

# Northwest Arkansas Council



## Annual Report 2011 - 2012



4100 Corporate Center Drive  
Suite 205  
Springdale, Arkansas 72762  
479.582.2100

July 31, 2012

Members of the Northwest Arkansas Council:

When my term as presiding co-chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council commenced last July, I knew the next 12 months would involve the establishment and implementation of many of the objectives outlined in the Greater Northwest Arkansas Regional Development Strategy. We've accomplished most of what we set out to do a year ago, and I'm proud to present a summary of those outcomes in our annual report.

One of our most important successes this year was strengthening relationships with our neighbors in the state and throughout the region. We held the Central/Northwest Arkansas Leadership Summit in February to promote more collaboration between the state's two largest regions. We also welcomed Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker to our region to talk about shared economic opportunities, and we are communicating more than ever with our friends in nearby Fort Smith about ways we can work together.

Meanwhile, our Regional Economic Development Work Group is off to a fast start. With the help of a team of business and chamber partners, entrepreneurial support and existing business services were in place before the end of 2011. The Council also enlisted some of the greatest marketing minds in the region, making significant strides toward developing a regional brand. Our logo, tagline, and a foundational marketing package featured at our annual meeting mark a milestone in this effort, and we look forward to utilizing it to tell our story to the world.

The Infrastructure Work Group focused on the re-issue of GARVEE bonds to improve access to Interstate 540 and will work to garner support for a major expansion of the interstate, Bella Vista bypass, and the start of the U.S. 412 bypass of Springdale. Water quality remains at the top of our list, and we continue to work with business and local governments to find workable solutions with the state of Oklahoma. With a June groundbreaking, the Razorback Greenway made another step toward forming the backbone of a regional trail network.

The Educational Excellence Work Group continues its work at the K-12 and post-secondary levels, expanding and creating programs to encourage residents to re-enter and complete higher levels of education.

The Community Vitality Work Group has successfully launched leadership and volunteer programs and will expand its efforts to the areas of diversity and health before the end of the year.

The pages that follow provide you with a detailed update on our progress over the past year and a glimpse of what's to come. It was an honor to serve you as presiding co-chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council. I look forward to working with our members, volunteers, and new presiding co-chair, John Tyson, as he guides the program in the new year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. David Gearhart".

G. David Gearhart  
Presiding Co-Chairman  
Northwest Arkansas Council



Northwest Arkansas residents in March celebrated the opening of **The Iceberg**, a shared workspace for entrepreneurs in downtown Fayetteville. The facility will be home to the startups participating in the first ARK Challenge, an entrepreneurs bootcamp that starts in August. (Photo by Todd Gill of Fayetteville Flyer)

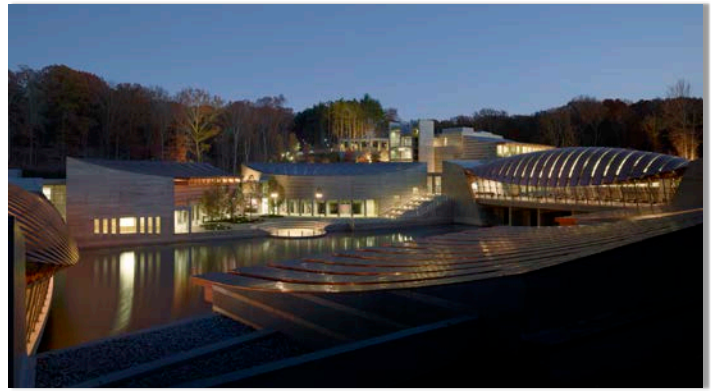
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**Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker** spoke before a group of 40 Northwest Arkansas civic and business leaders at an April luncheon. Chief Baker told guests he hopes to forge a strong economic relationship with Northwest Arkansas in the coming years.



November's opening of **Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art** drew national attention to Northwest Arkansas. Its economic impact on the region is already immense, luring thousands of tourists to Northwest Arkansas within just a few months. Businesses across the region have benefitted from the world-class museum's opening.



Participants of the Northwest Arkansas Higher Education Consortium signing ceremony were **Dr. Chip Pollard** of John Brown University, **Dr. Steven Gates** of NorthWest Arkansas Community College, **Dr. George Burch** of Northwest Technical Institute, **Dr. Daniel Rahn** of UAMS Northwest and **Dr. G. David Gearhart** of the University of Arkansas (not pictured).



Friends **Tim McFarland** of Elevate and **Cathy Foraker** of AT&T share a hug at the Northwest Arkansas Council's winter meeting in January.

Northwest Arkansas Council member **Howard Hamilton** looks on as Council member **Mark Simmons** greets one of the Council's guests at the winter meeting.





## Region’s Brand Strategy Conveys Northwest Arkansas Attributes

The colorful row of arrows pointing skyward represents the region’s diversity, the potential for upward mobility and economic momentum. But if you look just right, the assembly of arrows also depicts some of the region’s iconic environmental assets: a mountain range and a row of trees.

Each of the attributes featured in the Northwest Arkansas region’s new logo was strategically designed to connect with each of the designated targets: business owners, families and working professionals. The logo was designed with an intentional depth in messaging, embodying layers of communication with the goal of reaching a broader audience. The result is that each target sees and connects with the message they find most relevant and compelling, while being influenced by subsequent attributes.

“It’s open to interpretation,” said Scott Caldwell, vice president of marketing services for Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods. “It makes you think. It makes you look a little further.”

A team from Procter & Gamble, CJRW and Mitchell Communications Group, which received early-on assistance from Rockfish Interactive and Saatchi & Saatchi X, led the effort to define a logo and tagline to help market Northwest Arkansas.

The logo and tagline — Great for Business. Great for Life. — will be used in marketing brochures, websites, advertising and publications. Working professionals pursuing jobs, company owners looking to expand or relocate, and families are its intended target audiences.

The logo and tagline capture and communicate the wealth of attributes Northwest Arkansas offers, which will help increase awareness about the region.

“Having a regional brand will accelerate our growth in the future,” said Elise Mitchell, president and CEO of Mitchell Communications. “It will allow us to compete more effectively with other regional economies, leveraging all of our assets under one brand. The new brand does a great job of sharing the message that the American Dream is alive and well in Northwest Arkansas.”

A volunteer team from Procter & Gamble kicked off the branding effort last summer by developing a list of key attributes that the brand should convey. The team, which included associate director of external relations Tim Marrin and brand manager Chetan Parekh, drew insights from longtime Northwest Arkansas residents as well as those who have recently moved to the region.

The group talked at one point about how Northwest Arkansas is a bit like “sushi and sweet tea,” suggesting that the region has an upscale, modern side while also preserving Southern warmth and friendliness. The message evolved into a new tagline, but the sentiments remained. Northwest Arkansas blends business opportunities, big-city sophistication, small-town friendliness and scenic natural beauty - that’s the message the branding campaign aims to deliver.

