

First, let me welcome you to the Rogers City Council Chambers for the 2013 State of the City Address. I want to thank each of you for being here tonight and extend a special thanks to the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce for hosting the reception this evening. The relationship between the City and the Chamber continues to be one of the cornerstones of our success in Rogers.

Members of the Rogers City Council, Honorable City Attorney, Honorable Clerk, Honorable Judge Paul Bridges, city directors, city employees, and my fellow citizens, it is my honor and privilege to present to you the State of the City.

This is my third time to deliver the state of the city address and the beginning of my fifteenth year with the city. I can tell you that the state of the city has never been better. We continue to be a leader in the state on the economic front as the state and the country slowly recovers from one of the worst fiscal collapses in our nation's history. The success of Rogers and Northwest Arkansas continue to be led by the founding principles of strong leadership from our business community, the commitment to education, state of the art health care, a history of successful public-private partnerships, and the spirit of our people.

As we continue to be a leader in the state, it is imperative that we continue to invest in quality of life amenities in the city. Anchored by the passage of the 2011 bond election, many improvements are in the final planning stages or can already be seen throughout the city. Yesterday, we dedicated the new sports park and in May we will dedicate the new aquatics facility. These two projects alone represent \$19.5 million dollars of investment in our "quality of life" in Rogers. In 2013, we will aggressively plan for the re-development of Lake Atalanta. The acquisition of an additional 70+ acres contiguous to the existing Lake Atalanta Park has expanded our options and will prove to serve us well as we bring back the destination lure to Lake Atalanta. The regional Razorback trail project construction continues and completion is just around the corner. This regional project will prove to be one of the single most important regional "quality of life" amenities and a legacy example of the spirit of regionalism in Northwest Arkansas.

Currently under design or construction is \$100 million dollars in transportation infrastructure improvements which will prove to keep Rogers ahead of the game as we continue to attract new businesses and industry to Rogers. It has never been more important for us to be on our "A" game when it comes to competing for jobs and rooftops. The significant investment and effort of the Northwest Arkansas Council to improve economic development in Northwest Arkansas puts the region in the best possible position to attract new business.

2012 proved to be another record setting year for Rogers. Cabela's, Fresh Market, and a host of other new businesses opened in 2012. NextLife, a post-consumer plastics recycling center opened with an expected growth of up to 350 good paying jobs. A new record was set in sales tax collections in 2012, breaking the \$13 million dollar mark for the first time. That number represented an additional \$1 million dollars over 2012 collections. After a couple of declining years in 2009 and 2010, the last two years have seen an average annual growth of 7.5%. We continue to keep a healthy reserve, while cash flowing some of the smaller capital projects throughout the year, all good indications for our future.

I just want to spend a few minutes highlighting some of our individual department accomplishments of 2012 and goals for 2013.

The Parks and Recreation departments had a busy and exciting 2012 as two major projects were coming to fruition. The new Rogers Regional Sports Complex has been a much anticipated project as we continue to serve more and more youth and adult sports. By the end of 2012, we had acquired four of the five additional tracts of land for the future construction of the Veterans Park Soccer Complex. This project, when completed, will fulfill the promise made to the community after necessary changes had to be made in the development of a soccer complex. Working with the Rogers Activity Center board, the lights that were taken down from Dock Wheeler Park were installed on four soccer fields at Foerster Park, marking the first lighted soccer fields in the parks system. As previously stated we will open the new Aquatics Center in late May. This project will prove to be a regional amenity serving thousands of visitors from Northwest Arkansas and surrounding regions.

In 2012, the Rogers Museum Foundation gained a 501 (c) (3) status and started a capital campaign for facility expansion. They received the Arkansas Museums Association exhibit of the year award for the *Benton County Crime Stories* exhibit. If you haven't seen this exhibit, I highly recommend a visit. 2012 marked the highest ever off-the-street visitation and a 7% increase in overall in-house attendance. A total of 109,976 people either visited the museum or were served by an outreach exhibit, including 31,888 schoolchildren. The focus of 2013 includes continued work on the capital campaign and production of two new community exhibits.

The Rogers Recycling Center serves over 250 schools and businesses every week in addition to the self-drop off from individuals. The center processed more than 1,600 tons of material saving valuable space in our landfills. The center processed more than 230 tons of glass in 2012, which would have taken over 400 years to naturally biodegrade. In 2013, the center will begin work with the Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders to offer an event recycling program.

