



**2022 State of the City
Jan. 25, 2022
Mayor Lioneld Jordan**

To the City Council, City Attorney, City Clerk and all Fayetteville residents, I offer the following State of the City, 2022.

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

The last two years have brought unprecedented circumstances to everyone in Fayetteville.

Each one of us has been affected by the pandemic in some way, whether it's:

- concerns about keeping our loved ones safe and healthy
- adjusting to changes in how we go to school
- dealing with job losses or unpredictable paychecks
- finding and retaining employees
- seeing sudden price increases
- or keeping a small business open and profitable.

As if these issues are not enough to bear, we must also contend with not knowing when – if ever – things will get back to normal. That has been a constant source of stress and worry for many of us.

The challenges we are navigating are truly unique. And those challenges will continue to come our way. In times like these, the future feels very uncertain.

But what I can tell you with absolute certainty is that this City will continue to meet the needs of our residents without interruption, no matter what circumstances we face.

I want to express my gratitude to the residents of Fayetteville for their ongoing support, engagement and compassion.

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

I would like to thank City Clerk Treasurer Kara Paxton and her staff for their work.

I want to thank City Council for advocating for the people of Fayetteville. I appreciate their hard work, service and financial stewardship for this City.

I would like to thank City staff for their diligence and hard work over the past year. Their efforts make it possible for this City to provide uninterrupted service to our residents while moving so many important projects forward.

Thank you to our police officers and firefighters. The demands placed on these men and women have increased significantly over the past few years. Yet they never waiver from their dedication to protecting our residents and keeping Fayetteville a safe place to live and work. Thank you.

And finally, I want to thank our partners: Experience Fayetteville, Fayetteville Public Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville Public Schools, the Chamber of Commerce, Startup Junkie and so many other organizations that serve our residents, promote our economy and provide resources for people in need.

And now, let us take a moment to celebrate a few of our 2021 Awards and Accomplishments:

- Fayetteville ranked fourth in U.S. News and World Report's Best Places to Live
- We received five awards from the Arkansas Parks and Recreation Association for our parks, trails and recreation programs
- Fayetteville Police Department's Dispatch Center received a "Love Thy Neighbor" Award from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials
- Our Fleet was nationally ranked in the Top 100 Fleets list again this year
- We were one of 95 cities named on the CDP "A" List for climate leadership and transparency
- For the twenty-sixth year in a row, we were given a Tree City USA distinction by the Arbor Day Foundation
- Our residential food waste drop-off program received the Arkansas Recycling Coalition's Education Program of the Year award
- Once again, Fayetteville was named a Volunteer Community of the Year by the Arkansas Municipal League
- We received three Trendsetter City Awards from Arkansas Business

These are just a few highlights of the awards we received in 2021. There are too many for me to cover tonight, but you can find a complete list on the City's website. Our awards showcase the excellent work being done across nearly every City department. I hope you're as proud as I am that our work here in Fayetteville is being recognized nationally and around the world.

Despite many challenges over this past year, the City has delivered – without interruption – the essential services our residents expect and rely on every single day. We've done this while also making substantial progress on many other projects. This includes work totaling just over \$35 million across nine infrastructure improvement areas in our 2019 bond program.

Tonight, I want to share with you a few of the ways my administration and I are working every day to take care of people, protect the environment and grow economic opportunities for everyone.

Taking care of people is a guiding principle for me and my administration. Every department at this City is focused on serving the people. It is at the core of everything we do.

But we are not just meeting essential health and safety needs. We are delivering services, support and opportunities that improve quality of life, security and wellbeing across our community.

Many of these services, you will use every day without giving them much thought – such as water, sewer, trash collection, streets, sidewalks and building safety.

Other services are more visible and celebrated. Our parks and trails give every resident access to a safe and inclusive space for outdoor recreation.

The Yvonne Richardson Community Center give residents of all ages a place to play, learn, socialize and have fun. Fayetteville Public Library offers an incredible range of opportunities to explore, connect, get inspired and build new skills.

Some services you may only think about in times of crisis or great need. These include emergency calls to Fire and Police, housing support, rental and utility assistance, access to mental health resources or help taking care of a beloved animal companion.

Last year we made many improvements to City streets, busy intersections, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, trails and drainage. This work means our residents and visitors

have a better, safer experience getting around town. This is true whether you are traveling on foot, using public transit, riding a bike, renting an eScooter or driving a car.

