



2020 State of the City Address

Good evening. Members of the Rogers City Council, Honorable City Attorney Andrew Hatfield, Honorable Judge Chris Griffin, City directors and employees, and my fellow citizens both here and online. Thank you for joining us tonight for the State of the City Address.

I am honored to stand before you all tonight as we celebrate the accomplishments and progress made in the City of Rogers over the past year. Before we begin, I would like to thank the Chamber CEO President Raymond Burns, his staff and the Chamber Board of Directors for coordinating the reception this evening. I would also like to thank my wife, Lisa, and our daughters, Emily and Haley, as well as other members of my family that are present here tonight.

This evening marks the 10th State of the City address I have given, and as always, I am grateful to stand before you and share how Rogers has flourished and become a more sustainable community.

In 2019, employment in the City of Rogers grew by over 2,200 jobs, which is a 6.2 percent increase from the previous year. The current unemployment rate in Rogers is 2.2 percent, which is well below the national and state average of 3.6 percent.

Sales tax collections in Rogers amounted to over \$20 million in 2019, equaling a 5.32 percent increase since 2018 and a 78 percent increase from a decade ago in 2009. Since 2011, the City of Rogers has increased the unrestrictive reserve fund by 156 percent while lowering property tax rates twice in the same time period.

All of the accomplishments noted this evening would not be possible without the loyalty and trust of the members within our community and their decision to raise their families in a City “Where Possible Lives.”

In 2018, the City of Rogers passed a \$300 million bond issue in order to improve the police, fire, parks and transportation services. Since then, our departments have been working tirelessly to check off each of the promises associated with the 2018 Bond Issue. I am fortunate to lead the motivated individuals of each department within the City, and I want to take a moment to highlight some of their accomplishments.

In 2019, the Rogers Police Department selected an architect and construction management firm to construct a new Emergency Dispatch Center. This project is a direct result of the 2018 Bond Issue and will provide a state-of-the-art facility that is capable of withstanding severe weather threats, thus maintaining the “Nerve Center of the City.” As the design phase is wrapping up, we are expecting to break ground on the center in March.

The Rogers Police and Fire Departments joined the AWIN Radio System with funds from the 2018 Bond Issue. The AWIN radio system is a state-of-the-art, digital communications system that we are excited to be a part of.

The construction of the new Emergency Dispatch Center and upgrade to our radio system is essential in order to provide quick response times, efficient communication capabilities, and appropriate safety measures for our police officers, firefighters and community. In 2019 alone, Rogers Central Dispatch answered over 94,000 calls for service. While responding to almost 56,000 total incidents, the Rogers Police Department was still able to maintain a clearance rate of 90 percent of all reported crimes against persons, which is nearly double the national average.

With the increase of public service and demand, ten new officer positions were added to the Rogers Police Department in 2019 and 2020. Along with the increase in personnel, nine officers were promoted to various ranks throughout the year.

The Rogers Fire Department continued to provide first-class fire and emergency medical services to our community, and is continuing to enhance this level of service. 2020 will usher in the construction of new facilities as approved by voters in the 2018 Bond Issue. Among these new facilities are the Burn Building and Classroom Expansions at the Training Center, in addition to the construction of Station 8.

Proper training facilities are vital to ensuring the safety and success of our firefighters. The fire department hosted the first organized burn in the new Burn Building on February 7. The Burn Building provides a safe, controlled learning environment for our firefighters. Construction has begun for Fire Station #8, located along West Pleasant Grove Road between Rainbow Road and Highway 112. This station will help maintain our quick response time for those residing in West Rogers.

In addition to the new facilities, the Fire Department was awarded a federal grant for nearly \$250,000 to replace patient cots in our ambulance fleet, which allows for a significant improvement in both patient and responder safety.

The Rogers Fire Department managed the retirements of nine veteran firefighters, including two chief officers, in 2019. In order to replace personnel and staff the expanding facilities, the Fire Department hosted two 18-week fire academies and hired 16 new firefighters.

At the Rogers Executive Airport, 2019 marked a year of planning and preparation for future expansion. The region's dynamic growth has led to a significant increase in demand for aviation infrastructure and services. To meet the growing demand, the Rogers Executive Airport completed a new \$2M Taxiway-Apron in January.

Robust demand for hangar space continued in 2019 as the Airport completed strategic planning and preparations for future expansion. The Airport hopes to ultimately accommodate some 125,000 square feet of additional hangar space with the planned expansion. The first phase of construction is slated for this year and will focus on providing taxiway access and supporting infrastructure.

Rogers Public Library continued to serve our community well, circulating approximately 390,000 items, serving nearly 200,000 visitors, and issuing over 2,800 new library cards. The library staff saw a 30 percent increased use of downloadable and streaming books, audiobooks, magazines, music and video in 2019 with a total of 96,600 circulations.

The Rogers Library takes pride in the extensive involvement within the Rogers community and the free resources it provides to our citizens. Last year, the library offered almost 950 programs to the public, in which just under 34,000 total persons attended. Among these programs, Books and Brews celebrated its one-year anniversary and a new Cookbook Club was established. The library also participated in the “1,000 Books before Kindergarten” program.

Rogers Parks and Recreation is beginning construction at the Railyard Park and Mount Hebron Park after wrapping up the design phases in 2019. Mount Hebron Park will be the first major park located on the west side of town and will consist of trails, courts for tennis, pickleball and basketball, fields for baseball soccer, pavilions, a splash pad, open space, and a “Destination Playground.” The playground will be all inclusive and the largest of its kind within the region.