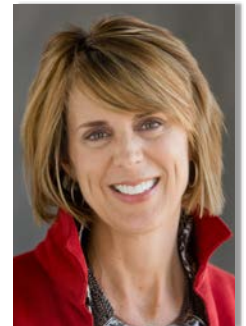
Five potential logos and taglines were presented. A group of national site selectors, some members of the Northwest Arkansas Council and 113 local professionals reviewed three of the marks. The consensus was that the selected logo and tagline clearly communicate that the region’s pro-business attitudes go hand in hand with the high quality of life.

Cynthia Puryear, a senior strategist with Mitchell, said she expects to see the logo and tagline become prominent in many efforts to tell people about Northwest Arkansas.

“If you are going to brand, it needs to be part of everything you are doing,” Puryear said. “If you really want to bring visibility, it needs to be on everything you touch and as visible as possible. It’s the voice of this whole campaign. You want to get people excited about it and keep them talking about it.”

Marrin said he’s satisfied with the logo and tagline that were developed, and the cooperation among those who helped with the project.

“This branding will help all of us communicate what Northwest Arkansas stands for in the hearts and minds of our region and what truly separates us from the competition,” he said.



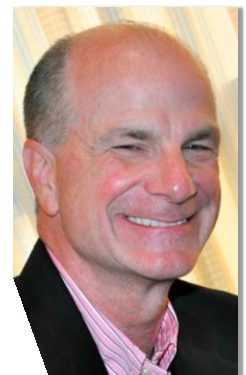
**Elise Mitchell**



**Scott Caldwell**



**Chetan Parekh**



**Tim Marrin**





## Notable Initiatives

Volunteer work groups and the staffs of the Northwest Arkansas Council, the Endeavor Foundation and the five largest Northwest Arkansas chambers of commerce pursued an impressive list of projects in the past year, completing some entirely and establishing others for long-term success. A synopsis of some projects starts here and continues throughout our annual report.

### STATE OF REGION REPORT

**Accomplishment:** The Northwest Arkansas Council partnered with the University of Arkansas Center for Business and Economic Research to create the region's first "State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report." The report compared Northwest Arkansas with its peer regions of Lexington, Ky.; Gainesville, Fla.; and Huntsville, Ala. Also included in the evaluation was Austin, Texas, an aspirational region that serves as a model for Northwest Arkansas.

The report, made public in September 2011, showed Northwest Arkansas with rising levels of employment growth and maintaining an unemployment rate below the national average.

"The State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report is designed to highlight both the region's strengths and put a focus on areas where our competitiveness lags our peers," said Kathy Deck, director of the University of Arkansas Center for Business and Economic Research. "This report demonstrates how employment opportunities and establishment growth in the region surpassed our benchmark group over the last decade, but also how our educational attainment and research expenditures were limiting factors."

**How it helps:** The report serves as a benchmark for how the region compares to other successful metropolitan areas.

**What's next:** The next State of the Region Report will be released in September 2012.

## Implementing Objectives

Northwest Arkansas started the year without a mechanism to track the region's new and existing business expansion activity, no regional program to encourage dropouts

the groundwork for the projects they'll take on next.

The volunteer work groups are organized around the four key strategies in the work plan: economic development, education, infrastructure, and community vitality. The collective staff of the Northwest Arkansas Council, Endeavor Foundation, and area Chambers of Commerce play a critical role implementing the plan.



**Steve Clark** of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce looks on as **Stephen Beam**, the chairman of the Regional Wayfinding Steering Committee, discusses the placement of wayfinding signs in the region. The signs, which should be put up by next year, will guide motorists to important destinations throughout Northwest Arkansas.

The work groups are addressing the objectives with both one-time events and long-term projects. Mark Simmons, chair of the steering committee that oversees the activities of the work groups, said work group chairs Susan Barrett, John Brown III, Tommy Deweese and Anita Scism are exceptional at keeping the groups on course.

"They've taken the ball and run with it," Simmons said. "They've been successful in getting community involvement and broadened the base of people who are involved."

to return to high school or a regional event to connect working professionals with nonprofit organizations in need.

Thanks to the dedication of four volunteer work groups, the Northwest Arkansas Council, the Endeavor Foundation and five Northwest Arkansas chambers of commerce, all of these programs exist today.

The 16 objectives unveiled in January 2011 as part of the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy would have overwhelmed the faint of heart, but not the volunteer work group members. They set out to tackle each of the unique objectives, completing some tasks in full while laying

On this page, you'll see the start of our "Notable Initiatives" list, showing many of the activities that have involved the volunteer work groups, the supporting organizations and Council staff.

The work groups started their planning and organizing as a short-term goal in the weeks immediately following the release of the development strategy, with the Educational Excellence Work Group out of the gate with the first event to address a key objective.

Reach Out Siloam launched in September 2011, with a focus on convincing dropouts to return to school in Siloam Springs. The work on that Saturday was a pilot study, and organizers will expand the initiative to other

school districts in Benton and Washington counties in August 2012.

The Regional Economic Development Work Group advised Northwest Arkansas Council staff on several key objectives of the plan: Site Selection Assistance, Research, Entrepreneurial Support, Business Retention and Expansion (BRE), and Regional Marketing. Most of these efforts are detailed in other places within this annual report.

“The Economic Development Work Group is passionate about supporting the entire region,” said Cathy Foraker, one of the work group’s members. “It is exciting to see the positive steps being taken to be pro-active in economic development, creating an identity for the region and working to support business retention and expansion.”

The Community Vitality Work Group held the region’s first volunteer fair in May 2012. The purpose of the event was to match working professionals with one of around 75 nonprofit organizations that sent representatives. Being a volunteer is an important part of being a community leader, and one of the fair’s objectives was to encourage working professionals to expand their leadership opportunities.

The volunteer fair was among the goals of the Community Vitality Work Group.

“We want to reduce obesity, embrace diversity, foster volunteerism, make our region more attractive to young professionals and generally improve our quality of life,” said work group member Laura Kellams. “There aren’t ready solutions sitting on a shelf waiting for us to pick them up and place them in our cart. These are complicated challenges involving human behavior

and our communities’ response.”

The Infrastructure Work Group’s broad mix of responsibilities include identifying the best ways to improve highways, public transportation, air travel, rail access, trails and water quality. Some members are helping with the Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway, a 36-mile trail that will allow cycling, running or walking on a paved path from Lake Bella Vista to Fayetteville. Its construction should be complete by the end of 2013.

Most of the work groups have recognized the importance of getting together every six weeks or so, realizing they can share ideas and learn from one another. Simmons said he realized it was possible that one work group member’s good idea in Elkins, Fayetteville or some other city could be replicated elsewhere.

