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2018 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Presented by Mayor Doug Sprouse

Feb. 27, 2018

City of Springdale, Arkansas

It is my privilege to deliver to you the 2018 State of the City Address. This is my 10th such address to you and the people of Springdale since becoming mayor in January of 2009. If I remember correctly, City Hall was being powered by generator that night due to the ice storm. As most will remember, 2009 was already a very challenging time economically for the people of our city and across the nation. But, a lot of great things have happened in this community both before, and since, that devastating ice storm.

In fact, our city has a long, rich history of people, churches, organizations, and businesses that have made, and will continue to make, our city, state, and world a better place to live. Tonight, I will briefly mention some of the highlights from 2017, as well as touch on some exciting things we can look forward to this year.

We talk a lot about the construction of Arkansas Children's Northwest and the opening of our new Sam's Club. We should. Those are projects for which the people of Springdale are thankful. Children's Northwest will change the lives of so many families for the better. With today's opening of Children's Northwest, an already great selection of healthcare options in Northwest Arkansas just went to the next level.

Sam's Club's opening last year made a noticeable impact on our monthly sales tax revenue. They have set the stage for more retail and entertainment development in the overlay district, making the most of great anchors such as Arvest Ballpark and now Children's Northwest. There are already plans for another multi-story tower, located just to the north of Children's Northwest. To the south, at the southeast corner of Don Tyson Parkway and Gene George Boulevard, plans have been announced for a \$180 million business development.

Just west of the ballpark, Northwest Arkansas Community College has announced plans to begin construction on their new Washington County Center sometime this year.

Development is also happening outside of our overlay district. Our downtown revitalization continues to pick up the pace. Every week either I or a member of our City staff is in a meeting about proposed development downtown. Our city, thanks to your support, publicly funded many infrastructure improvements to help support and prepare for coming development. We know this will have to continue.

Springdale Water Utilities has also been a valuable partner as we've worked together to prepare for growth; not only downtown, but all over of Springdale. The Walton Family Foundation, along with other large and small private investors, continues to support our downtown and believes in this revitalization.

In 2017, Tyson opened a spectacular new office complex on East Emma Avenue, bringing team members to work in our downtown every day. This helps support our existing restaurants and shops, while creating the need for more in the future. They're not finished yet. We can look forward to future announcements regarding the expansion of Tyson's presence downtown. It wasn't lost on anyone who attended the opening day of Tyson on Emma, when a Tyson executive referred to our future downtown area as "tech town." I think we can really see that happen.

I want to express my appreciation to some of the anchors that have not only helped sustain our downtown through the years, but are helping lead the charge during its rebirth. The Jones Center, a true jewel for Northwest Arkansas, continues to expand offerings and programming to meet the desires of our residents. With the new mountain bike training facility that will begin soon, they will further enhance our biking infrastructure, continuing the momentum created by the mountain bike trails that are currently being built on and around Fitzgerald Mountain.

The Arts Center of the Ozarks, with their new vision and bright future, stands poised to lead our thriving arts community to a new level, as our residents support the expanding role the arts will have in our community.

The Rodeo of the Ozarks, a big part of Springdale for more than 70 years, continues to be a major annual event. But through the vision of their board, that facility has become much more than an annual rodeo. Parsons Stadium is used for big events almost year round.

We are also blessed to have an asset in our downtown that we often take for granted, but makes downtown Springdale unique. Our downtown is within walking distance to the second busiest airport in the state. Our Airport Commission is working on plans that would further improve access and connect our airport to our downtown.

I need to also recognize the Downtown Springdale Alliance and the Springdale Chamber of Commerce for their spirit of cooperation as they work with each other and our city to set the stage for growth and vitality downtown. What we've seen so far could not have taken place without their passionate leadership and involvement.

