



**State of the City
January 15, 2019
Mayor Lioneld Jordan**

To the City Council, the City Attorney, City Clerk, City Staff, and all our residents, I offer you the following thoughts in our 2019 State of the City address.

I would like to open my remarks by saying the state of our City is sound.

In preparing these comments, I was inspired by the following quote from John F. Kennedy:

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

Tonight, I am going to speak about what we accomplished in 2018; where those accomplishments put us in the present; and more importantly, where those accomplishments will lead us in the future.

This City is forever looking toward the future, never content with where it is, but rather, where it is going to be. So, tonight I want to speak more about that future -- our vision, our hopes, and our dreams.

And we must always take just a moment to celebrate our successes and thank the community who makes those happen, who moves this City forward.

I would like to thank our City Clerk Sondra Smith and her staff for their excellent work in making our government transparent and accessible to the people and for keeping our records organized.

I would like to thank our City Attorney Kit Williams and his staff for providing sound legal guidance and their work on behalf of the residents of Fayetteville.

I would like to thank Judge Bill Storey and his staff for their excellent work on ensuring a superior district court and providing justice for our community.

I would like to thank you, the City Council of today and the City Council from last year for your hard work and for serving your constituents and the City with your financial stewardship and strategic leadership.

I would like to thank our dedicated City staff, volunteers, and all our residents for their hard work and support. We are fortunate to have the most talented and hardest working staff and volunteers of any city.

And finally, I want to thank our many partners in this City: our Experience Fayetteville team, the Fayetteville Public Library, the University of Arkansas, and Fayetteville Public Schools, along with many other organizations that serve the residents of our City, promote its economic and social well-being, and provide services for people in need.

Let us take just a moment to celebrate some of our **2018 Awards and Accomplishments**.

- For the third year in a row we were named one of the top five Best Places to Live by U. S. News and World Report
- We received the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality “Tech-E Award” for our HyDOZ Disinfection System at the Noland Wastewater Treatment Facility
- For its annual Trendsetter Cities program, Arkansas Business honored Fayetteville with awards in the Environment category for our Energy Action Plan, in the Infrastructure category for the Fayetteville Mobility Plan, and in the Public Safety category for our Fire and Public Safety training facilities and their community engagement practices
- For the third year in a row, we maintained our position as the top “Water Resources Utility of the Future Today”
- People for Bikes named Fayetteville as the “Best Place for Bikes” in Arkansas
- The Arbor Day Foundation again designated Fayetteville as a “Tree City USA Community,” our 23rd consecutive year
- The Arkansas Parks and Recreation Association presented six awards to our Parks and Recreation Department for natural resources and youth programs, Soft Surface Trail of the year for our Kessler Mountain Bike Trails, Facility of the Year for Lake Sequoyah, Festival/Event of the year for Ladies Du Fayetteville. Volunteer of the Year for Parks and Rec board member Laura Underwood for her fundraising efforts for the Yvonne Richardson Community Center
- Engagement HQ recognized Fayetteville for its Speak Up Fayetteville platform and we also received honorable mention at the Governor’s Digital Transformation Awards for Speak Up Fayetteville and our online systems

The City of Fayetteville Public Library received the following recognitions:

- The 2018 Best Public Library in CitiScapes Magazine’s “Best of NWA” readers’ poll

- Excellence in Business award for green and sustainable practices from the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce
- A prestigious Silver-level Bicycle Friendly Business certification by the League of American Bicyclists

Also, Congressman Womack nominated Fayetteville's public library for the 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

In July, site preparation for the Library Expansion Project started and the final design was approved in December. The expansion will feature 82,500 additional square feet of space and is expected to open in the Fall of 2020.

I'd like to talk a little bit about our other major **partnerships** in this City and accomplishments of 2018.

With our University of Arkansas and Experience Fayetteville partners, we launched the region's first bike share program, VeoRide, which has seen nearly 30,000 rides with more than 7,500 riders in its first four months. This healthy transportation alternative complements our trail system and represents 6,500 pounds of carbon emissions saved. This month, VeoRide will add 150 new electric bikes to assist with our hilly terrain, making our fleet one of the largest in the United States.

While our City has much more work to do to define its future transit infrastructure, we made good progress in 2018 with our University of Arkansas Razorback Transit and Ozark Regional Transit partnerships. By reducing duplicate routes, we increased frequency of pickups and created the first fare-free routes in Fayetteville for Ozark Regional Transit - increasing ridership by 13% from this time last year!

