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# 2017 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Presented by Mayor Doug Sprouse

Feb. 28, 2017

City of Springdale, Arkansas

City Council, and residents of Springdale, it is my privilege tonight to present to you the 2017 State of the City Address. I've recently begun my third term as Mayor, so this will be my ninth such address. And I can honestly say this is a very exciting time for Springdale. There are so many exciting things going on all over our city, time will not allow me to mention everything I want to, but I do want to hit some of the highlights.

First, I want to recap some important developments from 2016. Last year, we saw local employers continue to make Springdale one of Arkansas's leading job creators. Commercial and residential development also continued to increase.

Total permit valuation rose from just over \$167 million in 2015, to over \$216 million in 2016. As a result of a strong job market, disposable household income will continue to rise. And, as development continues to increase, more opportunities exist for our residents to support local businesses, rather than go to other cities to make their purchases.

When you put those factors together, the result means additional sales tax revenue generated back to the City, which, in turn, means more resources available to our residents in the way of improved infrastructure, continued police, fire and EMS protection, improved parks, and countless other City services that our residents want and deserve.

2016 saw the substantial completion of infrastructure, fire service and park improvements that were made possible by the citizen's approval of our 2012 bond issue. That bond issue generated, without any increase in taxes, approximately \$70 million for important projects that have improved the quality of life for our residents.

From the Don Tyson Parkway interchange, and the widening and extension of 56th Street, along with many other important road projects; to two amazing fire stations; to a world-class park, the C.L. "Charlie" and Willie George Park, along with many other park improvements throughout our city; the taxpayers of Springdale can take pride in the project priorities set by this City Council, and the quality of the projects that will serve our residents for many years to come.

Many of the positive developments we've seen taking place around our city would not be happening without those improvements that were made possible by the 2012 bond issue. We have seen what is possible when Springdale voters believe in this city's potential. It is for this reason that I am again asking this council and our residents to support another bond issue that will be brought forward in 2018.

Because of our stronger financial position, we believe such a bond issue will generate substantially more revenue than the 2012 issue, allowing us to pick up where we left off, with many additional road improvements, along with many more projects designed to better serve our community.

As in 2012, next year's bond issue would require no increase in taxes for our residents. I look forward to working with this council, and hearing from the people of Springdale throughout this year, as we prioritize and plan for projects that can be funded by a 2018 bond issue, if approved by our voters.

For 2017, the excitement continues. NWA Naturals fans will enjoy a new landscape as they look out beyond center field this season. Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) Northwest will be completing construction this year, readying for a January, 2018 opening. It's impossible to overstate the positive impact that ACH will have on our economy, and on the children and families of NWA. Sam's Club is planning to open in May. Springdale has been looking forward to that opening for a long time. There's no doubt Sam's will do very well in Springdale.

NWACC continues to move forward with plans for their Washington County Center on property they own just west of Arvest Ballpark. That area of town will also see a beautiful new professional building that we recently approved to be built next to the Don Tyson Parkway/56th Street roundabout.

We will see more new developments this year in and around the overlay district. Across I-49 on 48th Street, new commercial developments along with a new hotel are both already under construction. Along Highway 412 in Har-Ber Meadows, a new Freddie's nears completion with a Tacos 4 Life to begin construction soon. Further north, at Elm Springs Road, a new Arvest Bank location just opened, with new retail commercial space currently under construction next door.

Mercy Hospital continues developing their plans for the acreage they recently purchased at I-49 and Elm Springs Road. Moving to the east, as rooftops continue to increase at a rapid pace, the improved infrastructure, along with our new park and new schools, will no doubt push more restaurants and medical facilities into that area of our city.

Speaking of schools, the new Don Tyson School of Innovation is something every resident of Springdale can be proud of. This school model has the potential to change the way instruction is delivered; not only in Springdale, but around the nation.

The entire Springdale School District continues to innovate and excel, while regularly being recognized nationally for their great work in educating our kids. They also improve our city as they continually make quality investments in their facilities. They consistently invest in their older schools, in order to keep those neighborhood schools inviting and help set the standards for our older neighborhoods.

For example, construction will soon begin on new baseball, track, and soccer facilities on the Springdale High School campus. Those additional facilities will also greatly complement our city's soon-to-be-completed improvements to Murphy Park.

Now, let's talk about our downtown. Momentum continues to build. This year we welcome the Hogeye Marathon that will start and finish on Emma Avenue. We are opening up Spring Creek and

completing Walter Turnbow Park, which will serve as a downtown gathering place and another beautiful sight along the Razorback Greenway that runs through our downtown.

Additionally, we have physical assets like no other downtown in NWA. The Jones Center is amazing, and all of Arkansas knows it. While an asset to our entire region, Northwest Medical Center is vital to our downtown revitalization. They made a monumental commitment to our city and our downtown when they invested, and continue to invest in our downtown Springdale hospital.

