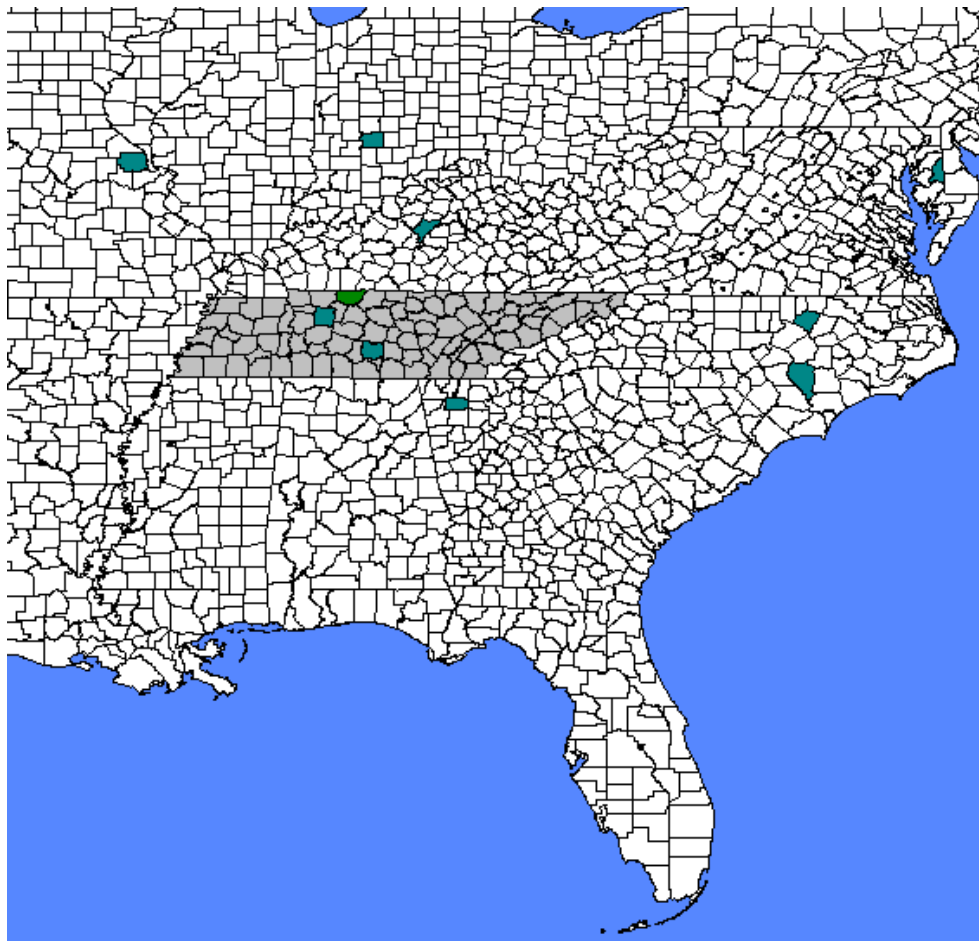


A Comparative Assessment of Robertson County, Tennessee

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October 2009



M C A
MERCHANT COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

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October 2009

Executive Summary

Merchant Community Analysis utilized a peer comparative approach in conducting an analysis of current population, labor market, industrial, and economic conditions of Robertson County, Tennessee. The following are the key items examined across the set of designated peer communities, resulting in the stated outcomes from this assessment:

Population Growth: Rapid population growth of is likely a great driving force in the local economy, but it brings added challenges, such as increased infrastructure needs.

Population Demographics: The growing abundance of children in the community will likely induce the need for continued added funding for the public schools. Attracting seniors to retire in Robertson County, however, may benefit the local economy in the long run.

Educational Attainment: The Roberson County adult population lags behind the nation and falls amid peer counties in educational attainment statistics.

Labor Force: The county's unemployed workforce has swelled to more than 3,500 in 2009. Increasing educational attainment may give workers the ability to find better jobs.

Job Growth: During the economic expansion prior to the Great Recession, Robertson County had robust job growth. Some of the growth occurred in industries that were likely related to the national housing bubble. However, the county also saw strong growth in other industries, to include manufacturing.

Industry: Robertson County's job base is pillared by the goods-producing sectors of agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. There may, however, exist local business opportunities in the sectors of art, entertainment, and recreation.

Average Wages: The county's wage growth has fallen behind all peer counties, as well as the nation as a whole. A more highly educated workforce may be essential in the creation of local jobs that pay higher wages.

Income: Commuters who hold higher paying jobs in Nashville likely contribute to higher average incomes in Robertson County.

