

**2015**

# **State of the City Report**

**CITY OF HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS**



**Presented to the Hot Springs Board of Directors**

**FEBRUARY 2, 2016**

# 2015 STATE OF THE CITY REPORT

Board of Directors and Citizens of Hot Springs, it is my distinct honor and great privilege to present the 2015 State of the City Address and to report to you that the state of this great city is strong.

As a professionally managed city, Hot Springs had an extremely productive year, positioning itself for even greater success in 2016 and beyond. We continue to be the desired destination for quality living and are widely considered one of the best places to live, work, retire and recreate.

Although 2015 provided Hot Springs with many successes, your city lost one of its finest public servants with the passing of City Manager David Watkins. He was a true visionary whose impact on this city continues to be illustrated through some of the accomplishments we will celebrate this evening and for years to come.

## **Downtown Hot Springs: Let's Continue Our Progress**

As stated in last year's address, your downtown continues to be a focal point with unprecedented development and investment. As the heart of this city grew strong, the outlying corridors have followed suit, seeing tremendous growth. First, I will expand on the downtown development numbers, which could not have been possible without your leadership and adoption of the Thermal Basin Fire District in late 2013. At no time in our history have public safety efforts impacted the community more than our efforts within the Thermal Basin Fire District during 2015. Fire sprinkler systems have been installed in 18 occupied structures assessed as unsafe, and two new fire sprinkler systems are currently being constructed. Means of egress improvements were completed in seven buildings, with similar improvements set for 2016 completion.

In 2015, slightly more than \$8 million in real estate transactions generated 18 new businesses opening in the downtown area. Downtown capital investment exceeded \$22

million. This includes the long-awaited purchase and renovation of the former Austin Hotel which will provide much-needed lodging at one end of our booming convention center. At the other end of the convention center property, Embassy Suites has begun renovations to its outstanding facility. Regions Bank will open its doors to a new banking center on Malvern Avenue in the coming months, as will downtown's newest hotel offering at the Thompson Building. This five-story structure, long considered a gem of the Central Avenue Historic District, is being renovated into a 62-room boutique hotel. It is hard to miss the scaffolding, spanning the entire building's height, which just five years ago would have been impossible to imagine downtown. As the work continues, this project and many others offer reminders of progress for our citizens and for the many tourists who visit the Spa City.

Two local education institutions, National Park College (NPC) and Henderson State University (HSU), forged a partnership that brought higher educational opportunities to the local community. The Landmark Building now serves as the base for an educational initiative focusing on building a stronger presence in Hot Springs by offering and developing programs suited to the needs of the area. The HSU/NPC Education program started with 145 students enrolled in 24 classes, totaling 765 credit hours. Students can now complete both undergraduate and graduate degrees right here in downtown Hot Springs.

The north end of Central Avenue saw the city's purchase of the former Majestic Hotel complex in late August 2015. The galvanizing event of the Majestic Hotel fire arguably served as the catalyst that sparked a movement to redevelop and preserve your downtown. The community has used the Majestic Hotel fire as an opportunity to recommit to preserving and enhancing downtown to benefit the great citizens of Hot Springs as well as all Arkansans. I am happy to report the removal of the rubble pile at the Majestic Hotel-yellow brick section is currently underway. With some cooperation from Mother Nature, our contractor projects to have the site cleared by the two-year anniversary of the fire.

Downtown Hot Springs is not the only part of the city experiencing tremendous development activity. In terms of major building projects citywide, the city had a banner year. National Park Medical Center, one of two regional hospitals located in the city, is currently undergoing a 65,000-square-foot addition that will house a new cardiac center.

Elsewhere, a Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market will soon be the new anchor of the Indiandale Shopping Center on Malvern Avenue. This project involves complete site redevelopment, including demolishing several structures and improving the existing shopping center. Other new citywide projects include a CVS Pharmacy at 3630 Central Avenue, a First Security Bank at 4129 Central Avenue, and a Senior Care and Skilled Nursing Facility at the Belvedere Country Club site, which also will undergo further renovations to its clubhouse and golf course. Throughout the city, construction of new hotels and restaurants demonstrate a strong resurgence in our local economy.

In 2015, the Planning & Development Department issued approximately 4100 permits totaling over \$41 million in citywide construction activity. With major future projects planned in significant areas of the city, it is expected that this trend will continue well into 2016 and beyond.

## **Notable Accomplishments**

Downtown's remarkable success has translated into numerous improvements throughout Hot Springs. This report highlights just a few city's outstanding projects and initiatives.

