

STATE OF THE CITY 2005

The City of Fayetteville is continuing to grow and prosper. We will further define the future of our City with the decisions we make this year.

I want us to look toward the future tonight at what we expect to achieve as a Council, as a City, and as a Community.

But first we need to take a brief look at what we have accomplished in 2004.

In our Development Engineering and Engineering Design Services Divisions

- The final section of Old Missouri Road between Old Wire road and Joyce Blvd is nearing completion, and will improve safety for our drivers and our pedestrians.
- The rewrite of UDC Chapter 170 - Stormwater Management, Pollution Prevention and Erosion Control has been completed and is ready for Ordinance Review.
- A contractual relationship has been developed for a biological stream assessment in conjunction with UA.
- Designed 10 Capital Improvement Projects that are currently either under construction or completed in 2004 such Shiloh Drive Widening, Broyles Road Extension, School/Archibald Yell Intersection Improvements, Milsap/College Intersection Improvements
- Provided engineering & surveying assistance for other City Divisions for 10 additional Capital Improvement Projects such as Gregg/Poplar & West/Maple Signalization, School Street Improvements, Amber Drainage Improvements, Ruppel Road Waterline Extension, Mount Sequoyah Land Purchase
- Performed 16 Preliminary Studies & Concept Plans for future Capital Improvement Projects and for other City Divisions such as the City Transportation Improvement Plan, Red Oak Park Drainage Improvements, Downtown One-Way Street Conversions, Highway 71B East Square Redevelopment TIF Plan for Public Improvements, I-540 TIF Plan for Public Improvements, Airport Entrance Improvements

In our Fleet Division

- The time required to ready a Police car for street utilization has been streamlined with development of a wiring harness for lights, siren, cameras, computer etc. by a Fayetteville manufacturer. At \$795 this is a relatively low cost item, but it indicates the initiative and creativity of our staff to work with a local manufacturer to develop a product which reduces the labor and time necessary to install all the various intricate components found in today's police cars. This effort has reduced the time necessary to ready an individual car from 128 hours to 54 hours, a savings of 74 hours or a monetary savings, less all material costs of about \$3,000 per car. The savings in 2005 from this creativity will be over \$40,000 with the 13 police vehicles being purchased this year.

In our Parks Division

- The Community/Regional Park acquisition and development is well underway in the first-of-its-kind program for Fayetteville which includes large-scale planning for a mixed-use development fully integrated with 233 acres of active and passive public spaces, trails, and natural conservation areas.

- The community involvement necessary for another 1st place award in the “America in Bloom” National Competition was successfully undertaken.
- West Mud Creek Trail, Walker Park Trail, Walker Park Senior Trail and Frisco Park Trail all completed in 2004. The Frisco Trail opening ceremony is tomorrow, January 19, 2005.

In our Transportation Division

- We improved winter weather driving safety with the initiation of the salt brine program for the prevention and removal of snow and ice from our City streets.
- 12.5 miles of deteriorated streets were rehabilitated.
- 17,500 linear feet of sidewalk were built or replaced.
- 72.5 tons of litter were removed with the use of work release trustees from our Police Department
- Traffic Signals at Gregg & Poplar and Maple & West were installed.

In our Parking and Telecommunications Division

- Installation of major electrical service in the Dickson Street Area for use by festivals and various special events was installed

In our Building Safety Division

- 6,280 permits were approved and over 34,000 inspections were performed.
- A policy requiring trash containers and portable toilets at construction sites was implemented and most citizen complaints have been eliminated.

In our Community Resources & Code Compliance Division

- 11 rehab projects were completed. This included, among other things, replacement of windows, doors, plumbing, electrical wiring, roofs, floors, insulation and heating. Maximum cost per project is \$20,000.00.
- 32 emergency repair projects were completed. These repair projects are limited to a cap of \$5,000.00 and include repairs relating to electrical hazards, roofs, heating, water leaks and sewer problems.

In our Solid Waste and Recycling Division

- The Curb the Clutter program grew to 62 areas being sponsored with approximately 10 tons of litter collected during 2004.
- The Great American Clean-up was sponsored with Keep Arkansas Beautiful. The efforts resulted in 130 volunteers dedicating 408 hours, collecting 2.2 tons of litter off city streets, removing almost one ton of trash from Lake Fayetteville, collecting over 29 tons of bulky trash and scrap metal from South Fayetteville and almost 2 tons during the trails clean up.
- City Ward Clean ups, various creek clean ups, and the annual Bulky Waste Round-up resulted in 6.6 tons of brush collected, 188 tons of trash was disposed of, and 100 tons of scrap metal recycled.

