



State of the City January 23, 2018

2018 marks 181 years since the founding of Bentonville. Imagine for a moment the many changes our city has seen. From a small thriving agricultural community to a vibrant 21st century city that has become a destination for regional, national and worldwide travelers. With a population estimated to be near 48,000, Bentonville is known for its welcoming spirit and its “can do” attitude. Home to the world’s largest retailer, a famous art museum and people groups from throughout the world, Bentonville is garnering awards and recognition as one of the best places in the United States to live and work. The caring and giving spirit of our city was recognized this month when the Governor’s office and the Arkansas Department of Human Services presented Bentonville with the Arkansas Volunteer Community of the Year Award, for the 8th year in a row! This past year more than 23,000 volunteers from dozens of partner organizations recorded more than 400,000 hours of service resulting in a gift to our community worth in excess of \$9.6 million. I

appreciate all in our community who selflessly give of their time and resources to assist those with needs ranging from physical to financial. The cumulative effect of these volunteers serves to create a quality of life seldom found in today's fast-paced society.

Bentonville is managed by an extraordinarily professional team. The City's senior staff lead 466 full-time employees and 159 part-time employees. Our employees are dedicated to providing taxpayers with an "exceeds expectations" return on their investment in city government. Highly educated and certified, the professionals that comprise our team make our city a point of difference. In 2017, Human Resources conducted a Wage and Salary Survey that covered more than 125 positions City-wide. Survey results from seventy public and private employers plus wage and salary data from four additional surveys were utilized to validate individual position "pay ranges". Survey results allowed changes to be made to 40+ City positions. This will help keep the City's pay plan current and competitive in the robust regional economy.

Bentonville's 2017 sales tax receipts grew more than 10% over 2016 collections. Final tax collections for 2017 are more than triple (3X) decade old 2007 receipts. It is a great compliment to our city when the private sector enjoys the benefits of our growth through increased sales.

Late last year Walmart announced plans to design and construct a new campus on approximately 300 acres east of the current home office. This project will dramatically add to the already vibrant NWA economy. The project, expected to require more than 5 years to complete, will create additional jobs and tax dollars. I expect the continued growth of this company and its worldwide influence will serve to attract new residents to Bentonville and northwest Arkansas.

The Utility Billing team managed the collection and administration of more than \$90 million from more than 24,095 accounts while providing a high level of professional customer service. In 2017, Utility Billing implemented an automated phone payment system and new payment website improving our customer's ability to make payments conveniently.

In 2017, the Electric Department installed 1,120 new meters, raising the total electric meter count to 22,895. 2017 revenue exceeded projections by 6.39%. The Electric Department also installed or repaired over 69 miles of overhead and underground wire in conjunction with new developments and roadway improvements. The relocation of the overhead line located on SW 8th Street in anticipation of the road widening, is the largest overhead relocation in Bentonville's history. The design of the new "J" substation will be completed in 2018, with construction estimated to be completed in early 2019.

Our Public Works Director oversaw the construction and completion of the new City Maintenance Facility located on SW 28th Street. All associated departments were successfully relocated in late July. This new facility is designed to meet the needs of our city's growth beyond a population of 80,000 residents. Additionally, the director oversaw the relocation of water and sewer utilities associated with the 8th Street Improvement Project. Our Public Works Director continues to collaborate with the Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACA) and Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on water and wastewater discharge issues.

The public works maintenance team creates the clean, professional and appealing appearance witnessed throughout the City. Many of the kind remarks we receive from visitors regarding the cleanliness of our city can be attributed to the daily work of this team.

The Transportation Department, in partnership with ARDOT, successfully completed the widening of Arkansas 12, / Southwest Airport Regional Boulevard. This partnership created a five-lane roadway from Walton & Rainbow Curve west to Shell Road, complete with green spaces and sidewalks. Also, right turn lanes at the Elm Tree/Hwy 72 intersection were added along with signal modifications. Construction began in September 2017 on the Northwest 3rd Street project. Bridge replacement and widening from Saddlebrook to Coler Creek is underway. This

project is expected to be completed in summer 2018. Pedestrian tunnels, at SE 8th & SE “J” St., are under construction and approximately 60% complete.

Projects currently in the design phase are: SW I Street right turn lane addition, N Walton/NW 12th/Tiger Blvd. intersection improvements adding left turn lanes for NW 12th and Tiger Blvd. along with signal replacement, Town Vu bridge replacement, Watertower Rd/8th Street: extending 8th Street east to Watertower Road and widening Watertower Road south to SE 14th Street (Hwy 62), and 8th Street widening SW “I” Street to Moberly Lane. Additionally, plans are underway to install a traffic signal at NW 3rd Street and North Walton Blvd.

