Members of the Northwest Arkansas Council:

Greetings and welcome to the 2013-2014 Annual Meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Council. I can report to you today that your involvement and excellent work is helping the Council and its partners as we go about building a greater Northwest Arkansas.

The annual report that you are reading highlights some of the work being accomplished by Northwest Arkansas Council staff and members, but it does not address everything. In fact, the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy that’s guided the Council’s work since January 2013 includes $5.0 billion strategic actions meant to upgrade infrastructure, strengthen our schools, improve quality of life and create jobs. All of those things are occurring in Northwest Arkansas!

The annual report includes information about how we’re teling site selectors and others across the nation about Northwest Arkansas, how our schools are improving, and how the companies already here plan to expand. There are stories about how Northwest Arkansas cities intend to enhance their downtowns, how highways are being built at their fastest rate since 1999 and how our region celebrated that we’ve reached 500,000 residents.

Finally, there’s information about how we’re about to embark on our next strategic plan, one that will build on what’s already been accomplished. We expect to maintain some of what’s been started while taking on new challenges.

It has been an honor to serve as Presiding Co-Chairman of the Northwest Arkansas Council, and I’m certain this organization will find new successes under the leadership of new presiding co-chairman Rosalind Brewer. She’ll be terrific in her new role here.

Thanks to each of you for your support of the Northwest Arkansas Council and for helping Northwest Arkansas grow jobs and economic opportunities.

Sincerely,

Mark Simmons
Presiding Co-Chairman

Fayetteville resident Greg Moody illustrated the front and back cover of the Northwest Arkansas Council’s annual report. It shows the Walmart AMP; the wayfinding system, the Razorback Regional Greenway; the planned Amazon; I-49; the region’s population milestone, Graduate NWA; a corporate expansion project; Ozark Regional Transit; the Fayetteville Tyrover and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

Jay Allen, Jay Allen Communications
Don Barigelapi, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
Dick Barclay, Beall Barclay
Susan Barrett, Consultant
Rick Barrow, Multi-Craft Contractors, Inc.
Neff Baore, Cooper Communities, Inc.
Fadil Bayarli, Bayarli Construction and Properties
Rod Bigelow, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
Rob Boaz, Carroll Electric Cooperative Corp.
Ed Bradberry, B & B Resources
Bill Bradley, Washington Regional Medical Center
Rosalind Brewer, Sam’s Club
Mary Beth Brooks, Bank of Fayetteville
Tim Broughton, Mcke Foods
John Brown III, Windgate Foundation
Frank Broyles, University of Arkansas
Raymond Burns, Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce
Wayne Callahan, Vestar Capital Partners
Steve Clark, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce
Ed Clifford, The Jones Trust
Justin Cole, Rich Baseball Operations
John Cooper III, Cooper Communities Inc.
Dana Davis, Bentonville/Bella Vista Chamber of Commerce
Rich Davis, SourceGas Arkansas
Tommy Deweese, AEP SWEPCO (retired)
Lee DuChanois, APAC-Central, Inc.
John Elrod, Conner & Winters
Danny Ferguson, Smartbase Energy
Greg Fogle, Nabholtz Construction Services
Cathy Foraker, AT&T
Greg Fogle, Nabholz Construction Services
Danny Ferguson, Smartbase Energy
Troy Galloway, Arkansas National Guard
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
D. Scott Hancock, Centennial Bank
Gary Head, Signature Bank of Arkansas
Dan Hendrix, Signature Bank of Arkansas
Dan McKay, Northwest Health System
Jeff Milford, AEP SWEPCO
Elise Mitchell, Mitchell Communications Group
Mike Moss, Moss Financial Group
Becky Paneitz, Insetz Group
Neal Pendegraft, Donald W. Reynolds Foundation
Gene Pharr, Arkansas Farm Bureau
Buddy Philpot, Walton Family Foundation
Eric Pinalta, Mercy Health Systems of Northwest Arkansas
Chip Pollard, John Brown University
Patrick L. Reed, FedEx Freight
John Roberts, J. B. Hunt Transport Services
Adam Rutledge, First Security Bank
Reynie Rutledge, First Security Bank
Maggie Sans, Walmart Stores
Nick Sontoleri, Rockline Industries
Archie Schaffer, Tyson Foods
Charles Scharlau, Southwestern Energy
Jeff Schomberger, Procter & Gamble
Anita Scism, Endavor Foundation
Lee Scott, Walmart Stores
Mark Simmons, Simmons Foods
Todd Simmons, Simmons Foods
Cameron Smith, Cameron Smith & Associates
Donnie Smith, Tyson Foods
Steve Stafford, Anstaff Bank
Philip Tidace, Weichert Realtors, The Griffin Company
Kirk Thompson, J. B. Hunt Transport Services
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, Crawford Johnson Robinson Woods
Charles Zimmerman, Walmart Stores
Randy Zook, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce

Peter Lane, Walton Art Center
Randy Laney, Empire District Electric Co
Randy Lawson, Lawco Exploration
Greg Lee, Tyson Foods (retired)
Jim Lindsey, Lindsey Management Co., Inc.
Jeff Long, University of Arkansas
Bill Matthews, McDonalds of Northwest Arkansas
David Matthews, Matthews, Campbell, Rhoads, McClure & Thompson
Wayne Mayes, Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce
Tim McFarland, Elevate Performance
Dan McKay, Northwest Health System
Jeff Milford, AEP SWEPCO
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Officers of the Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Held</th>
<th>Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (2013-2014)</td>
<td>Mark Simmons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (2014-2015)</td>
<td>Rosalind Brewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Past Presiding Co-Chair (2012-2013)</td>
<td>John Tyson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice Chair / Secretary / Treasurer</td>
<td>Scott Van Laningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair Emeritus</td>
<td>Alice Walton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair Emeritus</td>
<td>John Paul Hammerschmidt</td>
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Members of the Executive Committee

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2013-2014 Executive Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (1-year term)</td>
<td>Mark Simmons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair / Secretary / Treasurer (indefinite term)</td>
<td>Scott Van Laningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of NWA Chambers of Commerce</td>
<td>Wayne Mays (through January 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Chair’s Appointees (1-year term)</td>
<td>Rick Barrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Representative #1 (3-year term)</td>
<td>Becky Paneitz (term expires in 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative #2 (3-year term)</td>
<td>Chip Pollard (term expires in 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative #3 (3-year term)</td>
<td>Mitchell Johnson (term expires in 2016)</td>
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Outreach
The world is learning about region, thanks to the Council’s work with a New York firm

ER&E Program
Region’s companies predict they’ll hire at least 2,000 workers over next three years

Achievement
Northwest Arkansas students are improving in mathematics, literacy

Placemaking
Council and its partners support work to improve downtowns, support local food

Population Growth
Region’s population reached an important milestone on May 28

Infrastructure
Highway investments by state, cities raise spending to highest point since 1999

Economic Growth
Study: Northwest Arkansas economy should be among the best through 2020

Strategic Plan
The Council nears the end of five-year plan, new three-year plan in the works

Leadership
Sam’s Club leader will serve as the Council’s presiding co-chair in 2014-15

Members
The Council includes more than 100 business and civic leaders in Northwest Arkansas
Council Works to Tell Region’s Story

Economic developers in Northwest Arkansas work hard to keep the region on the list of places companies are considering for expansions, hoping the right combination of factors result in major jobs announcements.

Site selectors, the people who help companies evaluate where they should expand, work just as hard to eliminate Northwest Arkansas and every other community, knowing that they can evaluate communities effectively if they can get down to a short list of finalists. That’s where the business of company expansions works, and 2013 proved to be a banner year for Northwest Arkansas in terms of big-time jobs announcements and expansions. The region stayed on lots of site selectors’ short lists.

In a five-month span, Serco announced it would provide about 1,500 jobs in Rogers, Redman and Associates said it would move 74 jobs from China to Rogers, and South Coast Baking said it would bring an operation to Springdale, providing for 150 jobs.

