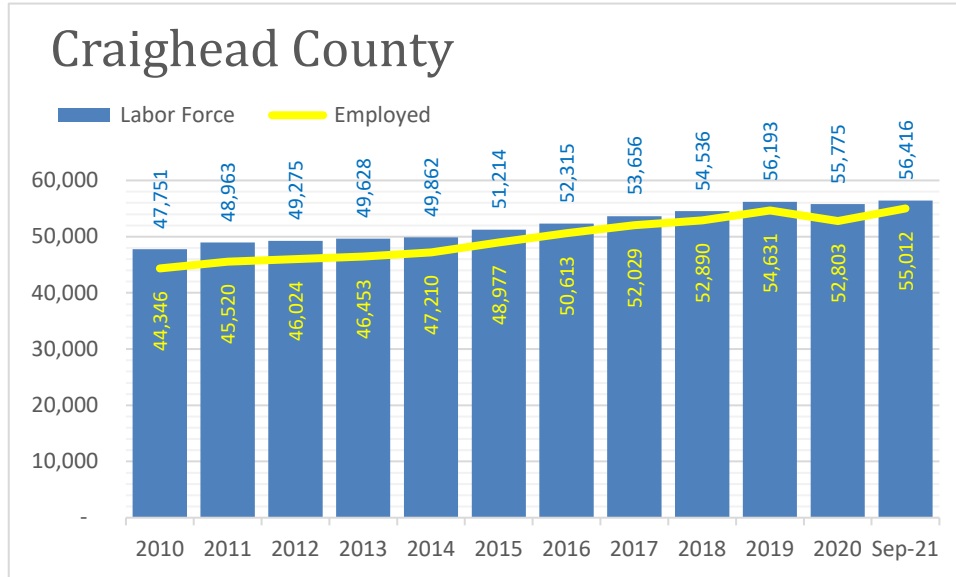
TALENT

Jonesboro's businesses and industry draw employees from a 12-county region as shown in the chart below. The region has a labor force of 173,441 strong and employs over 167,000 people. Craighead County comes in with a labor force of 56,416 and employing 55,012 people.

County	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Clay	5,436	5,274	162	3.0%
Craighead	56,416	55,012	1,404	2.5%
Crittenden	21,093	20,285	808	3.8%
Cross	7,069	6,831	238	3.4%
Greene	19,369	18,851	518	2.7%
Jackson	5,666	5,440	226	4.0%
Lawrence	6,893	6,662	231	3.4%
Mississippi	16,554	15,636	918	5.5%
Poinsett	10,110	9,805	305	3.0%
Randolph	7,588	7,363	225	3.0%
Sharp	5,751	5,520	231	4.0%
Dunklin, MO	11,496	10,837	819	7.0%
TOTAL	173,441	167,516	6,085	3.5%

Source: "Arkansas Labor Market," Department of Workforce Services, September 2021; Local Area Unemployment Statistics," Missouri Economic Research & Information Center, September 2021; Data provided November 3, 2021.

Jonesboro and Craighead County have had steady, solid growth for the past 50 years, both in population and available labor. There are many reasons companies and businesses locate in Jonesboro and Craighead County, one of which is our constant, durable labor force. As you can see from the chart below, Craighead County's labor force has grown 15.4% since 2010 and employment has grown comparatively at 19.4%. Having diversified economic sectors helps in providing this substantial and strong growth.



INFRASTRUCTURE

AIRPORT

A community's air service capability has an immense impact on economic development recruitment efforts. Corporate and business visitors need the convenience of flying in to visit a facility location and flying out to maximize time and ease of travel. Jonesboro is fortunate to have the Municipal Airport, a great asset to our community and area. To accommodate growth, the Airport Commission has developed a plan to strengthen the runways to accept larger aircraft. A grant in the amount of \$3.56 million has been awarded to the airport for this project. While more funding is needed, this is a great start!

Air Choice One has provided commuter air service in Jonesboro since 2012, currently offering daily flights to St. Louis. Awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Essential Air Service contracts are awarded every two or four years. With Jonesboro's contract up for renewal this year, the Jonesboro Airport Commission has endorsed Air Choice One as the preferred carrier for our area.



