

## State of the City 2017

Welcome. What a pleasure it is to have so many gathered to review and celebrate the accomplishments in the City of Rogers. All of us here would like to extend a special thank you to Chamber CEO Raymond Burns, his staff, and the Chamber Board of Directors for coordinating with the sponsors of the reception for this evening. I would also like to thank my Wife Lisa and our daughters, Emily and Haley.

Members of the Rogers City Council, Honorable City Attorney Andrew Hatfield, Honorable City Clerk Peggy David, Honorable Judge Chris Griffin, city directors, city employees, and my fellow citizens in attendance and online, it is my honor and privilege to present to you the State of the City.

This is my seventh State of the City Address, and each year I am amazed at the progress we've made as a community. This year was riddled with success, both in the public and private sector. Over 1,250 new jobs were created this year, pushing the unemployment rate in Rogers down from 3.2 to 2.6 percent. The U.S News and World Report ranked Northwest Arkansas #3 in the '2016 Best Places to Live' list. Rogers continues to see growth in sales tax revenue, with a 7% increase in 2016. While sales tax revenue was up, citizens will also get a break in property taxes in 2017, with a one mil reduction. Northwest Arkansas continues to show its economic prowess on the national stage, and Rogers is poised to standout in this region of excellence.

Since taking office in 2011, we have seen over 146 million dollars in public capital investment and over 1 billion dollars in private capital investment in our City. Since 2014, 60 million dollars have been invested downtown, a new downtown master plan was implemented in 2015.

Downtown Rogers is clearly moving into an exciting period of development, with “anchor” quality venues establishing a presence downtown. Improvements within the Industrial Planning District include a solid mix of quality of life improvements and industrial expansions. Thirty-one new businesses opened their doors in 2016, with twenty more slated to open in the first quarter of 2017.

These new businesses include restaurants, offices, educational facilities, apartments, and mixed-use developments and are predicted to bring 200 new jobs to the downtown area. Twenty-five historic buildings are under renovation, and the Chamber of Commerce has met with over 130 individuals and organizations concerning Downtown Rogers Development. A new Downtown Farmers Market opened in April, bringing fresh vegetables and a whirlwind of activity, and the Railyard Bike Park attracts over 1,000 cyclists a week to the historic bricks. Last year, Lake Atalanta Park was given back to the citizens of Rogers.

Lake Atalanta has been a staple in Rogers for generations, and over the years, the park that was loved by so many began to show its age. Thanks to a partnership with the Walton Family Foundation, this park was given a chance at new life. After nearly a decade of planning, the park was closed in July of 2015 for sixteen months of renovation. The park was re-opened in October with a jaw dropping transformation.

The footprint of the park was doubled to 236 acres. Four miles of hard surface trails were added along with bathroom facilities, playgrounds, and natural green spaces that make this park a destination for generations to come. It was an honor and a pleasure to see this park shine once again.

The thriving I-49 business corridor continued its sprawl, with new retail centers and restaurants opening their doors.

Looking at the overall state of affairs, it is easy to see why Rogers is the City 'Where Possible Lives', but now I'd like to spend a few minutes reviewing the individual accomplishments of all the City's departments.

The Community Development Department was established this year to combine city engineering and planning functions under a single director. John McCurdy was hired into the Director position in January. John has created three planning districts within the City of Rogers: Pinnacle, Downtown, and the Industrial District. This is in response to Rogers' continued growth over the past decade which has created the need to bring sharper focus to our planning approach.

Community Development, formerly called Planning and Transportation, built upon last year's success, and completed more work approved by voters in the 2011 bond issue. Construction on Pleasant Grove Road, Bellview Road North, Monte Ne Road South, Price Lane, 1st Street and Walnut Street at Lake Atalanta were finished last year. The year 2016 marked the opening of 6.8 miles of Greenway trails. In early 2017, we cut

the ribbon on the New Hope pedestrian bridge. This 1.2-million-dollar bridge was funded entirely by grants from the Federal Transportation Department and the Walton Family Foundation. These grants were just some of the over 6.2 million dollars in grants awarded to the City of Rogers from various agencies to better our transportation network in the City.

The Rogers Street Department never ceases to amaze with overlay work, drainage, and intersection improvements. Their reliable work keeps our streets in top condition and their quick response keeps the City running even in winter weather.

The Rogers Executive Airport had a very busy year. Fuel deliveries, a key benchmark of activity, were up 13% with several months exceeding 20% growth. Nine of twelve months marked 5-year highs.

