



## State of the City Address 2023

Greetings and welcome to the 2023 State of the City presentation.

It's my honor to share and reflect on the progress and accomplishments of our city in the past year, and to look ahead to the future.

As a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Arkansas native, I have lived most of my life in Rogers, the City Where Possible Lives. I am more excited than ever to call Rogers home.

I am proud to report that in 2022, Rogers has made significant strides in various areas including economic development, public safety, and quality of life improvements. Our city has successfully attracted new businesses and industries, creating new job opportunities, and boosting the local economy.

The economy of Rogers is in the best shape it has ever been. Our sales tax collections in 2022 reached a new high of over \$26 million, a 12.9% increase over the previous year. This growth is fueled by the addition of over 1,300 new jobs in 2022 and an unemployment rate that has fallen to just 2.1%. We added 13 positions this past year in the areas of Finance, Police, and Community Development.

Our city is also experiencing significant growth in industry and commerce, with new developments in the works, including a 500,000 square foot furniture distribution center that is expected to create 300 new jobs, and a mixed-use development near Promenade Boulevard and New Hope Road that will include a Whole Foods Market and 350 living units. Rogers will also become home to a UAMS campus in the future, as the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences has acquired 48 acres for expansion.

The downtown area of Rogers is also seeing growth, with two new multifamily projects in the works, which are expected to result in a 150% increase in multifamily housing. The city issued over 4,000 permits in 2022 with a total construction value of over \$450 million dollars.

Our Community Development department currently manages 35 active projects. Street projects that have been completed within the last year include the Pleasant Grove to Highway 112 expansion and the Arkansas St. Oak to Chestnut project. Two overpasses are underway to help reduce congestion and quicken emergency response times, one on Oak St. and the other in Uptown.

I am proud of how Rogers has become a prime destination for visitors and those relocating. My intention is to set Rogers up for success as the region grows. In order to plan for Rogers' future, the City launched a community conversation about growth, land development, and quality of life. This will result in a new Future Land Use Map. This discussion is critical for establishing Rogers for the future.

Additionally, we are working to improve the quality of life for all residents, right now. This includes investing in our public parks and recreation facilities, creating new community events and programs, and making our city even more welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

Two parks are in different stages of construction. Despite some delays, we anticipate that Mt. Hebron Park in Southwest Rogers will be open to the public in late Spring. This 75-acre community center will include baseball and soccer fields, basketball and pickle ball courts, a splash pad, a dog park, an accessible playground, trails, and a large meeting hall. I invite you to come and enjoy this new feature of our wonderful city when it opens this year.

On the other side of town, the beginning of a renovation project is near for Northwest Park. This is Rogers' oldest park, and it hosts thousands of games each year. Youth baseball and softball fields, concessions, pavilions, an indoor batting cage, a playground, and trails are all part of the new design. The renovations will allow this cherished park to continue to serve the citizens of Rogers for years to come.

Mountain bikers will be happy to learn that a redesign of the Lake Atalanta trail system was completed in 2022. This work improves the natural trail system's connectivity while also creating lines for riders of all skills. Rogers has nearly 80 miles of trails to date, including paved and natural surface trails. There are plans to add another 17 miles of trails within upcoming projects. Over 900 thousand riders used our trails in 2022.

One of the best aspects of our community is the way we work together to protect our natural environment. This year, volunteers contributed nearly 1700 hours to our parks and trails. This included litter cleanup, invasive species removal, and tree giveaways.

I am very proud of the strong focus we have placed on arts and culture. The Railyard Park's Butterfield Stage is ideal for downtown performances and is home to the Railyard Live concert series. Railyard Live has now completed its second season filling downtown with live music every weekend, free and open to the public. The 2022 season saw over 22,000 people attend shows, an increase of 53% over 2021.

Railyard Park continues to capture attention locally and nationally. On top of its multiple awards from 2021, the iconic park won in the category of Urban Design in Fast Company's 2022 Innovation by Design awards. This March, it was also awarded the Grand Conceptor Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas. Railyard Park remains the centerpiece of a downtown that has seen significant revitalization over the past few years.

The Railyard Entertainment District has expanded as well, now including 20 participating downtown businesses. Railyard Park, Railyard Live and the Railyard Entertainment District have combined to reshape downtown culture, revitalizing businesses and the downtown atmosphere.

One of my favorite downtown celebrations is our annual Rogers Christmas Parade. There is tremendous community support for this memorable evening. I want to thank everyone who took part in and assisted with this year's parade. The parade this year was spectacular, with over 90 entries. About 15,000 spectators lined the streets to enjoy the festivities.

More arts and culture programming will be coming to downtown in the historic Victory Theater. A Walton Family Foundation grant will help fund an upcoming renovation that will more than double the seating and upgrade the sound system. This will create a space for programming similar to the Railyard live, but in an indoor venue.

The City Council recently approved another entertainment district in Uptown Rogers that encompasses the Promenade Mall. The new Bellview Entertainment

District allows adult beverages sold by participating restaurants to be consumed within the district boundaries, adding one more draw to the already vibrant Uptown area.

Both the Walmart AMP and the Rogers Convention Center play host to a wide variety of events and concerts. With a thriving uptown and blossoming downtown, Rogers is a great place to host large regional events.

The Walmart Northwest Arkansas Championship has been a stop on the LPGA tour since 2007. It has grown over the years to include a 5K race and the Bite NWA food and beverage tasting experience. This year's tournament week had an estimated 15 to 20 thousand spectators. It's so rewarding to see Rogers develop into a community where large events can thrive.