The City of Hot Springs continues to provide quality-of-life amenities and customer service that our citizens have grown to expect. For example, construction is underway to link Hot Springs Greenway Trail with the National Park Service's Grand Promenade. This municipal-federal connection was made possible through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration, with another multi-phased project expected to be awarded later in 2016 from the same program. Our Valley Street Skatepark was awarded Facility of the Year by the Arkansas Recreation & Parks Association.

On the public safety front, our Hot Springs Police and Fire Departments have continued to provide outstanding services to Hot Springs citizens and visitors. The Police Department was the first law enforcement agency in the state to receive accreditation status through the Arkansas Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. HSPD will continue to prioritize police-community relations. In addition to providing two adult Citizen Police Academies

held each year, the Police Department initiated a week-long Youth Police Academy that was held this past summer. The department also began implementing its first phase of the body-worn video system. As two additional phases occur over a three-year period, sworn personnel will begin utilizing body-worn video cameras while performing law enforcement activities.

The Hot Springs Fire Department continued proactive training and inspections with more than 25,000 staff hours of training on subjects ranging from firefighting to incident command, and more than 5,000 pre-fire planning inspections of commercial properties. The Fire Marshal Division also conducted 357 fire safety inspections and 40 plan reviews on new commercial construction. HSFD answered 1889 calls for service, and the average response time to all alarms was four minutes, twenty six seconds from time of dispatch.

The Sanitation Department held three citywide events offered free of charge to area residents, including Spring Fling, e-Waste collection and Household Hazardous Waste Collection. These events helped educate the public on proper disposal of toxic and hazardous waste, resulting in more than 315 tons of material collected. The department also began a pilot program for plastics recycling, yielding an increased participation level of approximately 50% in the pilot area. Citywide curbside plastics recycling will likely be offered in April 2016.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development continues to facilitate neighborhood revitalization infrastructure and new affordable housing to our residents. The CDBG Program provided \$456,000 to repair and install sidewalks to meet ADA accessibility standards and improve pedestrian safety for schoolchildren, disabled residents and the elderly. The most noticeable CDBG improvements are located along Park Avenue, where bike lanes, bus shelters, ADA accessibility ramps, rain gardens, sidewalks and safer crosswalks were installed. By leveraging CDBG funds with other city funds, the city was able to complete more than \$600,000 of sidewalk and accessibility improvements in 2015.

Higdon Ferry Road has now been widened from a two-lane street to a five-lane roadway with bicycle lanes and sidewalks. The entire three-phase project stretches from Highway 7

South to Crawford Avenue. The city's contribution for right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation was about \$3 million of the overall \$19 million construction cost. This is possibly the best leveraging of city funds in many years. It greatly improves safety and is a significant upgrade to one of the city's major gateways.

Beyond the new investments and projects, we have going on in this city, we are building a community. As a Hot Springs citizen, you are in a premier place, and our many community celebrations help provide a time for us to connect with one another. From the monthly Hot Springs Gallery Walk to the annual Blues and Jazz Festivals, we offer something for everyone to see and do. The Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, now an Academy Award qualifying event held at the historic Arlington Hotel & Spa, offers a glimpse into the art of filmmaking. No mention of festivals and events would be complete without the 98-foot-long Bridge Street's own "World's First Ever 13th Annual World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade."

## **Economic Indicators**

I am pleased to report that the financial condition of the city is sound, with a balanced budget approved and maintained in 2015. The city's overall outlook is positive, with revenue streams experiencing solid growth. Through November, our year-to-date sales tax revenue increased slightly more than 5% compared to 2014 figures. The 1.5% sales tax supports the majority of city services, including public safety, all of which impact citizens' daily lives. Sales tax figures averaged an increase of 8% in the three most recent reporting months, a promising sign for your community. Another bright spot for the local economy is Oaklawn Racing and Gaming's strong, across-the-board business growth. With facility expansion now complete, games of skill revenue showed a 33% increase compared to 2014.

According to the Arkansas Realtors Association, new and existing residential units sold in 2015 experienced a slight decline of 3.25% for the Hot Springs area. However, city issued building permits, both residential and commercial, showed positive growth. New commercial permits totaled a valuation of \$30 million spread out over 19 permits, while 62 residential permits valued at \$10.2 million were issued. The local unemployment rate

dropped to 5.6% for the last quarter in 2015, closely mirroring the state's rate of 5%. Levels this low have not been reached since April 2008, widely considered the beginning of the nation's Great Recession. Several local businesses announced expansions and workforce increases, such as Alliance Rubber Company. Alliance, the nation's largest rubber band manufacturer, consistently posts export sales growth.