We have great things happening all over our city. Mercy will soon begin construction of a large clinic at Elm Springs Road and I-49. It will be the southernmost facility in their network, and we believe it's just the beginning of an expanded presence in Springdale. We know also that Northwest Health Systems has plans for substantial additional investment in their system; not only in their main location downtown, but in other locations, as well. It's encouraging to know that given the already plentiful options for quality healthcare in our city, the addition of Children's Northwest and the new Mercy Clinic will help position Springdale as the healthcare destination for our region.

In the southeast part of Springdale, new subdivisions and hundreds of rooftops will continue to be built in the area around C. L. "Charlie" and Willie George Park. With the park, and concentration of schools in the area, we can expect to see more development in the southeast.

Northwest Springdale is no different. The new Shaw Family Park, near Legendary Subdivision and Willis Shaw Elementary, should start construction this year. On North 40th Street, construction of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Northwest Arkansas Nature and Education Center should be underway soon.

I want to end by addressing our voters and thanking them for the strong support for our bond election that took place just two weeks ago. The voters of Springdale approved all six ballot issues by an average of more than 81%. That's practically unheard of. That's a strong statement that our voters want to see this tremendous momentum and progress continue.

We have our work cut out for us. As easy as it might sound, spending more than \$160 million on projects within three years will be quite a challenge. That's more than twice the money that was generated with our 2012 Bond Issue. This Council has been full partners with our City administration in preparation for wisely prioritizing projects.

Now, through additional public meetings and your input, we'll get to work prioritizing projects in each of the categories approved by voters. No category will be more challenging than prioritizing construction of new roads and improvements to existing roads. Exciting days are ahead.

With the upcoming construction of a new police and court building, along with a renovated City Hall, new and renovated parks, additional fire stations and training facility, and a new animal shelter, Springdale is positioned for continued growth.

The only reason a city government exists is to return services to its residents. We are public servants. The vote of confidence demonstrated two weeks ago confirms we are on the right track for Springdale. I'm sure you all agree that is a huge responsibility, and I know none of us take it lightly.

We are so blessed to be a part of such a welcoming community. Springdale is a much different place than it was when I was growing up. We have seen big changes in our demographics in the past 25-30 years. That's a lot of change in a relatively short period of time.

Human nature is to resist change and the unknowns that come with it. For that reason, I couldn't be prouder of the way Springdale has embraced this change. From our schools, which have been on the front lines, to our churches, to our business community, and down to our individual neighborhoods, Springdale has been a shining example of what a welcoming community looks like.

We recognize the richness that is added to our lives when we can willingly expose ourselves to other cultures, right here in our own city. And we've learned that our own culture is not at all threatened as we open up to others. I've learned that I don't have to forget who I am in order to appreciate who someone else is.

Through our work and cooperation with the national organization of Welcoming Communities, we are working on specific initiatives we can implement that will help our new residents better integrate and access everything Springdale has to offer.

I remember moving here with my family as an 8 year old. It wasn't long before two ladies were at our doorstep. They were from the Welcome Wagon. They brought us some small gifts and lots of information that helped us know more about our new community. It meant a lot to our family and made a lasting impression on me.

Being a welcoming community has nothing to do with some of the red meat issues many like to attach it to. The national debate swirling around immigration issues shouldn't impact how we treat our neighbors.

I would refer you to the Gospel of Luke, 10; 24-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Make no mistake, the City of Springdale always has, and always will, fully cooperate with federal agencies as they do their jobs. That said, we can and should still strive for ways to be a welcoming community, whether our new neighbor comes from around the state or across the ocean. It's simply the right thing to do.

This is truly a great city, made up of great people. We have a proud past, and surely have an exciting future. It is a privilege to serve our residents with this council, our boards and commissions, countless volunteers, and City employees who do their work with outstanding commitment to their jobs, and the ability to do those jobs with excellence. I am blessed.

Thank you to my family that unconditionally loves, encourages, and supports me. And thanks be to God, who sustains and empowers each of us to fulfill His unique purpose for each of our lives.

Thank you,

God Bless,

And Good Night.