Poverty: Increasing education attainment may be a key element in helping residents who currently live in poverty to find jobs that pay sufficient wages.

A Comparative Assessment of Robertson County, Tennessee

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Introduction

In analyzing the current business, economic, and demographic conditions of Robertson County, Tennessee, Merchant Community Analysis utilized a peer comparison approach. Peer counties were selected through a mathematical modeling process developed by Merchant. The process involves comparing some twenty different economic, demographic, and financial variables for over 3,000 counties in the United States. How closely these twenty variables are aligned to Robertson County's corresponding statistics determine the closest "peer" counties. The peer list of nine "closest" counties is summarized in the following table:

ANALYSIS: ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE PEER COMMUNITIES LIST

Rank	Peer Counties Based on Analysis	Most Similar Statistic
1	Dickson, TN	Number of Proprietors
2	Bedford, TN	Percentage of Children
3	Nelson, KY	Percentage of Seniors
4	Franklin, NC	Dividends, Interest, & Rent Income
5	Morgan, IN	Government Employment
6	Lincoln, MO	Available Labor
7	Gordon, GA	Available Labor
8	Caroline, MD	Education: High School or more
9	Sampson, NC	Population

Source: Merchant Community Analysis

Interestingly, the statistically objective approach has two Middle Tennessee counties filling the two top spots, and a county in neighboring Kentucky filling the third. While Dickson and Bedford Counties, like Robertson, have a relatively close proximity to Nashville, other peers are actually counties that lie outside the core cities of metropolitan areas like Louisville, Raleigh, Indianapolis, and St. Louis. One of the North Carolina counties, additionally, lies adjacent to the metropolitan area containing Fort Bragg, just as Robertson County lies adjacent to the Clarksville MSA, home to Fort Campbell.

Population

Among its peers Robertson County is the second largest in terms of its size in population. The most recently available population estimates for Robertson County and its peer communities is summarized in the following table:

POPULATION, 2008

Rank	Communities	Population
1	Morgan, IN	70,668
2	Robertson, TN	64,898
3	Sampson, NC	63,927
4	Franklin, NC	58,927
5	Gordon, GA	52,800
6	Lincoln, MO	52,775
7	Dickson, TN	47,884
8	Bedford, TN	44,696
9	Nelson, KY	43,113
10	Caroline, MD	33,138

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population growth is likely a great driving force in any growing local economy. However, rapid population growth also brings with it challenges, such as infrastructure needs. Funding the expansion of needed government services will also be necessary. Currently growing at a rate of more than 2.5 times the national rate, Robertson County has to efficiently respond to its growing needs now and in its future.

POPULATION GROWTH

FIVE-YEAR GROWTH RATES, 2003 - 2008

Rank	Communities	Percent Change
1	Lincoln, MO	20.3%
2	Franklin, NC	13.5%
3	Robertson, TN	12.3%
4	Bedford, TN	12.2%
5	Gordon, GA	11.2%
6	Nelson, KY	9.3%
7	Caroline, MD	8.2%
8	Dickson, TN	6.8%
9	Sampson, NC	3.9%
10	Morgan, IN	3.3%
-	United States	4.8%

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

Another variable to be taken into consideration when analyzing population is the geographic size of each community. While Robertson County ranks near the median of its peers in geographic size, it is the third most densely populated county among its peers. Population density in terms of persons per square mile is shown in the next table:

**POPULATION DENSITY:
PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE, 2008**

Rank	Communities	Square Miles	Persons Per Square Mile
1	Morgan, IN	406.5	174
2	Gordon, GA	355.5	149
3	Robertson, TN	476.5	136
4	Franklin, NC	492.0	120
5	Caroline, MD	320.1	104
6	Nelson, KY	422.6	102
7	Dickson, TN	489.9	98
8	Bedford, TN	473.7	94
9	Lincoln, MO	630.5	84
10	Sampson, NC	945.5	68
-	United States	3,537,438	86

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

As the Robertson County population continues to grow, while its boundaries remain constant, an induced result of growth in population density may be heavy automobile traffic buildup on local roads, streets, and highways. Paying for the necessary installation of costly stop-and-go lights or roundabouts as a way to safely deal with the additional traffic congestion may be a continuing challenge for the community. Funding for highways, bypass roads, additional highway lanes, and maintenance may be a statewide or regional challenge.