Across the state, the tourism industry is an important economic engine, often referred to as Arkansas' second largest industry, with agriculture being the largest. Obviously tourism is the driver of the local economy; three million visitors annually take in the natural beauty, relax in our many area lakes and dine at our award-winning restaurants. In 2015, Advertising and Promotion Commission hospitality tax revenues increased slightly more than 9% compared to last year's returns, bringing in approximately \$5.8 million. As previously stated, the downtown area is experiencing resurgence in hotel options. Additionally, the Central Avenue corridor continues to post new lodging offerings. Large flagship hotel chains such as Marriott, Holiday Inn and Hilton have all either opened or broken ground on new facilities.

The Hot Springs economy continues to progress, and we are optimistic about continued economic vitality for a number of reasons. The number of new business license issuances climbed, while occupation tax collections exceeded \$732,000 and \$688,000 in alcohol taxes was paid. A more in-depth review of the financial outlook is available in the 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) which will be released later this year.

## **In Closing**

Hot Springs is a great community and during the past year, we have seen unprecedented growth, investment and enthusiasm in our downtown area. In addition, we have seen transformations taking place throughout the city with large-scale construction activities, traffic improvements and major infrastructure projects being completed. Though we will face our share of challenges and obstacles in 2016, we will not tire and we will continue to work for resolutions. As the sun has set on 2015, we look forward to the dawn of a new era

with the hiring and leadership of our new city manager, David Frasher. With a hard-working, committed workforce, a seasoned professional management team and the leadership of the Board of Directors, I am confident of a bright future for our city as we continue the progress and advancement of the State of our City in 2016.

*Bill Burrough, Interim City Manager  
City of Hot Springs, Arkansas*

. . . . .

*An addendum containing additional departmental accomplishments follows this report. Copies of this year's report and those of previous years can be found on the city manager's page at [www.cityhs.net](http://www.cityhs.net) or by contacting the Public Information Department.*

## ADDENDUM

# 2015 CITY DEPARTMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*In 2015, the city has seen the construction of a new Regions Bank building, opening of the Henderson State Hot Springs location, expansion at Oaklawn, opening of a Courtyard by Marriott, Holiday Inn Express, approval of rezoning by the PC for a new Home2Suites by Hilton on 7 South, opening of 4D Theatre, Kilwins, Tropical Winery, Kollektive Coffee & Tea, Reese's, several new art galleries, MidAmerica expansion, groundbreaking of NPMC Cardiovascular Center, contract to purchase and clear Majestic site, CDBG projects in the Park Avenue, Whittington, and Gateway neighborhoods, paving and new sidewalk construction all over the city, rehabilitation imminent for three hotel projects in the downtown area, construction of First Security Bank, opening of a new retail center at Shady Grove and Carpenter Dam, new medical supply office next to Candlewood Suites, new CVS at Central and MLK, Baxter Plaza park and parking lot, improvements at Kimery Park. I think this city is on a roll!*

*- City Manager David Watkins, Summer 2015*

## Airport

1. The airport faced many challenges in 2015. To overcome these challenges, the airport has developed new revenue sources and inventive ways to generate more sales. The airport managed to improve while operating within the 2015 budget.
2. The airport secured multiple State of Arkansas Department of Aeronautics grants to construct eight nested T-hangars and one large box hangar. These grants totaled \$688,750. When completed, these hangars will generate \$28,452.00 in additional revenue. In turn, nine new aircraft will be based at Hot Springs with potential additional fuel sales.
3. The airport continues to make improvements. Using a State of Arkansas Department of Aeronautics grant, the airport installed a new roof on hangar A12, a large community hangar built in 1945 that houses 15 to 20 private aircraft. This will extend the life of the hangar roof an additional 20 years and better protect the based aircraft from the elements. Using another state grant, the airport crack filled and seal coated over 128,000 square yards of asphalt, extending the life of the asphalt. With this grant we also addressed other issues on taxiways and aircraft parking areas. Total amount of both grants are \$392,595.00.
4. The airport completed the FAA AIP Grant 3-05-033-022-2014. With this grant, the airport expanded the large aircraft parking ramp, providing more space for larger transit aircraft. It also created a parallel taxiway for runway 13/31, complying with standard airport design and providing a safer operating area. The airport received an additional a grant from the FAA to conduct a runway safety assessment. This grant will provide suggestions for future improvement. The total amount of both grants is \$628,695.00.

*George Downie, Airport Director*

## Animal Services

1. Participated in a large cruelty case in Garland County that had 14 horses and 12 dogs in the case. Prosecution netted a 3 year felony term for the defendant.
2. Placed more than 600 pets into new homes.
3. More than 600 pets were spayed or neutered so they will not require ongoing community resources for their offspring.
4. Continued cultivating working relationships with members of city and county government in the provision of animal services to all of Garland County.

