

2019 State of the City Address

Good evening. I am honored to have so many gathered to look back and celebrate another year of progress in 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 two Daughters, Emily and Haley.

Members of the Rogers City Council, City Attorney, City Clerk, Judge, city directors, city employees, and my fellow citizens in attendance here and online, it is my honor and privilege to present to you the State of the City.

Welcome to another celebration for Rogers: “Where Possible Lives.” Each year, this motto becomes more and more engrained in the fabric of our City. Since taking office in 2011, I have seen the city grow by leaps and bounds. Each year, we look back at our accomplishments and wonder how can we possibly improve? Each year, we are humbled by the next.

It is getting harder to keep track of the accolades and milestones our hometown has achieved over the past year. So, strictly to eliminate confusion, and not to unabashedly brag on our city; I will recap those now: Rogers was ranked the 14th Best place to live in 2018 by Time/Money Magazine. The U.S News and World Report ranked Northwest Arkansas #5 among the 2019 Best Places to Live list. Forbes ranked Northwest Arkansas the 2nd best mid-sized City for Jobs in 2018.

More than 1100 jobs were created in the city through November of 2018 and the unemployment rate in Rogers is currently at 2.5%, the lowest in Northwest Arkansas. We continue to see growth in our sales tax revenue, with a 5 percent increase in 2018. Through common sense budgeting and a booming economy, Rogers' reserve fund has more than doubled since 2011. We were even able to lower property tax rates for Rogers citizens twice in the same time period.

2018 will be defined as the year that Rogers took the next step. Together, we passed a 300-million-dollar bond issue for improvements in our city. At the same time, millions of dollars in private investment came pouring into our community. We're at another precipice of explosive growth in Rogers and I believe we will look back after years of success and pinpoint the 2018 bond election as where it all began.

Uptown Rogers continued to develop into the "Downtown of Northwest Arkansas" with companies like Top Golf, Duluth Trading Company, and Dave and Busters, just to name a few, locating here. The Walmart Amp Announced a 14-million-dollar expansion, and Hunt Ventures continues to move the city forward with the 100-million-dollar Pinnacle Heights development. These announcements are just the tip of the iceberg for this region of our City, and I'm excited about the next landmark announcement expected later this year.

Downtown Rogers continues to revitalize at an exciting rate. Thirty-nine new businesses opened their doors, with an additional 19 scheduled to do so in 2019. Ross Barney Architects and city staff are putting the finishing touches on the redesign of

Frisco Park. Thanks to a Walton Family Design Excellence Grant, Frisco Park is being completely redesigned to bring new life to our downtown district.

Ground will be broken for the new Railyard Park in 2019, bringing new spaces and development opportunities for our rapidly changing downtown. The city brought in nationally renowned street design expert, Jeff Speck, to take a look at parking in our downtown. The result was location of hundreds of potential new parking spots and recommendations to make our downtown more walkable and economically viable. We are looking forward to implementing these changes over the next year.

Looking at the overall state of affairs, it is easy to see why Rogers is the city “Where Possible Lives.” Now I’d like to spend a few minutes reviewing the individual accomplishments of the city’s departments.

The Rogers Police Department made important updates to its communication systems, increased staff, partnered with the Arkansas Department of Transportation, and created a new pilot program to reach youth in our city. Among the projects included in the 2018 bond issue is funding for a new communication system to support our public safety departments. The AWIN Radio system is a statewide, state-of-the-art, digital communications system that will accommodate our needs well into the future.

Across the country, Police Departments are finding it increasingly difficult to hire new officers and keep their departments fully staffed. I am proud to report that the Rogers Police Department increased staffing levels in 2018, filling all School Resource Officer positions and increasing personnel in the traffic unit. This latter action led to a 17 percent reduction in collisions at our most accident-prone intersections in the city.

In 2018, the Rogers Police Department partnered with the Arkansas Department of Transportation to add local streets to the online database, iDriveArkansas.com, allowing citizens to check the status of our streets during inclement weather. A total of 16 major roads have been added, and Rogers is one of two cities in the state to have this technology.