Age Demographics

One characteristic that rapid population growth may bring with it is a growing population of children who must be schooled. The following table shows the percentages of children in the communities under consideration:

**CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY:
POPULATION YOUNGER THAN AGE 18, 2008**

Rank	Communities	Percent
1	Gordon, GA	27.2%
2	Lincoln, MO	26.9%
3	Bedford, TN	26.1%
4	Robertson, TN	26.1%
5	Nelson, KY	25.7%
6	Sampson, NC	25.5%
7	Dickson, TN	25.4%
8	Morgan, IN	24.5%
9	Caroline, MD	24.3%
10	Franklin, NC	24.3%
-	United States	24.3%

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

Among its peer communities, Robertson County has the fourth highest concentration of children in the community, at 26.1 percent. All peer counties have a percentage at or above the corresponding national percentage. As the Robertson County population continues to grow, and the number of children continues to grow along with it, the need for increased funding for the public schools will likely grow, too.

Robertson County, along with many of its peers, has a smaller percentage of persons age 65 and older in the community than the nation. Senior citizens who are retired have the potential to bring added income and spending into a community through their “nest egg” investments, to include income from dividends and interest. In 2007, Robertson County had a per capita income figure from dividends, interest, and rent of a mere \$2,600; the comparative amount for the nation was nearly \$6,800. Retired military and government workers can also bring in added income and subsequent spending through their pension benefits.

Attracting more seniors to retire in the Robertson County community may help to benefit the local economy, as well as help to increase the household and per capita incomes. The current percentages of seniors in peer communities are summarized in the next table:

**SENIORS IN THE COMMUNITY:
POPULATION AGE 65 AND OLDER, 2008**

Rank	Communities	Percent
1	Sampson, NC	13.2%
2	Caroline, MD	12.9%
3	Dickson, TN	12.6%
4	Bedford, TN	11.9%
5	Morgan, IN	11.9%
6	Gordon, GA	11.3%
7	Nelson, KY	11.2%
8	Robertson, TN	11.1%
9	Franklin, NC	10.6%
10	Lincoln, MO	10.1%
-	United States	12.8%

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

Education, Labor Force, and Jobs

In 2008, the national unemployment rate for someone without a high school diploma was 9.0 percent; for someone with a bachelor’s degree, it was 2.8 percent. Furthermore, the full-time median earnings for someone with a master’s degree are more than twice than that of someone with only a high school diploma or equivalency.

These figures are according to a recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (graph shown in conclusion of this report). Needless to say, there is a clear direct correlation between educational attainment and subsequent ability to both find work and to be paid sufficiently.

Unfortunately, the latest data available on educational attainment statistics for all counties included in this study come from the 2000 Census. It shows that one out of four adults in Robertson County has not attained a high school diploma or equivalency. The statistics are presented in the next table:

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:
HIGH SCHOOL OR MORE, AGE 25 AND OLDER, 2000**

Rank	Communities	Percent
1	Morgan, IN	80.7%
2	Nelson, KY	79.0%
3	Lincoln, MO	76.4%
4	Caroline, MD	75.0%
5	Robertson, TN	74.8%
6	Franklin, NC	73.6%
7	Dickson, TN	72.6%
8	Bedford, TN	69.7%
9	Sampson, NC	69.1%
10	Gordon, GA	65.9%
-	United States	80.4%

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

In addition to attaining at least a high school diploma or equivalency, postsecondary education is a key to the upward mobility of Robertson County residents. The 2000 statistics show that less than twelve percent of adults age 25 and older have attained their bachelor's degree. This figure is less than half the corresponding national percentage. As shown below, all peer communities have percentages well below the national level.

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE, AGE 25 AND OLDER, 2000**

Rank	Communities	Percent
1	Nelson, KY	13.4%
2	Franklin, NC	13.2%
3	Morgan, IN	12.6%
4	Caroline, MD	12.1%
5	Robertson, TN	11.9%
6	Dickson, TN	11.3%
7	Bedford, TN	11.1%
8	Sampson, NC	11.1%
9	Gordon, GA	10.6%
10	Lincoln, MO	9.7%
-	United States	24.4%

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

Amid the Great Recession the unemployment rate in Robertson County averaged 6.0 percent in 2008, which is not as bleak as in many of its peer counties, but it is

slightly more than the corresponding national percent. In 2009, Robertson County’s unemployment rate has been elevated to nearly 11 percent.

**UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
ANNUAL AVERAGE, 2008**

Rank	Communities	Percent
1	Caroline, MD	5.5%
2	Sampson, NC	5.6%
3	Morgan, IN	5.8%
4	Robertson, TN	6.0%
5	Franklin, NC	6.3%
6	Bedford, TN	6.6%
7	Dickson, TN	6.7%
8	Nelson, KY	7.4%
9	Gordon, GA	7.4%
10	Lincoln, MO	7.9%
-	United States	5.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

As the national and global economies rebound, the number of unemployed persons in a local economy can be seen by businesses and industry as a measure of labor availability. Before businesses expand or relocate, the determination on the location for their expansion can be contingent on an area’s labor availability. It is generally a significant measure impacting a company’s decision.