*Dan Bugg, Animal Services Director*

## Engineering

*(Working with and supporting the Utilities, Public Works, and Parks & Trails Departments)*

1. **Consent Administrative Order Compliance** - Completed construction of the third phase of the Fairwood Force Main and the Tertiary Filter at the Southwest Wastewater Treatment Plant. Awarded contracts for construction of the Stokes Collection System. These projects represent an investment of almost \$9 million in our wastewater system in 2015. Completed the design and are obtaining bids for construction of the Stokes Pump Station, Fairwood Phase 4 Force Main, and the Stokes Force Main.
2. **Ouachita Water Treatment Plant** – Implemented the project to add plate settlers to Basins 6 and 7 which will enable more reliable production in high turbidity events. Also obtained bonds to rehab filters at the plant in 2016 and 2017. Providing a reliable water source is one of the Board of Directors’ top goals for the city.
3. **Water Distribution System** – Work is in progress on waterline improvement projects totaling almost \$2 million. The projects replace degraded mains and also enhance fire protection to areas not previously provided ample fire protection. Fire protection projects also included the Thermal Basin where new fire mains were installed throughout downtown Central Avenue to promote revitalization of that area.
4. **CDBG and Sidewalk Projects** – Completed \$414,208 of “old-money” CDBG projects and \$42,147 of 2015 CDBG projects. The most noticeable project was located along Park Avenue where bike lanes, bus shelters, ADA accessibility ramps, rain gardens, sidewalks, and safer crosswalks were installed.

*NOTE: From all funds, including CDBG, General Fund, and Complete Streets, we completed more than \$600,000 of sidewalk and accessibility improvements within the city in 2015.*

5. **Higdon Ferry Roadway Improvements at Crawford** - Higdon Ferry Road has now been improved from a two-lane street to a five lane roadway with bicycle lanes and sidewalks. The overall three-phase project stretches from Highway 7 South to Crawford Avenue. The city's contribution for right-of-way and utility relocation was about \$3 million of the overall \$19 million construction cost. This is possibly the best leveraging of city funds in many years. It greatly improves safety and is a significant upgrade to one of the major gateways into the city.

#### **Other notable accomplishments**

1. Helped write and obtained approval of the city's Complete Streets Policy.
2. Completed Runyon Bridge replacement.
3. Helped complete the Blue Heron Trail connection on the Greenway.
4. Planned and completed a street overlay and improvement program.
5. Helped obtain TAP and Safe Routes to Schools Grants for \$913,700.
6. Assisted the MPO and consultant in developing the 2040 Transportation Master Plan.
7. Developed a revitalization plan for Malvern Avenue from Grand Avenue to Spring Street.

*Gary Carnahan, Chief Engineer*

#### **Finance**

1. We completed the 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and were awarded the Certificate of Achievement.
2. We successfully negotiated an affordable contract with New World Systems (Tyler Technologies) for upgrading our software. This was also successfully presented to the Board and approved in the 2016 budget. This implementation will be a major step forward for the city in terms of technology.
3. The 2015 Water Bonds were issued in December 2015. This provided an additional \$7.8 million in funding for needed improvements in the water system. These were issued at a very competitive rate.

*Dorethea Yates, Finance Director*

#### **Fire Department**

1. **General Accomplishments** - The Hot Springs Fire Department had a busy year, answering 1889 calls for service. Our average response time to all alarms was four minutes, twenty six seconds from time of dispatch. We conducted 25,820 man hours of training on subjects ranging from firefighting to incident command. Our fire loss (\$1,187,103) was 41% less than our 2014 loss totals. Through our efforts on the fire ground, our firefighters saved an estimated \$5,322,007 in real and personal

property. The firefighters conducted 5,489 pre-fire planning inspections of commercial occupancies; the fire marshals conducted 357 fire safety inspections and conducted 40 plan reviews on new commercial construction. We initiated the formation of a Dive Rescue Team to improve the capabilities of our Water Rescue Team. We also initiated the formation of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Team within our Hazardous Materials Response Team. We received a state grant in the amount of \$297,000 to further equip our Hazardous Materials Response Team.

2. **Thermal Basin Fire District 2015** - At no time in our history have fire department code enforcement efforts impacted the community more than our efforts within the Thermal Basin Fire District during 2015. Eighteen occupancies in unsafe structures have installed fire sprinkler systems. Two new fire sprinkler systems are currently being constructed. Additionally, plans have been approved for the construction of sprinkler systems in four occupancies during 2016. Means of egress improvements were completed in seven buildings, construction of new means of egress features are ongoing in other downtown buildings. The ACTI campus installed 1700 feet of fire mains, 16 new fire hydrants and a 2500 gallon-per-minute pump to boost fire flow within the facility. Based upon fire department recommendation, the City of Hot Springs installed dual 12-inch water mains in the 100, 200 and 300 blocks of Central Avenue, and installed tap lines for fire protection systems in many of the multi-story structures downtown. The city also installed new fire hydrants on the Central Avenue mains, doubling the number of fire hydrants serving that area.

