

2019 State of the City Address
Mayor Doug Sprouse
City of Springdale

On January 1st of this year, I began my 11th year as the Mayor of Springdale. I want to first thank the people of Springdale for allowing me to serve in this office. It is truly and exciting time to be in Springdale. Thanks to our great business community and our hard working residents, we are consistently one of the state's leaders in job creation. We also are tied with Bentonville for the lowest unemployment rate in Arkansas, at 2.5%. On the revenue side, our city sales tax receipts are up 6.25% over the first 2 months of last year. We have so many great and exciting things happening in our City, and I'll just have time tonight to touch on a few of those. But before I get into some of the things that are coming, I would like to highlight a few of our city departments.

Fire Department- SFD together with our water utility, dispatch center, and IT Department, recently achieved an ISO 1 rating. This positively impacts property insurance rates for our residents. Also, last summer, the SFD received National Accreditation. Our organization is now one of only a handful of departments statewide that hold both of these recognitions.

Police- SPD also continues to excel, not only in keeping our city safe, but also by working with our community partners to continue improving ways to serve our residents. Thanks to the support of this council and the voters of Springdale, we'll begin construction soon on a new facility that will further improve our public safety efforts, across the board. Construction will also include a new radio system and CAD, along with a new dispatch center and new IT facilities. This will position us to utilize the latest technologies that will enhance our ability to continue to protect and serve our growing city.

Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Community Development, our Buildings Dept., Animal Services, and all the divisions within each of these departments continue to work hard to meet the needs and expectations of our residents. Though we are a large organization, we are still a lean organization, when compared with other cities on a per capita basis. We are able to accomplish all we do because of the example and expectations set by our department heads and the dedication to service of those they supervise.

We have a Senior Center that I believe has no equal in the State of Arkansas. That's not because they're in a perfect facility, but because of the staff and volunteers that make it special for the seniors that attend.

Our citizens can access a premier Public Library and an award winning Museum. Both serve our community and region well.

Finally, I couldn't ask for a more efficient and supportive administration team. They help our residents daily, getting them to the proper person or finding answers to their questions or concerns.

I'm also privileged to get to work daily with other dedicated elected officials; Judge Jeff Harper, City Attorney Ernest Cate, and City Clerk Denise Pearce. Without them and the staffs they have assembled, we simply couldn't function as a city.

At this point, it's appropriate for me to recognize and thank this Council publicly, for your support of our great employees during our most recent budget process. You had to deal with some difficult choices and concerns, and I know I can speak for all our employees when I thank you for your confidence in the work we do.

We've experienced some exciting times in our city over the last few years, and the excitement is not only going to continue, but increase as more and more announcements of great things coming to Springdale are expected this year. Thanks to the strong support of the voters of Springdale, each ballot question considered in last year's bond election passed by an amazing average of 85%. That's almost unheard of. As a result, we now have several projects at various stages of design or construction. I want to update everyone on what is going on so far.

I'll start with our Parks Bond.

- 1) The final design of Shaw Family Park is due in a matter of days. The LSD was approved by our Planning Commission earlier this month. At almost 120 acres, this will be our second largest park behind JB Hunt. I should mention again a \$.5 mil. donation by the Shaw Family that is helping to make this large park a reality.
- 2) Design will begin soon on the improvements to Randal Tyson Sports Complex. Thanks again to the Tyson Family for generously donating a large portion of the park to the city that we did not already own. Now that the city owns the land, we are free to use bond money to go toward those needed improvements.
- 3) \$1.9 mil. of bond money was used toward the purchase of the former Next Level building on Cambridge St. Late last year, this Council unanimously approved the sale of our 1960 Youth Center in Murphy Park, along with the purchase of the Next Level building to become our new Rec. Center. This is an exciting opportunity which for the short term will present its share of challenges. But over time this move will prove to have been an excellent investment for the future recreational needs of our fast growing city.
- 4) We will also continue to use park bond money to make various improvements to existing parks. For example, we are now in the process of installation of field lighting at Bobby Hopper Park, and Security Camera installation at both Murphy and CL and Willie George Parks. And while this Council has not yet committed money to it, the Luther George Park improvements are currently under design. The design is being funded by a WFF Design Excellence grant, through the DSA. This has the potential to be a transformational project for the revitalization of our downtown. While I've made it clear that private money will be an important factor in construction of the improvements, it's also important that the city is in a position to make a significant contribution

of available park bond money toward construction. The design firm will be back for another round of public meetings next month.

Moving on to our Criminal Justice Bond update; the design team is working closely with the construction manager and city staff to finalize design. The design was also paid for by a Design Excellence Grant, saving our taxpayers well over \$3 mil. We should have completed construction documents by the middle of next month. Phase 1 of the project will consist of the new police building, including dispatch and IT Department, new courtroom and court offices, and new City Attorney offices. Phase 1 should be completed by May of 2020. Phase 2, which is the complete remodel of our existing city hall, will then begin and should be completed by June of 2021.

Design of our new Animal Shelter is nearing completion. The new shelter will be located just east of Hwy. 265, on the south side of Don Tyson Parkway. Construction should start this summer, and take about a year to complete. It will be a facility that will serve our residents for many, years to come. We also believe with this more visible and accessible location, every aspect of Animal Services will be improved, from increased adoptions and awareness, to more timely responses from Animal Control.