We look forward to continued partnership with Fayetteville Public Schools and the Boys and Girls Club to provide educational and extracurricular activities for our youth.

The Yvonne Richardson Community Center board of directors continues to discover new opportunities to grow youth and adult programming at YRCC.

We sincerely appreciate our partnerships with the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association for help with the purchase of Kessler Mountain and the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust for preservation of that mountain, as well as the recent preservation of the environmentally sensitive wet prairie and oak savannah habitat adjacent to the Woolsey Wet Prairie. Preserving Fayetteville's most significant natural resources will always be a hallmark of this administration.

As I told you last year, I promised that this administration would serve as a bridge between our younger generations, who bring new and great ideas about urban competitiveness, to our traditionalists, who hold very high standards of what this City is and all it can be. I truly believe we kept that promise as we laid foundations for our future with several initiatives and master plans.

While each one of our efforts in 2018 combined to create intentional and deliberate progress, no matter their size or scope, I must acknowledge one of the single most strategic decisions ever made in this City.

Just a few short weeks ago, we signed an agreement to develop, construct, and operate Arkansas's largest solar power system with onsite utility-scale storage at our wastewater treatment facilities. With this action, we take a monumental step toward the Energy Action Plan's steep goal of 100% renewable clean energy use by City facilities by 2030. The project is expected to be completed this fall, raising the rate of clean energy consumption by City facilities to 72%. The system has a 3.1-year return on investment and will save our City \$6 million-dollars in energy costs over the next twenty years!

While we continue to make strides, we must not rest in the safe zone.

We must expand our vision in other areas, **such as our digital infrastructure; our welcoming initiatives; our social services and housing initiatives; and economic and workforce development.**

Our **Digital Inclusion Plan** will ensure everyone has internet access at the speed you need and at a price affordable to you, so you can participate in education, healthcare, jobs training, and local and national policy discussions.

Last year, the City added wi-fi, free to the public, in ten new locations; we began review of infrastructure to support future smart city technology initiatives; and passed an ordinance to provide for the permitting of next generation small cell wireless facilities to improve residents' wireless access.

University of Arkansas and Fayetteville Public Library staff and stakeholders joined City staff to create the Digital Inclusion Task Force. The group works to raise awareness, identify gaps in access and affordability, and provide expanding digital readiness opportunities for Fayetteville households.

Another great partnership has been working with Canopy NWA and the Ozark Literacy Council to help us implement several goals of the **Welcoming Plan** adopted by the City Council in April of last year. One of our short-term goals is to establish welcoming hubs to share information, offer classes, and serve as gathering spaces.

Working with Ozark Literacy Council, staff created the first virtual Welcoming Hub, a part of the City's website designed specifically for use by international residents new to our city and our country. The website is empowered by Google Translate and offers clear, simple information regarding City services, plain-language explanations of how to navigate everyday American tasks such as enrolling children in school, paying taxes, and setting up a bank account, plus links to resources such as English language classes, citizenship information, and legal services. Additionally, I will support inclusion of legal immigrants into our City's volunteer committees to create more diverse participation in city government.

By providing welcoming services, multilingual materials and resources, and thoughtful approaches to programming - we hope to increase our community's foreign-born population to at least double-digit numbers, raising the level of diversity in local government participation. New Americans contribute a great deal, culturally and economically, to our beautiful city. And every single one of these new Americans is welcome in this city.

A common thread that runs throughout our goals is to do more for those in need. We depend on our **Community Development Block Grant** funding and City operational budget for housing and transportation assistance programs, homeless services, case management, and to aid numerous agencies that serve similar missions for our neighbors who have difficult hurdles to overcome. We will continue to work with and support the private and nonprofit options for housing through staff support, development policies, and partnerships with public lands to help foster more attainable housing. But as all of you know, the topic of attainable housing cannot be looked at in isolation.

We must continue to raise the quality of living for everyone by supporting workforce development and recruitment of living-wage jobs, and new and better skills training and educational opportunities for all our residents.

Toward that end, I believe this year's **Economic Vitality** efforts, including our emerging **Workforce Development Plan** will help with wages and housing opportunities for all.

Our expanded promotional efforts to market Fayetteville as a great place to do business are peaking the interest of prospective businesses. The quality of life in Fayetteville is what draws talent to our City, thus attracting new employers with living wage jobs. Fayetteville continues to grow as a great place to live, work, play, learn, and do business.