“We’ve got great things going on and getting them duplicated was one of the things I was hoping to see,” Simmons said. “It’s good to see things happening on a regional basis.”



**Susan Barrett**, who chairs the Northwest Arkansas Council’s Infrastructure Work Group, has been steady in her leadership, ensuring that meeting participants can share regional information about highways, public transportation, wayfinding, trails, water quality, rail and airports.

## Notable Initiatives

### ARK CHALLENGE/ICEBERG

**Accomplishment:** A federal grant is helping fund The ARK Challenge, a 14-week entrepreneurial bootcamp. Up to 15 teams will develop technology-based startups. Some teams will focus on food processing, logistics and retail industry technology.

Teams selected will be based at The Iceberg, a shared workspace in Fayetteville. The Iceberg opened in March 2012.

**How it helps:** The ARK Challenge and The Iceberg support the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy objective of “enhancing Northwest Arkansas’ culture of entrepreneurship by expanding the scale and scope of small business support services.”

**What’s next:** The teams chosen to participate in the first bootcamp begin their work on Aug. 6. The bootcamp ends Nov. 9.

### REACH OUT TO NWA

**Accomplishment:** Modeled after Reach Out to Dropout programs in Texas, Reach Out Siloam sent Siloam Springs High School administrators, teachers and community volunteers out to contact high school students who didn’t return to class in September 2011 and encouraged them to return to school. The event was considered a pilot project to see if it could be expanded to other schools in Benton and Washington counties.

**How it helps:** Re-engaging high school students increases the likelihood that they’ll become graduates. An objective in the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is to reduce the dropout rate.

**What’s next:** Organizers plan to expand the program to other high schools in August 2012. The goal is for Reach Out to NWA volunteers to knock on the doors of students throughout the region.



## Notable Initiatives

### HIGHWAY BONDS

**Accomplishment:** The Northwest Arkansas Council supported approval of GARVEE bonds for statewide highway improvements that included nine I-540 exits in Benton and Washington counties. Voters passed the measure in November 2011.

The Council's Executive Committee also took a position in support of the statewide, temporary, half-cent sales tax that's on the Nov. 6, 2012 ballot. If approved, the tax would pay to widen I-540 to six lanes in Benton and Washington counties, and build parts of the Bella Vista and Springdale bypasses.

**How it helps:** A goal within the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is to invest in infrastructure to "enable sustainable, long-term growth and improve economic competitiveness."

**What's next:** Depending on the outcome of the Nov. 6 sales tax vote, it's possible that the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Authority will pursue a sales tax.

### WAYFINDING

**Accomplishment:** A grant allowed seven Northwest Arkansas cities to take the first steps toward creating a regional wayfinding system patterned after signs already in place in Bentonville. The system will help residents and visitors navigate the region, and the signs will promote key destinations. Participating cities are Bella Vista, Eureka Springs, Fayetteville, Lowell, Rogers, Siloam Springs and Springdale.

**How it helps:** The Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy's Objective 4 suggests improving "multi-modal mobility throughout Northwest Arkansas." A wayfinding system is recommended.

**What's next:** A pilot project will be agreed upon by the cities by Dec. 31, 2012. The pilot project will be installed by July 31, 2013.

# This Year in Northwest Arkansas

## Regional Growth Continues

Northwest Arkansas Council staff analyzed U.S. Census Bureau statistical data to evaluate statewide growth as well as growth in the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), its urbanized area and Northwest Arkansas counties and cities.

### Statewide

- Arkansas' population grew by 22,064 in the 15 months that ended in July 2011. Of those additions, 48.3 percent were in Benton and Washington counties.
- Arkansas added more people in the 15 months than a state twice its size (Missouri, population 6 million).
- Arkansas' population is on pace to top 3 million sometime in 2015.

### Metropolitan Statistical Area

- MSA population increased by over 10,600 between April 2010 and July 2011. Its population was estimated at 473,830 as of July 1, 2011, the Census Bureau said.
- During a 15-month period that ended in July 2011, only 22 MSAs nationwide grew faster than the 2.29 percent growth rate in Northwest Arkansas.
- If the MSA continues to add residents at the current pace, its population will top 500,000 by mid-2014.

- The Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA is the 107<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation.
- The Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA's addition of 10,623 people in 15 months means it added more people than 19 MSAs with populations above 1 million people. Among those 19 larger MSAs were the ones that included the cities of Birmingham, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Des Moines, Detroit, Little Rock, Memphis, Milwaukee, Newark, Pittsburgh and St. Louis.
- The Northwest Arkansas Council staff last year predicted the MSAs 2010 population would be "at least 463,300" when new U.S. Census Bureau figures were released in mid-2011. The actual number was 463,204. We were this close to correct.

### Urbanized Area

- The Northwest Arkansas urbanized area (which is defined as areas with at least 1,000 people per square mile and adjoining areas with at least 500 people per square mile) saw its population reach 295,083 people, making it the nation's 15<sup>th</sup> fastest growing urbanized area from 2000 to 2010. Its population in 2000 was 172,585.
- The urbanized area now includes parts of six cities that weren't in the urbanized area in 2000. Those six cities are Bella Vista, Cave Springs,



Centerton, Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove and Tontitown.

- Increases in the urbanized area's population mean additional federal funding, which should arrive in 2013. The federal funding to the region's two primary bus systems — Razorback Transit and Ozark Regional Transit — should increase by \$1 million annually.

### **Benton and Washington Counties**

- The Census Bureau reported in May 2012 that Benton County was Arkansas' fastest growing county last year. Its population grew 2.8 percent to reach 227,556 residents by July 2011.
- Only three counties in Arkansas grew faster than Washington County between April 2010 and July 2011. Its 207,521 residents make it the state's third largest county.
- The 6,217 people added in Benton County during the 15 months that ended in July 2011 were more people added to any county in Arkansas, Alabama, Missouri or Mississippi.
- Washington County has the state's largest Pacific Islander population, due in large part to the Marshallese community in Springdale. Washington County's 4,197 Pacific Islanders are 61.2 percent of the state's total Pacific Islander population.
- Of the estimated 195,075 Hispanics living in Arkansas as of July 2011, 68,621 were in Benton and Washington counties. They accounted for 35 percent of the state's Hispanic population.
- The 10,673 people added in Benton and Washington counties between April 2010 and July 2011 were more than Central Arkansas' four largest

counties. (Pulaski, Saline, Garland and Faulkner added 10,162.)

