

# **ANNUAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

*2012 Year End Report*

Mr. President Pro Temp,  
Madam Clerk,  
Mr. City Attorney,  
Members of the Council,  
Members of the Media,  
Distinguished Guests,  
and Citizens of Jonesboro;

Having now completed my first full term as Mayor, I continue each and every day to be reminded of just how blessed I am to be able to help lead a city with so many who are willing to give so generously of their time, energy, and resources into making this such an incredible community. It is so rewarding to continue to see our citizens, our businesses, our institutions, and our family

of city employees all working together in a seamless effort to help us realize our goals of continued growth and prosperity.

It is to each of you that AGAIN I say THANK YOU for this wonderful responsibility, and to whom I dedicate this annual State of the City.

On behalf of my administration and dedicated employees of the City of Jonesboro, it gives me great pleasure to report to you, yet again, that the state of the City of Jonesboro is strong and viable, and that we continue to have an optimistic outlook for our future in 2013 and beyond.

As with the previous year, we began and ended 2012 with a balanced budget. We did so due to the diligence and commitment of our employees, our department

heads, and our budget staff. We continued to be conservative in our revenue projections, and steadfast in our commitment to transparency and the kind of responsible day-to-day management of individual budgets that leads to a prudent use of the tax dollars of which we have been entrusted for the operations of the city.

The efforts of our staff and employees once again paid huge dividends in our financial management, as we ended the year with revenues exceeding expenses.

After many years of progressively improving our overall fiscal management practices, I am very proud to commend our finance department for what is undoubtedly the most impressive legislative audit to date since becoming a city of the first-class. The accountability that has been instituted, along with the

strict adherence to best practices and careful attention to detail has produced an exemplary audit of which the citizens of this city can be most proud.

As a community, Jonesboro continues to be blessed as a city of great interest and increased investment. We continue to enjoy being a destination for investment capital, new industry, retail expansion, healthcare, and educational advances, as well as, residential growth. Landmark developments such as the new NEA Baptist Healthcare campus, the evolving Medical Mile, new physical plant investments by Arkansas State University, and the ever-nearing completion of the Hwy 49 connection to US 67 are but a few of the tangible examples of hundreds of millions of dollars that are being invested to strengthen our position as the regional hub of Northeast Arkansas.

And people don't just come here to visit. Our multi-decade trajectory of systematic growth in population continues at a steady 2.5 percent annually. This growth in population and service area continues to present unique challenges, but also opportunities.

These challenges, among others, are the catalyst behind our efforts to develop a citizen-driven long-range vision for the city. Vision 2030 is in a critical phase of evaluation and revision based on evolving market conditions, citizen feedback, and synergistic opportunities. The planning process has not been a fast one, but I've instructed the commission and our staff that I prefer methodical, inclusive, and thorough as opposed to the alternative. I am confident that the final narrative will be reflective of a community poised for growth and a citizenry who is ready to embrace that growth and utilize it to its fullest extent.

We continue to work towards finding a balance of our priorities, and to make sure that we are looking at every facet of life in and throughout the city in an effort to address every concern, every opportunity, and every element in building the highest level of quality of life for all citizens.

Public safety has been and remains of the highest priority. As with any community that is growing, we face numerous challenges in addressing the health and safety of our citizens and visitors alike.

We have occupied the new Harrisburg Road fire station; the next to last of relocated stations to bring us within full compliance of our updated coverage plan for the ISO. The final station is well in the planning stages and the location has been secured. I, along with Chief

Miller and his entire staff, look forward to the completion of the critical phase in the department's decorated history.

With a constant focus on best practices and new technology, our firefighters are some of best-trained in the state, and continue to serve as a model department across all of Arkansas.

Our Police Department continues its same standard of excellence and service that earned it the honor of being one of approximately 900 agencies in the entire United States as being CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) Certified. I am proud to announce that Chief Yates and his staff achieved critical RE-accreditation in 2012.

We have continued to evolve our management and service structure, and last year added a key component to our strategy moving forward when Lt. Todd Nelson was promoted to head our new Quality of Life unit. By aligning Code Enforcement and housing conditions with such key components as Crime Analysis, PROWL, Animal Control, Neighborhood Watch, Neighborhood Initiatives, and grant-writing, we are forcing this segment of our organization to address both the tangible and intangible aspects of improving our overall quality of life.

A critical step was taken in our effort to move our force to strategic geographic locations in order to better service our community. Late last year, Arkansas State University made available to us the opportunity to request possession of the former U.S. Army Reserve Center on South Caraway Road for use as a central police



station. I applaud Dr. Tim Hudson and his team at ASU for taking this bold step in the latest chapter between our two entities in working together to make the safety of our citizens and their students of paramount importance.

When the process is complete, our department will enjoy a new central command, complete with evidence storage, a motor pool, and administrative offices. The location will improve our ability to be both proactive and reactive in the administration of our duties.

E-911 and Animal Control continue to be innovative in meeting the increased demands for their services.

Our E-911 Dispatch Center continued to show the kind of innovation that has earned them a stellar reputation. They continued to take advantage of grants

and opportunities to expand their services through new equipment, advanced training, and innovative management methods. Their use of social media and other improving methods and technologies have not only improved their ability to respond and inform, but have increased their public profile and the confidence placed in them by our citizens.

