



## State of the City Address 2024

Greetings and thank you for joining the 2024 State of the City presentation.

It's always my honor to share this update with you. Today we celebrate our accomplishments, and look forward to future victories, while acknowledging the opportunities before us.

Over the past two decades, the City of Rogers has witnessed incredible growth and transformation. Rogers continues to thrive as a center of opportunity and community spirit. In the next few minutes, we'll discuss the important milestones we've reached, the initiatives that are in place to embrace the growth in the region, and the investments we've made to improve the quality of life here.

Let's begin with some impressive statistics that showcase the economic vitality of Rogers. In 2023, the city collected \$29 million from the 1 cent sales tax, marking an outstanding 8% growth over the previous year. This financial success demonstrates that Rogers continues to be a regional center for economic activity. I am proud of my home town and what is becoming.

One of the most rewarding aspects of our thriving economy is the creation of jobs. From January to November of last year, Rogers saw the creation of almost 1,500 new jobs. This not only strengthens our local workforce but also contributes to the overall prosperity and well-being of our residents. Our city's unemployment rate stands at just 2%, making it the lowest in the state.

Rogers has experienced continued growth in building and development, with 56 large-scale projects passing through the Planning Commission last year. These developments encompassed over 1500 dwelling units as well as commercial spaces. The city issued over 5,000 building permits in 2023. Currently, over 100 large-scale projects are under construction across Rogers. The estimated value of all of these developments is around \$900 million.

Capital investment in downtown Rogers continues to grow, totaling \$105 million since 2016. We are approaching a 208% increase in multi-family housing in downtown over the past 7 years. These are indicators that downtown is continuing to develop into a walkable hub of culture and commerce.

The Pinnacle Springs mixed use project is well under way near New Hope Road and Promenade Boulevard. This development will be anchored by a Whole Foods and contain 350 living units. The community welcomes additional grocery options and the mixed use fits well with this part of Rogers.

Solidifying its position as one of the leading cancer care providers in the nation, Highlands Oncology purchased 51 acres off of I-49 and Bellview Road for a groundbreaking destination medical campus, offering unparalleled access to innovative treatments here in Rogers. While this is in the early stages, I am excited to see this campus become a reality.

Another addition on the horizon is that professional sports are coming to Rogers. The United Soccer League has plans for a stadium next to the Promenade Mall. The goal is to begin play in 2026.

Developers, homeowners, and residents alike have appreciated the launch of a new licensing, permitting and concern reporting software in 2023. Since the portal launched in early October, almost 2700 permits have been created and over 300 code violations have been addressed. These tools are available on our website, [rogersar.gov](http://rogersar.gov), to easily conduct business with Rogers.

As we celebrate these successes, it's essential to recognize the vision and planning that go into sustaining our city's growth. Rogers is committed to embracing its future with forward-thinking initiatives. A revised Comprehensive Growth Plan is being developed to guide the process. This plan will serve as a blueprint for sustainable development, ensuring that our city continues to thrive while preserving its unique character. It is a commitment to the thoughtful stewardship of our city, focusing on key factors including land use, transportation, and stormwater management.

Our Community Development department has been at the forefront of this process. In 2023, they took steps to revise key planning documents, including the proposed future land use map, master street plan, and unified development code.

This comprehensive revision considered feedback from our residents, including nearly 50 local developers, guaranteeing that these foundational documents will truly reflect the values of our community. As we look ahead to 2024, these tools are set to undergo approval and adoption. They will serve as a strategic guide, directing the city's growth in a manner that is both sustainable and in harmony with the community's aspirations.

In addition to these planning successes, the physical landscape of Rogers has seen some notable improvements. With the addition of almost \$3.5 million in grant funds last year, the city is in the process of making multiple intersection improvements, adding miles of sidewalk, and completing a full renovation of Victory Theater, among other achievements.

The construction of two new overpasses enhances connectivity in Rogers, making it easier for residents to navigate the city. The Uptown Overpass, which opened its lanes in late 2023, connects Mercy Hospital to the Walmart AMP in the Pinnacle Hills area. Already, residents are reaping the benefits of improved traffic flow and accessibility. A second overpass at Oak St. will be opening in early 2024.

In May 2023, we proudly opened the doors to Mt. Hebron Park, a newly built 80-acre park and community center in southwest Rogers. This addition offers a range of recreational opportunities for individuals and families. In 2023, Mt. Hebron Park was awarded the Outdoor Facility of the Year award from the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association. Among the many features, it boasts the largest inclusive playground in Arkansas which caters to children and parents of all abilities.

On the other side of town, a rejuvenation of Northwest Park is currently underway. Scheduled to open later this year, this park's transformation promises to enhance its amenities and create an even more inviting space for our community to gather and play. The new design will offer eight fully turfed fields for baseball and softball.