The Rogers Police Department continues to serve the public with a high level of professionalism. The department, like others in the region, struggles to recruit the best of the best which is difficult as area departments continue to grow and the pool of qualified applicants fails to keep pace. RPD rolled out 25 new Chevrolet Tahoe's, upgrading the uniformed operations fleet. The Chevrolet Tahoe is quickly becoming the police car of the future in America. With a similar average mpg to that of police fleet passenger cars, lower overall maintenance costs, and the additional space provided for the officer and the increasing amount of equipment necessary in the modern police unit, it makes the Tahoe the best performing police vehicle on the market. Numerous technological upgrades were funded in the communications center allowing for enhanced speed and accuracy. Of the violent crimes reported during 2012, the department cleared 70.4% of the cases, which is far above the national average and speaks highly of the commitment and dedication of our men and women in blue, who have dedicated their lives to keeping our community safe.

The Rogers Public Library continues to be one of the busiest in the state. In 2012 the Library circulated almost half a million items and now serves over 34,000 patrons annually. In 2012, it welcomed more than 4,000 new members, and served over 48,000 children, parents, and caregivers in the Children's Library. In 2013 the Library will complete a new strategic plan and explore additional opportunities to partner with other service providers, maximizing the exposure of the library in the community.

The Planning department rewrote the city sign ordinance, completed the new Drainage Manual replacing the 1993 manual, hosted the Regional Development Conference, and approved and processed 27 large scale plans and 71 variance requests. In 2013 the department will review and modify the Master Street Plan, update the growth comprehensive map, and explore upgrades in the GIS system.

The Rogers Street Department had a very productive 2012 which included: signalization of Olive and 34th Street, Price Lane widening from 1st Street to 8th Street, the beginning of drainage work on 24th Street, sidewalk installation on Highway 94 from 1st Street to Eastside Elementary, and completion of a decal lane on Highway 62. Bond projects continue as construction was started on 21st and 24th Streets, mill, caulk, and repair work was started in Country Club Estates; widening of Dixieland Rd. at the Sports Park, and the signal upgrades at 8th and Olive and 13th and Olrich were all completed. For 2013 projects include Persimmon and N. 22nd Street and completion of the 24th Street drainage project. Construction will start on nearly all of the first phase bond projects including: Bellview (north and south), Pleasant Grove Road, Monte Ne, First Street, Mt. Hebron, Price Lane, Perry Road, and the North 2nd Street drainage project.

Finance, Information Technology, and the Human Resources departments continue to support all the operations of the city well. Numerous investments are being made in the IT department in 2013 to help insure continued support and success. Our Finance department welcomed a new director this month. After 29 years of public service, Richard McComas will retire in March and begin traveling the country with his wife, Lisa. We honor and celebrate the accomplishments of the distinguished public service of Richard.

New commercial building permits decreased from 23 in 2011 to 20 in 2012, however, the valuation of the projects increased from \$23 million to \$26 million. Commercial remodel permits increased from 124 in 2011 to 133 in 2012. There were 17 commercial addition permits issues for 2012, up 1 from 2011. The total value of commercial permits issued for 2012 were \$42 million, compared to \$40 million in 2011. Residential single family permits were up in 2012. There were 309 permits issued in 2012 with a valuation of \$60 million, compared to 181 permits in 2011 with a valuation of \$34 million. Single family addition permits were up 34 over 2011, with 129 permits issued. There were 128 single family remodel permits issued in 2012, an increase of 27. In 2012, the Rogers Fire Department's Fire Marshals were co-located at City Hall as building inspectors and fire marshals work closely on commercial buildings construction.

More than 2,500 notices or letters were issued by Code Enforcement for violation of city ordinances in 2012, up from 2,200 in 2011. The majority of these were for tall grass/weeds, inoperative motor vehicles, and unsightly/unsanitary conditions. Foreclosed or abandoned property continued to be an issue in 2012 regarding the upkeep of those properties. Code Enforcement continued to pick-up illegally placed signs. Code officers also cleaned up graffiti at approximately 200 locations in 2012. A joint proactive effort with the Planning Department resulted in numerous illegal signs being removed by business owners, resulting in these businesses coming into compliance with the City's sign ordinance, thus improving the appearance of the City.

Rogers Animal Services had a remarkable year in 2012. Total intakes at the shelter were down for the year. The lower intake numbers are attributed to a community focused animal control effort based on returning pets to owners and keeping animals out of the shelter. Euthanasia numbers were cut in half in 2012 compared to 2011. Rogers Animal Services adopted out 1,115 animals in 2012. The Rogers Animal Services team is rapidly becoming the benchmark animal control and animal sheltering organization in Northwest Arkansas. In 2013, Rogers Animal Services is going to stress responsible pet ownership by reviewing all city animal ordinances,

along with emphasizing spay/neuter, and micro-chipping. Dallas, Albuquerque, and Denver all require pet owners to have their pets spay or neutered, or acquire an “intact animal permit”. The City will look at what is working in other areas of the country to help with the over-population of unwanted dogs and cats.