The City's robust economic development plan, "Fayetteville First", continues its path toward implementation to benefit the economic health of Fayetteville.

Successes from the implementation of the Fayetteville First plan include:

- Pinnacle Foods completed a \$30 million-dollar expansion of their manufacturing and cold-storage facility

- The largest film project in Arkansas history, HBO's True Detective, was headquartered and produced in Fayetteville during 2018, hiring hundreds of individuals, and developing expanded capacity in our creative economy
- Tyson's Mexican Original began a \$30 million-dollar expansion
- The Chancellor Hotel in the Downtown Square area was acquired by Graduate Hotels – a small, boutique-hotel chain specializing in university towns
- The Old Post Office, an anchor of the historic Downtown Square, recently sold and will soon be home to a new dining experience
- The City acquired 228 acres in west Fayetteville, creating Centennial Park at Millsaps Mountain, for future development of a new trail system to serve local hikers, trail runners, and mountain bikers with an emphasis on events for the region's growing mountain biking tourism industry
- In 2018, the City of Fayetteville saw more than 370 new businesses open their doors, creating 1,000 new full-time jobs
- Our economic vitality goals and metrics for the year have not only been met -- most have reached 150% of their targets
- We are on track for \$100 million-dollars in taxable sales growth for 2018
- Our economic base has grown to approximately 3,850 businesses operating in Fayetteville. Those businesses provide more than 43,000 full-time jobs in our City

So I have a question to ask you, City Council. With all of those facts and figures I presented to you, doesn't it seem like business is not only doing well in this city, but it is booming???!!! With your help, this city is open for business and we will continue to lead with our economic development efforts.

This year's workforce development focus will be on employment opportunities through the expansion of skilled trades and apprenticeship programs, and strategies that aim to assist those with barriers will create the opportunity for almost every resident of our City to find a career and make a living wage.

Also, I have a great announcement to make tonight about a totally new opportunity for our workforce, something we have worked on for over a year.

In 2019, we will welcome the Arkansas Coding Academy to Fayetteville, an affordable alternative-education program that offers fast-paced workforce development solutions for the Information Technology sector. The organization has a track record of helping populations with barriers obtain gainful employment earning well above a living wage after just three short months of full-time training.

The prosperity and sustainable growth of our City will extend to everyone equally.

And speaking of City Growth, Census 2020 preparations are moving forward this year and we need everyone to stand up and be counted!

An accurate census helps ensure fair representation at all levels of government. Congressional districts and ward boundaries are determined by census numbers. Census results directly impact the funding Fayetteville will receive over the next decade and play a crucial role in determining how \$800 billion-dollars of federal funding is distributed and allocated annually across state and local governments.

Please, encourage all your friends and neighbors to stand up and be counted!!!

As a matter of fact, Fayetteville's population is projected to increase by 50,000 by the year 2040. We have a lot of getting ready to do! Fayetteville's rapid growth and vibrant economy was proven in 2018! We issued almost 1,400 building permits totaling nearly \$415 million dollars in investment, an approximate 30% increase over the average of the previous five years.

As promised last year, we began implementing the Lean Government Plan all while keeping up with our growth and building permitting. We doubled down to spend valuable staff time in training sessions, learning to improve our process workflow, eliminate waste, and increase quality and customer service for all permitting and zoning.

As a result, customers will begin to see a shorter timeline for the permitting and certificate of occupancy. This work will streamline processes to be implemented during the migration to a new permitting software system.

Our comprehensive development plan, **City Plan 2030**, is being updated to City Plan 2040 as we prepare for Fayetteville's growth. Using public input from residents and stakeholders, staff is creating tools to help decision-makers attain the plan's six primary goals. These tools include an Infill Development Scoring Matrix, a Growth Concept Map that identifies key growth areas, and a map with new layers of data to aid development decisions.

The Future Land Use Map was also updated to serve as a broad land use guide for Fayetteville's growth. While residents of Fayetteville continue to indicate broad support for Fayetteville's infill growth policies, we know many residents desire **improved design standards** to ensure that infill development compliments the character of established neighborhoods. To respond we will revise design standards for City Council's consideration in 2019.

After a survey of property owners indicated support for creating a local **historic district in the Washington/Willow Neighborhood**, the City Council approved funding for design guidelines to enable the district's creation. That process kicks off this month and will be completed by mid-2019.