RPD also made new strides to reach out to the youth in our community. Following a similar program initiated in Houston, Texas, RPD founded the Youth Police Advisory Council. The Council is made up of students from all five high schools in our City and members are given an opportunity to meet with the Chief of Police and command staff to express concerns, share ideas, and foster stronger relationships with the youth in our community.

In 2018, RPD handled over 58,000 calls for service and cleared 93 percent of the reported crimes against persons, well above the national average. In 2019, the department will begin work on a new dispatch center, approved by voters in the 2018 bond issue. I look forward to another year of success for the Rogers Police Department.

The Rogers Fire Department will be making much needed improvements to its training facilities and constructing a new fire station in 2019. Fire Station #8 will be built on Pleasant Grove Road in Southwest Rogers, one of the fastest growing areas in the City. The station will provide critical support, and allow the Rogers Fire Department to keep its fast response times. Additional classroom space will be added to the Fire training Center and a new burn building will help train the firefighters for decades to come. RFD will also be adding five new fire-fighting apparatuses to its fleet, to begin

phasing out older vehicles. These improvements and additions will ensure Rogers continues to maintain its ISO 1 rating as well as national accreditation.

In collaboration with the Benton County Sheriff's Office, RFD has created a county-wide dive rescue program. The department secured over two million dollars in federal funding to hire twelve new firefighters and improved the alert system between the Rogers Executive Airport and city fire stations. Our fire chief, Tom Jenkins, served as the President of the International Fire Chiefs' Association during the past year. He traveled the world as the IAFC President, representing more than 11,000 fire departments. We are proud of our fire chief and glad to have him back home in Rogers.

The Rogers Executive Airport completed major improvements on its facilities and received national recognition in 2018. Thanks to continued support from the Federal Aviation Administration, the airport received a \$2.2M taxi-lane apron improvement in December. The new apron enhances the safety, utility, connectivity, and capacity of the airport. The airport's fixed base operator, Beaver Lake Aviation, received national recognition from FlightPlan.com in its annual Pilot Choice Awards for 2018. The Airport has added several newly based aircraft, and demand for hangar space remains strong.

The Rogers Public Library had another busy year in 2018, circulating over 375,000 items, serving over 200,000 visitors, and adding 3,000 new card members. The Library offered nearly 900 programs in and outside the library walls and increased STEAM programming for children and young adults. The digital footprint of the library continues to grow, with library staff preparing more than 20,000 student and teacher eCards for the Rogers School District.

Rogers Parks and Recreation spent 2018 welcoming thousands to our Aquatics Center, fields and trails, as well as finalizing the redesign of the Frisco and Northwest Parks. All while planning for the new Mount Hebron Park in West Rogers. The redesigned Frisco Park has the potential to capitalize on recent public space investments and help make downtown Rogers a regional destination. The project deployed a robust community outreach effort. Through a digital survey that collected more than 1,000 responses and public feedback events, the design team helped define the park's desired outcomes and objectives through the words of the community. The result is a series of plazas that can transform throughout the day, week, month, and year. These versatile and flexible spaces extend beyond the park into adjacent streets. We are excited to begin work on the park in 2019.

Design work is well underway for Mount Hebron Park. These designs will be driven by heavy community engagement and we hope to bring a new space that offers something for everyone. Mount Hebron park will include a massive playscape, that is accessible for children of all abilities. The city's staff has spent countless hours studying accessible parks across the country, to bring this unique space to our region.

Northwest Park is the oldest sports park in Rogers and needs an update. The conceptual design for the new park includes baseball fields, concessions, pavilions, an indoor batting cage, a playground, trails, and large grass lawns. The renovation will allow this cherished park to continue to serve the citizens of Rogers for decades to come. In addition to all of the above, the city's Aquatics Center welcomed more than 88,000 visitors last year. We are in the design phase for improvements to the Aquatics

Center, necessitated by its extensive use by not only the community, but the entire region.

