

City of Bentonville

Bentonville, at 180 years of age, is a vibrant City positioned to professionally serve its population with an above expectations level of service. Our city has become a destination for many seeking a place to call home, work or visit. The nationally recognized achievements of our school district, employment opportunities and quality of life serve to influence those who choose to locate into our community. Intentional commitment by myself and the leadership team to manage city revenue, assets and expenses in a conservative manner produced sound financial results for another calendar year. I and staff work with the many individuals, businesses, organizations and City Council to help insure developments and improvements are responsible and designed to produce long-term positive impact on our City. It is often difficult to assimilate change while preserving the key characteristics of our City. Preserving the characteristics that make this a favored place to work, raise a family and live life is a goal we are committed to in a very intentional manner. Additionally, we have to manage our time and resources in such a manner that insures we are focusing on initiatives that are material and critical to the efficient operation of the City.

Bentonville is blessed to have an extraordinarily professional team guiding its many operations. The City's senior staff manages approximately 440 city employees and an additional 165 seasonal summer employees. Our employees are dedicated to providing taxpayers with an "exceeds expectations" return on their tax dollars. The highly educated and certified professionals that comprise our team make our city a point of difference. The addition, in 2016, of financial incentives for educational achievement by our employees is designed to further strengthen our team through both retention and recruitment. The City employs seasoned professionals in each of these fields of expertise: legal, courts, finance, administration, law enforcement, fire safety, community planning, engineering, library services, human resources, technology, parks & recreation, public works, transportation, utilities management, and customer service.

For the seventh year in a row, Bentonville was named a Volunteer Community of the Year by the State of Arkansas. This past year 33,032 volunteers from 56 partner organizations recorded more than 403,047 hours of service resulting in a gift to our community worth approximately \$9.5 million.

Bentonville's 2016 sales tax receipts were 1.7% over 2015 collections. Sales tax collections for 2016 were up 70.2% over 2006 receipts. It is a great compliment to our city when the private sector enjoys the benefits of our growth through increased sales. In addition there have been numerous new investments in retail and hospitality outlets. Our City is solidly positioned to continue providing services and customer service designed to exceed our customer's expectations throughout the coming year.

Our Utility Billing team managed the collection and administration of more than \$88 million from more than 23,051 accounts while providing a high level of professional customer service. Our Utility Drive-thru relocated to a refurbished facility at the corner of SW 4th Street and Main in July allowing easier access for patrons.

The Electric Department completed numerous upgrades designed to minimize interruptions and increase the reliability of our delivery system. This past year, in addition to the large amount of commercial and residential developments completed by Bentonville Electric and Utility Department, planning and design took place for many large projects within the City.

Our Public Works Director supervised the design and construction of the new City Maintenance Facility located on SW 28th Street. This initiative will relocate (under one roof on 30+ acres) our Street, Water Utilities, Wastewater, Electric and Inventory departments. This will provide for more efficient and effective operations. We anticipate this \$26 million facility will open mid-2017. This facility was designed to meet the needs of a city with a population of approximately 80,000 citizens.

The public works maintenance team is the primary force that creates the clean, professional and appealing appearance witnessed throughout the City. The many 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 successfully completed the 84 Right-of-way easement acquisitions related to the 8th Street project. Utility relocations have now begun and completion is expected in 18 months. The widening of Arkansas 12, / Southwest Airport Regional Boulevard in partnership with AHTD continued, when completed, this project will provide a much needed five lane highway from Walton & Rainbow Curve west to Shell Road. The City of Bentonville again partnered with City of Rogers on the I-49/Walton Blvd. interchange improvement. Design was completed on the NW 3rd Phase 3 project, and is set to tentatively go to bid early summer. Design is approximately 90% complete on the Water Tower/8thStreet extension project. Work on the Elm Tree/Hwy 72 intersection

improvement project is pending city council approval of the contract. The Hwy. 102 and SW "I" St. right turn lane addition is in the consultant selection phase. The Walton Blvd./12th St./Tiger Blvd. intersection improvement is in the Right-of-Way acquisition phase.