- We saw a 200% increase in tonnage collected from bulky waste curbside service from 151 tons in 2003 to 462 tons in 2004.
- We sent to recycling markets 5,200 tons of materials from the curbside, drop off and in house programs. This represents a 6% increase over 2003 totals. This included recycling 80 tons through the In-House program (Government offices and Schools) and 20 tons through the commercial igloo program.
- We collected and processed 1,600 tons of yard waste curbside in 2004. In comparison 1,400 tons were collected in 2003, this realizes a 14% increase in tonnage collected.

In our Planning Division

- 441 subdivision/development/land use applications were accepted and processed
- 643 Planning Reports were prepared in 2004 compared to 462 reports in 2003.
- Staff planned for the implementation of a Downtown Master Plan, coordinating assistance from the planning/architecture firm of Dover, Kohl and Partners. The City Council adopted the Downtown Master Plan in 2004, and staff continues efforts to implement various aspects of the Plan, including adoption of the zoning codes.
- Long-Range Planning activities centered on the topic of annexation in 2004, providing for the city-wide Island Annexation ordinances adopted by Council in July.
- Staff developed an “Attainable Housing Element” for the 2020 General Plan for presentation to the Planning Commission and City Council.

In our Billing and Collection Division

- We refunded 15,181 Utility Deposits for a total in excess of \$535,000. This refunding was authorized by City Council for customers who had been on the utility system for more than one year and paid on-time. Completed 1st year of web/telephone billing payments receiving \$253,685 from 4,465 payments with a goal of increasing payments made with this method by 20% this year

In our Accounting Division and Budget and Research Division

- We converted the city’s financial statement presentation to GASB34 Standard which requires government financial reports to look more like business financial statements.
- We were awarded the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award in 2004 and Certificate of Achievement for Excellence In Financial Reporting for the 2003 Financial Reports.

In our Building Services Division

- Construction of Fire Station 7 was initiated during 2004 with completion slated for the 1st Quarter 2005.
- Construction of a replacement Water & Sewer Operations Facility was initiated during 2004 and is scheduled for completion in the 2nd Quarter 2005. This facility was originally scheduled for construction in 1989.
- We are on target to purchase the Tyson Complex at Happy Hollow and Huntsville Road. This new public facility will house a new fire station number 3 and address our space needs for next 10 to 15 years.

In our Information Technology Division

- The City's Website averaged 850,000 successful hits per month during 2004 with an average of 24,000 individuals accessing information monthly.

Here's what the library accomplished in 2004:

- FPL and the City sold the Roberta Fulbright building and annex for \$1.7M.
- On October 9, the FPL opened the \$23.3M 88,000 square foot Blair Library on time and on budget.
- The community reached out to help the library in unprecedented numbers. Nearly 15,000 volunteer hours were donated-a 40% increase over previous years.
- FPL implemented the first RFID (radio frequency identification) library project and the first book conveyance and sorting system with automatic check-in in Arkansas.
- Library check-outs increased 40% in the months after opening to over 70,000 items checked-out.
- The number of people registering for new library cards rose by 800% in the first two months after Blair Library opened.
- The Library received \$50,000 grant for children's literacy and basic workforce skills resources from the Area Wal-Mart Stores.
- FPL Foundation received a \$250,000 gift to the capital campaign from the Area Wal-Mart Stores and Sam's Clubs.
- The Library created the Center for Writers at FPL with a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council. Bob Ford is the first author-in-residence.

Here are a few items from the Police Department:

- We have appointed a new Police Chief, Frank Johnson, another of our police officers who progressed through the ranks of the Fayetteville Police Department to rise to the rank of Chief.
- Detective Gary Crews was named the 2004 police officer of the year by Attorney General Mike Beebe
- A contract was negotiated with Washington County that will allow for the closure of the Fayetteville City Jail.
- The department conducted the first Citizens Police Academy. It was attended by 12 Neighborhood Assn members.
- The department started a Crisis Intervention Unit to deal with domestic violence and mental health cases.