The monthly average number of unemployed persons in Robertson County in 2008 was nearly 2,000, and has since swelled to more than 3,500 during 2009. The community has an abundance of its people who could fill the jobs of an expanding company, but so do most other communities at this economic juncture. The following table summarizes the labor availability of Robertson County and its peers in terms of the number of unemployed persons:

UNEMPLOYMENT: A MEASURE OF LABOR AVAILABILITY
ANNUAL AVERAGE, 2008

Rank	Communities	Unemployed Persons
1	Morgan, IN	2,155
2	Lincoln, MO	2,078
3	Robertson, TN	1,990
4	Gordon, GA	1,979
5	Sampson, NC	1,777
6	Franklin, NC	1,762
7	Nelson, KY	1,591
8	Dickson, TN	1,583
9	Bedford, TN	1,486
10	Caroline, MD	908

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Robertson County has historically had more workers by place of residence than it has jobs by place of work. That is, there are simply more workers than there are jobs. The statistics show that only 44 percent of commuting workers who live in Robertson County actually work in the county, too. About 41 percent commute to Nashville-Davidson County to their jobs. The following table shows calculated ratios of civilian jobs-to-labor force:

RATIOS OF JOBS-TO-LABOR FORCE
ANNUAL AVERAGE, 2007

Rank	Communities	Employment*	Civilian Labor Force	Ratio
1	Bedford, TN	27,014	22,614	1.19
2	Dickson, TN	24,814	22,993	1.08
3	Gordon, GA	28,363	26,761	1.06
4	Nelson, KY	20,314	21,342	0.95
5	Robertson, TN	29,571	32,550	0.91
6	Caroline, MD	14,293	16,298	0.88
7	Franklin, NC	22,199	26,889	0.83
8	Sampson, NC	25,254	32,972	0.77
9	Lincoln, MO	18,020	26,235	0.69
10	Morgan, IN	21,096	36,963	0.57
-	United States	178,902,800	153,124,000	1.17

* Includes wage & salary employment and proprietors, but excludes military

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Merchant Community Analysis

It is interesting to note that in the United States in 2007 that the ratio of civilian jobs-to-labor force is well above one. This is because some workers hold down more than one job at the same time. Now, the national figure of 1.17 includes

unemployed persons in the labor force; if only the employed labor force were included, the ratio would be even higher, at about 1.22.

Bedford County, Tennessee is the only county in the peer list that exceeds the national ratio in the above jobs-to-labor force ratios, while Dickson County has the second highest ranking ratio. Even though Robertson County is not currently as much a center for jobs as its two Middle Tennessee peers, the historical data indicates that gains in the jobs-to-labor force ratio may be forthcoming.

The Robertson County community has been fortunate to see significant job growth over the most recent five-year period for which data is available. With overall 5-year job growth beyond 18 percent, it has exceeded the national growth rate by a factor of nearly 3.5. Additionally, job growth has greatly outpaced the county’s population growth, which was just below 11 percent over the same time period. Recent job growth is summarized below:

**JOB GROWTH: WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT
FIVE-YEAR CHANGE, 2002 - 2007**

Rank	Communities	2007	2002	Change	Percent Change
1	Franklin, NC	13,415	11,170	2,245	20.1%
2	Lincoln, MO	12,164	10,267	1,897	18.5%
3	Robertson, TN	20,112	17,026	3,086	18.1%
4	Bedford, TN	19,263	16,876	2,387	14.1%
5	Gordon, GA	23,332	21,620	1,712	7.9%
6	Dickson, TN	16,586	15,412	1,174	7.6%
7	Nelson, KY	15,524	14,435	1,089	7.5%
8	Sampson, NC	21,735	20,452	1,283	6.3%
9	Morgan, IN	16,800	16,213	587	3.6%
10	Caroline, MD	10,082	9,731	351	3.6%
-	United States	144,815,000	137,664,000	7,151,000	5.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Merchant Community Analysis

While the job growth in Robertson County is exemplary, the types of jobs that have been created are of important consideration. The next section addresses the community’s jobs by industry, and an analysis is made to identify the industries that have seen the bulk of the county’s job growth.

Industry

The goods-producing sectors of agriculture, construction, and manufacturing are staples of Robertson County's job base, collectively comprising more than 36

percent of all jobs. Comparatively, only 16 percent of jobs in the United States are collectively within these three industry divisions.