The Fire Department had a record breaking year in run volume. For the first time in the history of the Bentonville Fire Department, the department had 600 plus emergency calls in one month. The Fire Department finished the year with a 3.27% increase in call volume for a total of 6,325 emergency calls, consisting of 689 fire calls, 163 hazardous material calls, 687 other calls, and 4,786 EMS calls and one fire related death. The commitment to continual improvement is validated by 29,803 man-hours of training for our professional firefighters throughout 2016.

The Human Resources department worked with the Fire department in coordinating a full "Department Assessment" to help identify personnel shortages and staffing requirements. The result was the approval of ten (10) additional firefighters to be spread across six (6) fire stations and the development of an "overtime" program for existing firefighters to assist the Fire Marshal and Fire Inspectors office in conducting fire and safety inspections throughout the City. These two outcomes will greatly improve the fire department's ability to continue to provide outstanding fire and EMS support to the City residents and to improve the business, school, and home safety standards for the community.

The Police Department and Emergency Dispatch Center processed almost 64,000 total calls for service, a significant increase over 2015 totals. On average, and for the 5th year in a row, the Police Department answered between three and five hundred additional calls each month compared to the prior year. There was no notable increase in more serious crimes or crimes against persons. The Bentonville Bomb Squad finished the year with more than 50 calls for service. Other activities for the Bomb Squad, such as dignitary details, special events, safety sweeps and standby services bring the total to more than 100 calls for service. One homicide occurring in late 2015 was swiftly cleared by arrest in 2016.

Employee development and retention resulted in our police department finishing 2016 fully staffed and nearing fully trained with 69 sworn officers and 30 professional staff members. Two newly formed positions, a Domestic Violence Detective and a Community Officer completed their first year of activity with notable results. The Domestic Violence Detective position has allowed us to take a new approach to the relationship between law enforcement and the victims of domestic violence cases. This new approach has improved cases and identified victims who may have otherwise fallen through the cracks. The Community Officer initiated services during one of the most volatile times for law enforcement in recent history. As police departments across the nation struggle with an ongoing public relation crisis, our Community Officer worked to strengthen existing community relationships, and identified new partnerships that will continue to solidify Bentonville's reputation as a city of distinction.

In response to nationwide school security concerns, the Police Department also continued its established program to increase safety and security in our schools. This program involves random visits to elementary and middle schools that are not served by School Resource Officers.

2016 marked the 100 year anniversary of our police department's service to the community. In recognition of this century of service, a public event was held on May 21 at Citizens Park. During this event, the City of Bentonville Police Department was recognized by numerous dignitaries. The Honorable U. S. Senator John Boozman recognized and congratulated the police department with an entry to the Congressional Record, and is quoted in the Record as stating that our police department has "made Bentonville one of the safest communities in the State of Arkansas and the United States."

The Bentonville District Court continues to look at ways to improve the court experience and better serve our community. In April, 2016, the District Court launched JusticeWeb, an online portal that allows people to look up cases heard through the Bentonville District Court. This website provides case dispositions, upcoming court dates, current balances owed and information on whether a citation is payable without an appearance in court. The implementation of JusticeWeb has greatly reduced the amount of time court staff devotes to case research and has provided a useful tool to attorneys, record check companies and the general public to access requested information.

The District Court continues to see a steady increase in total cases filed annually. In 2016, the District Court had almost 5,500 new Traffic, Misdemeanor and Ordinance cases filed and over 1,500 new Civil and small Claims cases. More than 8,500 arraignments on new charges were scheduled last year and over 3,500 cases were given Plea/Discovery and/or Trial dates.

The DWI Court program remains a high priority for the District Court. The DWI Court has grown the number of participants it serves and the DWI Court team meets regularly to review their progress.

In 2016, the City of Bentonville Legal Department handled 2,998 new criminal and traffic cases in Bentonville District Court, including arraignment, discovery, plea hearings and trials. The department also prepared 67 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 alternative dispute resolution, receiving training in mediating complex organizational conflicts from the Straus Institute at Pepperdine University.