### **Northwest Arkansas Cities**

- Fayetteville (3<sup>rd</sup>), Springdale (4<sup>th</sup>), Rogers (8<sup>th</sup>) and Bentonville (10<sup>th</sup>) were among the state's ten largest cities in July 2011.
- Among Arkansas cities that added the most residents between April 2010 and July 2011, five of the top 10 are in Benton and Washington counties. They were: Springdale (1,605), Rogers (1,575), Fayetteville (1,522), Bentonville (994) and Bella Vista (746).
- Among 502 cities and towns in Arkansas, 56 grew by more than two percent between April 2010 and July 2011. Thirty-two of the 56 are in Benton and Washington counties.
- Springdale added 23,999 residents between 2000 and 2010. No city in the state added more residents during the decade.
- Seven cities in Arkansas added more than 10,000 residents between 2000 and 2010. Four of those — Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Bentonville — are in Benton and Washington counties.
- Four of the five cities in the state — Springdale (23,999), Rogers (17,135), Fayetteville (15,533) and Bentonville (15,571) — that added at least 15,000 residents during the decade are in Northwest Arkansas. The only other city was Conway (15,741).
- Eight communities in the state with more than 2,000 residents doubled, tripled or quadrupled in population between 2000 and 2010. Six of the eight communities (Bethel Heights, Centerton, Elkins, Pea Ridge, Prairie Creek and Tontitown) are in Benton and Washington counties.

## **Notable Initiatives**

### **CAREER COACHES**

**Accomplishment:** Four partners — the University of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions, the Walton Family Foundation, the Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative, and the Northwest Arkansas Council's Educational Excellence Work Group — announced in December 2011 that they found a way to encourage at-risk students to graduate from high school and have a specific post-graduation educational plan.

Modeled after Gov. Mike Beebe's "Arkansas Works" program, the new Northwest Arkansas Career and College Coaches program will operate in Benton and Washington counties. School districts throughout the two counties will participate.

"With the right guidance, students who otherwise may have abandoned their educational pursuits are instead finding the potential for lifelong careers," Gov. Beebe said at the time the program was announced. "By banding together, the Walton Family Foundation, the University of Arkansas and the Northwest Arkansas Council are bringing more students this opportunity that will further improve Arkansas' educational future."

The Walton Family Foundation provided a three-year grant to the program.

**How it helps:** The program addresses Objective 13 of the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy. The objective aims to "continue to improve high school graduation and college matriculation rates."

**What's next:** Newly hired coaches will be assigned to schools to begin the program in the fall 2012.

## Notable Initiatives

### CENTRAL/NW ARKANSAS SUMMIT

**Accomplishment:** Members of the Northwest Arkansas Council and Fifty for the Future met in February 2012 on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville. Fifty for the Future is an arm of the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce. Ted Abernathy, executive director of the Southern Growth Policies Board, facilitated the discussions.

**How it helps:** Participants explored opportunities for collaboration between Central and Northwest Arkansas. Several possibilities were identified.

“The future of our state hinges on the ability of people to work together for the greater good,” said Elizabeth Small, president of Fifty for the Future. “To be successful, it’s important to have a meaningful, mutually productive relationship with our friends in Northwest Arkansas.”

**What’s next:** The next summit is expected to occur in late August in Central Arkansas.

### JOINT MEETING

**Accomplishment:** The Northwest Arkansas Council and the region’s chambers of commerce helped organize the first joint meeting of three state commissions in April 2012. The meeting between the Arkansas Highway Commission, Arkansas Parks and Tourism Commission and Arkansas Economic Development Commission was held at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

**How it helps:** A dinner at the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks in Fayetteville and the meeting at the Bentonville museum introduced Northwest Arkansas to some members of the three commissions who were unfamiliar with the region.

**What’s next:** It’s not known whether the commissions will meet jointly again in another part of Arkansas.



## Long View of Milken Shows Northwest Arkansas’ Reliability

The Milken Institute’s annual list of Best-Performing Cities is one of the nation’s most talked about measures of a region’s economic success.

The Best-Performing Cities list includes measures of job, wage, and technology performance to rank 200 large metropolitan areas, and Northwest Arkansas is always among the best performers.

Unlike other “best places” rankings, what’s unique about the Milken list is its absolute focus on the economy. There’s no quality-of-life component, meaning highway improvements that might reduce traffic congestion, and world-class amenities, such as the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, have no direct impact on how the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area fares each year.

Even without the advantages that Crystal Bridges gives Northwest Arkansas on other national measuring sticks, the Northwest Arkansas MSA does well on Milken’s list most years.

In fact, we finished No. 1 in 2003. Milken recognized Northwest Arkansas for its “diverse, stable” economy that year.

### Best-Performing Cities 2002-2011

1. McAllen, Texas
2. Raleigh, N.C.
3. Washington D.C.
4. Northwest Arkansas
5. Austin, Texas
6. San Antonio, Texas
7. Huntsville, Ala.
8. Charleston, S.C.
9. Provo, Utah
10. Anchorage, Alaska
11. Durham, N.C.
12. Bakersfield, Calif.
13. Houston, Texas
14. Fort Worth, Texas
15. Albuquerque, N.M.

# Milken Institute Review



We wondered what would happen if we took a long-term view of Milken's annual list.

Our analysis started in Northwest Arkansas. We took every Milken Best-Performing Cities list since 2002 and figured out how we performed in a typical year.

We took our best year (No. 1 in 2003), our worst year (No. 57 in 2008) and all the others since 2002 and figured out that our average finish among the nation's 200 largest metropolitan areas is 24<sup>th</sup>.

Northwest Arkansas finished No. 7 in 2004 and No. 8 in 2005. It's finished 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, too.

"When a metro ranks consistently among the top 20, I think it says something about that region's economic vitality, and perhaps, its business leaders and local government officials," said Armen Bedroussian, co-author of the Milken Institute's Best-Performing Cities list. "Their ability to collaborate and create a business-friendly environment is a critical ingredient in sustaining economic growth."

What being No. 24 on average over the past several years didn't tell us is how Northwest Arkansas compared to nearby large metropolitan areas.

We sized up the average performance of nearby Fort Smith, Little Rock, Springfield, Mo., and Tulsa, Okla. We did better.

We sized up metropolitan area after metropolitan area, going further and further away each time.

Our result was clear: Since 2002, only three large MSAs in the entire nation performed better than Northwest Arkansas if the average finish on the Milken list is the measure. The three were McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Texas; Raleigh, N.C.; and Washington, D.C.

We edged out much-talked-about Austin and San Antonio, strong performers on the most recent Milken lists but not as strong on lists prior to 2008.



**Old Main** is the most recognized building on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville. With more than 23,000 students last fall, the university's enrollment has increased by 7,500 students over what it was a decade ago.

Northwest Arkansas, the home of the University of Arkansas and a nice mix of retail, food processing, logistics and other companies, is consistently among the nation's top Milken performers, and only a few other places can make the same claim.

## Notable Initiatives

### CHEROKEE NATION

**Accomplishment:** Members and staff of the Northwest Arkansas Council met with Cherokee Nation Chief Bill John Baker and his staff in April 2012, hoping their first formal meeting will build a bridge to a stronger relationship.

