

The majority of the county falls within the Coastal Plain Region. This topographical boundary begins at the bluffs and is characterized by level areas with only rolling hills and wide stream valleys. The Alluvial Plains are between the River's edge and the bluffs. This slim strip of land is below 300 feet above sea level and, when well drained, is utilized predominantly as farmland due to its rich soil. The lowest areas in the plains form small lakes and marshy swamps that, combined with the hot and humid climate, make prime breeding territories for insects.

Shelby is surrounded by Tipton and Fayette counties in Tennessee, as well as Desoto County, Mississippi, to the south and Crittenden County, Arkansas, to the west. These political boundaries hold little distinction through the course of everyday life for their citizens. Known as the "tri-state area", the counties are so integrated that the region serves as a metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Memphis serves as a commercial, distribution and health services center.

## E c o n o m i c B a s e

---

Shelby County enjoys a strong economic base with a healthy mix of commerce, industry and agriculture. Well-known as the "Distribution Center of America," Memphis' wide variety of intermodal transportation capabilities make it a prime location for a number of large businesses. The area is conveniently located at the intersection of interstates 55 and 40 and allows easy access to seven U S and 15 state highways. Two railway companies and more than 200 motor freight companies are located in the area. The international airport accommodates over 260 flights daily, carrying both passengers and freight. Additionally, the Mississippi River port in Memphis is situated on a nine-foot deep channel that provides a navigable waterway for barges traveling a north-south route.

With over 440,000 persons in the local labor force, both the county and the city boast a 3.7% unemployment rate. Some of the area's largest corporate employers include FedEx, Northwest Airlines, Baptist Memorial Hospital, Methodist Hospital, The Regional Medical Center (The MED), Cleo Inc., Kroger and First Tennessee Bank. Seven institutions of higher learning and over 200 elementary and secondary schools located within the county support and train the growing local workforce.

## D e m o g r a p h i c s

---

The demographics of the area are best represented in a comparison of the county, the City of Memphis and the MSA populations. (See Table II-A below for detailed demographic information.)

The region's demographic characteristics show a variety of important issues facing the local citizens. Although growth throughout the MSA has been impressive during recent years, the City's population has been in decline. Shelby County is expected to have over 943,000 citizens by 2010.