While construction of an over 10,000 square foot apron was underway, the Airport was also busy completing the design phase for a major runway project. This \$6.6M project, funded from our partners at the Federal Aviation Administration, will be completed in 2017.

This year, the Parks and Recreation departments joined forces under the leadership of Jim White. Jim came to the city from the Rogers School District and his leadership has made Parks and Recreation as efficient as ever. The re-opening of Lake Atalanta, the City's largest park, highlighted the year.

6.8 new miles of trails opened in Rogers, and an average of over thirty-one thousand people enjoyed the trails in Rogers each month. Seven new participants joined the Adopt-A-Trail program,

and volunteers logged over two thousand hours of service last year, a 236 percent increase from 2015.

The Rogers Aquatics Center safely welcomed seventy-seven thousand visitors and offered a variety of programming such as: swim academy, team events, day camps, birthday parties, and after hours' corporate events.

The International Mountain Biking Association brought its World Summit to Northwest Arkansas in November, and Rogers was able to shine once again as the Railyard Bike Park played host to some of the world's best cyclists.

Countless tournaments, championships, and exhibition games were played in Rogers' Parks. From lacrosse to baseball, athletes of all ages came to Rogers drawing local and regional tournaments. Over 500 youth baseball teams played in Rogers, playing nearly one thousand games and booking over 1,300 hotel rooms.

For 2017, the Parks and Recreation Department will complete an entire loop around the city of hard surface trails, with the completion of the Northern Trail Loop, and is working to offer an interactive guide to City trails. The design process has begun on Aquatics Center improvements, plans for renovations to Northwest Park, and the new Mt. Hebron Park.

With a daily average of over 1,000 users and over 250,000 visits annually, the Adult Wellness Center continues to be one of the most widely used public facilities in the area. The Center celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2016, with a weeklong

celebration. The second annual health fair provided health education for over 700 people. Volunteer groups from local businesses, churches, youth groups, and the United Way provided support for a variety of projects.

The Adult Wellness Center continued to implement their long-term maintenance plan with the HVAC system replacement, re-surfacing of the lap pool, and adding new fitness equipment. With the ever-changing needs of our members, a variety of new classes and activities were added to the curriculum, with more expected in 2017. The Adult Wellness Center is a one of a kind facility in Northwest Arkansas and it's been a pleasure watching it thrive over the last decade.

The Rogers Historical Museum is preparing for a new home. The historic Hailey Ford building is being restored to its iconic brick facade and will serve as the main gallery for the museum. The staff worked with DeLeon and Primmer Architecture, through a Walton Family Foundation Design Excellence Grant, to develop the renovation plans and broke ground this year on the restoration project. The capital campaign is going strong and the public portion of fundraising will begin this summer.

While renovations were underway, the museum continued to share Rogers' History in new and unique ways serving over 116,000 people through exhibits, programs, and a new video series called 'Living History'.

The Rogers Recycling Center processed over 1,720 tons of recyclable material which saved valuable space in our landfill. In 2016, the City of Rogers Recycling Center partnered with the Benton County Solid Waste District and Benton County Environmental to open a Convenience Center for all Benton

County residents. Last year, over 1,000 tires, 2,200 pieces of furniture, 200 appliances, 2,500 pieces of electronics were collected, and over 700 people have used the facility to dispose of household hazardous waste.

In 2017, the Rogers Recycling Center will continue to expand their commercial collection services to allow more businesses the opportunity to recycle.

The Rogers Public Library had another busy year circulating over 400,000 items and welcoming over 225,000 visitors. Over the summer, the library expanded its reach by opening a mobile kiosk at the Rogers Activity Center. The kiosks offers an additional pick up and drop off location within walking distance to downtown. The library answered over 52,000 reference requests, and conducted nearly 1,000 programs with over 47,000 attendees. The library is one of the most visited in the State, and continues to be a pillar of our strong community.

The Rogers Police Department continues to set the standard for excellence in the state and around the country. The department earned its third overall accreditation from CALEA, an organization that has become the national benchmark for excellence in Law Enforcement.

Rogers Police continued their outreach programs, working to embrace our minority communities through open forums, group discussions, and recruitment efforts. RPD hosted the 3rd Annual Rogers Night Out in conjunction with the Fire Department, several non-profits, and corporate sponsors.

In September, RPD had the unique opportunity to pilot a partnership with the NWA Food Bank. Every patrol car was

equipped with a box of food with nearly a dozen meals, to give out when officers saw the need. This not only helped families, but also created an opportunity for positive interaction with law enforcement.