**How it helps:** With 16,000 Oklahomans working in one of four Northwest Arkansas counties each day, it's important that both regions recognize their reliance on one another. Many people from Northwest Arkansas work in eastern Oklahoma, and Arkansas entities provide water and wastewater services to a few Oklahoma communities.

**What's next:** The successful first visit is leading to additional communication between the Cherokee Nation and those in Northwest Arkansas. That could involve Cherokee Nation members doing such things as attending the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences as health care is one of the Nation's critical needs. Northwest Arkansas business and civic leaders are likely to travel to the Cherokee Nation headquarters in Tahlequah for further discussions.

### BUSINESS INTERNSHIP

**Accomplishment:** AT&T provided a grant for students to participate in a small business internship program. It will place 20 students from the University of Arkansas and John Brown University as business interns.

**How it helps:** The program introduces high-achieving students to small businesses in the area.

**What's next:** The interns start work in the fall and expect to be on the job for at least the first semester of the academic year.





## Collecting Data First Step in Program to Help Existing Businesses Thrive

The best example of the growing partnerships between the Northwest Arkansas Council and five chambers of commerce is the effort they've put toward the new, regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

Launched in November 2011, the BRE program utilizes a team of chamber partners to visit key employers in their communities to survey top company officials.

The team asks questions about the company's product, market, management, industry, workforce and technology. Questions are designed to give economic development professionals a better understanding of the company, its role in the community and any potential needs it may have.

The information is collected utilizing the Synchronist Business Information System created by Wheaton, Ill.-based Blane Canada Ltd. The database allows the team and the Northwest Arkansas Council to quickly respond to an individual company's need, but it also helps the Council identify trends that may be affecting entire industries. Formulating a response to address business climate issues that the team identifies will hopefully help all businesses in the region over the long term.

Lance Eads, the vice president of economic development for the

Springdale Chamber of Commerce, said companies are impressed by the attention they are receiving.

"I've had several say, 'Wow, thanks for the attention, this is pretty cool,'" Eads said. "They see the benefit, too."

In the first six months, chamber partners visited more than 160 companies, determining that those companies expect to add more than 600 jobs in

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**"I've had several say 'Wow, thanks for the attention, this is pretty cool.' They see the benefit, too".**

**Lance Eads, Springdale Chamber of Commerce**

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the next three years. They also anticipate adding nearly 400,000 square feet to their businesses, and expect to make capital investments near \$700 million.

Eric Canada, a partner with Blane Canada Ltd., said few communities are able to collect so much information from so many companies in six months.

The Northwest Arkansas Council goal is for the outreach team to contact 450 companies this year.

"You've got to get the data in there first and see what the information is telling you," Canada said. "It's a growing process."

The chamber partners have already identified ways to help companies. For example:

In Siloam Springs, chamber officials learned of one company that was competing for a new product line with several other cities where the company operates. The Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce helped the company figure out how to bring the new work to Arkansas, creating about 20 Siloam Springs jobs.

"They found out we cared, the city cared and the company isn't out there on an island trying to get this expansion," said Wayne Mays, Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce president and CEO. "We were able to tell them and show

them we could advocate for the company's needs."

In Springdale, Eads said he's helping companies find new, bigger locations after realizing that they were interested in expanding through BRE interviews. He's learned about a small Springdale company with a large Department of Defense contract and another company that makes night vision equipment for the military's use.

"They like that someone is coming out and listening to their story," Eads said. "They work in obscurity at times. We're learning what they provide to their communities and how to help them."

## Notable Initiatives

### LEADERSHIP/VOLUNTEER FAIR

**Accomplishment:** The Northwest Arkansas Leadership Council held the first regional volunteer fair in May 2012 in Rogers, bringing around 75 nonprofit organizations together to promote their organizations. The goal was to help working professionals identify organizations they might assist with their knowledge and expertise.

“This event provides a wonderful opportunity to connect nonprofit organizations that have volunteer needs with people looking to share their time and talents,” said Krista Khone, who helped organize the volunteer fair. “The venue offers an easy way for potential volunteers to learn more about the options in our communities.”

**How it helps:** Objective 12 of the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is to “develop the next generation of leadership in Northwest Arkansas by promoting citizen engagement, volunteerism and leadership training.”

**What’s next:** Organizers are evaluating the first volunteer fair and making adjustments for a second fair, tentatively planned for May 2013. Additionally, the Leadership Council is recruiting 50 young mid- to upper-level managers to participate in the Certificate of Leadership in Board Service at the ALPFA Institute at the University of Arkansas this fall. Another 25 people will be picked to participate in the Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders program in the spring 2013.

### DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT

**Accomplishment:** The Built Environment Task Force, part of the Community Vitality Work Group, is creating a way to evaluate the overall health of the region’s downtowns. The envisioned report will include data on commercial and residential areas in downtowns as well as public and private investments, taxes, and visits to key attractions. The report will provide information to assist

in planning for downtown areas, and it could be similar to Arvest Bank’s Skyline Report, an analysis of the region’s housing market that’s completed by the University of Arkansas Center for Business and Economic Research.

**How it helps:** Objective 9 in the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is to “enhance the quality of the region’s infrastructure and the region’s downtown and population centers.”

**What’s next:** The task force expects to have a way to evaluate area downtowns by mid-2013.

### HIGHER ED CONSORTIUM

**Accomplishment:** Five colleges and universities in January 2012 formed the Northwest Arkansas Higher Education Consortium. It includes the University of Arkansas, Northwest Technical Institute, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Northwest, NorthWest Arkansas Community College and John Brown University.

**How it helps:** The consortium creates a mechanism for colleges and universities to work together on projects of mutual interest. The agreement calls for collaboration focused on recruitment, retention, fields of study and marketing.

**What’s next:** The consortium members identified student retention as a paramount concern, and so much of the group’s energy will go toward programs to retain students and to provide the region with a well-educated workforce.

### WELLBEING INITIATIVE

**Accomplishment:** The Wellbeing Task Force identified an active living initiative as its first priority, and the Endeavor Foundation agreed to take the lead on its behalf. The vision for the initiative is that “Northwest Arkansas is a healthy community where routine physical activity and healthy eating is accessible, easy, affordable and safe for everyone.” Additionally, the task force is evaluating the need for a study associated with

after/out of school programs and the need for a regional health assessment.

**How it helps:** The development strategy’s Objective 10 is to support the work of community and social service providers to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the region’s populations.

**What happens next:** The outcomes and objectives of the three- to five-year active living initiative are in development. The rollout of the initiative and awareness campaign will be in early 2013.

