

Why energy matters more than ever in modern manufacturing

By Sam Howard

Location, transportation, and logistics form the physical framework of economic opportunity. But even the best-situated community cannot compete for modern industry without one additional element: dependable energy. In today's manufacturing environment, power is not simply a utility. It is a prerequisite. For much of the twentieth century, energy was treated as a background consideration. Factories were labor-intensive, machinery was relatively simple, and power demands were predictable. Kentucky's low energy cost was an advantage. If electricity was available and reasonably priced, production could proceed. That assumption no longer holds. Modern manufacturing relies heavily on automa-

tion, robotics, advanced controls, and digital monitoring systems. These technologies improve efficiency and product quality, but they also increase dependence on uninterrupted power. Even brief disruptions can halt production lines, damage equipment, and create costly delays. For manufacturers, reliability is not a convenience; it is an operational requirement. Energy costs matter just as much. While automation has reduced the importance of low-wage labor, it has elevated the role of fixed operating expenses. Electricity is now one of the most closely scrutinized line items in a facility's long-term budget. Companies evaluating potential sites examine not only current rates, but also the stability, reliability, and predictability of those

costs over time. Communities that cannot offer confidence in future energy affordability are often eliminated early in the site-selection process. Energy demand is also increasing, rapidly. The cost of providing power is driven by more than generation alone. In Eastern Kentucky, declining population and aging energy infrastructure add pressure to already strained systems. Transmission costs for delivering electricity through the national grid are set by federal regulatory agencies outside Kentucky's control, further complicating long-term planning. Kentucky has long benefited from a reputation for dependable and affordable power. That reputation helped attract industries that provided stable employment across generations. Over time, however, changes in regulation, infrastructure, and generation have altered the energy landscape. The gap between regions that are energy-ready and those that are not has widened. Closing that gap is essential to remaining competitive. Energy readiness does not imply a single source or a one-size-fits-all solu-



tion. Instead, it refers to a system that can scale with growth, withstand disruption, and meet both industrial and residential needs. Manufacturers look for redundancy, capacity, and a clear plan for future demand. Households and small businesses depend on affordability and consistency. Both require thoughtful, long-term planning. As communities consider where to locate production in an era of reshoring and supply-chain realignment, energy is often one of the first questions asked, and rarely the last. Communities with strong transportation networks but uncertain power infrastructure face a significant barrier. Those that can demonstrate reliability and foresight gain a competitive edge. That distinc-

ence in the building and infrastructure sectors. He serves as Chief Executive Officer of Trace Creek Construction, Inc., where he oversees company operations, financial management, and long-term strategy. The firm specializes in design-build construction, construction management, and pre-engineered building systems, with completed projects across the public and private sectors, including schools, hospitals, churches, judicial facilities, detention centers, and industrial developments. Howard also serves as Managing Member and Economic Development Manager for Northeast Kentucky Development, where he works to attract new and expanding industries to the region. In that role, he is directly involved in project development, site promotion, and financing strategies, including design-build leaseback models. His work brings him into regular collaboration with local and state officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders. Howard's focus is on job creation, infrastructure development, and strengthening the long-term economic vitality and quality of life in Northeast Kentucky.

Editor's Note
This column is the third part of a guest series authored by Sam Howard and published by THE LEWIS COUNTY HERALD to encourage thoughtful discussion about Lewis County's future. Howard is the primary author of the series; I am serving as editor and host, working with him on clarity and presentation for HERALD readers. While we have been lifelong friends, this series appears because of his professional experience in construction and economic development and his interest in Lewis County's progress. The views expressed are those of the author, and readers are encouraged to engage with these topics as the series continues.
- Dennis Brown