*Ed Davis, Fire Chief*

## **Fleet Service**

1. **Capital** – Completed several capital projects, including purchase of property contiguous to the Service Center, demolition of one of the condemned structures, installation of security fence and automatic gate on Leawood Street, and replacement of an unreliable fuel dispenser at the city's dedicated fuel station.
2. **Surplus Sales** – Internet auctions of surplus assets netted over \$100,000 and was returned to city accounts.
3. **Replacement of 56 vehicle and equipment capital assets** – Many people are not aware of all the procedures required to replace assets. Fleet Service is involved in every step from cradle to grave. Some of the procedures include evaluating the old asset for replacement, writing or selecting specifications, receiving Board approval of resolution, purchase order issuance, ordering from the vendor, receiving and inspecting asset for adherence to specifications, issuance and documentation of asset number, creating payment packet, installing city markings, outfitting of asset, providing proof of insurance, licensing, issuance of fuel card, and finally, preparing and coordinating the sale of the surplus asset.

All this was accomplished while successfully recruiting four key replacements due to retirements in the Fleet Service Department. The retirees left with almost 60 years of combined experience.

*Greg Speas, Fleet Service Director*

## **Information Systems**

1. Completed virtualization of the Sensus servers and final deployment of the Logix environment.
2. Converted the GIS web site from Adobe Flash (which is being discontinued) to Java.
3. Extended fiber and the ShoreTel phone system to Central Fire and Adams Street Utilities Departments. Average cost per extension has dropped to about \$9 per month from \$30-\$60 and will continue to decline as we convert more phones. Long distance for the ShoreTel phones is free as well.
4. Deployed new PC asset management and patch management applications will help with asset aging status and patch security.
5. Replaced our firewall and core network switch infrastructure. This will help us stay current with security and give us visibility of network traffic to help manage and troubleshoot traffic flow.

*Jeff Winter, IS Director*

## **Intracity Transit**

1. We were running four out of five buses that should have been decommissioned. The reason they weren't is that two of our Gillig buses lost engines. The city is required to keep the three Gillig type buses until the year 2020, so the two engines are our first priority. They were purchased for \$30,000 out of capital account and were installed by Fleet.
2. The capital account was budgeted for a Gillig in 2014. The total cost of that vehicle is \$433,000 (federal \$346,400, city match \$86,000). I checked with Finance to see if we could buy the replacement engines with FTA funding that was budgeted for the new Gillig. The FTA has approved this plan.
3. With the remaining funds, the plan was to purchase a new less expensive vehicle. As stated above, the Gillig's useful life ends in year 2020. The cost of a 30-foot Gillig is approximately \$433,000, with the city match at 20% and FTA at 80%. The vehicle that I proposed costs \$ 140,000. This vehicle can have three wheelchair positions and still have 13 seated positions. The Gilligs have two wheelchair positions and 16 seated positions. The proposed vehicle would be gasoline which would save \$10,000 in fuel yearly as opposed to diesel. We also can rotate the smaller vehicles out

because their useful life is seven years, where the Gilligs are 10 years. Another advantage is that the maintenance cost is less expensive. I recommend that the city buy one of these vehicles this year and, beginning in 2017, budget an additional vehicle per year for three years. With the help of Fleet and Finance, this plan was accomplished.

*Richard Grandon, Resident Advisor*

## **Parks & Trails**

1. **Hot Springs Creek Greenway Trail** - Two properties totaling approximately 6.5 acres were purchased in the vicinity of the future Wetlands Trail section. Friends of the Parks contributed \$9,000 to the city for grant match and property acquisition assistance. Property appraisals, surveys, and title searches were contributed by local businesses. The Blue Heron Trail was completed and dedicated in September, and a federal TAP grant of \$363,000 was awarded in December for the next phase of the Greenway, known as the Southern Trail. A brick inlay sidewalk wayfinding project (also a federal grant) was begun that will visually connect the Transportation Plaza Trailhead to the National Park Service's Bathhouse Row.
2. **Awards**
  - a. **Growing Healthy Communities:** Hot Springs was recognized as a "Thriving Community" by the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention. Community Recreation Program status was given to the Historic District Farmers and Artisans Market, and a "double bucks" SNAP pilot project was implemented with federal/state/and local partnership sponsors. A "Food Truck Fridays" program was launched at the market. Parks & Trails staff organized the city's Arbor Day program, one of the criteria of our Tree City USA designation.
  - b. **Valley Street Skatepark:** The Arkansas Recreation & Parks Association awarded the Valley Street Skatepark with the "Facility of the Year" award for facilities less than \$500,000.
3. **Planning and Policy** - Parks & Trails was the lead department in the SmartGrowth America technical assistance grant which resulted in a Complete Streets Policy, with dedicated funding being unanimously adopted by the City Board in February. As a result of this policy, Hot Springs was featured in the April edition of the Federal Highway Administration's Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter. P&T also serves as the lead department in the city's Green Infrastructure Plan currently under development. P&T Director Jean Wallace became the city's official liaison to the Arts Advisory Committee and in May, the iconic Mother Nature sculpture fountain was restored and re-dedicated during the opening ceremony of the Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance "Arts in the Park" festival.