During 2004 the Fire Department set and achieved several goals, which will help the organization in its effort to improve the quality and level of service it provides to the citizens of Fayetteville.

- The most important success achieved by the Department in 2004 is the completion and distribution of the comprehensive Fire Station Concept and Deployment Plan.

- Fire Station 7 - We began construction of the Department's first expansion fire station in 26 years. Construction of Fire Station 7 began during later part of the spring of 2004 with the anticipation this facility will be complete during the first quarter of 2005.
- Fire Safety Trailer - The Fire Department also liquidated several capital assets which were gathering dust and utilized the proceeds from those items to fund the purchase of a new Fire Safety Education Trailer.
- Firewise Program - We worked closely with the Arkansas Department of Forestry to begin the process of establishing a Firewise Board. The Firewise program was established by the US Department of Forestry in an effort to assist in the mitigation of wildland-urban interface fires.
- Wellness & Fitness Program - We initiated our Wellness and Fitness program for fire fighters, in conjunction with the University of Arkansas.

In our Water and Sewer Department

- The new Westside Sewer Plant is on target to have construction completed by the end of 2006, with the crossover of service beginning immediately with full operation underway in the Spring of 2007.
- Water/Sewer Maintenance employees designed and installed 8,498 feet of water main line from 2 inch to 12 inches in diameter, and installed or repaired 132 fire hydrants.
- Water mains were installed and/or replaced on Lafayette (in coordination with the AHTD repaving project), South School (in coordination with the Blair Library opening), Ruppel Road (supporting the new Fire Station), and in other areas of the City.
- Water/Sewer Division employees also designed and installed 5,658 feet of sewer main line from 6 inch to 12 inches in diameter throughout the City including Hotz, Mountain, Highway 265, Prospect, Lakeridge, Strawberry, and other locations.
- We also washed a record 184 miles of sewer lines, televised a record fifteen miles of sewer lines in 2004.
- All of these accomplishments came in a year when the division reduced overtime by over 2,800 hours from 2003.

What should Fayetteville achieve this year and perhaps for the next 2, 3 or 4 years?

We are having or will have discussions with others that should lead to positive results which include:

- Coordination with other governmental entities within Washington County concerning emergency ambulance services on how this service can be improved and funded in a manner that meets Citizen expectations while reducing financial pressure on the City of Fayetteville, Washington County and the other participating jurisdictions in the County.
- The City and Fayetteville School district concerning contract negotiations regarding the school resource officer program. The goal is to have a mutually beneficial agreement developed and presented to each governing body by the end of the 1st Quarter 2005.
- A Consolidated Strategic Plan for our new Library as it relates to the need for a stable revenue stream for library operations while providing more flexibility in the City's General Fund.

- Exploring franchises with private security firms to reduce the number of false alarms that the City's Police and Fire departments currently respond to.
- Creating Annual or Biennial adjustment to all "user fees" based on the rate of inflation.

As leaders of Fayetteville, we each have our individual goals, objectives and visions of what we desire our Community to achieve and become during the next few years and beyond. Through our combined efforts coupled with public discourse we will form the agenda for our Community to create the Fayetteville of 2006, 2010 and beyond. For the last four years we have worked diligently to increase our efficiency and try and keep pace with the daily needs of our citizens during a period of unprecedented growth. But, very importantly, we have also been planning for our future and preparing to implement those initiatives that will help us be competitive in the marketplace with an outstanding quality of life and sense of place that other cities can only wish for. Examples of our efforts include the Transportation Planning process which outlined transportation safety and travel needs of our City, our Downtown Design Process that gave form to our collective vision of our entire downtown area, indeed, the very heart of our city. We have created a Tax Increment Finance District that even in the legislative and legal turmoil of TIF legislation is one method the City has to enable us to remove of the derelict Mountain Inn building, to be replaced with a much-needed upscale hotel.

Our past decisions have followed the Council's goals and objectives that we have framed behind the Council. The decisions we will make concerning our Capital Improvements Program, our Street Maintenance Program, our Transportation Improvement Program, our Parks and Trails Program will create the Fayetteville that we will leave to our successors and our community's children and grandchildren.

2005 brings exciting opportunities for improvement that will have a fundamental, long-lasting impact on our city. I want to outline the top five projects we will see real progress on this year.