Next year, we will seek options for infill density and we will evaluate our **annexation policies** to ensure they provide growth management in an appropriate manner to promote the orderly and efficient development and expansion of our City.

And so my friends, how do we plan our growth for the future? With growth comes great responsibility to expand all city services and amenities. In the past, our voter-approved bond initiatives have funded capital projects and **infrastructure improvements** allowing us to grow at a pace that our current and future residents need and expect in order to make Fayetteville the best city possible.

Let's go through some of those infrastructure improvements tonight.

- Work continues on Old Wire Road, Highway 112, and Ruppel Road
- The Old Wire Road cycle track will connect to upgraded trails in Gulley Park
- The Niokaska Creek Trail will extend to Mud Creek Trail, completing a major bicycle and pedestrian connection from east Fayetteville to the Razorback Greenway.
- Miles of water line and drainage improvements, sewer rehabilitation, and pavement overlay continue in 2019, as well as vital new and repaired sidewalk installations

We kicked off our Stormwater Study this fall, analyzing services currently provided and what is needed to keep our residents safe during flooding and to reduce contaminants reaching our waterways.

Years of continued infrastructure improvements and maintenance help keep this city on track and we continue to implement our Master Plans, such as the **71B Corridor Plan** and the **Recycling and Trash Division's Master Plan**.

The reason I say all of this is because we will always promote the efficient expansion of City services and infrastructure to keep our City safe and clean, while also promoting a high quality of life with a unique sense of place.

Toward that end, we launched phase one of our **Parks and Recreation 10-year Master Plan**.

In multiple listening sessions all over town, and through public feedback you, our residents, told us that you want to be able to have an active lifestyle, have access to natural areas, and spaces to interact with fellow community members. And, you told us you LOVE the trails. In 2018, we created two miles of new trails, bringing our total shared-use paved trails to 45 miles, natural surface trails to 38 miles, and on-street bikeways to 30 miles!

During our parks planning, we learned that our community parks, such as Wilson, Walker, Gulley, and Bryce Parks, Lake Fayetteville, and Kessler Mountain Regional Park are your favorites. Our parks system is one of our crown jewels and we will continue to make it shine!

And now, let me tell you about what I am truly excited about...**IT'S THIS BOND INITIATIVE!!!**

We bring this extension of our one penny sales tax to you, the people, on April 9 of 2019 to allow us to continue to build our City and keep it moving forward!

We have paid the sales tax bonds down to the point that we can now finance, without raising taxes, another round of funding for the City's infrastructure projects to meet our growth and continue to build our City's future. The last time voters approved a Sales and Use Tax Revenue bond was in 2006, for \$110 million-dollars.

Today, for the same penny tax, we will be able to fund approximately \$214 million-dollars' worth of projects - projects that will continue to help us retain our leadership as one of the top best places to live in the United States!

This bond package includes investments in every major infrastructure area we need. It is a result of years of master planning and hard work with a keen eye to future economic vitality interests.

To begin with, \$70 million-dollars will go toward **building roads and improvements** such as traffic capacity, sidewalk, transit, and bicycle facilities enhancements.

- Funding for infrastructure improvements in the Dickson Street and Downtown Square areas - focusing on increased and improved sidewalk connections, lighting, and wayfinding
 - Increasing walkability and pedestrian comfort with signal upgrades
 - Continued expansion of the City's sidewalk network
 - Intersection and signal improvements for more efficient traffic flow
 - Developing and implementing a traffic calming policy
- Some of the following corridors and intersections being considered are:
- Completing the last missing segment of N. Ruppel Road for the arterial loop
 - Improvements to Zion Road from Vantage Drive to Crossover Road
 - Improvements to the Porter Road, Deane Street, and Sycamore Street corridor from I-49 to N. College Avenue
 - Improvements to North Street and Mission Boulevard from Garland Avenue to Old Wire Road
 - Improvements to Highway 71B, to implement the recommendations from the Highway 71B Corridor Plan currently in progress
 - Improvements to the 15th Street and Razorback Road intersection near Baum Stadium
 - Improvements to the Millsap Road and College Avenue intersection near Whole Foods

Hardware and software upgrades for the traffic signal network will make it easier to respond to changing traffic conditions. Increased funding for pavement overlay and pavement management programs to fix our potholes and maintain our roads.