*Jean Wallace, Parks & Trails Director*

## Planning & Development

1. **Downtown Redevelopment** - The Planning & Development Department worked hand-in-hand with developers, architects, builders and engineers involved in a number of landmark redevelopment projects downtown. The Dugan Stuart Building, Thompson Building, Citizens Building, and Landmark Building are all undergoing or have undergone full renovations, to be adaptively reused as hotels, condominiums, apartments, luxury bed-and-breakfast, and higher education space. These types of catalytic projects will have a domino effect on downtown redevelopment.
2. **Major Building Projects Citywide** - Beyond downtown, the City of Hot Springs saw a banner year in terms of major building projects citywide. National Park Medical Center, one of two regional hospitals located in the city, is currently undergoing a 65,000-square-foot addition for a new cardiac center.

Elsewhere, a Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market is set to be the new anchor of the Indiandale Shopping Center, which will include a complete site redevelopment involving the demolition of several structures and improvements to the existing shopping center.

Oaklawn Jockey Club completed its recent expansion and is set to open in time for the upcoming race season.

Other citywide projects include a new CVS Pharmacy at 3630 Central Avenue, new First Security Bank at 4129 Central Avenue, new Regions Bank at 302 Malvern Avenue, and a new Senior Care and Skilled Nursing Facility at the Belvedere Country Club site which also will undergo further renovations to its clubhouse and golf course.

In all, the Planning & Development Department issued approximately 4100 (4,097) permits totaling more than \$41 million of citywide construction activity. With major future projects planned in significant areas of the city, it is expected that this trend will continue well into 2016 and beyond.

3. **Title 17 Amendments - Property Maintenance and Premise regulations**

In its continued efforts to keep the City of Hot Springs a safe and attractive place to live, work and play, the Planning & Development Department provided support to the Board of Directors to amend Title 17: Public Health and Property and update city codes on property maintenance, including amendments to:

- a. Establish a vegetative maintenance strip along rights of way and certain property lines for undeveloped lots.
- b. Prohibit certain outside storage in residential areas.
- c. Clarify approved parking surfaces.
- d. Delete exception for non-licensed vehicles. Reduce height for weeds to from ten inches to six inches.

4. **Enclave Annexation** - Planning & Development provided staff support to the Board of Directors in preparing and delivering property owner notification of the Board's intent to annex a significant land area between city limits and the lakefront. Part of this support included the preparation of maps, brochures, legal descriptions, and welcome letters to property owners in this area as well as serving as the primary citizen point-of-contact, answering questions and addressing concerns about the annexation.
  
5. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2015 Projects (\$590,417 total)**
  - a. \$424,915 in CDBG sidewalk/ADA accessibility improvements (Church St, Park, Reserve, Illinois, Crescent, Silver, Wade, Walnut, Ouachita at Hawthorn, Prospect around Levi, Quapaw at Quapaw Community Center and Malvern)
  - b. \$59,088 in CDBG street improvements (crosswalks - lights, markings, buttons; school zone markings, bike lane markings, bus shelters)
  - c. \$56,298 in CDBG support for 15 Habitat for Humanity home building projects (acquisition, survey, clearance, platting)
  - d. \$43,196 in CDBG park improvements (Chattanooga play equipment & pending Linden lot acquisition)
  - e. \$6,920 for homebuyer education classes

*Kathy Sellman, Planning Department*

## **Police Department**

1. The greatest, and perhaps most important, accomplishment for the Hot Springs Police Department during this past year was receiving accreditation status through the Arkansas Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (A.L.E.A.P.) administered through the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police. The department adopted and is in compliance with 188 best practices or standards that were carefully developed by Arkansas Law Enforcement professionals to assist agencies in the efficient and effective delivery of service and the protection of individual's rights. These standards cover all aspects of law enforcement operations including use of force, protection of citizens' rights, pursuits, property and evidence management, and patrol and investigative operations. The Accreditation Program assures both city management and the citizens that their Police Department is operating in a manner that reflects the current best practices of law enforcement. Furthermore, it simultaneously reduces both officer and agency risks while improving community cooperation. The Hot Springs Police Department was the first law enforcement agency in the state to receive this prestigious designation.