Our Rogers Aquatics Center continues to make a splash. In 2023, it registered the second-highest yearly attendance since its opening a decade ago. This recreational amenity has become a favorite among residents, offering a refreshing escape during the warmer months and fostering a sense of community

through water-based activities. Almost 94,000 attendees visited the park last season.

The trail network in Rogers has seen a remarkable increase in usage, with trail counts up by an impressive 28%. As we continue to invest in the expansion and maintenance of our trails, we're proud to announce that Rogers boasts over 78 miles of trails. These trails not only promote physical well-being but also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and connectivity for commuters.

The holiday season in downtown Rogers was truly illuminated this year, thanks to the Parks Department's remarkable efforts in adorning the area with around 225,000 lights. This festive display required 240 man-hours of dedication, creating a magical atmosphere for all to enjoy. I personally appreciate the effort of this team to make Christmas special in downtown each year.

Speaking of Christmas, the annual Rogers Christmas Parade continues to enchant the community, with another successful year featuring over 100 floats. Adding to the festive spirit, the Christmas Village was introduced, creating a robust experience for attendees. This celebration has long been a cherished tradition, bringing the community together to kick off the holiday season with joy and Christmas spirit.

The Bikes, Blues and BBQ motorcycle rally filled Rogers again in 2023. With a regional attendance of over 275,000 people in 2023, it continues to show that it is a significant event that draws enthusiasts from far and wide. This cultural highlight is a major draw for our region and significantly contributes to tourism and the economy.

In 2023, the Walmart AMP had another remarkable season, solidifying its status as a premier entertainment venue. This season was the largest ever, featuring a lineup of 41 shows and events. I am personally amazed with the ever changing and impressive lineup.

The impact of the Walmart AMP's 2023 season was felt throughout the community, with an overall attendance of over 318,000 people. Notably, 16 shows saw attendance surpassing 10,000 tickets sold. As a cultural beacon in Rogers, the Walmart AMP not only provides world-class entertainment but also

contributes to the economic vitality of our city by attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

The Walmart NWA Championship LPGA tournament, now in its 17th year, has become a staple in the Rogers community. Over the years it has continued to grow, adding the Bite NWA food tasting event and 5K. Its success is proof of our city's ability to host and support major sporting events.

In recent years, Arts and Culture for the city of Rogers has become a growing part of our community's progress. Railyard Live, our outdoor live music venue, recently concluded its third season with resounding success, boasting a record attendance of over 31,000 people. The venue was recognized as Runner Up for Best Live Music Venue from CitiScapes Magazine. Railyard Live brought continued growth to downtown Rogers, with more concerts, a larger attendance, a broader range of artists, and even more opportunities for local talent. With the support of a Walton Family Foundation grant, we were also able to expand musical offerings to include national touring artists for accessible ticket prices.

We are pushing forward on the renovation of the Victory Theater. This historic venue is undergoing a transformation to become a center for larger musical acts and plays. The revitalization of this space not only preserves a piece of our city's history but also opens up new possibilities for entertainment. A new website has been created for this venue, [TheVictoryTheater.com](http://TheVictoryTheater.com), and programming will begin in March. I invite you to explore the website and stay up to date with upcoming shows. Tickets will sell out quickly to these popular events.

Our public safety is one of the many reasons that I am proud of our city. It is crucial that residents and visitors feel safe, and that they truly are safe.

In 2023, the Rogers Police Department addressed staffing challenges by initiating a digital recruiting strategy, along with a dedicated recruiting website. Recognizing the need to fill vacant positions with qualified individuals, this innovative approach leverages technology to attract a diverse pool of candidates. I am happy to say that Rogers Police Department hired 23 officers in 2023 and enters 2024 with only 3 openings.

Recognizing the hard work and dedication of our law enforcement officers, we applied a mid-year pay increase. When combined with our comprehensive benefits package, this makes officers with the Rogers Police Department the highest paid in Northwest Arkansas. This commitment to fair compensation not only attracts top talent, but also fosters a sense of pride among our dedicated officers.

In a significant move towards enhancing training capabilities, the Rogers Police Department invested in a virtual reality training system in 2023. The technology allows officers to immerse themselves in real-life scenarios, providing invaluable experience in a controlled and simulated environment. This addition to the training regimen ensures that our officers are well prepared to handle a variety of situations.

The Rogers Fire Department took significant steps to enhance emergency response capabilities. CPR devices were added to all ambulances and fire trucks, ensuring that first responders have the best tools to provide immediate and effective life-saving interventions.