Land has been acquired at the Bentonville Municipal Airport for the construction of a west parallel taxiway. Construction of the turf runway has been completed and approval of the relocated Runway 36 Threshold has been obtained. The Bentonville Municipal Airport is experiencing greater growth and activity than any time since its creation.

Bentonville Fire Department hired 10 additional firemen in 2017. The Department responded to 6,341 emergency calls, and reported no fire related deaths in 2017. The department’s commitment to continual professional improvement is validated by 32,031 hours of training for firefighters throughout 2017. This is an increase of 2,227 hours compared to 2016. Training was specifically focused on leadership, EMS, Rescue, HazMat, and Fire Fighting protocol.

The Bentonville Fire Department was honored this January when it was selected as the winner of the 2017 Arkansas Business Trendsetter award for Public Safety. A new 137' aerial truck was purchased and recently delivered. This integral firefighting tool is expected to be in operation by the end of January. Bentonville (FD) apparatus inventory must include equipment with at least 100' of aerial capability in order to maintain a class 2 ISO rating.

The newly established strategy for Fire Safety inspections exceeded projections. Inspectors performed more than 2,000 inspections on existing commercial structures within Bentonville during 2017. Additionally, the Fire Department tested and serviced over 1,300 hydrants between November 1 and December 20. The 2018 Budget includes funding for the design and the site preparation for our 7th Fire Station to be located in the southwest area of our City.

The Police Department and Emergency Dispatch Center processed approximately 66,000 calls for service. On average, dispatch has experienced an increase of more than two hundred calls each month for each of the past 6 years. Approximately 16,000

9-1-1 calls were received at the police department's Communications Center. There was no notable increase in more serious crimes or crimes against persons and no trends in criminal activity that should be cause for concern. One of the few more serious crimes recorded in 2017 involved the early Sunday morning violent armed

robbery of a Dollar General Store. Patrol officers investigated the robbery and were able to clear it by arrest within 45 minutes of its occurrence. (One of our officers was recognized by the Arkansas Attorney General for his efforts to solve this case.)

The Bentonville Bomb Squad finished the year with more than 100 calls for service, including 30 bomb related calls for service. A new Remotec FX Robot, one of only three in the world, was also brought into service in late 2017 through a \$317,000 Federal Grant.

Employee development and retention resulted in our police department ending 2017 fully staffed with 74 sworn officers and 31 professional staff members. A midyear City Council approval created a new Captain's position; the first addition to the PD command staff since 1983.

City Council also approved the design and future construction of a 25,000 square foot Dispatch Center. This new facility will be constructed on property located directly south of the current police facility. The new Dispatch Center will be weather rated and will include space for a city-wide emergency operations area. The new facility will also provide space for CID and an area designed to address operations and training needs. The existing police facility will be repurposed for uniformed patrol needs with minimal modifications.

Police and Fire Dispatchers implemented and completed a 9-1-1 education program for students in local elementary schools. School Resource Officers delivered the G.R.E.A.T (Gang Resistance Education and Training) program plus Drug Free Benton County presentations.

In response to growing concerns, the department offered presentations based on a nationally recognized Active Shooter training program to better educate and prepare our own staff, area businesses, churches, and other community members.

In response to school security concerns, the Police Department continued its elementary and middle school visitation program. Officers averaged more than 30 random visits weekly, taking advantage of opportunities to encourage good personal choices at a very early age. The police department also collaborated with the Bentonville School District to launch an ongoing anti-drug campaign.

In 2017, the City of Bentonville Legal Department handled 3,010 new criminal and traffic cases in Bentonville District Court, including arraignment, discovery, plea hearings and trials. Notably, the department's case load for matters set for trial increased from 791 trial settings in 2016 to 1109 trial settings in 2017. This increase translates into greater time devoted to trial preparation and witness and law enforcement coordination as well as additional legal and police department hours dedicated to appearing in court.

The department also prepared numerous ordinances and resolutions, reviewed hundreds of criminal cases for probable cause, provided legal and prosecution support for criminal investigations, prepared contracts for approval, negotiated land transactions and complex regulatory matters and consulted regularly with all City departments to provide guidance and risk management.