RAIL

Construction on the rail storage yard is underway, with Phase I complete and Phase II starting. When complete, the storage yard will accommodate 180 rail cars on four tracks. This will be strong benefit to our industries located in the industrial parks. The City of Jonesboro owns the rail spur in the industrial park and is managing the storage yard construction.

DITCH RELOCATION

The Corps of Engineers has notified the City of Jonesboro that a permit to relocate a ditch on "Site F" in the Craighead Technology Park has been granted. As shown on the photo to the right, the ditch currently runs through the middle of the site. Once relocated, it will run along the western boundary and then to the east. This will open "Site F" up for full development on the property.



ROADS

The East Arkansas Good Roads (EAGR) organization advocates for transportation in our region. Their diligent efforts, along with our economic development partners, have garnered us I-555 access to I-55 and the four-laning of Highway 226 to U.S. 67. Leaders of this organization are working with our federal delegation, the Arkansas Department of Transportation, and the State of Missouri to secure funding for Future I-57, which is located from U.S. 67 in North Little Rock to connect in Missouri. Highway planning is a long-term process and these projects provide ease of transportation now, but more importantly provide infrastructure for the future.



GRANT FUNDING

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) has been allocated \$3.7 billion in supplemental funding to assist communities in their efforts to build back better by accelerating the economic recovery from the pandemic. NAIDC, and our economic development partners, are reviewing the opportunities available for grant funding and will be applying for improvements as appropriate. Areas of funding include:

- ▶ **Economic Adjustment Assistance**
- ▶ **Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation**
- ▶ **Indigenous Communities**
- ▶ **Build Back Better Regional Challenge**
- ▶ **Statewide Planning, Research and Networks**
- ▶ **Good Jobs Challenge**

MOMENTUM20 JONESBORO

Search for Director of Talent Attraction!

Jonesboro Unlimited will begin implementing their new five-year strategic plan in earnest starting in January. A large emphasis is being placed on talent recruitment in this plan – bringing workers to Jonesboro. Toward that goal, the search has begun for a Director of Talent Attraction to develop a campaign and implement key elements of the plan. JU is excited to charter this new path with their economic development partners!

TECH TALENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Chamber's Workforce Development Committee annually awards a \$1,000, "Tech Talent" Scholarship to a graduating student who plans to attend ASUN to pursue a career in a technical field. This scholarship is key in building a sustainable, skilled pipeline of talent for our area. The 2021 scholarship recipient is Jase Mattix from Jonesboro Public Schools.

IT APPRENTICESHIP LUNCHEON

Connecting educators and industry to facilitate conversation is an element of workforce development that helps build a talent pipeline for future growth. An IT apprenticeship luncheon was held this quarter to talk about the skills needed in the IT industry. It's important that we continue fostering the connection between education and the workplace.

PLANT MANAGERS' ROUNDTABLE

Taking care of our existing industries and fostering a network for plant managers to converse and freely talk about items of concern is what the Plant Managers' Roundtable is all about. These are convened on an as-needed basis and help build a pro-business environment.

Growing the Economy

The Red Wolf Convention Center – NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine – Arkansas State University - First National Bank Arena – City of Jonesboro youth sports programs – Tournaments – Regional Healthcare Hub – PBA Bowling Tour stop – National Disc Golf Pro Tour – Jonesboro Shooting Range – Just a few of the annual events and activities that make a huge impact on our economy! Jonesboro is GROWING and is well known on a statewide, national, and global level as a first-class city. Events held in Jonesboro bring visitors from all over the world and their impact is immense. These entities are an important sector of the economy and we want to fully support and grow their efforts!

Activity in the 3rd quarter remained strong with three inquiries, two prospect visits, seven business retention and expansion projects, and eight market research requests.



Colson Group USA is completing construction on their new facility in the Craighead Technology Park. This is indicative of other ongoing projects in the park and in our industrial family – Nestlé, Camfil USA, Spirit Fitness and Nice-Pak Products, Inc.