The natural beauty of Fayetteville's parks, lakes, trails and gardens enrich our quality of life. A master plan for our Parks and Recreation system is underway to make sure our parks remain vibrant, accessible and inclusive for future generations. Through a robust public input process, we're working with the community to identify assets and challenges for existing parks, open-space amenities, indoor and outdoor facilities and recreation programs.

Last year, service calls to the Police Department increased by about 3 percent. 911 emergency calls for Police service increased by about 11 percent. Meanwhile, calls to the Fayetteville Fire Department increased by about 28 percent compared to 2020. Last year, the Fire Department saved more than \$340 million of property in this City – an increase of about 53 percent.

Demands on our police and fire services have significantly increased over the past few years. It is critical that our Police and Fire Department personnel have the resources and support they need to meet these demands.

Fire Stations 8 and 9 will open this spring. Our new Police Department Headquarters opens this fall. In addition to these new facilities, we are working to recruit and retain the very best police and fire personnel to make sure this City can continue to provide the excellent service, safety and professionalism our community expects.

Last year our Police Department began a program that pairs a social worker intern with a police officer trained in crisis intervention to safely and compassionately assist residents in need. This is the first program of its kind in Arkansas, and its success in the first year has been incredible. Recently we were selected to receive a \$250,000 grant from the Department of Justice to expand our program. This funding allows us to make an even deeper impact on community safety and wellbeing.

Fayetteville is now the second largest city in Arkansas. Our population continues to grow as more people move here to enjoy everything we have to offer. With this growth comes increased demands on all City services. As we have always done, this administration will continue working to meet the needs of our residents while planning ahead for the future.

Protecting our environment means that we take proactive steps to preserve natural resources, reduce harmful climate impacts and promote resource efficiency.

There is no other city in this State that works as hard as Fayetteville to protect and preserve the environment. It's an important part of who we are as a community, and it remains a clear priority for this administration.

City government operations achieved a 65 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Our community-wide reduction was 19 percent. City solar projects prevented 30,000 metric tons of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere and cut our energy costs by \$500,000.

This year, we are working to end coal-supplied electricity to Fayetteville. We are also managing open space lands owned or controlled by the City to pull carbon dioxide from the air and into trees and grass. These actions will help us prevent more CO₂ from entering the atmosphere.

In 2021, we diverted nearly 15,000 tons of waste from going to area landfills through recycling and composting programs. Currently, we're diverting 19 percent of our waste.

That number is encouraging, but it isn't enough. As our population grows, we must do more to make sure we are reducing as much waste as possible. Food waste composting is one way each of us can make a difference.

Food waste makes up about 18 percent of what we send to the landfill. Last year, we started a new residential food waste composting program that makes it easy for residents to collect compost at home. We have five free drop-off locations around town and a mobile food waste recovery trailer that usually sets up on the Square during the Farmer's Market.

I hope you will add food waste composting to your household routine as another way to reduce your impact on the environment. This is a program we intend to grow over the next year.

We also plan to work with our regional partners to study where waste is coming from and how new diversion programs can help us keep material out of the landfill.

Last year, Fayetteville residents contributed 8,700 volunteer hours to remove invasive plants and clean up litter through our Adopt-A-Park and Adopt-A-Trail programs. This work helps to keep our trees healthy, prevents waste from entering our watershed and keeps our public outdoor spaces beautiful.

We planted 350 trees in public spaces to help maintain our urban tree canopy. We also gave away 1,200 native trees to Fayetteville residents through our Celebration of Trees

event. This year our goal is to plant 500 trees in low income neighborhoods, in our parks and along our trails, streams and sidewalks. And, we will give away another 1,200 trees to our residents through the 2022 Celebration of Trees.

This year, we will conduct a climate change vulnerability assessment and begin planning to mitigate expected climate change impacts. Climate change is a critical issue that affects all of us. It's an issue that we must address NOW.

We must also work to make sure our transition to clean energy and energy efficiency is equitable, affordable and available to all Fayetteville residents and businesses.

The passion, engagement and commitment we see from the Fayetteville community around protecting and preserving the environment is truly inspiring. Thank you for helping us safeguard Fayetteville for future generations.

Growing economic opportunities for everyone means that our workforce and our business community receive the support they need to grow, thrive and be successful.

This year, you will hear more about a new project in Fayetteville that I'm really excited about. SLS Community and South Cato Springs LLC are creating a community of vocational, residential and clinical resources that will help improve the lives of neurodiverse residents and their families.