Another example is Bikes, Blues and BBQ. Bikes, Blues and BBQ is not new to the area, but in 2022 the rally made its hub in Rogers, with events in downtown and at the Rogers Convention Center. This regional event drew an estimated 225,000 people to Northwest Arkansas.

Rogers Police Department along with Rogers Fire Department established a central command and requested assistance from many neighboring agencies for support. I would like to thank local law enforcement agencies that assisted in the rally in Rogers. We received numerous compliments from attendees and residents about how welcoming our police officers were that weekend. According to RPD's impact assessment, the event resulted in only four arrests and one citation.

Rogers Police Department went a step further in their mission of integrity and transparency this year. The department upgraded its car camera systems and purchased body cameras. This is part of our ongoing effort to be more transparent with the community, protect officer interests, and collect more evidence.

Rogers Police Department continues its tradition of excellence, resolving crimes more effectively than the majority of the country. The Rogers Police Department's crime against person clearance rate is 84.2%, almost double the national average. The clearance rate for crimes against property is 43.2%, compared to the national average of 17.2%.

In your community, it's important that you not only feel safe, but that you are safe. This year, the Rogers Fire Department took significant steps to improve public safety in Rogers. RFD doubled the number of thermal imaging cameras on city fire trucks. These cameras are important tools in locating victims inside smoke filled buildings. We also received a federal grant to help us purchase rescue and wildfire personal protective equipment for the entire department. The new Air and Light 1 can provide additional resources to emergency situations. This apparatus responds to longer-duration incidents, providing needed resources and improving public safety.

The Rogers Fire Department also led Northwest Arkansas and much of the country in developing procedures for electric vehicle fires. This includes the use of specialized nozzles by our firefighters and the purchasing of fire suppression blankets.

We will see improvements to our already quick emergency response times in the coming year, as a dedicated fire station alerting console will be added to our dispatch equipment. This will help get firefighters alerted and, on their way, as soon as possible. Future dispatch upgrades will also include an automated weather alert system. Once installed, tornado sirens in Rogers will sound whenever a National Weather Service alert is issued in our area.

The City of Rogers website got a makeover recently. The site is designed to be easy to use, and there are many ways to find what you are looking for. It is easy to stay informed on projects and community events, as well as connect to city resources.

Our administrative staff has been working on a new citizen engagement portal that will make it easier to report concerns to city departments and smoothly work through the permitting processes. I am happy to announce that we should see this launch in spring.

It's exciting for me as Mayor to reflect on the facilities and operations that improve the quality of life in Rogers. 2022 was year of impressive accomplishments for many city departments.

The Rogers Aquatics Center has bounced back from being closed in 2020 and partially opened in 2021. Residents and visitors are embracing their local water

park with daily admissions up 62% and facility rentals up 45%. Rogers residents should be proud to have this recreational amenity in their city.

Rogers Recycling Center assisted residents in making more environmentally friendly waste disposal decisions. This past year, the Rogers Recycling Center recycled over 4.6 million pounds of material. Our collaboration with Benton County and the Benton County Solid Waste District continues in 2023, allowing citizens to dispose of household hazardous waste, electronic waste, and other items.

The number of intakes at the Rogers Animal Shelter rose in 2022. The caring staff works tirelessly to care for these animals and find them new homes. The shelter had a 94% save rate at the end of the year. I am very proud of our Rogers Animal Services staff for always being creative in raising awareness for the animals in their care.

Rogers Executive Airport is growing. The airport's \$3.8 million-dollar expansion was completed in 2022, marking the most significant expansion of Airport infrastructure in decades. This allows for over 100,000 square feet of new hangar space which is in various stages of planning, design, and construction. In addition, the airport received a federal grant and began work on a \$712 thousand dollar pavement rehabilitation project for its asphalt taxiways and aprons. The next few years promise to be very exciting for Rogers Airport and all of its stakeholders.

Attendance and circulation numbers at the Rogers Public Library have increased in 2022. In fact, adult patron involvement increased by 143% compared to 2021. The Rogers Public Library offers countless classes and programs, both in-person and online. A recognized program in 2022 was the “Achieve It” job skills program, which is offered in both English and Spanish. Some of the topics covered in 2022 included budgeting, saving, investing and affordable healthcare. Heading into next year, Rogers Public Library will continue its goal to increase interactive, diverse and enriching programs, safely and creatively for all ages.

The Rogers Historical Museum had another successful year of preserving and celebrating Rogers' local history. This year, the museum welcomed over 18,000 visitors and hosted a variety of programs and events. In addition, they collaborated with other local museums to host the Southeastern Museum Conference, which attracted 450 museum professionals.

After 16 years in operation, the Adult Wellness Center continues to set the standard for successful senior programming. On average, 750 classes are offered each month. Volunteers donated over 9000 hours to help make these fitness, educational, and recreational activities happen. The Center currently has over 8,000 active members, with 1300 new members joining in 2022. This demonstrates the Adult Wellness Center's significance in the community.

Looking ahead into 2023, I am relieved that our community is regaining its footing after a few uncharacteristic years. This past year was a year of transition for many of us as we took steps forward while still dealing with the fallout from 2020 and 2021. We've adapted to leading productive lives while making wise decisions to avoid illnesses and stay up to date on vaccines and boosters.

Doing our part, the City of Rogers collaborated with the Arkansas Department of Health earlier this year to distribute nearly 7000 rapid COVID tests. These tests were made available at the Rogers Public Library and at fire departments. Rogers Fire Department also delivered over 170 tests to those who could not pick them up.

The future of Rogers is bright and full of promise. There is much to be proud of and much to look forward to. It gives me great pleasure to serve as your Mayor. On behalf of our 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.

Together, let us continue to make Rogers a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

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