Now turning to an update on our new fire stations;

- 1) Station 7- Construction is ahead of schedule and should be completed in just a few months. If you haven't driven by lately on Harbor Avenue, it's going to be a great looking facility, and provide much needed coverage for a fast growing area of Springdale.
- 2) Station 8- Will be located on the corner of Huntsville Ave. and Kawneer Dr. It will be the same basic design as Stations 2, 3, and 7. The property for this station was donated to the city by the Public Facilities Board. Construction should begin late spring or early summer of this year.
- 3) We should be bringing forward design and CM contracts for station 9 within the next year. Station 9 will be located on the corner of Ball Rd. and Carrie Smith in the NW corner of Shaw Family Park. Planning for the additions to our training facility on Turnbow Ave. should follow shortly after Station 9 starts.

Road projects update; several road projects are in various stages of design or construction. Our first project was completed last year. That was the overlay and restriping of Huntsville Ave./Elm Springs Rd. from Thompson to I-49. Also included in that project was the overlay of a portion of Johnson Ave. and Lakeview Dr. This first project came in well under engineering estimates. Another project that is about to begin construction will be the extension of Gene George Blvd. from Bleaux north to Elm Springs Rd. Notice to proceed was issued Jan. 14th. Utility relocation has begun and road construction should begin very soon. Bids for this project also came in almost \$1mil. below preliminary estimates. One other road project already under construction is Watkins Ave, from Arvest Ballpark west to 64th St. We are partnering with NWACC on those improvements as they continue the construction of their new Washington County Center.

Other road projects under design;

- 1) The extension of 48th St. from the Walmart Supercenter north to Bob Mills Rd.
- 2) The extension of Ford Ave. from Ford Ave. to Butterfield Coach Rd.
- 3) 40th St. from Falcon north to the new AGF Education Center.
- 4) 64th St. from Dearing north to Sunset.
- 5) The extension of Maple Ave. from Holcomb to Park St.
- 6) Portions of Ball Rd. and County Line Rd. bordering Shaw Family Park.
- 7) Pump Station Bridge at Spring Creek. Partnering with ARDOT. Design complete. Acquiring ROW and moving utilities.

According to estimates, the projects I've just mentioned will use just over half of our road bond money. After a few more of these projects are bid, we can begin to prioritize the next round of road projects.

Now besides everything else going on, our downtown revitalization continues to hit on all cylinders and is even gaining speed. There are a lot of things being planned that I can't talk about yet, but I can say that we expect many important announcements related to downtown this year, the next announcement coming in a matter of weeks. Projects being talked about will keep bringing more jobs, residents, and visitors to downtown. While talking about downtown, I do need to mention the great work of our DSA, and look forward to working with new Executive Director, Jill Dabbs, as she works with her board and downtown businesses and residents as our downtown moves to the next level. I also have to give kudos to our Chamber of Commerce. Not only have they been a great partner to our DSA in promoting downtown, but they continue to work to effectively to promote all of Springdale. They also played a major role as the Governor was designating Opportunity Zones across the state. I'll not go into great detail here, but with the designation of 4 Opportunity Zones, Springdale has more of these zones than any other city in Arkansas, besides Little Rock, which also received 4. The really exciting part of this news is that with 4 contiguous zones, our entire downtown is within an Opportunity Zone. This will greatly encourage more investment and it will be coming more quickly than otherwise.

We're also looking forward to coming announcements in our Overlay District. As mentioned earlier, the NWACC Washington County Center will be completed this year. Further development near ACNW and the Highlands Oncology Facility that is under construction will bring many more development opportunities to the area. High quality multi family, also now under construction, will help provide much needed options for people hoping to locate in that exciting area.

While I've talked about downtown and our Overlay District, those aren't the only growing areas of Springdale. Mercy's new medical facility at Elm Springs Rd. and I-49, will also spur continued

development around that interchange. All along the I-49 Corridor, Hwy. 71B, and Hwy 265, as well as along our east west corridors, development is happening.

This year, we will also be preparing for the 2020 Census. We'll be meeting in a couple of weeks to begin forming our Complete Count Committee. We need help making sure everyone in Springdale is counted next year. Our residents need to understand the importance of getting everyone counted. State turn back funds that help us build and maintain our city streets are directly tied to our population. Everyone here uses our city services regardless of who they are, or how, or when they came here. We all drive on our roads. No matter who calls for emergency services, we respond. The level of effectiveness with which we can provide many of these essential services to all residents rely on this per capita funding that comes back to our city. We need to all participate. We're cheating ourselves and our fellow residents when we choose not to be counted. If any of our residents have an interest in serving on our Complete Count Committee, please call my office so we can get you connected.

I've probably gone on long enough. I can imagine some of your eyes glazing over as I'm writing this. These State of the City Addresses are much more difficult to give when we've got so much going on, because, it's difficult to choose what to leave out. But, that's a great problem for a city to have. We are blessed. What I've shared with you tonight is really just the tip of the iceberg. But I hope I've been able to give you, and our citizens, some good information during the last several minutes.

One more "thank you" to the citizens of Springdale for allowing me to continue to serve as your Mayor. As always, I need to thank my wife of almost 42 years, Sandy. Also, I want thank my family for their continued love and support. As you surely know, elected positions like yours and mine can many times be more difficult on our families than on us. I'm also thankful for many great friends and acquaintances, old and new- from here and from around the state, who make life fun and meaningful. They also encourage me, and pray for me, and for this city. Most of all, I thank God for His many blessings, for giving me a purpose, and for loving me unconditionally-He knows that's the only way I can be loved. But no matter whom you are, He loves you that way, too.

May God bless each of you and may God continue to bless the people of Springdale.