I believe this will be one of the most significant economic and community development projects ever to come to Fayetteville.

I want to thank our partners who are working to bring this vision to life:

- the SLS Community Board of Directors
- Phigenics LLC
- the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce
- Startup Junkie
- UAMS
- our Economic Vitality Department
- and many more

I also want to honor the visionary behind this project and friend of the City, Ashton McCombs III, whom we lost late last year.

When our bond program is complete, we will have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into this community. This kind of investment is playing an important role in keeping Fayetteville's economy strong.

Through our bond program, we will continue to improve our streets, drainage, parks, trails and city facilities, and to build infrastructure to support new and valuable economic development projects.

Progress continues on The Ramble. This 2019 bond project creates a new destination that will attract visitors and new business, add to our sales tax revenue and support the vitality and safety of our downtown and entertainment districts.

We broke ground on a replacement parking deck earlier this month, and construction is now underway. Improvements to Fay Jones Woods, Razorback Greenway and West Avenue between South Street and Center Street in the Lower Ramble will be complete this spring. More work on West Avenue from Center to Dickson Street will start this spring. With the help of Experience Fayetteville and a new Arts and Culture staff position at the City, we will begin to see programming in the Lower Ramble later this year.

Last fall we welcomed the UCI 2021 Cyclo-Cross World Cup event at Centennial Park, which also will be the site of the 2022 Cyclo-Cross World Championship in just a few days. Because of the excellent work that's been done to make Centennial Park an attraction for mountain biking events, thousands of international competitors and spectators will spend time in our community, contribute to our local economy and hopefully plan return visits.

Speaking of visitors to this City, our airport had a record year in 2021. Fuel sales increased more than 80 percent compared to 2020, and airfield operations increased around 30 percent.

When people fly into Fayetteville for athletic events, recreation or business meetings, they also stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, shop in our stores and enjoy our Outdoor Refreshment Areas and parklets.

All of this is good for our economy.

Development and new construction in Fayetteville are thriving. Last year we saw very strong numbers for development in Fayetteville. The number of plans, permits and inspections managed through the City's development services department increased significantly compared to 2020. This includes more than 600 new single-family homes, around 80 new townhouses and about 2.7 million square feet of commercial permits.

We continue our work to develop the City's diversity, equity and inclusion strategy. A new Equity Officer position at the City has helped us to identify DEI training opportunities and build relationships with community partners who are focused on addressing equity issues. This work is important and necessary for helping us build an inclusive, welcoming region where everyone can thrive.

We began working on a new Economic Vitality master plan in 2021, which I hope to bring to City Council for consideration this year. Strategic focus areas include:

- economic recovery from the pandemic
- workforce development
- equity and inclusion for community members
- small business support and growth
- workforce housing
- and the creation of jobs

A community-led steering committee along with insights from nearly 2,800 residents are helping to shape this plan, which I believe will be unlike any other we've seen in this City.

Workforce training, living wages, childcare and affordable housing are challenges that we must address to make sure everyone has access to worthwhile employment economic mobility. Through my work with the National League of Cities, I'm collaborating with mayors across the country on these same issues.

Fayetteville's economic vitality master plan will be tailored to meet OUR unique needs, right here at home.

Tonight, I've shared just a few of the many ways this City is working to take care of people, protect the environment and grow economic opportunities.

Early this year, I will bring a recommended plan to City Council for our American Rescue Plan funds. This funding gives us an unprecedented opportunity to invest in Fayetteville's people, environment and economy.

I know that many of you are anxious to hear how this funding will be used to deliver long-term benefits to everyone in Fayetteville. I look forward to introducing our recommendation and hearing comments from Council and the public.

I want you to know that my administration and I are always working to make Fayetteville a great place to live and work – now and into the future.

We often feel the strain of having so many projects happening at the same time. Even though it is hard work, we press ever onward, because that is what the people of Fayetteville expect and deserve.

Tonight, I conclude my remarks with this quote from President John F. Kennedy:

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

Here in Fayetteville, we do not settle for only what is good enough. We want the very best for this community.

And that means we must have the courage to take on difficult work TODAY, so that we ALL can enjoy the benefits of that work - tomorrow and into the future, for generations to come.

Friends and Council members, no matter what challenges come our way, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to working together for a better today – and a better tomorrow.

Thank you.