2. The Hot Springs Police Department has and will continue to place a strong emphasis in police-community relations. In addition to providing two adult Citizen Police Academies held each year, the Police Department initiated a week-long Youth Police Academy that was held this past summer. There were 21 young citizens throughout Garland County, between the ages of 14 and 18, that participated in a learning and fun-enriched environment. The attendees participated in a simulated physical fitness test, an oral interview board, traffic stops, and were even able to process a staged crime scene. The relationships, understanding and rapport that were established during this week between the officers and our community's youth will, no doubt, provide a foundation for future academies as well as enhance communication between both parties.
3. The Hot Springs Police Department also began implementation of its first phase of the body-worn video system. This was the first of three phases, during the course of a three year period, that sworn personnel will begin utilizing body-worn video cameras while performing law enforcement activities. The city's Board of Directors along with city management have identified this tool as being a critical asset in providing transparency, accountability, training, and job performance reviews for both officers and citizens. Thus far, the department has purchased approximately 33 cameras and a server from L3 technology with the anticipation that the department will continue to purchase additional cameras over the course of the next two years. As the cameras are purchased, priority will be given to those officers that have daily interaction with citizens, such as those assigned to Patrol and Traffic.

*Interim Chief Stachey, Police Department*

## **Public Information**

1. PI won the 2015 Arkansas Business City of Distinction Award in the Technology Advancements category for cities in its population class for the City of Hot Springs' website, [www.cityhs.net](http://www.cityhs.net). The award honors outstanding initiatives in cities across the state. PI continues to work with the citywide Web Team to increase the quality and quantity of information on the website; to promote consistent design; and to more fully utilize website tools and modules to better serve the public.
2. PI provided coordination, technical support and extensive PR for several major events, including the public release of the Downtown Development/ Redevelopment Plan at the Exchange Street Parking Plaza and the Ouachita River Valley Association Annual Convention, held for the first time in Hot Springs. Both events were well attended, with the ORVA Conference setting a new sponsorship record. The ORVA Executive Director stated afterwards, "This was one of those rare events when everything went perfect."
3. PI launched several large-scale grassroots public awareness campaigns, including:

- a. Transition from CodeRED to CivicReady as the city's emergency notification system provider. A PI-produced video PSA featuring city employees was a key promotional tool, along with the creation of citizen-friendly signup flyers and click pens distributed at community events.
  - b. National Mayor's Water Conservation Challenge, resulting in Hot Springs as a top-ten finisher among other U.S. cities with the highest percentage of residents in their population categories who made water-saving pledges. Hot Springs also ranked #2 in the nation in its population category, with more than 400 area residents making more than 5000 pledges to save water and preserve the environment. The mayor, city manager and county judge engaged in the campaign, which included outstanding cooperation across local media. Locally-produced radio PSA's were scheduled by area radio stations for extensive airtime provided at no cost. This significantly aided the city's efforts to increase water conservation awareness.
  - c. Enclave annexation education, through the creation of specialized brochures and Web pages.
4. PI upgraded, expanded and diversified government access TV programming on city12, including:
    - a. Standardizing and increasing the quantity of rebroadcast times of Board of Directors' regular and agenda meetings.
    - b. Creating themed monthly government-related series designed to attract new viewers.
    - c. Cooperative agreements with University of Arkansas and Mississippi State University to air Extension Service programs on a weekly basis.
    - d. Updating the design of existing video bulletin board screens.

*Terry Payne, Public Information Director*

## **Public Works**

1. Completed the entire list of streets submitted for paving and rotomilling, coming in under budget.
2. Completed the installation of HVAC units at City Hall that has allowed us to permanently shut down the old chiller/boiler system.
3. Obtained new traffic signal timing plans for the entire Central Avenue and Higdon Ferry corridors.

4. The Stormwater Division completed approximately \$300,000 in storm drainage upgrades.
5. Completed a new floor coating in the parking deck restrooms, making it much more aesthetically pleasing and easier to clean.