As with many of its peers, Robertson County's agricultural sector stands out remarkably, with nearly four times its job base within the agricultural sector than the corresponding national proportion. The following table summarizes the percent jobs in each disclosed industry division of all peer communities:

PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED INDUSTRY DIVISIONS, 2007

Communities	Agriculture	Construction	Manufacturing	Retail	Accommodation & Food	Government*	All Other
Robertson, TN	6.3%	9.5%	20.6%	10.1%	5.2%	12.1%	36.1%
Dickson, TN	5.1%	11.6%	13.7%	12.2%	5.4%	10.6%	41.3%
Bedford, TN	6.0%	8.0%	26.4%	8.6%	3.4%	8.8%	38.8%
Nelson, KY	7.3%	10.5%	20.0%	10.9%	4.8%	9.7%	36.8%
Franklin, NC	3.6%	13.8%	14.0%	8.9%	3.1%	11.6%	45.0%
Morgan, IN	3.4%	10.0%	11.6%	14.1%	7.7%	15.6%	37.6%
Lincoln, MO	6.6%	12.4%	9.2%	10.6%	6.6%	13.8%	40.8%
Gordon, GA	2.5%	6.1%	31.7%	11.2%	5.0%	12.0%	31.6%
Caroline, MD	5.3%	12.0%	10.1%	11.0%	3.3%	11.7%	46.5%
Sampson, NC	9.9%	5.6%	14.2%	10.0%	4.8%	17.3%	38.1%
United States	1.6%	6.4%	8.0%	10.7%	6.8%	13.4%	53.1%

* Includes military

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data

While agriculture is a significant sector to the Robertson County economy, agricultural jobs have been in decline during the most recent five-year period. This is the case nationally and in all Robertson peers as well. The manufacturing sector in Robertson County, however, has bucked the national trend by gaining jobs at a rate of 7.6 percent in five years, while the nation has lost more than 8 percent of its manufacturing jobs.

Robertson County has seen significantly higher growth than the nation in all its disclosed major non-agricultural industry divisions. The next table summarizes job growth by industry during the economic expansion prior to the Great Recession.

FIVE-YEAR EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATES OF SELECTED INDUSTRY DIVISIONS, 2002 to 2007

Communities	Agriculture	Construction	Manufacturing	Retail	Accommodation		All Other
					& Food	Government*	
Robertson, TN	-11.3%	40.7%	7.6%	15.9%	35.2%	9.7%	34.7%
Dickson, TN	-11.6%	41.6%	-19.4%	16.3%	15.3%	0.5%	24.4%
Bedford, TN	-11.6%	45.2%	13.1%	19.3%	12.5%	-6.0%	27.7%
Nelson, KY	-7.2%	8.5%	2.8%	9.8%	-2.7%	7.3%	17.4%
Franklin, NC	-13.8%	36.9%	32.5%	-1.9%	19.8%	5.9%	33.2%
Morgan, IN	-3.9%	0.9%	10.2%	2.1%	-11.4%	8.2%	7.5%
Lincoln, MO	-8.1%	45.6%	19.5%	-1.6%	20.5%	22.3%	24.9%
Gordon, GA	-6.0%	27.4%	9.9%	16.5%	5.1%	29.8%	6.4%
Caroline, MD	-9.0%	45.8%	-11.6%	-22.5%	28.2%	2.8%	20.5%
Sampson, NC	-13.9%	8.8%	-6.5%	-2.5%	13.2%	5.2%	22.4%
United States	-7.7%	20.4%	-8.3%	4.4%	12.1%	3.2%	12.9%

* Includes military

Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data

Caution is to be used before celebrating Robertson County's job growth from 2002 to 2007. Much of the robust employment growth may reflect the United States' housing bubble, as a closer analysis shows that the top 3 industries for growth in Robertson County were construction; real estate, rental, and leasing; and private administrative and waste services. As the national economy recovers, and the laws of supply and demand induce a correction, Robertson County will have to respond by growing jobs that are sustainable through the next economic expansion.

As shown earlier in this report, Robertson County has a significant proportion of children in its community. There may exist opportunities for creating business establishments, as well as jobs, that cater to children and young adults. Youths having more cultural, constructive, and productive activities may additionally translate into lower local crime rates. In addition to serving the community better, added recreational activities for visitors may help to bring outside dollars to be spent in Robertson County.