Those jobs came as Northwest Arkansas is just starting to gain visibility on a national stage and the Northwest Arkansas Council is working with local chambers of commerce and Development Counsellors International (DCI) of New York to accelerate the location in the central U.S., its abundance of white-collar workers, its talent from location work that we see, learning more about their process makes a difference for us in the long run.”

Yet, often people in Northwest Arkansas and other regions across the U.S. never know they were candidates for Arkansas on paper seems like it’s time for the region’s leaders to take on a new set of challenges. Most aspects of the five-year development strategy, which was launched in January 2011, are either fully complete or established in a way that will allow for ongoing, future success. The mid-course assessment by Raleigh, N.C.-based Economic Leadership earlier this year suggested that the Northwest Arkansas Council and its partners should finish up the five-year strategy’s key components in 2014 and that it should turn 2015 into the first year of a new three-year strategic plan.

The Council’s Executive Committee approved development of the new three-year plan at its meeting in June. Economic Leadership will lead the effort, and the new, written strategic plan should be complete by December.

Ted Abernathy, the Managing Partner of Economic Leadership and economic policy advisor to the Southern Governors’ Association, said Northwest Arkansas partners have done well in pursuing the objectives and strategic actions described in the five-year plan. The goals in the five-year plan centered on topics related to better schools, infrastructure upgrades, improving community vitality and increasing job opportunities in Northwest Arkansas.

“Collaboration is made possible through shared goals, understanding what’s key, and is usually dependent on past actions, recognized proficiency, or alignment of beliefs,” Abernathy wrote. “The successes of the implementation over the past three years are, in part, due to the quality of the leadership and staff of the Council.”

Abernathy over the next few months will meet with business, government and economic development leaders in Northwest Arkansas as he helps put together the region’s new three-year plan.

“Ted’s conversations with people in Northwest Arkansas as part of his mid-course assessment told us our next plan should have fewer than the 55 strategic actions than there were in the original five-year plan,” said Mike Malone, the Council’s president and CEO. “He’s said it may be that we need fewer, more impactful undertakings in our next plan and that’s one of the things he will help us determine.”

“Ted has an incredible knowledge about what makes regions successful on a national level, and we want to use his insight to shape where we should go in our new three-year plan. We know for certain that we can build on our first plan’s success.”

A mid-course assessment determined that so many components of the 2011-2015 Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy are complete that it’s time for the region’s leaders to take on a new set of challenges.

“The lack of more jobs and new developments is due to the fact that so many components of the five-year plan have been completed,” said Mike Harvey, the Council’s chief operating officer. “They’re handling about 70 percent of the significant location work that we see, so establishing these relationships and learning more about their process makes a difference for us in the long run.”

Yet, often people in Northwest Arkansas and other regions across the U.S. never know they were candidates for company expansions, said Ray Watson, a Dallas site selector with MaximusAlliance.

“Northwest Arkansas, for example, was considered last year as one of 98 possible sites for a 1,000-job call center because of its workforce, its high percentage of people who speak both Spanish and English, and its central U.S. location, Watson said. However, Northwest Arkansas was eliminated because it didn’t meet certain “critical success factors” that included having a high unemployment rate and a population of at least 1 million people. Both population and high unemployment were important because the call center is expected to have high employee turnover. The call center ended up in Texas.

“One of the weaknesses you do have is just knowledge about the area,” Watson said. “It’s not a well-known area beyond Walmart, so you’ve got to work to introduce more [site selectors] to it.”

Alison Benton, a site selector for Aliquants in Dallas, said site selectors are familiar with the area but not nearly enough have visited the region. Benton was in the region for a client who wanted to consolidate some scattered U.S. manufacturing operations into the same region, but the project wasn’t completed.

“How you’ll do depends on whether someone has been there,” Benton said. “Northwest Arkansas on paper seems like it’s time for the region’s leaders to take on a new set of challenges. Most aspects of the five-year development strategy, which was launched in January 2011, are either fully complete or established in a way that will allow for ongoing, future success. The mid-course assessment by Raleigh, N.C.-based Economic Leadership earlier this year suggested that the Northwest Arkansas Council and its partners should finish up the five-year strategy’s key components in 2014 and that it should turn 2015 into the first year of a new three-year strategic plan.