*Denny McPhate, Public Works Director*

## **Sanitation**

1. Sanitation held three big events during 2015: Spring Fling, E-Waste Collection & Household Hazardous Waste. A total of 317.99 tons of material was collected in the following quantities:
  - a. Spring Fling had 221.91 tons collected during the two-day event.
  - b. E-waste Collection totaled 65.06 tons of electronic waste.
  - c. The two Household Hazardous Waste Collections netted 31.02 tons of various items such as paints, acids, aerosols, batteries, & caustic cleaners, and more.
2. The department started a pilot program in the Earth Angel Program taking plastics curbside in area "H" in August, which has seen a 50% increase in participation. We plan to take the plastic collection citywide in March or April 2016. We will begin to bail our plastics in 2016 which will generate additional revenue. We also started accepting SOP (Sorted Office Paper), which includes magazines, office paper, catalogs, junk mail, and more. This commodity is accepted at our drop-off site. So far, we have collected 22.50 tons of SOP.
3. Finally we collected 41,425 tons of Class I solid waste (household trash) in 2015, compared to 40,198 tons of Class I collected in 2014. This represents an increase of 3.05%. We collected approximately 3,842 tons of recyclable material in 2015. Our department looks forward to all the changes in 2016 and to continue providing the best customer service possible for the residents of the City of Hot Springs.

*Randy Atkinson, Sanitation Director*

## **Sports Recreation**

1. Concluded Kimery Infield rehab project.
2. Hosted the 2015 5A Arkansas High School Fastpitch State Tournament (Kimery Park), May 14-16 and ASA Girls District 6 Tournament (Kimery Park), June 13-14.
3. Hosted the 2015 Senior Olympics SPA World Qualifier, May 28-31.
4. Constructed a new parking lot at Kimery Park.

*Nathan Neighbors, Operations Manager*

# Utilities

## Field Operations

1. **Water Distribution** – Crews installed 101 new water services. During the year, personnel made 292 water main repairs, 90 fire hydrant repairs and 331 service repairs. Crews discovered leaks on three air relief valves on a 24” water main, which were a major source of unaccounted water loss.
2. **Sewer Collection** – Collection crews replaced three sewer mains on Hagen Street, Dawer Street, and Main Street. The CCTV crew televised 71 sections of gravity sewer mains (~100,000 feet) and 127 sections of gravity mains (~96,000 feet) were cleaned and/flushed. The Sewer Collection Department made repairs to a sewer main in the Quail Ridge subdivision that had contributed over 100,000 gallons per day (Inflow and Infiltration) during rain events.
3. **Sewer Lift** – Lift station personnel repaired 861 pumps and responded to more than 1000 grinder station repairs and calls. Crews set 36 new grinder pumps for customers. Some 551 major pump stations were inspected and repaired as necessary.

Phase III of the Fairwood Force Main and Pump Station Improvements project was completed in 2015.

## Water Production

1. **Lakeside Water Treatment Plant** – In 2015, the Lakeside Plant successfully converted from chlorine gas to sodium hypochlorite (bleach) as a disinfecting agent. The conversion has simplified maintenance and makes for a safer workplace for operators at the Lakeside Plant and greatly reduces the “risk management” planning and protocol.

A backup generator was installed at the Lakeside Plant to mitigate any lengthy power outages and allow for normal demand of potable water for the water system.

2. **Ouachita Water Treatment Plant** – The Ouachita plant had a new backwash line installed in 2015 for the routine maintenance of the plant’s backwash tank. The tank supplies the water needed to backwash the nine filters. The new line provides redundancy in the filter backwash operation by allowing the isolation of the tank. The filters can then be backwashed directly from the transmission line in the event of needed maintenance or if there is a failure in the tank backwash system.

3. **Plate settlers and an improved sludge collection system** have been installed in basin 6. Basin 7 is currently in the upgrade process. Plate settlers increase the settling efficiency of the basins, increasing the rating on the sedimentation model. Each basin increases production from 2.38 MGD each to 8 MGD each.

## **Wastewater Treatment and Compost**

1. **Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant** - Amanda Thomason, Lab Tech in the wastewater laboratory passed and received her Class 4 license. Blake Edwards received his Class 3 license and is currently cross training in the lab. The department has started a new Operations Cross Training Program with operators to insure that they are informed, capable, competent operators, ready to take on more duties and understand their responsibilities.

The plant has completed Phase I of the SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system improvements. Three new scum boxes were replaced in the primaries, greatly improving operations. The plant continues to meet permit requirements.

2. **Southwest Wastewater Treatment Plant** – The plant had a new tertiary filter installed. The HMI (human machine interface) project is approximately 75% complete.
3. **Compost Facility** – The Compost Facility received more than 50,000 cubic yards of brush in 2015 with an average of 1500 vehicle each month getting compost or dropping off brush. The facility sold 3498 loads of compost and provided 2459 free self-loads of compost to the public.

*Monty Ledbetter, Utilities Director*

**- END OF REPORT -**