

MEMORANDUM

December 30, 2013

TO: Mayor and Board of Directors

FROM: Ray Gosack, City Administrator

SUBJECT: 2013 Key Accomplishments

*YEAR'S END IS NEITHER AN END NOR A BEGINNING BUT A
GOING ON, WITH ALL THE WISDOM THAT EXPERIENCE CAN
INSTILL IN US. ~ Hal Borland*

This quote aptly sums up our transition from 2013 to 2014.

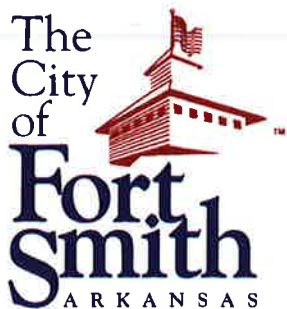
2013 has been a productive year for the City of Fort Smith. The city government has many accomplishments in its service to the citizens and businesses of Fort Smith. These accomplishments provide important building blocks for 2014 and beyond.

A list of 2013 key accomplishments is attached. They're in no particular order with the hope that you'll review the entire list. The support and leadership from the mayor and board of directors were instrumental in these accomplishments. The department heads and employees at all levels are committed to the board's goals and made substantial contributions to these accomplishments.

2014 will provide new opportunities for strengthening the community. With the board's guidance and the staff's professionalism, we can make 2014 a successful year on behalf of the citizens we serve.

Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ray".



CITY OF FORT SMITH

2013 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The update to Fort Smith's comprehensive plan began with the hiring of a consultant and the appointment of a 28-member citizens steering committee. Numerous public engagement sessions were conducted with more than 500 citizens involved. A vision statement has been developed. The plan update is expected to be complete by the end of 2014, and will guide the city's priorities for the next 10+ years.
- Construction of water and sewer infrastructure along Riverfront Dr., which began in summer 2012, has been completed. The \$1.5 million project will stimulate development along Fort Smith's river front.
- Residential sanitation rates were reduced 7.6% as a result of completing the conversion to the automated collection of trash. The dept. of sanitation initiated a multi-year program to provide fully-automated collection of residential recyclables. This initiative will help control future collection costs.
- Construction of I-49 through Chaffee Crossing and southward to U.S. Highway 71 continued. The segment between Highways 22 and 71 is expected to be open to traffic by the end of 2014.
- The construction of fire station 11 at Chaffee Crossing is nearly completed. The station will be in full operation by early February. The addition of this apparatus and personnel helps preserve Fort Smith's very favorable fire insurance rating. Modernizations to 10 older fire stations, including replacement of emergency generators, are also nearly completed.
- Fort Smith's economic development activities flourished with announcements from 9 companies adding nearly 1,000 jobs and investing more than \$240 million. Old Dominion Freight Lines, Health Management Associates, Umarex USA, Phoenix Metals, Gerber Products, Answer Fort Smith, Thermold Magazines, Mars PetCare, and Butler & Cook all made announcements during 2013. The announcements helped to improve Fort Smith's employment rates and enhance the tax base.

- The county-wide 1% sales tax was renewed by voters for another 10 years with an overwhelming 79% approval. Fort Smith uses more the 3/4 of its share of the tax revenue for police and fire services. Other portions of the revenue are used for libraries, public transit, parks, downtown/riverfront projects, and senior citizen services. The tax has been in place since 1994.
- The board of directors conducted a strategic planning retreat which identified 9 priorities. These priorities will guide the staff's work for the next 2 years.
- The Walton Family Foundation awarded a \$1 million grant to the city for construction of the River West Trail along the Arkansas River. The city has matched the grant for a \$2 million project. Design work has begun, with construction expected to start by September 2014. The trail should be completed by mid 2015.
- Construction began on a new scale house and comfort station at the landfill. The new facilities will provide improved customer service with shorter wait times. Completion is expected by mid 2014.
- The City of Fort Smith public safety communications center has been re-accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. This is a testament to the quality of services provided by Fort Smith's 9-1-1 center, and demonstrates our compliance with nationally-accepted performance standards. Fort Smith was the first city in Arkansas to attain dual accreditation of both law enforcement and 9-1-1 services.
- The former Girls Inc. club on North 7th St. was acquired by the city and will become the Belle Grove Community Center. Public input for recreation and programming services has been solicited. The project will be funded with revenue from the 1/4% sales tax earmarked for parks projects.
- Approximately 120 residential lots are under various stages of development. Commercial building permit values increased by 130% over 2012.
- The 14th annual Creekmore Holiday Express saw an estimated 23,000 citizens attend the attractions at Creekmore Park during November and December.
- The city received the United Way award in the government division for substantial increases in the amount of giving and in the number of employees participating.
- Transit ridership increased 6% during 2013 and the number of miles driven increased by 7%. The transit facility was made fully-accessible to employees and

visitors with the addition of an elevator and office renovations at a cost of \$450,000.

- The utilities dept. laboratory was certified by both the Arkansas Dept. of Health and the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality to perform drinking water and wastewater testing. These certifications allow us to operate the water and sewer utility more responsively to changing conditions, which ensures we're providing the highest quality of services. Fort Smith is the only municipal laboratory in Arkansas to achieve both of these certifications.
- Final funding amounts for the new city/county aquatic center at Ben Geren Regional Park have been determined. Design features will be selected in early January. Construction is expected to begin by May 2014 and be completed by April 2015.
- The city was granted a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Assn. for the 28th consecutive time. This is the highest award given for governmental financial reporting.
- The internal auditor and utilities dept. staff completed a water/sewer efficiency study which identified suggestions for improving the operation of the city's utilities services.
- Plans are underway for the construction of a new water splash pad in downtown Fort Smith. The project will be funded jointly by the city and the Central Business Improvement District. It's expected to open on the Fourth of July, 2014.
- Design and construction of various water transmission system improvements has continued. Construction of a new line at Chaffee Crossing is underway, and design is completed for the first 6 miles of a new line from Lake Fort Smith with construction expected to begin in February 2014.
- Conducted 5 sessions of the citizens academies program through fire, police and administration – graduating more than 90 citizens. These academies develop better relationships between city government and residents.
- Began construction of 2 softball ballfields at Ben Geren Park to replace fields taken for expansion of the Fort Smith National Cemetery. The new fields will be in service during spring 2014.

- Continued construction of \$180 million in improvements to the sanitary sewer system to reduce the occurrence of sewer backups, overflows and untreated discharges during periods of heavier rainfalls. Work this year has focused in the Cavanaugh/Zero St./Mill Creek areas.
- Six replacement pieces of fire apparatus were received and placed into service in March. The \$4.1 million purchase includes 3 pumpers, 2 aerial ladder trucks, and 1 combination pumper/aerial truck. The new equipment was purchased with sales tax bond proceeds approved by voters in March, 2012.
- The city's 10-year old aerial maps were updated by flying and creating new aerial maps of Fort Smith and nearby areas. The maps are used for a variety of purposes by the public and various governments.
- The city was granted a distinguished budget presentation award from the Government Finance Officers Assn. for the 25th consecutive time. This is the highest award given for governmental budgeting.
- Fort Smith was named an Arkansas Volunteer Community of the Year for 2013. This was the 15th time and the 9th consecutive year for Fort Smith to receive this honor.
- Improved neighborhood infrastructure by resurfacing 16 lane miles of neighborhood streets; and reconstructing and repairing 7.5 miles of public sidewalks using city forces.
- Worked with the Fort Chaffee/188th Community Council to preserve missions for the 188th Fighter Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard. The city staff facilitated close coordination with the community council and the congressional delegation, which resulted in the unit retaining its staffing levels despite changes to its mission. The new missions are integral parts of the future Air Force and will preserve the unit's presence in Fort Smith.
- Mayor Sandy Sanders and Fayetteville mayor Lioneld Jordan continued their strategic partnership between the 2nd and 3rd largest cities in Arkansas. The partnership, which involves dozens of community members, is working to promote deepening of the Arkansas River channel to 12'.
- Implemented a responsible and safe urban deer hunt program to reduce vehicle accidents and other problems caused by the deer population in the city limits.

- The city's development ordinances were updated to allow for planned zoning districts. The PZD's, which were requested by the development community, allow for more flexibility in property development.
- The city supported two litter pick up days organized by the Beautify Fort Smith committee. Nearly 3 tons of trash was removed from public roadways.
- The development services department partnered with World Changers, a network of Southern Baptist and other evangelical churches, to make roofing and exterior repairs to 12 homes in Fort Smith. World Changers received private funding to perform repair on another 3 homes.
- The city launched new citizen communications initiatives including iFortSmithConnect, which invites citizens to subscribe to automated voice, e-mail or text notifications about matters of interest to the citizens. Thus far, over 550 citizens have subscribed. Continued with quarterly neighborhood board meetings, a monthly e-newsletter (*Fast Focus*), a Facebook page, and small group listening meetings with a diversity of citizens. Facebook likes increased from 146 likes in November 2011 to 2633 likes as of December, 2013. The Fast Focus newsletter subscriber number has increased from 244 subscribers in January 2012 to 527 in November 2013. Activity on Twitter has increased steadily with nearly 1600 followers. The goal is to strengthen trust and to build communications tools and resources for city representatives and citizens.
- Nearly all city employees underwent citizen service training to strengthen their skills in providing responsive services to the citizens and businesses of Fort Smith.
- Two Fort Smith police officers received statewide recognition from the Criminal Justice Institute and the Arkansas State Police for their D.W.I. and occupant protection (seat belt) enforcement work. The officers' exceptional enforcement initiatives improve traffic safety in Fort Smith.
- The city initiated efforts to improve communication between ADEQ, Whirlpool Corporation, and property owners/residents affected by the TCE contamination near the Whirlpool plant site. A remediation plan has been prepared and is being implemented by Whirlpool. The city curates a repository of documentation for ease of public access and information sharing.
- The public service bulletin board announcements on the city's government access

cable TV channel received a 3rd place national award behind Austin, Tex. and Fountain Valley, Calif. The bulletin board is operated by the city clerk's office.

- Fort Smith was name the #1 True Western Town in 2013 by True West magazine. The designation bolsters our region's attractiveness as a tourism destination.
- Originated a *shop local* campaign in collaboration with the chamber of commerce to encourage residents to make holiday purchases from hometown merchants rather than through the Internet. Social media is an important component of the campaign, and encourages merchants and shoppers to engage.
- The police dept. implemented on-line reporting for minor incident reports, citizen requests for extra patrol, and private property accidents. This new reporting option provides additional convenience for citizens a frees officers to respond to other calls for service.