Commandments back at Capitol

By Kevin Grout

Attorney General Russell Coleman celebrated the return of an historic Ten Commandments monument to the Kentucky Capitol grounds. The monument, which was originally displayed at the Capitol in 1971, honors the immense historical significance of the Ten Commandments to the founding of the Commonwealth and the nation. "The Ten Commandments are at the heart of America's history and founding, so it is only right that they also sit at the heart of our Commonwealth's Capitol grounds," said Attorney General Coleman. "After several decades, we have returned this monument to its proper place, and I'm grateful to Representative Baker and the entire

General Assembly for taking this important step to uphold our history. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our Solicitor General Matt Kuhn for not only locating this monument but also for working for years to bring it back to Frankfort." Last February, Attorney General Coleman published a formal Attorney General's Opinion, which found that the Ten Commandments could be displayed in public school classrooms and the Capitol grounds without violating the First Amendment. Following the Opinion, the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 15, sponsored by Representative Shane Baker (R-Somerset), to move the monument back to the Capitol grounds. "I am pleased to see this

historic Ten Commandments monument returned to its rightful place," said Rep. Baker. "The Ten Commandments have widely recognized historical significance in the history of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the nation. This monument is part of an old tradition of public monuments and displays that acknowledge the Ten Commandments' role in our heritage." In 2000, the ACLU sued to prevent the continued display of the Ten Commandments at the Capitol. In granting the motion, the judge relied on a now-defunct rule called the "Lemon test." The US Supreme Court overturned that standard in 2022 paving the way for the monument's return. In December 2024, Attorney General Coleman led an 18-state coalition to support a Louisiana law allowing for Ten Commandments displays in public classrooms. The law would require a three-paragraph "context statement" to be part of every display, which provides examples of the Ten Commandments being "a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries."

GARBAGE

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lowed and may result in enforcement action. Residents experiencing repeated issues are encouraged to report them so the matter can be addressed. Haulers are required by the ordinance to report their list of customers to the county quarterly. Illegal dumping also remains a concern. County leaders say mandatory collection was designed in part to eliminate excuses for dumping trash along roads, in wooded areas, or on vacant property. Violations of the ordinance can result in citations and fines, with each day of noncompliance considered a separate offense. While participation in garbage pickup is required, the ordinance does allow for limited exemptions. Residents may apply for an exemption by providing proof that they legally dispose of their household waste at a permitted landfill or by demonstrating that they recycle all household waste, subject to review by the county's solid waste coordinator. Officials emphasize that the ordinance applies to all households and busi-

nesses, regardless of location, and that permitted haulers are required to provide at least weekly residential collection. Current permitted haulers are Lawhun Sanitation, SET Sanitation, and AK Sanitation. Long-time service provider Rick Kamer retired at the end of 2025. County leaders say the goal is not punishment, but fairness and cleanliness. "Mandatory garbage pickup helps keep Lewis County clean and protects everyone's quality of life," said Solid Waste Coordinator Roger Lewis, adding that cooperation from residents is essential to making the system work as intended. Residents with questions about garbage service, billing, or compliance may contact Lewis for additional information at roger.lewis@lewiscountky.gov or 606-796-0624. To see a PDF of the original county ordinance (2003-008), follow the QR code or visit: <https://lewiscountyherald.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Trash-pickup-ordinance.pdf>



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JANUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	2 STORY HOUR 10:30AM	3
4 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	5 DUCKORATING COMPETITION (ALL WEEK)	6 NESCO JOB FAIR 11AM-3:30PM	7	8 HELEN'S BOOK CLUB 6:00PM	9 STORY HOUR 10:30AM	10
11 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	12 DUCKS DUE	13 DUCKORATING COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED	14	15	16 STORY HOUR 10:30AM	17
18 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	19 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	20 LEGO CLUB 3-5PM	21	22	23 STORY HOUR 10:30AM	24 PUZZLE RACES! 10:00AM
25 *LIBRARY CLOSED*	26 BOOK BOX PICKUP	27 BOOK BOX PICKUP	28	29 WATERLESS SNOWGLOBE CRAFT (ALL DAY)	30 STORY HOUR 10:30AM	31

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