It's also rare to have a downtown with such access to one of the busiest airports in the state. Recent improvements to the existing Springdale Municipal Airport terminal, along with future plans that will further enhance access to our downtown and improve our airport, are reasons for continued support and recognition of our Airport Commission and airport staff.

We have an Arts Center that is on the horizon of a new and exciting direction that will redefine the arts in Springdale. They will be a major player in downtown and this new direction will serve our residents and our arts community well.

Shiloh Museum is a downtown anchor that attracts visitors from near and far to our downtown. While they are a City entity, it was still an important show of support for our downtown when this council voted to direct \$500,000 to the renovation of the Shiloh Meeting Hall, one of the most historic structures in our community.

Just over a year ago, this council adopted the Downtown Springdale Master Plan. That was an initial, but critical step in our downtown revitalization. The next step will soon be before you. That is the consideration of our Form-Based Code. As with the master plan, many people and organizations worked long and hard to make that happen. I'll not get into naming them, because I would be sure to leave someone out. It's important that we work through this process together in order to approve the new Form-Based Code when it is brought forward next month. This will allow the momentum for investment and excitement to continue moving our downtown forward.

It's impossible to talk about our downtown momentum without mentioning just a few folks. Tyson Foods and the Tyson family continue to invest time and treasure downtown. The recently opened Company Store and the new Tyson office building that will be completed later this year will be game-changers for our downtown. They will bring hundreds of employees daily, increasing the demand for goods and services in the area. This is good news for all our existing downtown businesses, as well as those that are coming.

The Walton Family has also been tremendous supporters of our downtown efforts. Both the Foundation and various family members have been involved in more ways than I could even begin to describe.

In fact, many people have taken the early risks necessary to invest and support our downtown efforts. From multiple building owners to small businesses to the residential fixer-uppers; they all have

been and will continue to be important pieces of a new economy for our downtown. And we can never neglect to recognize and thank those residents, businesses, churches, and other institutions, that have supported and been committed to our downtown for years, and are now beginning to see the improvements for which they've worked so long.

There are a couple of things more specific to City government I hope we can work on together over the coming months. The first is separating out Community Engagement from Public Works. Organizationally, that's the best long-term path for both departments. I look forward to working with you as we develop a plan that would allow that to happen.

Another idea I would like to see move forward is the development of a Youth City Council. It's vitally important that our young people are exposed to City government and have the opportunity to better develop interests, knowledge, and an awareness of each citizen's responsibilities of civic engagement. I believe cultivating the desire for involvement in and service to our community is essential for the future of Springdale. It will take all of us to be willing to invest some time into our young people. A few weeks ago, I emailed each of you some examples from around the country of how such youth councils can work. My hope is that it will be beneficial to future leaders of our city, and a rewarding experience for each of us.

In closing, I could go into great detail describing the wonderful work our dedicated public servants perform daily. Each department is worthy of mention. In the interest of time, I won't do that this year. I just know you join me in thanking our amazing employees for their dedicated service to the residents of this city.

Council, I want to thank each of you for the way you serve Springdale. To our Planning Commission, along with all of our commissions, boards and committees, thank you. To our non-profits and volunteers, thank you. You make our city a better place to live. To the local business owners, thank you for investing in our great city.

To our churches, thank you. You are the anchors of our community. Through the prayers, support, and work of God's people, you demonstrate God's love for His creation, and His provision for the people who live here. Thank you to my wife, Sandy (we're celebrating 40 years together this August), and my family and friends for their unfailing love and support.

Most importantly, thank you to each and every person who calls Springdale home. Your spirit and the passion you have for our community is one of the many reasons Springdale is truly the heart of Northwest Arkansas.

Finally, we live in a divided nation right now, probably the worst I've seen in my 60 years. Whatever you or I believe about most issues, about half the people out there are going to disagree. Those issues are important to our country, and I'm just as passionate about what I believe as anyone. But I know this; regardless of what any of us believe about all the issues that divide this nation, we're all people, neighbors, and coworkers who have to share the same space on this big round rock.

Springdale is a welcoming community. It always has been. Regardless of our color, or culture, or wealth, or poverty, or faith, we all share the desire to experience joy, peace and purpose in life. I don't have to change who I am in order to accept who you are. There's so much negativity out there, and it's so easy to get caught up in it. There's a lot of fear out there, too, mostly unfounded, stirred by those who benefit from it.

Well, I've got a solution. If we could all just love God, help our neighbors, spend more time volunteering and less time focusing on negatives and arguing about politics, obey the law, and do the things we all know are right; regardless of who we are, or where we've come from, we'll experience more joy and peace in our life.

What else could we want? In this contentious, divided world in which we currently dwell, doesn't that sound inviting? Life's really too short for any other approach.

Thank you,

God Bless,

And Good Night.