- We will update the City's Comprehensive Plan. This plan will assist us, the Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and the Planning Commission in decision-making on land use issues. In the near future I will be putting together a work session between this Council, the Planning Commission, business leaders, engineers, architects, developers, and builders to fully discuss ways we can improve our reputation as a place to do business while committing to an attractive, well-planned future for our city that will enhance our quality of life and of place. This is one of my personal high priority items for 2005.
- Everyone knows traffic congestion is our primary concern. But I would also note that, while we are the third largest city in the State, we have better traffic flow than other, smaller cities because of our traffic management and planning efforts. But we need to solve existing problems as well as prepare for the future. The Street Committee is currently reviewing a comprehensive list of street improvements that will greatly aid traffic safety and accessibility throughout our City. Review and adjustments to that list are welcome and should be fully discussed by the Street Committee and by the full City Council. However, this street improvement program is of critical importance to the citizens of Fayetteville and should move forward with an objective of establishing a final project list by the end of February. When this list is final, the Engineering staff will update the cost estimates and we will prepare for a public vote on a bond issue for serious traffic improvements. This is probably the most important issue facing our community today. Our current efforts are not keeping pace with our needs and we must address those needs or face traffic safety and congestion issues that we will all find unacceptable.
- Access improvement to the Northwest Regional Mall, CMN Business Park and Washington Regional Hospital is critical in the coming year. It is unlikely that significant improvements can be accomplished this year, but we need to develop a functional plan to improve access to this important retail/office/healthcare area. Some improvements may necessitate coordination with the City of Johnson and other local governmental agencies.

- We must secure the redevelopment on the Mountain Inn property. We have to use whatever tools are available to us to remove this dangerous eyesore. At this time, we have a development group willing and able to place their money into a new, high-quality development that will greatly aid in the reinvestment in Downtown Fayetteville. This private reinvestment will begin to build synergy for other private investments. This project is important for our community. Even if the current project cannot come to fruition, one way or another, the Mountain Inn must be removed. We must have the vision and the will to move forward to get this ruined building torn down.
- We are on the cusp of obtaining the land and beginning the development of a new community park in Southwest Fayetteville. This is a project that is being brought forward only because of a innovative approach and a development group willing to take a chance on the viability of housing development in this area of the City. This is another of those opportunities that cannot be passed up. We must commit to a quality community park and an improvement schedule that will see this park begin construction in 2005. This fully-planned, 800 acre mixed-use development built around a 233 acre regional park is the first of its kind for Northwest Arkansas and perhaps the State. This public/private partnership makes it possible for Fayetteville to finally have the one-of-a-kind park we have long needed while saving our citizens about \$3 million.

But as we work to resolve these defining issues we have to do it in the context of maintaining our core services. We cannot continue to have record growth year after year and expect Fayetteville's city staff to handle it with no additional help. We have increased efficiencies and levels of productivity unlike any time in our past but we must realize any organization that becomes too overburdened for too long will fail. None of us want to increase taxes yet all of us want to maintain our high level of city services. We can't continue to dance to opposing fiddlers. We have done all we can to provide the best possible product for the lowest possible cost to our citizens, but we have come to the inevitable decision point. We have suffered unavoidable increases in our costs of doing business such as insurance, construction materials, fuel, wage pressures, and inflation to name a few, set against the backdrop of the need to expand core services that do not pay for themselves, such as fire, police, and transportation. At the same time Fayetteville has maintained the lowest tax rate by far in Northwest Arkansas. If we simply tied the next lowest tax rate in the corridor, which would be Rogers', we would catch up with our needs for the foreseeable future and probably beyond. If we choose to live with our existing rate then we will have to make serious cuts to services. This year we will have to make those hard decisions we have been putting off.

But the news for Fayetteville is astoundingly good. We live in one of the most liveable cities in America, one of the best places to retire, build a career, raise a family, spend time outdoors, take in the arts, and find fulfillment. In short, Fayetteville is an excellent place to simply enjoy your life. That is why we have been discovered, and all of our decisions must be measured to protect and enhance this immeasurable, intangible, irreplaceable quality.

I look forward to our work together in this effort to continue creating new and unique opportunities, setting the stage for bold ideas and thoughtful action, and, at the end of the day, finding satisfaction in a job well done.