The department maintained its commitment to continuing education and collaboration, attending the NADCP Conference on innovative treatment courts, together with the DWI Court Team, including defense counsel, treatment providers, law enforcement and supervision. The department also worked closely with respected collaboration experts Ken Cloke and Joan Goldsmith, culminating in the City's onsite training and community dialogue.

Bentonville Parks and Recreation's Community Programs continue to grow in size and popularity with our citizens and visitors. In 2017, Parks and Recreation hosted 140 recreation programs involving more than 237,500 participants.

Bentonville Parks and Recreation was recognized with two prestigious awards ~ The United States Specialty Sports Association named Memorial Park as the "National Sports Complex" of the Year. The Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association named the Square-to-Square Bike Ride as the "Event of the Year" in the State of Arkansas.

A \$530,000 renovation at Melvin Ford Aquatic Center was completed in May, just in time for opening the summer season. This renovation provided a major facelift for this popular 25 year old facility.

Parks and Recreation adopted a new 10 Year Master Plan, this process included more than 27 public and focus group meetings with citizen participation and input. The plan provides Parks and Recreation with a planning document and a Capital Improvement Plan that will continue for the next decade.

In November the Bentonville Community Center welcomed its one millionth visitor. This landmark visit was celebrated on November 13, two years and five months since its opening. Since opening in June 2015, the facility has offered 7,000 swim lessons, 130,000 fitness classes, hosted 80,000 children in the Kids Center, and provided countless opportunities for our citizens to enrich their lives in what is proving to be a very valuable asset for our community.

Multiple trail projects were completed in south and southwest Bentonville. The Citizens Park Fitness Trail and the Trail of Two Cities are two of the most popular additions.

Bentonville Public Library worked with the Bentonville Library Foundation to reconfigure or “repurpose” specific areas of the facility to make best use of the

existing floorplan. These changes improved connectivity of related spaces and allow library staff to share resources while enhancing patron's library experience.

Bentonville Public Library was one of fourteen libraries nationwide selected to host *Explore Space: A Cosmic Journey*. This traveling exhibit was available January through March 2017 and saw more than 7,900 patrons viewing this exhibit.

In April, in conjunction with youth lit fest, a special StoryWalk® was unveiled at Train Station Park! Visitors were encouraged to stroll through the park and read one of the featured books. The author and the illustrator were both present.

In September, ten members of the BPL staff presented professional development sessions at the 2017 Arkansas Library Association annual conference on various library topics. Bentonville Library also hosted an open house event for conference attendees where more than 100 librarians, library workers and special guests attended.

Community Development Highlights:

Estimated Population: 47,645 – up 5% from 2016

459 single family building permits -- down 22% from 2016 (2016 was highest since 2005)

Average value of new home--\$291,569

Average new home size—2,953 sq. ft.

Multi-family units – 400 – up 59% from 252 in 2016

Total number of all building permits issued – 1,562 – up almost 7% from 2016

Value of all residential building permits = \$395.1 million

Additional ordinances adopted include regulations for addressing amendments to the sign code, and adopting national standards for determining sight distances at intersections and commercial driveways.

Other initiatives designed to enhance Bentonville’s appearance, environment and sense of community included: tree and flower plantings, tree giveaways, volunteer events, neighborhood meetings and public art.

Bentonville maintained its Tree City USA designation for the eighteenth year in a row, exceeding the per capita spending requirement for community forestry initiatives. Due to a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, the Tree and Landscape Committee was able to give Bentonville residents almost 800 trees. The October Planting Blitz resulted in the planting of an additional 430 trees on 6 public property locations.

Transportation assistance for low-income, elderly and disabled Bentonville residents continues to be offered by supplementing the costs associated with taxi and Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) fares. \$27,340 taxi and ORT coupons were redeemed by 217 approved riders during the past year.

As I begin my 12th year as your mayor, I want you to know that I consider it a great honor to lead the City's endeavors. I see a bright future for our city and I commit to lead with a focus on professionalism, character and integrity in all that we do.

Bentonville is "God blessed" and a welcoming community comprised of peoples from all over our world. Bentonville is a safe place, a prosperous place and a place that strives to embrace change and growth in a responsible manner while maintaining a special small town atmosphere.

It is my vision and my hope as we grow, that Bentonville will always appreciate and respect those who have gone before us. Those whose service often resulted in sacrifice for the liberty and freedom we enjoy today. I pray that those who currently work to keep us safe and protect us from harm be held safe themselves and that the services provided by our city's employees will be seen as a model for others to follow.

Thank you all ~ may God continue to bless our City, Northwest Arkansas and the United States of America

**Mayor Bob McCaslin
City of Bentonville**