The following table shows that Robertson County has only 20 establishments in the art, entertainment, and recreation sector. This equates to about 3,200 residents per establishment. This is a significantly higher ratio than the corresponding national figure, but it is lower than most peer communities. The next table summarizes these ratios and rankings:

**BUSINESSES IN ART, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION
RATIO OF POPULATION TO ESTABLISHMENTS, 2007**

Rank	Communities	Establishments	Residents per Establishment
1	Lincoln, MO	17	3,025
2	Nelson, KY	14	3,029
3	Robertson, TN	20	3,158
4	Sampson, NC	16	3,960
5	Caroline, MD	7	4,685
6	Bedford, TN	9	4,873
7	Dickson, TN	9	5,260
8	Morgan, IN	13	5,366
9	Gordon, GA	9	5,758
10	Franklin, NC	9	6,339
-	United States	125,222	2,406

Source: Merchant Community Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns data

Additional data shows that in Robertson County a little more than \$100 is spent annually per capita in the local art, entertainment, and recreation sector, whereas the corresponding national figure totals \$493 per capita (latest figures are from 2002 data). The smaller ratio may be influenced by the county's proximity to Nashville, which has significant cultural amenities, including professional sports. However, the ratio may also reflect opportunities in filling the need for entertaining, cultural, and leisurely activities in the local community.

Wages, Income, and Poverty

The average wage per job in Robertson County, at \$30,584, is roughly 70 percent the national average wage of \$43,889. While this may seem to be a stark contrast, the county average wage falls amid the averages of other peer counties. The table below illustrates:

AVERAGE WAGE PER JOB, 2007

Rank	Communities	Average Wages	Percent of U.S.
1	Franklin, NC	\$33,623	76.6%
2	Nelson, KY	32,649	74.4%
3	Gordon, GA	31,969	72.8%
4	Bedford, TN	31,253	71.2%
5	Dickson, TN	31,059	70.8%
6	Caroline, MD	30,970	70.6%
7	Robertson, TN	30,584	69.7%
8	Lincoln, MO	30,407	69.3%
9	Morgan, IN	30,224	68.9%
10	Sampson, NC	30,187	68.8%
-	United States	43,889	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Merchant Community Analysis

The statistics indicate that Robertson County has not kept up with other peer counties in growth of average wages. Over the five years from 2002 to 2007, wage growth was under 17 percent, while average wages nationally grew by more than 21 percent. Only the two peer counties in North Carolina exceeded national average wage growth. Robertson County ended 2007 lagging last among peer counties in five-year wage growth, as shown in the following table:

AVERAGE WAGE GROWTH FIVE-YEAR CHANGE, 2002 - 2007

Rank	Communities	2007	2002	Change	Percent Change
1	Sampson, NC	\$30,187	\$24,035	\$6,152	25.6%
2	Franklin, NC	33,623	27,007	6,616	24.5%
3	Caroline, MD	30,970	25,536	5,434	21.3%
4	Bedford, TN	31,253	25,797	5,456	21.1%
5	Lincoln, MO	30,407	25,373	5,034	19.8%
6	Nelson, KY	32,649	27,424	5,225	19.1%
7	Dickson, TN	31,059	26,345	4,714	17.9%
8	Gordon, GA	31,969	27,136	4,833	17.8%
9	Morgan, IN	30,224	25,828	4,396	17.0%
10	Robertson, TN	30,584	26,190	4,394	16.8%
-	United States	43,889	36,150	7,739	21.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Merchant Community Analysis

As mentioned earlier in this study, research shows that greater educational attainment translates into higher earnings for workers. In order to create jobs in the county that pay higher wages, it may be necessary to have a more highly

educated workforce. Having higher educational attainment would likely make the community look more attractive to expanding industries that could create higher paying jobs.

As average wages lag in Robertson County, per capita personal income ranks 2nd highest among peer communities; only the bedroom peer county outside Indianapolis ranks higher. While it may seem ironic that Robertson County ranks high among peers in per capita income, but lags in average wages, the logical explanation for this inconsistency may be due to Robertson County's bedroom community position outside Nashville. Per capita personal income figures with the calculated percent of United States income figure are shown in the next table:

PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME, 2007

Rank	Communities	PCPI	Percent of U.S.
1	Morgan, IN	\$33,234	86.1%
2	Robertson, TN	30,829	79.8%
3	Nelson, KY	29,236	75.7%
4	Dickson, TN	28,658	74.2%
5	Bedford, TN	28,281	73.2%
6	Franklin, NC	27,685	71.7%
7	Caroline, MD	27,452	71.1%
8	Lincoln, MO	26,572	68.8%
9	Sampson, NC	26,553	68.8%
10	Gordon, GA	25,978	67.3%
-	United States	38,615	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Merchant Community Analysis

It was stated earlier in this report that about 41 percent of the commuting workforce in Robertson County commutes to Nashville-Davidson County for work. Average wages in Nashville were \$ 45,076 in 2007, which is 47 percent higher than the average Robertson County wage. Given these statistics, it is evident that the residents who work in Nashville have higher average earnings; these, in turn, help to bolster the county's overall income.