The Rogers Fire Department continued to set the pace for modern and progressive public safety agencies by becoming one of three fire departments, worldwide, to be accredited by both the Center for Public Safety Excellence and Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services. This important and painstaking distinction means that taxpayers in Rogers can rest assured they’re protected by some of the best first responders in the country. Just as importantly, these accreditation processes are the “gold standard” in municipal public safety and provide for quality training programs, excellent equipment initiatives and strategic direction for the department. In 2012, four new fire apparatus, three pumpers, and an aerial ladder were placed into service thanks to funding from the 2011 sales tax extension. The year 2013 will see an additional three fire trucks arrive to complete the fleet overhaul for the department. The department’s statistics continue to show that Rogers firefighters are among the busiest anywhere. With nearly 50,000 hours of training and a ten percent increase in emergency calls, there is little downtime around the fire station. Firefighters helped improve the city’s cardiac arrest survival rate in 2012 by training thousands of adults and middle school children in CPR. It is our hope that the Rogers of the future is a healthy city, where life-saving interventions are known by all.

The department saw the departure of former Deputy Chief Jake Rhoades. Replacing him was an internal, tenured member of the department, Bryan Hinds. In the coming year, the department will continue to focus on the development of officers and establishing the city’s training center as a regional “mecca” for emergency responder professional development. The year 2013 will also signal huge improvements for the department’s response capabilities as the city’s heavy rescue will receive a dedicated fulltime crew and further efforts will be made to locate and plan for Station 8 in southwest Rogers.

In 2012, the Adult Wellness Center stayed busy with an active membership roster of 10,213 members and with anywhere between 800 to 1,400 people visiting the facility on any given day. In order to keep up with this amount of traffic, the Adult Wellness Center implemented a long-term maintenance plan for their facility that was approved during the 2012 budget process. Also, the Friends of the AWC fundraiser was implemented in September of 2012 and generated \$4,555 during the first four months of activity. Furthermore, the AWC conducted wellness contests, health screenings, and several educational programs as a direct result of their successful partnership with both the Mercy Health System and the Northwest Health System. During 2013, the Adult Wellness Center will provide us with the results of the Membership Rate Survey that will help the City Council during the membership rate discussions. The emphasis on maintenance will continue in 2013 by facilitating and executing the long-term maintenance plan to care for the building and equipment.

Main Street Rogers was happy to report the opening of twenty seven new businesses in 2012. Eleven downtown businesses expanded in the past year and three existing businesses relocated to downtown Rogers. Occupancy rate for the heart of the downtown area is 95%. The new street light program for downtown continued with the addition of lighting at the intersection of 2nd and Elm and one block of Elm Street. The Main Street Rogers Design Committee presented a 4 year Christmas lighting plan for Frisco Park and the Downtown area. Last fall, phase one of the plan was approved by City Council. A 27-foot-tall lighted Christmas tree was purchased by the city and displayed in Frisco Park, as the center of the Christmas light display for 2012. Main Street Rogers held 186 events and activities in downtown Rogers in 2012. These events provided more than 49,700 people with family friendly fun activities and programs.

The Rogers Municipal Airport showed improvements in most measures of activity, including a 6% increase in fuel flowage fees, its primary source of revenue. Excluding tower and customs operations, core operating and maintenance expenses were 57% under budget, evidence of the continued focus on cost control and efficiency of the 120 aircraft based at Carter Field. Rogers Municipal Airport was one of 84 out of 2,455 general aviation airports classified as a “National

Service Airport” in a study of general aviation airports conducted by the FAA. In 2012, the airport completed a \$1.1 million project, to reconstruct an aged, dilapidated, and structurally insufficient corporate apron. In 2013, the Airport Commission and staff plan to complete a new strategic business and financial plan for the Airport, while continuing to identify, explore, and capitalize on economic development opportunities.

As you can see there is a lot happening in Rogers and many reasons for all of us to be proud to call Rogers home. The challenges we face would be welcomed news in most communities across America today. On behalf of the city staff, elected officials, members of the various boards and commissions, and my office, we look forward to continuing to provide unparalleled service to the people of Rogers, the “city where possible lives.”

While the challenges are many, the opportunities are endless.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Hines, Mayor