### POINT OF CONTACT/SITE VISITS

**Accomplishment:** The Arkansas Economic Development Commission last fall deemed the Northwest Arkansas Council to be the regional “point of contact,” meaning companies considering Northwest Arkansas as a future location are being encouraged to make their initial contact with the Council. The Council works closely with the region’s chambers of commerce to ensure that companies are able to easily identify the best possible Northwest Arkansas expansion sites, and to ensure that the company is provided with the best, most reliable economic and statistical information about the region. With the Council’s assistance, it will ultimately be the chambers of commerce that “close the deal” with companies expanding to Northwest Arkansas.

**How it helps:** A regional economic development contact ensures that companies receive consistent, reliable information.

**What’s next:** While few companies were interested in expanding to Northwest Arkansas in late 2011, there was a notable increase in companies considering Northwest Arkansas as a place for possible expansion in the first half of 2012. By working together, the Council and the region’s chambers of commerce expect that upward trend to continue.



## Notable Initiatives

### ANGEL INVESTORS

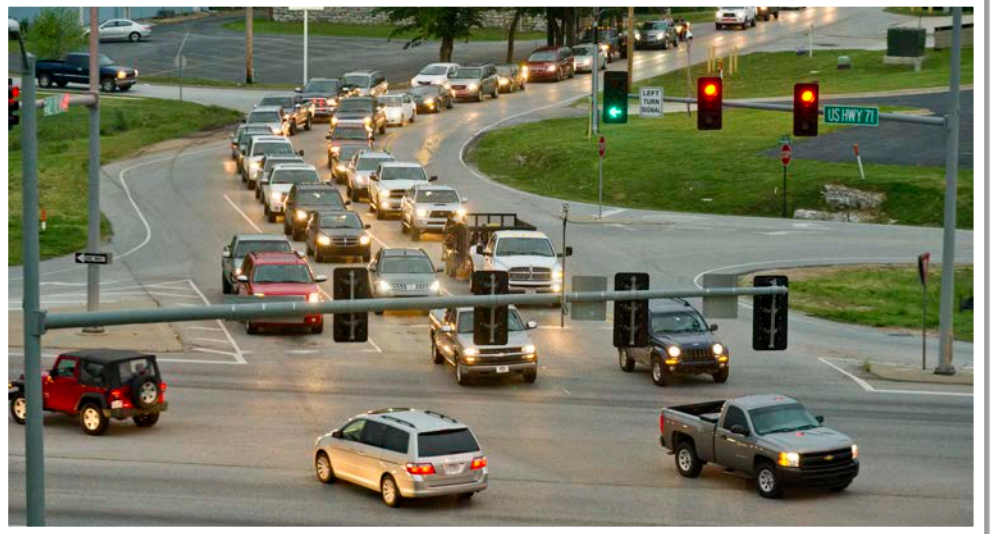
**Accomplishment:** Partnering with the Northwest Arkansas Entrepreneurship Alliance, Innovate Arkansas and the University of Arkansas, the Northwest Arkansas Council supports efforts to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem to diversify and grow the economy. The Gone in 60 Seconds (G60) Elevator Pitch Contest and the Natural State Angel Association connect aspiring, early- and second-stage entrepreneurs with idea validation, mentorship and funding.

G60 contests were held in Fayetteville, Rogers, Little Rock and El Dorado. The Natural State Angel Association has grown to more than 80 members.

**How it helps:** Creating the angel network addresses Objective 6 of the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy by boosting support for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Northwest Arkansas will benefit from job growth, higher-paying jobs and better opportunities for new college graduates. The rich entrepreneurial heritage of Northwest Arkansas is a testament to the value of startups.

**What's next:** The Northwest Arkansas Council supports angel network partners, attends events and meets with entrepreneurs and investors to build existing companies and diversity to congruent industries.



**Traffic** on County Road 40 in Benton County backs up as drivers wait to turn onto U.S. 71. If voters approve a temporary sales tax on Nov. 6 to pay to build a portion of the Bella Vista bypass, it's believed it will reduce congestion on U.S. 71.

# Better Roads, Good Water Keys to Northwest Arkansas Economic Development

Although the Council has added some new initiatives and work streams since the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy was unveiled in 2011, we are still actively working to find solutions to improve infrastructure, the bread and butter of the organization's work since its founding in 1990.

The Council played important roles in identifying and lobbying for funding for critical Northwest Arkansas projects such as the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, which opened in 1998, and Interstate 540.

Yet there remain critical, unfunded infrastructure projects that need attention if Northwest Arkansas is to continue the economic growth that's been prominent in the region for the past 40 years.

Among them are a massive highway proposal that the state plans to fund from a temporary, statewide half-cent sales tax over the next decade. The tax will go to referendum in November 2012, and the Council's Executive Committee is supporting passage of the tax to pay for Northwest Arkansas' most important highway projects.

If approved by voters in November, the tax would pay to widen I-540 to six lanes from Bentonville to Fayetteville. Other money would go toward building the first half of the Bella Vista Bypass, a section of the Springdale Northern Bypass, and provide \$8 million annually to local governments in Benton and Washington counties. Details about how much funding each community would receive is available at the website [www.movearkansasforward.com](http://www.movearkansasforward.com).



Regardless of the November election results, it's possible that the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Authority, the only RMA in the state, will pursue a tax to fund regional highway and public transportation projects.

Even as voters and elected leaders determine the best way to improve highways, Northwest Arkansas faces other challenges in the areas of aviation, trails and water.

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA), for example, opened a new terminal in August 2011, creating a better first impression for visitors to the region. Work remains however. XNA would like to attract a low-cost carrier to improve access to major cities across the U.S., and an access road to the airport's south entrance remains a priority.

The region's trail system will improve dramatically in the coming year. Final completion work has begun on the Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway, a 36-mile paved trail from Lake Bella Vista to Fayetteville. The trail's construction, which started in Rogers, should be complete by the end of 2013, allowing pedestrians and cyclists starting in Bella Vista to travel through Bentonville, Rogers, Lowell and Springdale on their way to Fayetteville. The region already has several miles of trails in Fayetteville, Rogers and Bentonville, but the greenway will connect them.

Several important steps were taken in the past year to protect and improve the region's water supply, and among the most significant was the further advancement of the Beaver Watershed Alliance. The Alliance, which includes representatives of Benton, Madison and Washington counties, is an organization charged with protecting Beaver Lake and its tributaries in the same way the

Illinois River Watershed Partnership works to protect the Illinois River.

Several water quality challenges remain however, and none are bigger than a decades-old dispute over the Illinois River, a 99-mile stream that flows from Arkansas into Oklahoma near Siloam Springs.

Localities in Northwest Arkansas have spent about \$225 million in the past decade to



Northwest Arkansas Council member **Jeff Koenig** chats with Fayetteville resident **Nancy McVey** in the new concourse area at the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport. The new concourse, which opened in September, makes a nice first impression of the region when visitors arrive.

reduce phosphorus discharges; the state of Arkansas has passed laws to reduce phosphorus levels in streams; and companies and landowners have taken steps to ensure that phosphorus doesn't move from pastures to streams after heavy rain.