The adoption initiative, started over 4 years ago by Animal Control, continues to grow in popularity each year. The department continues to reach out into the community and partner with businesses and other agencies to sponsor adoption and vaccination clinics throughout the city. Sgt. Rogers continues to work with local media in an effort to educate the general public about how they can become more involved. Our facilities continue to serve as a model for departments throughout Arkansas and neighboring states.

Our Street and Sanitation Departments now fully occupy our new public works campus just off of Dan Avenue. This incredible facility combines the best of organization and technologies, allowing these two departments to maintain our fleets, manage our assets, store our materials, dispatch our crews, and lead our teams.

As our number of residents who live here and visitors who travel here continues to steadily increase, new demands for service are placed on these critical areas of service. I am proud of the work that Royce and Steve and their teams are doing to respond to these demands.

Craig and our Engineering team continue to advance the quality of our infrastructure. New standards are

under constant review and the commitment to planning instituted in years past is paying dividends. We continue our strategic partnerships with key state and federal agencies in advancing our program of better flood control and improved streets and highways.

Our Planning Department has continued their normal responsibilities of regulating zoning and processing site plans in coordination with the MAPC and Board of Zoning Adjustment. Otis and his staff are in the final stages of the revisions and edits of our 20 year comprehensive plan, which will prove to be a critical framework for guiding our consideration in future growth initiatives.

Wixson Huffstetler officially took the reins as our Director of Parks and Recreation last year. He and his staff are doing a tremendous job in both maintaining our

parks and building on current programs. Sponsorship levels continue to rise, as do the participation by outside teams in several key tournaments and events. Their work in coordinating with local sports authorities has led to an increase in out-of-town visitors who spend the night, shop, and eat in our city.

I am proud to announce that they are doing a tremendous job in bringing the vision of a Miracle League Field, a complex dedicated to serve our special needs population, to fruition. Once completed, there will not be a facility its equal anywhere in the country. It will be the largest Miracle League Field in the United States and will not only serve our community, but our entire region. It will certainly become the standard for programs of its kind from coast to coast.

Heather Clements and her team in Grants and Community Development continue to set new standards in innovation and efficiency. Their passion and desire to help our city realize the most of its partnerships with the federal and state government, as well as, private for-profit and non-profit organizations, and philanthropic agencies are an inspiration to our entire administration. Their vision and commitment have led to numerous new opportunities, and they are quite literally shaping the landscaping of some of Jonesboro's most critical areas.

We have a new Director of MPO, Dr. Marsha Guffey, who comes to us from Little Rock. Dr. Guffey's credentials are well documented and her body of work in central Arkansas speaks for itself. Yet, I cannot let this opportunity pass without acknowledging the work of her predecessor, and how excited I am about her leadership

in picking up where Amin left off in leading our city to address critical planning and transportation issues.

JETS has continued its annual quest to foster innovative solutions in increasing ridership on targeted routes and managing overall costs. In a new and emerging economy, public transit has the capacity to play an ever-increasing role in our city. The convergence of housing, transportation, and economic development into a cooperative thought process will contribute increasingly to our future dialogue. The adjustments we have made and the partnerships we continue to foster will only place JETS in a position to take full advantage of these future opportunities.

Information Systems continues to embrace the latest technologies and do an incredible job of keeping us connected and productive. The preparation for the

move to our new Municipal Center later this year will perhaps be one of the biggest challenges that department has ever faced, but Erick Woodruff and his team have meticulously planned each and every phase of this critical transition.

The work on the new Municipal Center continues to progress. We fully anticipate hitting our target dates for occupation and I believe that the citizens of Jonesboro are going to be very proud of the work that is being done.

Once completed, we will be best positioned to meet the needs of today and the coming decades. The fluidness of operation, the ability to manage people and costs, and the ease of access by people who need to do business will be unmatched in our history.



Our new facilities will enhance our communication efforts through public access television and will allow our HR department to better screen new applicants and train existing employees.

While I am proud of all that we have accomplished after my first term in office, I know we are only getting started. As we have for the past four years, we will continue to work tirelessly to meet the challenges head-on and identify and take advantage of the opportunities to make Jonesboro the absolute best small city in America to live, work and raise a family.

As in every year since taking office, we have big decisions ahead, but I am ever-more convinced that we are up to the challenge and will far exceed your expectations. Continuing with God as our guide and the citizens as our conscience, we will push forward.

I end this address the same as in previous years, declaring that I continue to be eternally grateful for this privilege of serving as your Mayor and for the honor of working with an extremely dedicated staff that are committed to serving the citizens of Jonesboro. I would like to once again take this opportunity to publicly thank the members of the City Council for the trust and confidence they have placed in my administration, and for working hand in hand with us to develop the kind of working relationship necessary to run an open, transparent, and effective city government.

I personally pledge to work with each of you to do all that we can to improve the quality of life and abundance of opportunity for every man, woman, and child that make up our community.

May God watch over each and every one of you and your families, may he protect our citizen soldiers who find themselves in harm's way, and may He continue to bless our city, our state, and these United States of America.

Thank you.