2018 saw more than half a million visitors on our trail system while nearly four miles of new trail were added. Volunteerism was impressive in 2018, with more than 13,000 hours logged and five new adopt-a-trail organizations participating. In 2019, we anticipate completing designs and begin work on our park improvements, and continue to program first rate recreation activities for our citizens.

The Rogers Historical Museum was able to close out 2018 by cutting the ribbon on the renovated Hailey Building. This project was completed on time and under budget and included six new permanent exhibits for the community. The whole project was made possible by a Walton Family Design Excellence Grant, countless donors, DeLeon & Primmer, Nabholz, Hight Jackson, volunteers, and various other contractors and skilled workers. The education space was expanded with a new children's gallery and more classroom and research library space. During construction, RHM's educators remained engaged in the community, teaching various programs to more than 17,000 children and hosting successful Ghost Walks, Model Train Shows, and a Family Day. The Museum will be welcoming its first field trip in February and I look forward to this building serving Rogers for generations to come.

The Rogers Recycling Center recycled more than 1,900 tons of glass, plastic and paper, saving valuable space and extending the life of our landfill. The Recycling Center's Event Recycling Program was used for 21 different events in 2018, some with more than 1,000 persons in attendance. This free service helped some of these events

generate virtually zero waste. In the next year, the Recycling Center will partner with the Benton County Solid Waste District to expand services to our residents and others in the community and find new opportunities to re-use our resources.

As our City grows, our Community Development Department has adapted to meet the needs. A citywide infrastructure study was completed in preparation for the bond issue, to ensure that the projects would have the largest impact on our community. While planning for future projects, construction continued and the Monte Ne Road improvements were completed in 2018. This drastically improved the flow of traffic while providing development opportunities for Downtown Rogers.

The comprehensive growth map for the city was updated last year, establishing a citywide growth management system and a framework for Uptown Rogers. Efficiency in the department took a leap forward in 2018, with improvements across the board. Digital signing was introduced to expedite contracts, GIS was updated to include added layers for public hearings, and the CityView portal was launched, allowing all planning applications and development projects to be submitted online. The planning side of the department was moved downstairs at city hall to better accommodate citizens. All current street projects can now be accessed online and are kept current through-out construction. These improvements and others earned the department an Arkansas Digital Government Transformation award for efficiency. The department processed 45 large scale projects and 53 rezonings, each with a staff report to the Planning Commission and City Council to assist in decision making. Many

employees in the department furthered their education, with new urbanism, project management, and flood plain certifications.

Next year's goals include developing an engineering manual with code updates, completing construction of Magnolia Overpass, Bellview Road, Garrett Road, and the Northern Loop Trail, while beginning construction on many of the projects outlined in the 2018 bond issue.

Rogers Animal Services continues to set the bar higher for animal care in the region. For the second time in three years, the shelter posted a zero percent euthanasia rate. Due to our Animal Care Officers' innovative methods in the field, we were able to return 504 animals to their owners, many of them never having to enter the shelter. The shelter continues to expand its social media presence, with nearly 10,000 likes on its Facebook page. Pictures of the Animals are uploaded as soon as they come into the shelter, where they can be identified by our social media community and reclaimed by owners, or find new families. Successful adoption events led to 355 adoptable animals finding new homes. This shelter continues to adapt and innovate, and our community is the beneficiary. I can say with full confidence, that our shelter is leaps and bounds ahead of the region, and many parts of the country.

The Adult Wellness Center has been serving our city for more than a decade and it's become one of our most successful and unique amenities in the region. This facility continues to break fundraising goals, raising more than 31,000 dollars in 2018, up 20 percent from the year before. We had more than 140 volunteers provide more than 11,700 hours. The AWC held its fourth annual Health Fair in 2018, providing health

education to more than 1000 seniors. In 2018, the Adult Wellness Center offered 276 different fitness, educational, and recreational classes, adding 160 more than the year before.

There is so much to be proud of in the City of Rogers, and so much for which to look forward. 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.