Nonetheless, Oklahoma remains convinced that more steps are necessary to further reduce river phosphorus. Northwest Arkansas cities face the possibility of spending an additional \$100 million to upgrade wastewater treatment plants to remove more phosphorus and even those costly improvements may not satisfy the concerns of Oklahoma.

## Notable Initiatives

### STOPOUTS

**Accomplishment:** In an effort coordinated by the Educational Excellence Work Group, the region's higher education institutions joined forces to establish a system targeting "stopouts" to help them finish college. "Stopouts" are people with some college credit but no degree.

**How it helps:** Statistics show about 22 percent of the region's population falls into the stopout category. Companies need a workforce with certain educational and skill levels to be successful. The nation's top regions typically have more than 30 percent of their residents with college degrees. The system should boost the number of college degree holders and lead to a more educated workforce.

**What's next:** The region's stopout system is expected to be operational by year's end.

### DIVERSITY GUIDE

**Accomplishment:** The Diversity Team working under the Northwest Arkansas Council's Community Vitality Work Group, is focused on creating an online guide to access information about diversity services and programs.

**How it helps:** It addresses the gap between perceived and actual diversity identified in the Northwest Arkansas Competitive Assessment by assembling information about the various diversity programs and services in a single place. It also allows corporate recruiters to access diversity information in a quick, efficient manner when cultivating relationships with recruits, and it gives new residents information they need to become involved with diversity programs.

**What's next:** A timeline and plan of delivery will be created. The expected launch of the program is fall 2012.

## Notable Initiatives

### CAREER READINESS

**Accomplishment:** A Workforce Development Team, part of the Northwest Arkansas Council's Educational Excellence Work Group, has partnered with various human resources organizations to increase the number of residents in Benton and Washington counties completing Arkansas Career Readiness Certificates.

**How it helps:** The certificates provide assurance to company hiring managers that a certificate holder has basic workplace skills in Reading for Information, Locating Information and Applied Mathematics. Many Arkansas companies consider whether a job candidate has obtained a Career Readiness Certificate in their pre-employment screening process.

**What's next:** A strategic plan of action will be completed and implemented with the help of educational institutions and the employer community.

### MAYORS TRIP TO D.C.

**Accomplishment:** Six Northwest Arkansas mayors, along with representatives of the Northwest Arkansas Council and chambers of commerce, went to Washington, D.C. in October 2011 to discuss highway and water issues with representatives of federal agencies, members of Congress, and their staffs.

**How it helps:** The contingent was able to convey the challenges faced by Northwest Arkansas when it comes to traffic congestion and water quality.

**What's next:** The Council helps organize trips to Washington every two years so another regional trip is likely in 2013.

## Northwest Arkansas Recognition

**Northwest Arkansas** ranked 19<sup>th</sup> overall by Forbes magazine among 200 metropolitan statistical areas for "Best Places for Business and Careers." (June 2012)

**Northwest Arkansas** ranked 26<sup>th</sup> on the Milken Institute's list of Best Performing Cities in 2011. The region ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in 2010. Northwest Arkansas was the top-ranked place in 2003. (The 2012 rankings will be announced in December.)

**Siloam Springs** recognized as one of the 20 Best Small Towns in America by Smithsonian magazine. The list focused on cities with populations of less than 25,000 residents. (May 2012)

**Fayetteville** picked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation's best "cheap mountain towns for retirees." (April 2012)

**Bentonville** recognized by Travel & Leisure magazine as one of the 12 hottest travel destinations of 2012. The magazine said Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, which opened in November 2011, "may be enough to attract culture seekers from around the country, if not the world." (January 2012)

Forbes/New Geography ranked **Northwest Arkansas** at No. 21 this year among medium-sized cities in its list of Best Cities for Job Growth.



Northwest Arkansas Council members, including **G. David Gearhart** (left) and **Jim Walton** (center), showed up early for the annual winter meeting to talk with Council President and CEO **Mike Malone** about issues affecting Northwest Arkansas. Education issues were the focus of the winter meeting.



## TIME lists Alice Walton among 'Most Influential'

Alice Walton, who was recognized as the Northwest Arkansas Council's second honorary lifetime member in January, was selected by TIME in April as one of the magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World.

"The TIME 100 is not a list of the most powerful people in the world, it's not a list of the smartest people in the world, it's a list of the most influential people in the world," said TIME Managing Editor Richard Stengel.

"They're scientists, they're thinkers, they're

philosophers, they're leaders, they're icons, they're artists, they're visionaries. People who are using their ideas, their visions, their actions to transform the world and have an effect on a multitude of people."

Certainly, Alice Walton has a lifetime of positive impacts on Northwest Arkansas, but her latest project is most certainly the crown jewel.

In November 2011, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art opened in Bentonville, giving the Northwest Arkansas region its single most impressive project in at least 40 years.



**Alice Walton** is congratulated by Northwest Arkansas Council member John Brown III. Walton was recognized in April by TIME magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World.

"With Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, she has placed a daring bet that a small town can become a big art-world destination," TIME's art critic Richard Lacayo wrote. "We're betting she's right."

The museum has exceeded its own high expectations as attendance is far ahead of what it had predicted.

Only one other person — former President Bill Clinton — holds the distinction of being an honorary lifetime member of the Northwest Arkansas Council. Clinton was selected as an honorary lifetime member in 2010.

## Notable Initiatives

### REP. EMERSON VISIT

**Accomplishment:** The Northwest Arkansas Council helped coordinate a visit from U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson of Missouri. The visit in January 2012 focused on paying for highway projects that go from Arkansas to Missouri, as well as conversations about banking and agricultural issues.

**How it helps:** Emerson's visit gave her a clear view of how Arkansans view the Bella Vista bypass, Interstate 49 projects, as well as certain banking regulations and agricultural issues.

**What's next:** The Northwest Arkansas Council has been called upon to host visits for members of Congress on occasion and that should continue.

### RAZORBACK GREENWAY

**Accomplishment:** Construction of the Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway started in June 2012. The trail, funded by a federal grant and Walton Family Foundation gift, will be a 36-mile cycling and pedestrian path from Lake Bella Vista to Fayetteville.

**How it helps:** One of the strategic actions under Objective 4 of the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is to "build the trails system detailed in the Northwest Arkansas Heritage Trail Plan, including the regional Razorback Greenway and projects in local communities."

**What's next:** Guided by the staff of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, the entire 36-mile path will be complete by the end of 2013.





**G. David Gearhart**, the 2011-2012 presiding co-chair, became chancellor at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville in 2008 after serving 10 years as a UA vice chancellor. Mr. Gearhart was the second university chancellor to serve as the Council's presiding co-chair. The first was John White (2006-2007).