From 2002 to 2007, average wages in Robertson County grew by some \$4,400. Per capita income, on the other hand, grew by nearly \$5,400, growing at a rate more than 21 percent. The national growth rate exceeded 25 percent over this same time period. Only one peer county exceeded the nation's per capita income growth rate from 2002 to 2007; however, none attained the nation's average growth in actual dollar amount. The changes in per capita personal income and rankings are summarized in the following table:

**PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME GROWTH
FIVE-YEAR CHANGE, 2002 - 2007**

Rank	Communities	2007	2002	Change	Percent Change
1	Sampson, NC	26,553	20,804	5,749	27.6%
2	Dickson, TN	28,658	23,117	5,541	24.0%
3	Morgan, IN	33,234	27,355	5,879	21.5%
4	Caroline, MD	27,452	22,635	4,817	21.3%
5	Robertson, TN	30,829	25,449	5,380	21.1%
6	Bedford, TN	28,281	23,485	4,796	20.4%
7	Lincoln, MO	26,572	22,957	3,615	15.7%
8	Gordon, GA	25,978	22,649	3,329	14.7%
9	Franklin, NC	27,685	24,146	3,539	14.7%
10	Nelson, KY	29,236	25,560	3,676	14.4%
-	United States	38,615	30,838	7,777	25.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Merchant Community Analysis

Even though Robertson County has seen its share of growth in both wages and income, it still faces the challenge of having some 12 percent of its residents living in poverty. While this percentage is below the national rate of 13 percent, as well as below many of its peer counties, the unfortunate reality is that more than 7,000 residents are living in poverty within the county.

Helping residents who currently live in poverty to find jobs that pay sufficient wages may be a question of helping to increase their educational attainment. Using education as a tool to both secure employment opportunities and foster wage growth may be a key to alleviating poverty in the county. The latest county figures from the Census Bureau are presented in the final table of this assessment:

RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY, 2007

Rank	Communities	Number	Percent
1	Morgan, IN	6,023	8.7%
2	Lincoln, MO	4,768	9.4%
3	Nelson, KY	4,729	11.3%
4	Robertson, TN	7,251	11.6%
5	Caroline, MD	3,789	11.7%
6	Dickson, TN	5,804	12.4%
7	Franklin, NC	7,818	14.0%
8	Gordon, GA	7,340	14.3%
9	Bedford, TN	7,677	17.7%
10	Sampson, NC	12,974	20.6%
-	United States	38,052,247	13.0%

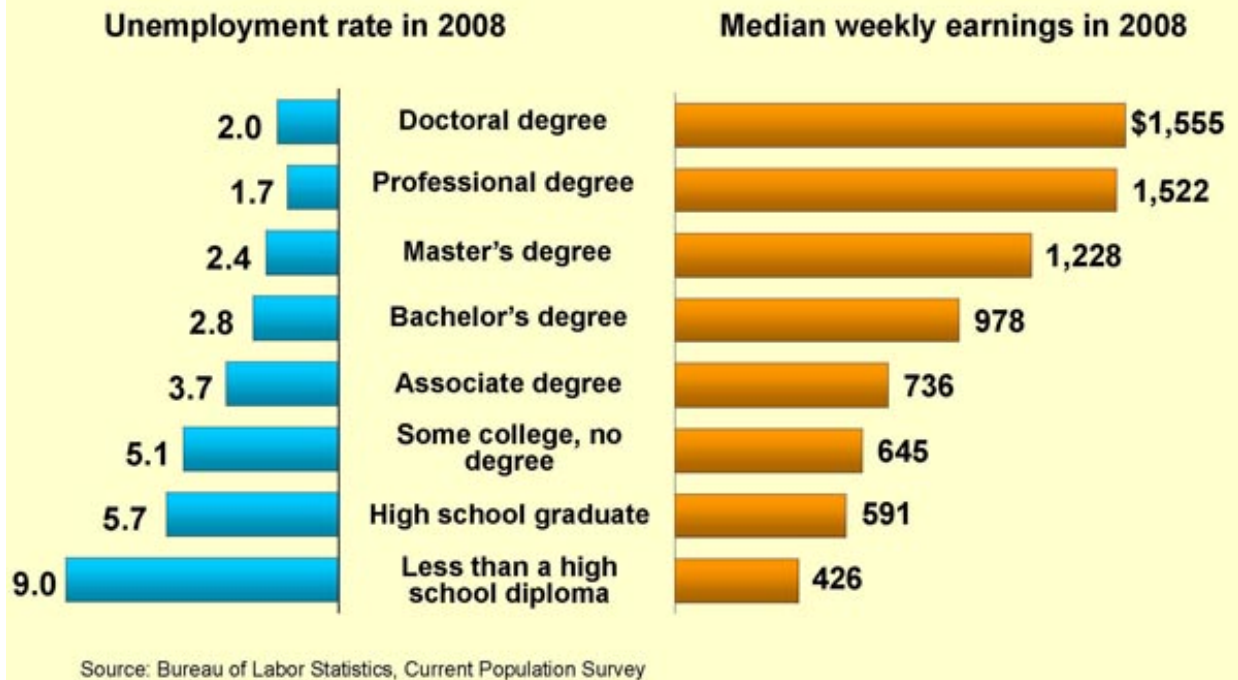
Source: Merchant Community Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau data