Furthermore, RFD's self-contained breathing units got an update to current standards. This investment not only provides the best protection for our firefighters, but also enhances their effectiveness in responding to incidents that require respiratory protection.

Recognizing the unique challenges posed by potential exposure, the Rogers Fire Department welcomed an infection control officer in 2023. This role is integral in managing processes when firefighters are exposed, contributing to a proactive approach in safeguarding the health and well-being of our dedicated first responders.

As we discuss the accomplishments of other city departments, I want to take a moment to highlight some important contributors to helping city programs and facilities run. Volunteers play a vital role in the success of several key city institutions. Through their efforts, history is preserved, trails are cared for, and the well-being of our community members is maintained. In 2023, the cumulative impact of these volunteer efforts was extraordinary, with a total of almost 25,000 volunteer hours donated. Thank you to these individuals for their investment into the community.

In 2023, the Rogers Recycling Center achieved remarkable success in its mission to reduce waste and promote recycling practices. A total of 2030 tons of material were recycled, contributing significantly to the conservation of valuable space in our landfill. Moreover, the Recycling Center processed an impressive 27 tons of Styrofoam. These accomplishments reflect the collective dedication of our community to embrace eco-friendly habits and make a positive impact on our environment.

The Rogers Animal Shelter encountered significant challenges last year, yet the commitment to the well-being of animals remained unwavering. Despite the difficulties, the shelter achieved an impressive 93.8% live save rate. This statistic speaks volumes about the tireless efforts of the shelter's staff and the support of our community in providing care, love, and second chances to the animals under their guardianship.

In 2023, the Rogers Public Library experienced a remarkable 42% increase in visits. This surge in attendance reflects the library's ability to adapt to the evolving needs and interests of our residents, providing a welcoming space for all. Our library is not just a home of books; it's a hub of learning, exploration, and community connection.

Through almost 1000 interactive, creative, and enriching programs, Rogers Public Library engages the citizens of Rogers in a diverse range of experiences. In 2023, the library checked out nearly 245,000 items, showcasing the continued enthusiasm for reading and lifelong learning within our community.

The Rogers Historical Museum also had a large jump in visitors. Attendance increased 83% compared to 2022. This downtown fixture celebrates the past and educates the present, and I'm excited for the growth in engagement at this important institution.

In 2023, the Rogers Historical Museum was honored with two recognitions that point to its significance in the cultural landscape of Northwest Arkansas. It was chosen as the #1 museum in Northwest Arkansas in the Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

Additionally, the museum received the Gold Award for Gallery Installation for its "A Parade in Apple Blossoms" gallery from the Southeastern Museum Conference.

From fitness classes and wellness workshops to recreational activities and social gatherings, the Adult Wellness Center provides a holistic approach to wellness. Whether it's improving physical fitness, fostering social connections, or enhancing mental well-being, the center offers a supportive environment where members can thrive and pursue their wellness goals.

Throughout the year, over 195,000 visits were recorded at the Adult Wellness Center, reflecting the facility's popularity and the high level of participation among residents. This figure demonstrates the widespread utilization of the center as a valuable resource for individuals seeking to improve their health and quality of life.

Currently, the Adult Wellness Center boasts over 9,400 active members. These members benefit from a diverse array of offerings, with 750 monthly fitness, educational, and recreational classes and activities tailored to meet the diverse needs and interests of the membership base.

The Rogers Executive Airport's main focus remains on facilitating growth. The Airport has acquired pledges for many new hangar constructions in the new eastside expansion area. The first of several complexes were completed in 2023, and several more are set to begin building this spring. When completed, over 175,000 square feet of new hangar space is expected, representing a 60% increase in capacity.

While substantial effort was directed toward sustaining growth, the long-standing emphasis on operational and infrastructure excellence persisted. The Airport finished a large-scale taxiway and apron renovation project that covered 134,000 square yards of asphalt pavement. The Airport also completed design and secured FAA funding for three upcoming infrastructure improvements totaling upwards of \$2.7 million. All are necessary for safety and to sustain the airport's expansion.

As we look towards the horizon, the future of Rogers shines brightly with promise and potential. There's a wealth of accomplishments to take pride in, and even more opportunities lie ahead. It's truly an honor to serve as your Mayor, alongside our dedicated city staff, elected officials, and members of various boards and commissions.



Together, we are committed to upholding our tradition of delivering exceptional service to the people of Rogers. As we stand together, let's continue our collective efforts in making Rogers not just a place to reside, but a vibrant community where individuals and families can thrive.

With gratitude and optimism, let us forge ahead, making Rogers an even greater place to live, work, and raise a family. I pray for God's blessings not only for our beloved city but for the State of Arkansas and the United States of America.

Thank you, and let's journey forward together towards a bright and prosperous future for all.