**John Tyson**, the 2012-2013 presiding co-chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council, is chairman of the board at Tyson Foods. He was chairman and CEO of the company from 2001-06. Mr. Tyson also served as the Council's presiding co-chair in 2007-2008.

### Officers of the Council

Position Held	Officer
Presiding Co-Chair (2011-2012)	G. David Gearhart
Presiding Co-Chair (2012-2013)	John Tyson
Past Presiding Co-Chair (2010-2011)	Jim Walton
Vice Chair	Scott Van Laningham
Secretary / Treasurer	Mark Simmons
Chair Emeritus	Alice Walton
Chair Emeritus	John Paul Hammerschmidt

### Members of the Executive Committee

Type of Appointment (term of appointment)	2011-2012 Executive Committee
Presiding Co-Chair (1-year term)	G. David Gearhart
Vice Chair (indefinite term)	Scott Van Laningham
Secretary / Treasurer (indefinite term)	Mark Simmons
President of NWA Chambers of Commerce	Steve Clark (through January 2013)
Co-Chair's Appointees (1-year term)	Greg Lee Jeff Long
Nominating Committee Representative #1 (3-year term)	Becky Paneitz (term expires in 2014)
Nominating Committee Representative #2 (3-year term)	Cameron Smith (term expires in 2013)
Nominating Committee Representative #3 (3-year term)	John Brown III (term expires in 2012)



## Members

**Rick Allen**, Allen Canning Company  
**Jay Allen**, Jay Allen Communications  
**Don Bacigalupi**, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art  
**Dick Barclay**, Beall Barclay  
**Susan Barrett**, Consultant  
**Rick Barrows**, Multi-Craft Contractors, Inc.  
**Neff Basore**, Cooper Communities, Inc.  
**Fadil Bayyari**, Bayyari Construction and Properties  
**Rob Boaz**, Carroll Electric Cooperative Corp.  
**Ray Bracy**, Walmart Stores  
**Ed Bradberry**, B & B Resources  
**Bill Bradley**, Washington Regional Medical Center  
**Rosalind Brewer**, Sam's Club  
**Mary Beth Brooks**, Bank of Fayetteville  
**Tim Broughton**, McKee Foods  
**John Brown III**, Windgate Foundation  
**Frank Broyles**, University of Arkansas  
**Raymond Burns**, Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce  
**Wayne Callahan**, H.J. Heinz Company  
**Steve Clark**, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce  
**Ed Clifford**, The Jones Trust  
**John Cooper III**, Cooper Communities Inc.  
**Rich Davis**, SourceGas Arkansas  
**Tommy Deweese**, AEP SWEPCO (retired)  
**Lee DuChanois**, APAC-Central, Inc.  
**Eric Edelstein**, Rich Baseball Operations  
**John Elrod**, Conner & Winters  
**Danny Ferguson**, Southwestern Energy  
**Greg Fogle**, Nabholz Construction Services  
**Cathy Foraker**, AT&T  
**Alan Fortenberry**, Beaver Water District  
**Wallace Fowler**, Liberty Bank of Arkansas  
**G. David Gearhart**, University of Arkansas  
**Stan Green**, Lindsey Green Properties  
**Mary Ann Greenwood**, Greenwood Gearhart Inc.  
**Scott Grigsby**, Arvest Bank Group  
**John Paul Hammerschmidt**, former U.S. Congressman  
**Howard Hamilton**, Liberty Bank of Arkansas  
**Gary Head**, Signature Bank of Arkansas  
**Dan Hendrix**, Arkansas World Trade Center  
**Tom Hopper**, Crafton Tull & Associates  
**Dina Howell**, Saatchi & Saatchi X  
**Dennis Hunt**, Stephens  
**Walter Hussman**, WEHCO Media Inc.  
**Mitchell Johnson**, Ozark Electric Cooperative Corp.  
**Robert Jones III**, Conner & Winters  
**James Keenan**, The Raven Foundation  
**Jeff Koenig**, Upchurch Electrical Supply Company  
**Peter Kohler**, UAMS Northwest  
**Bob Lamb**, Consultant  
**Peter Lane**, Walton Arts Center  
**Randy Lawson**, Lawco Exploration  
**Greg Lee**, Tyson Foods (retired)  
**Jim Lindsey**, Lindsey Management Co., Inc.  
**Jeff Long**, University of Arkansas  
**Bill Mathews**, McDonalds of Northwest Arkansas  
**David Matthews**, Matthews, Campbell, Rhoads, McClure & Thompson  
**Wayne Mays**, Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce  
**Tim McFarland**, Elevate  
**Dan McKay**, Northwest Health System  
**Jeff Milford**, AEP SWEPCO  
**Elise Mitchell**, Mitchell Communications Group  
**Mike Moss**, Moss Financial Group  
**Becky Paneitz**, NorthWest Arkansas Community College  
**Gene Pharr**, Arkansas Farm Bureau  
**Neal Pendergraft**, Donald W. Reynolds Foundation  
**Buddy Philpot**, Walton Family Foundation  
**Chip Pollard**, John Brown University  
**Ken Reeves**, FedEx Freight  
**John Roberts**, J. B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc.  
**Reynie Rutledge**, First Security Bank  
**Maggie Sans**, Walmart Stores  
**Nick Santoleri**, Rockline Industries  
**Archie Schaffer**, Tyson Foods  
**Charles Scharlau**, Southwestern Energy  
**Jeff Schomburger**, Procter & Gamble  
**Paul Schroeder**, Dillard's Department Stores  
**Anita Scism**, Endeavor Foundation  
**Lee Scott**, Walmart Stores  
**Mark Simmons**, Simmons Foods  
**Cameron Smith**, Cameron Smith Associates  
**Scott Street**, Mercy Health Systems of Northwest Arkansas  
**Philip Taldo**, Weichert Realtors, The Griffin Company  
**Jim Taylor**, First Security Bank  
**Kirk Thompson**, J. B. Hunt Transport Services.  
**Kenny Tomlin**, Rockfish Interactive  
**Walter Turnbow**, Beaver Water District (retired)  
**John Tyson**, Tyson Foods  
**Scott Van Laningham**, Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport  
**Eddie Vega**, EZ Spanish Media  
**Jerry Vest**, Regions Bank of NWA  
**Fred Vorsanger**, UAMS AHEC Board  
**Alice Walton**, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art  
**Jim Walton**, Arvest Bank Group  
**Rob Walton**, Walmart Stores  
**Perry Webb**, Springdale Chamber of Commerce  
**John White**, University of Arkansas  
**Wayne Woods**, Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods  
**Charles Zimmerman**, Walmart Stores  
**Randy Zook**, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce



4100 Corporate Center Drive, Suite 205, Springdale, Arkansas 72762

[www.nwacouncil.org](http://www.nwacouncil.org)