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“We found that everyone in Northwest Arkansas deserves congratulations for diligently and systematically implementing the recommendations from the strategy,” Abernathy wrote in his mid-term assessment completed earlier this year. “We also found that as the Council moves forward for the next few years, there are opportunities to establish a more aggressive program of work and also address the threat of losing momentum.”

In its report, Economic Leadership noted that several of the strategic actions accomplished such as the establishment of a regional wayfinding system and organizing a regional diversity summit “will make all future efforts easier and difficult projects possible.”

“Collaboration is made possible by trust, and trust is developed over time through shared goals, understanding the mission, and recognizing proficiency, or alignment of beliefs,” Abernathy wrote. “The successes of the implementation over the past three years are, in part, due to the quality of the leadership and staff of the Council.”

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Northwest Arkansas Chamber of Commerce and the Northwest Arkansas Council determined early this year that local companies planned to add more than 2,000 new workers.

The information, which was collected in 529 interviews in 2013 by outreach specialists from Chambers of Commerce in Bentonville/Bella Vista, Fayetteville, Rogers-Lowell, Siloam Springs and Springdale, was gathered as part of the annual Employer Retention and Expansion (ERE) program.

Among the most significant findings in the 2013 survey:

- Employers indicated they would hire 2,037 new workers in the next three years. Employers surveyed in 2012 expected to fill 965 new positions over three years.

- Employers planned to invest $795 million in expansions over three years.

- Employers in 2013 identified more than three times as many “community strengths” as “community weaknesses” when asked about Northwest Arkansas.

- The “strengths-to-weaknesses” ratio was similar in 2012.

- Respondents gave the region high marks for its business climate, vibrant economy and quality of life.

- Respondents listed infrastructure, skilled labor availability and transportation as top concerns.

The ER&E program allows outreach specialists to interview representatives of leadership teams in businesses, nonprofit organizations and local governments.

The responses are entered into the Synchronist Business Information System database maintained by the Council. It allows the Council to track the information provided by the companies.

The information allows the Chambers of Commerce and the Council to go work on issues that are affecting employers in a specific community or to work to address regional challenges,” said Mike Harvey, the Council’s chief operating officer.

There are many examples of tasks taken on by area Chambers of Commerce because needs were identified during interviews. The Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce helped Gates Corporation with employees making job transfers from North Carolina by arranging school visits.

Mike Harvey of the Northwest Arkansas Council talks with reporters, chamber of commerce

Survey: Employers Predict 2,000 New Jobs

“Getting feedback on potential issues has been valuable as the input from our members helps shape the programs that the Chamber offers moving forward. Having hard data that more than one industry or business faces a problem has helped speed up the resolution process and helps keep Rogers and Lowell as top business-friendly communities.”

Council staff worked on several regional issues raised during ER&E interviews in 2012 and 2013. Those included assisting Ozark Regional Transit with its goal of expanding its bus routes.

“The Council was key in providing the support and statistical data that many of the entities we met with used or relied upon in making their decisions about funding,” said Joel Gardiner, ORT’s general manager.

Councils responded, using additional funds they received from the passage of Issue No. 1 in 2012, to increase their contributions to public transportation. With the additional funds, ORT added routes in Fayetteville, Rogers and Springdale. It also created a new rural commuter route.
A Northwest Arkansas-focused education report card shows the region’s public school students are performing better in the classroom than they did five years ago.

The 2013 Northwest Arkansas Report Card, published by the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas in partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Council, provided several positive results for Northwest Arkansas students.

Among the most encouraging improvements was how students are doing on the Arkansas Benchmark exams over the long term. The report, which shares information about student performance in 17 school districts, showed the average literacy score increased from 69.1 percent in 2007-08 to 81.3 percent in 2012-13.