In the past year, Code Enforcement became a division of the Police Department, now called the Neighborhood Services Unit. This consolidation allows a more streamlined, concentrated approach to keeping our City clean.

RPD handled over 60,000 incidents, clearing over 93% of all reported crimes against people, more than double the national average. Rogers Central Dispatch answered nearly 27,000 emergency calls.

The Rogers Fire Department continues to set the “gold standard” for fire and emergency medical responses across the country. The department’s most significant achievement in 2016 was the reaccredited by the Commission on Public Safety Excellence. This improvement process ensures our firefighters are performing according to industry best practices and our citizens are well protected. The department first earned this honor in 2011 and this reaccreditation allows them to keep a dual-accredited status. This complements our City’s elite class 1 insurance rating (ISO).

With emergency medical incidents accounting for nearly 75% of the department’s call volume, it became imperative to create a career path for firefighter-paramedics. The new position of “Master-Paramedic/Firefighter” was created to allow Rogers to continue to recruit and retain the best emergency healthcare providers possible. This position was developed in large part to the research and contributions of the city’s human resources



department – a shining example of the inter-department teamwork within our city.

In 2017, an additional ambulance will be assigned to Fire Station 2. This “peak volume” ambulance is the first of its kind in the region. This type of solution is cost-effective and targeted to make a difference for our residents.

The department’s Risk Reduction Division has proven to be an overwhelming success. In 2015, an effort was made to co-locate and eventually consolidate the operations of the city’s Building Inspection Department into the Fire Prevention Division of the Fire Department. This new organizational unit was renamed and set forth to make development and construction in our city more accessible and streamlined. Rogers has set the bar on residential and commercial development for the past decade, and we recognize that in order for that to continue in this highly competitive region, we have to streamline our processes as much as possible. I’m happy to report that our consolidation effort has saved money through management practices and reduced turnaround time for inspection and plan review requests. The bottom line is this: It has never been better or safer to do business in Rogers.

2016 was a year of unprecedented success for the City of Rogers Animal Services. Over 1,400 animals were brought in last year and the shelter reported a 0 percent euthanasia rate for the first time in the department’s history. We hope to continue this success in 2017 with a system of progressive animal control, which this year answered over 4,500 calls for service, resulting in nearly 700 animals returned to their homes.

Utilizing a donation account which totals over \$300,000, Rogers Animal Services looks to begin major improvements to the living spaces for our four legged residents. Kennel improvements will be put into place to help reduce stress for the animals, thus enhancing their stay and increasing their chance of being adopted.

The IT Department continued to make important strides at City Hall, supporting all the other departments through a smooth network of communications and technology. Last year, IT deployed a new email archiving and retrieval system. They also completed the integration of Rogers Water Utilities into the City's network. This enables us to share resources such as: phone, Internet, GIS, and CityView applications. This will make business processes and communications more efficient and cost effective.

The Legal department brought in a new Senior Staff Attorney, Jennifer Waymack, this year. Jennifer is a Rogers' native and we are excited to have her. One of the biggest accomplishments this year was the complete overhaul of Chapter 14 of the City Code of Ordinances. These updates reflect contemporary planning and business practices to set clear, but fair, criteria for new development. These updates created a streamlined process for development, ensuring we have balanced growth in the coming years. In addition to Chapter 14, Legal revised several areas of other sections of the City's codes to clean up the language and reduce unnecessary regulations.

The legal department worked closely with the Neighborhood Services Unit to address unsightly and unsanitary conditions. They also worked with Risk Reduction to address dilapidated properties, and helped other city departments process FOIA requests thoroughly. This year, the department plans to

implement changes from the 2017 Legislative Session and create a user friendly process for Special Event Permitting.

This year, we made a concerted effort to better communicate with our citizens. We brought in Ben Cline to serve as our Public Relations Specialist, in order to reach our citizens in new ways. We have increased our social media presence and we are working to engage and inform the public on everything that is happening in Rogers. In 2017, we're looking to move into live broadcasts, re-design our website, and continue to tell the story of our City and the people who live here.

There is so much to be proud of in the City of Rogers and so much to look forward to. It is my distinct pleasure to serve as your Mayor. On behalf of the city staff, elected officials, members of the various boards and commissions, and my office, we look forward to continuing to provide unmatched service to the people of Rogers.

May God continue to bless the City of Rogers, State of Arkansas, and the United States of America.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Hines