Conclusion

Robertson County is poised for future growth, based on its historical population growth and job growth. Robust growth will bring with it continued challenges as well as new opportunities.

Of all the figures considered in this study, higher educational attainment is indispensable to county residents holding jobs and being paid sufficiently, as illustrated in the following graph from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Education pays



An added benefit of increased educational attainment is that it directly translates into greater productivity, which, theoretically, would benefit the local economy. Greater productivity should translate into greater pay, as well as potentially attracting industries that pay higher wages.

In short, increasing the educational attainment should lead to better jobs, better wages, higher incomes, and greater opportunities for the residents of Robertson County.

Top 50 Peer Counties Generator

Select County: Robertson, TN



<u>Rank</u>	<u>FIPS</u>	<u>Peer Counties Based on Analysis:</u>	<u>Most Similar Statistic:</u>
1	47043	Dickson, TN	Number of Proprietors
2	47003	Bedford, TN	Percentage of Children
3	21179	Nelson, KY	Percentage of Seniors
4	37069	Franklin, NC	Dividends, Interest, & Rent Income
5	18109	Morgan, IN	Government Employment
6	29113	Lincoln, MO	Available Labor
7	13129	Gordon, GA	Available Labor
8	24011	Caroline, MD	Education: High School or more
9	37163	Sampson, NC	Population
10	1115	St. Clair, AL	Poverty
11	45055	Kershaw, SC	Available Labor
12	13157	Jackson, GA	Percentage of Seniors
13	47031	Coffee, TN	Property Taxes
14	39015	Brown, OH	Education: High School or more
15	47021	Cheatham, TN	Population Density
16	5085	Lonoke, AR	Population
17	29145	Newton, MO	Farm Employment
18	47167	Tipton, TN	Percentage of Seniors
19	39071	Highland, OH	Property Taxes
20	48021	Bastrop, TX	Percentage of Seniors
21	29159	Pettis, MO	Government Employment
22	48291	Liberty, TX	Percentage of Seniors
23	18071	Jackson, IN	Number of Jobs
24	50011	Franklin, VT	Percentage of Seniors
25	48199	Hardin, TX	Institutionalized Population
26	13047	Catoosa, GA	Population
27	18061	Harrison, IN	Per Capita Income
28	21029	Bullitt, KY	Population Growth
29	1051	Elmore, AL	Manufacturing Firms
30	37109	Lincoln, NC	Population Growth
31	26027	Cass, MI	Per Capita Income
32	21113	Jessamine, KY	Manufacturing Firms
33	37061	Duplin, NC	Government Employment
34	13297	Walton, GA	Institutionalized Population
35	47073	Hawkins, TN	Dividends, Interest, & Rent Income
36	40037	Creek, OK	Number of Jobs
37	48349	Navarro, TX	Government Employment
38	5033	Crawford, AR	Percentage of Children
39	18145	Shelby, IN	Number of Jobs
40	39107	Mercer, OH	Average Wages
41	21211	Shelby, KY	Farm Employment
42	28109	Pearl River, MS	Government Employment
43	39147	Seneca, OH	Available Labor
44	42109	Snyder, PA	Manufacturing Firms
45	29037	Cass, MO	Percentage of Children
46	48257	Kaufman, TX	Population Density
47	29009	Barry, MO	Farm Employment
48	39037	Darke, OH	Average Wages
49	21049	Clark, KY	Population Density
50	29201	Scott, MO	Manufacturing Firms