Mathematics scores rose from 73.7 percent to 78 percent in the same five-year period.

“Northwest Arkansas is a diverse community, which is typified in the K-12 system; parents truly have a choice in the type of school that they want to send their student to,” said Michael Crouch, school performance evaluator for the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas. “School districts across the region have seen improvement over the past 10 years, even with increasing enrollments and the percentage of students who earn college degrees.

Telling the story of Northwest Arkansas schools is important to attracting talent to the region. Working professionals interested in jobs with leading Northwest Arkansas companies, want to know about such things as the region’s cost of living, quality of life and school systems. The annual report card is a great way to get an overview of the various school systems.

“The trend is clearly moving in the right direction,” Crouch said. “These trends have been positive across all subjects and age levels.”

While the trends are good, it is dangerous to say that we have no weaknesses. Despite our many bright spots, there is plenty of room for further growth. One obvious issue on the horizon is the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Successful transition could be a boost for education in the region, and the economy in the long term.”

Sarah Taldo-Brothers, a vice president for Weichert Realtors – The Griffin Co., said homeowners consider schools when identifying where they want to live. She said a home near a desirable school often sells for a higher price.

“If the buyers have school-aged children, schools are one of the first factors that are discussed,” Brothers said. The report card is one of the education initiatives from the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy being pursued by the Council, its Educational Excellence Work Group and their partners.

Other education-related efforts related to the five-year development strategy include Razor C.O.A.C.H., a program to assist at-risk students in pursuing educational and career opportunities after high school graduation; Graduate NWA, a program to help nontraditional students complete college degrees and technical certifications; Reach Out NWA, a program to encourage high school dropouts to return to the classroom; and the Northwest Arkansas Higher Education Consortium, a mechanism to allow the region’s colleges and universities to work together on programs of mutual interest.

Among the Northwest Arkansas Council’s primary goals is to give members a high return on their investments in the organization. For every dollar provided to the organization, the Council wants there to be large financial investments into projects and the future success of Northwest Arkansas.

The rate of return on the members’ investments from July 1, 1990 through May 31, 2014 was 28,400 percent. To put it another way, for every dollar provided to the Council by members, the region received at least $284.

Those investments into the region over the years have included such massive projects as the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport and major state and federal highway allocations. This year’s return on the members’ investments included Northwest Arkansas funding for the establishment of compressed natural gas fueling stations, for more public transportation and for the region’s wayfinding system.
The half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2012 is starting to reap rewards, enabling the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department to make major investments in two Northwest Arkansas projects this year. Indeed, 2014 may be looked upon in future years as an extraordinary time for Arkansas projects this year.

The Northwest Arkansas Council has identified connected and growing downtown areas, a robust arts and entertainment scene, active and well-maintained public spaces and trails, accessible and regionally branded food and culinary options, and proactive growth strategies as key elements to long-term success. “The practice of placemaking is increasingly driving regional economic development strategies across the country,” said Mike Harvey, the Northwest Arkansas Council’s chief operating officer.

“The rationale behind this shift is simple – a talented workforce is just as valuable to companies as real estate, roads and taxes – and those regions that attract and retain the best talent will win in a hypercompetitive 21st Century economy. Regions that are winning the battle for this talent are the regions focused on developing the best places for those workers to live.”

Northwest Arkansas cities are redefining themselves in a big way by focusing on placemaking strategies as a way to strengthen and highlight their unique qualities as the region grows.

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“The rationale behind this shift is simple – a talented workforce is just as valuable to companies as real estate, roads and taxes – and those regions that attract and retain the best talent will win in a hypercompetitive 21st Century economy. Regions that are winning the battle for this talent are the regions focused on developing the best places for those workers to live.”

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Population Growth

Rapid Growth Leads to 500K Milestone

Northwest Arkansas reached a new growth milestone this year, becoming the 500,000th resident to the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area. Noted by the U.S. Census Bureau as one of the nation’s fastest growing regions during the 1990s and then applauded by the Milken Institute as one of the nation’s Best Performing Cities in the 2000s, