



## ***MEMORANDUM***

August 9, 2016

**TO:** Mayor and Board of Directors  
**FROM :** Ray Gosack, City Administrator  
**SUBJECT:** 2014 Key Accomplishments

***TO MAKE AN END IS TO MAKE A BEGINNING***  
***~ T.S. Eliot***

This quote aptly sums up our transition from 2014 to 2015.

2014 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 2015 and beyond.

A list of 2014 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.

2015 will provide new opportunities for strengthening the community. With the board's guidance and the staff's professionalism, we can make 2015 a successful year on behalf of the citizens we serve.

**Happy New Year !**

# CITY OF FORT SMITH

## 2014 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The update to Fort Smith's comprehensive plan, led by a 27-member citizens steering committee, was completed. The update including a vision statement will guide the city's priorities for the next 10+ years.
- The Degen Foundation announced the establishment of the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Smith. The college will enroll its first class of 150 medical students in fall 2016. Construction of the campus has begun. The city is supporting the project by providing \$1.5 million in infrastructure work, and has received a \$1.2 million EDA grant to assist the college with other construction costs.
- Movoto Real Estate named Fort Smith as the 4<sup>th</sup> most exciting city in Arkansas, and the most exciting city in the northwestern part of the state.
- 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 spring 2015.
- Fire station 11 at Chaffee Crossing began operation in February. The addition of this apparatus and personnel helps preserve Fort Smith's very favorable fire insurance rating. The project design won an award from *Firehouse* magazine.
- Fort Smith's economic development activities flourished with announcements from 8 companies adding 1,400 jobs and investing more than \$180 million. Ross Dress for Less opened a store in Fort Smith. The announcements helped to improve Fort Smith's employment rates and enhance the tax base.
- The Mayor and Board adopted a board best practices document, one of the priorities from the 2013 board retreat.
- The convention and visitors bureau won the community tourism development award at this year's governor's conference on tourism. The award was presented for achievement of substantial success toward the enhancement of local resources through imaginative and innovative development efforts.
- Design of the River West Trail along the Arkansas River was completed and a construction contract approved. The Walton Family Foundation awarded a \$1 million grant to the city for construction of the trail. The city has matched the grant for a \$2 million project. The trail should be completed by late 2015, and has

been named the *Greg Smith Riverwalk*.

- Fort Smith received an honorable mention in the Arkansas Business city of distinction awards. The honorable mention was in the technology category for the myFortSmith app.
- ArcBest Corporation announced the construction of a new headquarters building and the addition of 975 employees at Chaffee Crossing. The city is supporting the project with the construction of two new roads and the use of industrial revenue bonds.
- Completed consent decree negotiations with the federal government for improvements to Fort Smith's sanitary sewer system. The improvements will bring Fort Smith into compliance with the federal Clean Water Act.
- Construction of a new scale house and comfort station at the landfill was completed in November. The new facilities will provide improved customer service with shorter wait times.
- Jennifer Humphrey began employment in August as the deputy director of finance. The new position is part of the succession plan for the finance dept.
- The former Girls Inc. club on North 7<sup>th</sup> 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. Construction is expected in 2018.
- Approximately 60 residential lots are under various stages of development.
- Livability.com ranked Fort Smith as the 6<sup>th</sup> most drought resistant city in the United States. The ranking reflects the city's long-range planning and implementation of water supplies that will meet needs for at least 60 years.
- The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Creekmore Holiday Express saw an estimated 15,000 citizens attend the attractions at Creekmore Park during November and December.
- Purchasing manager Alie Bahsoon was recognized as the 2014 manager of the year by the Arkansas chapter of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. The award was made for the many innovations in Fort Smith's procurement methods.
- To improve transparency and public access, the city began live-streaming of regular board meetings on the city's web site. Meetings may also be viewed live

on the cable TV government access channel. Replays are available on the city's web site and on the cable TV channel.

- Tracey Shockley began duties in December as Fort Smith's new internal auditor.
- Construction began for the new city/county aquatic center at Ben Geren Regional Park. Design features include a 500' lazy river, a children's pool, 4 slides 30' - 40' in height, and the region's only wave pool. Construction is expected to be completed by April 2015 in time for a Memorial Day weekend 2015 grand opening. A management company has been hired.
- The city was granted a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Assn. for the 29<sup>th</sup> consecutive time. This is the highest award given for governmental financial reporting.
- Matt Jennings and David Smith in Fort Smith's community development division were elected to regional leadership positions with the National Community Development Council.
- The construction contract was awarded for a new water splash pad in downtown Fort Smith. The project is funded jointly by the city and the Central Business Improvement District. The new splash pad should be completed in May.
- Construction of various water transmission system improvements has continued. Construction of a new line and storage tank at Chaffee Crossing is underway, and construction for the first 6 miles of a new line from Lake Fort Smith will begin in 2015 with completion expected in 2016.
- Conducted 5 sessions of the citizens academies program through fire, police and administration – graduating 110 citizens. These academies develop better relationships between city government and residents.
- Completed construction of 2 softball fields at Ben Geren Park to replace fields converted for expansion of the Fort Smith National Cemetery. The new fields allow for more children to participate in local softball leagues.
- Continued construction of \$200 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 and the Navy Rd./Mill Creek areas.
- The city was granted a distinguished budget presentation award from the

Government Finance Officers Assn. for the 26<sup>th</sup> consecutive time. This is the highest award given for governmental budgeting.

- Fort Smith was named an Arkansas Volunteer Community of the Year for 2014. This was the 16<sup>th</sup> time and the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for Fort Smith to receive this honor.
- Improved neighborhood infrastructure by resurfacing 18 lane miles of neighborhood streets; reconstructing and repairing 6.7 miles of public sidewalks using city forces; and designing 1.5 miles of neighborhood water line and fire protection improvements for construction in 2015.
- Utility relocation work and removal of structures for the Jenny Lind Rd. widening project began. Construction plans are completed and will be submitted for approval by AHTD. Roadway construction is expected to begin in spring 2015 and be completed by the end of 2016.
- The city supported two litter pick up days organized by the Beautify Fort Smith committee. Nearly 1.5 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 15 homes in Fort Smith. World Changers received private funding to perform repair on another 2 homes.
- The city continued its efforts to encourage the remediation of TCE pollution at and near the Whirlpool plant site. Whirlpool accelerated its implementation of the remediation plan. Contaminated soil was removed near the plant, and chemical oxidation is reducing the TCE concentrations in most locations. The city curates a repository of documentation for ease of public access and information sharing.
- Fort Smith was named a top 10 True Western Town in 2014 by *True West* magazine. The designation bolsters our region's attractiveness as a tourism destination.
- Awarded a contract and construction began for 8 tournament-quality softball fields at Chaffee Crossing. The fields will allow Fort Smith to host more and larger regional and national softball tournaments, which will boost the region's tourism economy.
- Promoted a *shop local* campaign in collaboration with the chamber of commerce to encourage residents to make 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.

- Began construction of a fire training center which will improve training opportunities for Fort Smith firefighters. The additional training enhances responses to emergencies and employee safety.
- Director of Development Services Wally Bailey received a prestigious award from the International Code Council for his work to promote building and life safety codes worldwide.

Every time you tear a leaf off a calendar, you present a new place for new ideas and progress. Charles Kettering

What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year. Vern McClellan

2014 – Graphic Packaging, \$7 million, 25 jobs  
Georgia Pacific, \$40 million, 40 jobs  
ArcBest, \$30 million, 975 jobs  
Mars PetCare, \$76 million, 90 jobs  
Spartan Logistics (Whirlpool warehouse), \$\_\_ million, 100 jobs  
River Bend Industries, \$228,000, 35 jobs  
TiFiber, 100 jobs  
Medical College, \$30 million, 100 jobs