As all our road improvements also take into consideration a walk friendly environment, so shall these new roads provide pedestrians with:

- Sidewalk improvements with additional lighting, wider sidewalks, and improved street crossings
- Transit stations and safety upgrades

Trail Improvement Projects total \$6.5 million for our growing pedestrian and cycling network including:

- Completion of the Tsa La Gi Trail
- Connections to Centennial Park via the Shiloh Trail and connections along Old Farmington Road
- Creation of the Sublett Creek Trail to make connections from North Street and Mission Boulevard, through Evelyn Hills Shopping Center area, to College Avenue near Woodland School
- Extension of the St. Paul Trail to the proposed paddle park at Pump Station Road, across the West Fork of the White River, and connecting with neighborhoods east of the river

We are looking at **Drainage Improvement Projects** that will total \$15 million-dollars. After the major flooding event in April of 2017, more than 100 projects of all sizes were identified throughout Fayetteville. Some of the larger, more critical projects include:

- The Little Missouri Creek near Old Missouri Road and Mud Creek Trail
- Areas near Fairlane, Elmhurst, and McClinton Streets
- E. Country Way Road and Ferguson Avenue, close to Gulley Park
- The area of Sunbridge Drive and N. College Avenue
- And other areas where residents are impacted by flooding

Also, we know we have growing public safety needs and top quality public safety programs, so let's be sure to provide the necessary infrastructure for Fayetteville police and fire departments to do their jobs, help keep people and property safe, and improve police and fire response times as calls for service increase.

Our police and firefighters work diligently with compassion for our residents, building relationships with the neighborhoods they serve, and providing community engagement opportunities year-around.

Public safety projects include two questions totaling \$50 million dollars. \$35 million dollars is going toward the purchase of land and construction of a new Fayetteville Police Headquarters. \$15 million dollars will be spent on firefighting facilities.

A new police headquarters building will provide the capacity for public safety to keep up with our growing City. The new facility will be a campus concept, and it will include three buildings – one for the main police department, housing all personnel; another for training with vehicle and evidence storage; and finally, an indoor pistol and rifle firing range.

Firefighting Facilities Improvements will provide three additional fire stations and apparatus to support ongoing growth for fire and emergency response. The new Fire Stations will be staffed with existing personnel and Fire Companies. The stations will be positioned in the south, northwest, and central areas of the City for quicker response to those areas. In addition, the Fire Department will replace two Fire Engines and a Ladder truck to complete the apparatus replacement program.

City Facilities Improvements totaling \$3 million-dollars will create more efficient working spaces and energy use, continuing the internal implementation of our City’s Energy Action Plan as role model for other cities to follow. At the end of the day, we are going stay ahead of call volumes and response times to provide services to our residents and keep them safe while they enjoy the amenities of our beautiful City.

Park Improvement Projects for the bond total \$25 million-dollars for regional and community parks and will add new features and land acquisition to include:

- Completion of the Kessler Mountain Regional Park baseball complex
- Improvements at Lake Fayetteville
- Camping amenities at Lake Sequoyah Park
- Enhancements to the Community Parks, including the Yvonne Richardson Community Center
- A paddle park on the West Fork of the White River
- Acquisition of future park land to include a partnership with the Fayetteville Public Schools for purchase of Lewis Fields

Economic Development Projects will total \$3 million dollars. For workforce development, these funds can be used to foster public/private partnerships to provide flexibility for recruiting businesses and to broaden Fayetteville’s incentive program.

The **Construction of the Cultural Arts Corridor** is also a considerable investment in our City’s economic development, including potential for new or replacement parking facilities. This project will total \$30 million-dollars and will transform the downtown area into a destination experience for residents and tourists.

The Cultural Arts Corridor is a public investment on public land for public use. The Corridor will create a community hub for large and small performances, festivals, visual arts, and so much more. It will be a catalyst for additional shopping and eating in the downtown area, while also increasing bike trails and connections, and improving streets and walkability.

The Cultural Arts Corridor project will ultimately put our community's cultural values on display for generations to come. It will celebrate our local arts culture; preserve the environment, urban forest, and watershed; and create accessible and enjoyable gathering spaces in central Fayetteville for residents and visitors.

And that, my friends, is the summary of the questions residents will be asked to vote for on April 9 of this year!

As I close: This City is and always will be on the cutting edge, pushing the envelope, leading the pack, and making what other places would call impossible our very own version of possible.

This City never rests and will always be moving down the road of progress to the place we will finally reside called the future.

As Kennedy also said in that same speech in 1963 referenced in my introduction:

We cannot rest on our achievement or resist the pace of progress. For time and the world do not stand still.