Bentonville Parks and Recreation received several awards and hosted several events throughout the year. One of only 200 communities in the United States and one of two Arkansas communities, Bentonville was recognized as a Playful City USA. In September, the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association recognized the Bentonville Community Center as the Recreation Facility of the Year in the State of Arkansas. In July, Memorial Park played host to the Fast Pitch Softball National championship of the United States Specialty Sports Association. Bentonville was the host city for the International Mountain Bike Association's (IMBA) World Summit. The event utilized our Downtown, the Razorback Greenway, Slaughter Pen and other recreation facilities for the largest event in IMBA's history.

November 10 marked the opening of the newly designed playground at Wildwood Park. The playground design was a partnership between Brightfield Middle School 5th grade science classes and Bentonville Parks & Recreation Department. Also in November, a new Bike Playground opened north of the Bark Park. The play area is designed for children ages 5-12.

In 2016, a new restroom and concession facility was added for the Community Center soccer fields. Park's staff worked with Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department to bid a new one mile loop trail - Construction is anticipated in spring 2017.

Parks and Recreation received more than \$2 million dollars in grant funding from organizations leading the way for quality of life, safety and beautification projects that will benefit our citizens for many years to come.

Use of Bentonville's public parks and trails are at an all-time high with an estimated 2 million patrons utilizing our 22 parks and 56 miles of multipurpose and single track bike trails. In addition, more than 600,000 people participated in Bentonville Parks & Recreation's organized recreation programs and cultural events, validating that our Parks and Recreation system is meeting its mission of "Enhancing lives through leisure, recreation and culture."

The self-service library at the Bentonville Community Center has been well used by citizens. The 2,094 item collection has been checked out 9,951 times, resulting in a 475% material use. The convenient book drop has collected 11,340 books and audiovisuals since opening day.

October, 2016 marked Bentonville Public Library's 10-year anniversary at 405 S. Main Street! Significant accomplishments during the last ten years at BPL include: library collection growth from 62,266 items to 134,325 items, recording 2.8 million visits, and issuing more than 60,500 library cards to patrons. Library programs have been attended by 298,998 people.

Volunteerism continued to positively impact the library with 556 individuals volunteering 11,385.75 hours valued at almost \$268,250. BPL received more than \$94,540 in grants, sponsorships and donations last year. One grant resulted in ten iPads being purchased for patron use inside the library.

Community Development Highlights:

Estimated Population: 45,458 – up 3.1% from 2015
594 single family building permits -- up 23% from 2015
Average value of new home--\$290,569
Average size of new home—2,926 sq. ft. – compared to 3,048 last year
Value of all residential building permits was almost \$210.8 million—up almost 5%.
We expect this trend to continue with 638 lots final platted this year and another 783 preliminary platted.

Two regulatory changes occurred in 2016. As a result of the recent U.S. Supreme Court case regarding municipal sign law, our sign code needed to be brought into compliance with the ruling. The new sign ordinance was adopted by City Council this past August.

Bentonville's downtown neighborhoods have experienced unprecedented growth and development. Numerous rezonings and variances for residential development indicated a need to offer zoning districts designed for a variety of residential types. With the help of our planning consultants, Houseal Lavigne Associates, three new land use categories for our Future Land Use Plan were adopted and resulted in the establishment of four new downtown residential zoning districts.

Other initiatives designed to enhance Bentonville's appearance and environment included: tree and flower plantings, tree giveaways, trail construction and public art. The Tree and Landscape Committee funded \$50,000 in tree-related projects and gave away 675 trees to Bentonville residents, with financial assistance provided by the Walton Family Foundation.

The fourth annual Tree Planting Blitz held in October, logged more than 584 volunteer hours by 145 volunteers who planted 675 trees in 14 locations throughout the City.

Bentonville continues to offer a taxi coupon program to assist low-income, elderly and disabled residents with transportation. Approximately \$20,000 of taxpayer dollars funded the 7,800 trips provided to almost 100 participants.

As I begin my 11th year as your mayor, I want you to know that I am honored to lead the City's 440+ employees. I and staff remain committed to serve you with professionalism, character and integrity in all that we do.

I see Bentonville as "God blessed", a welcoming community populated by peoples from all over our world, a safe place, prosperous and poised to grow. It is my vision and my hope that our city 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. May those who currently work to keep us safe and protect us from harm be held safe themselves. I pray 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