Rogers Parks and Recreation is also working with the Community Development Department and Ross Barney Architects to construct the redesigned Frisco Park through the Walton Family Foundation’s Design Excellence Program. After a robust community outreach effort and survey process, we are excited to see the revitalization of this part of the historic downtown.

In addition to these major projects, our local trails and connectivity are continuing to improve within Rogers. Parks and Recreation added 9.1 miles of side path trails and welcomed nearly 557,000 trail users to the Rogers Trail System in 2019. Our staff also added 285 bike parking spaces throughout the trail system. Our Adopt-A-Trail program continues to grow as we welcomed four new participating organizations last year.

The Rogers Historical Museum celebrated the 1-year anniversary of the completion of the Hailey Building and expansion of the Museum on December 13. In this past year, museum visitation totaled over 87,000. The staff at the museum offered various educational programs to our community, including our most popular children's program "Rocky Branch One-Room School". In this program alone, our staff was able to educate over 33,400 students.

The museum also ended 2019 with the hire of a new Museum Director, Serena Barnett. Barnett previously worked on staff at the museum in the early 2000's, and we are pleased to welcome her back. The Rogers Historical Museum is currently planning and preparing for this year's events, exhibits and programs, as well as those for the upcoming 140th Anniversary of the City of Rogers in 2021.

The James R. Welch Recycling Center recycled over 2,000 tons of glass, plastic and paper in 2019, saving valuable space and extending the life of our landfill. The Recycling Center's Event Recycle Program was used for 18 events in 2019. Two of these events had more than 5,000 in attendance.

Through a partnership with Benton County Solid Waste District, Rogers Recycling Center has expanded the items that can be properly disposed of including household hazardous waste, bulky waste, tires and other items. The Convenience Center has received over 7,800 loads of material, which included over 3,000 tires, 6,600 pieces of electronics and other items that are hazardous to our environment.

During and after the October tornado that devastated a path through our City, the Street Department responded in such an amazing way. From working alongside electric

and gas crews to open streets that allowed crews to access areas blocked by debris in the attempt to restore power and gas service to literally going house to house picking up storm debris, they worked overtime and weekends for months and demonstrated the best public service and helped restore a sense of community very quickly in the wake of the tornado. They were even able to inspire and recruit some members of the Parks Department to join in the clean-up and long hours.

The City's Community Development Department continues to adapt and plan for the substantial increase in development and growth in Rogers. There is currently over \$250 million in private capital investment projects under construction or in the pipeline. In 2019, the Planning Division managed and approved a record-breaking amount of development activity, including 503 residential lots. The department oversaw 1.4 million square feet of commercial space under construction in Uptown Rogers real estate submarket, which exceeds the construction activity in the central business districts of Oklahoma City, Kansas City and Tulsa.

The Community Development Department processed 54 large scale projects, 12 small scale projects and 50 rezone requests, each with the Planning Commission and City Council assisting in the decision making.

Construction on many of the public works projects approved by voters for the 2018 Bond Issue, such as street improvements, took place in 2019, including the construction of the Razorback Regional Greenway Trail enhancements, Magnolia Street Overpass, and Northern Loop Trail at 8th and Easy Street. Construction is currently underway to

improve the Walnut Street I-49 interchange, as well as the construction to form the connection on Pleasant Grove Road from Rainbow Road to Highway 112.

As construction and development progresses, as does the need for additional transportation opportunities within our community. The Community Development Department oversaw improvements to Ozark Regional Transit services that provide zero-fare access and on-demand transit options in a route network restructured for increased efficiency and ridership. Riders now have two options of transportation: a fixed route connecting Downtown Rogers to Uptown Rogers or an on-demand route that riders may schedule from various stops within the City through a mobile app, website or by phone call.

Rogers Animal Services continued to maintained a 100 percent live release rate in 2019 and sets this standard as the expectation for the year of 2020. Due to progressive animal control, the calls for service at the shelter decreased significantly in 2019. The staff at the Rogers Animal Shelter provides the best care for our local animals and continues to stay up-to-date on the most trending ways to publicize adoptable animals, primarily through social media channels. Due to their innovation, the return to owner and adoption rates remain high.

The Adult Wellness Center continues to serve as the most valuable amenity provided to the 50+ community in our region. In 2019, the center offered 305 different fitness, educational, and recreational classes. Of those classes, 165 new classes were created and added to the curriculum. In 2019, new memberships totaled to over 1,000,

and the center recorded over 260,000-member visits. On average, approximately 900 to 1,400 people utilize the facility each day.

The Adult Wellness Center had over 11,300 recorded volunteer hours in 2019 serving in the areas of the front desk, data processing, the library, the garden, class leadership, and volunteer instructing.

Along with all of the external benefits we extend to our community, we take pride in the benefits we provide to the employees of our City. The City's Self-Insured Health Plan has increased by an average of 5 percent in the past 5 years in comparison to large fully insured plans, which typically increases from approximately 8 to 10 percent annually. Through the efforts of the Human Resource Department, I was able to sign an agreement with Mercy Life Line in February that will provide all City of Rogers employees and their families full emergency air transportation coverage when flown by Mercy aircraft.

As you can see from these accomplishments, it is an exciting time to live in the City of Rogers, and I am honored to serve as your Mayor.

On behalf of the City staff, elected officials, and members of our various boards and commissions, we look forward to continuing to serve you.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Greg Hines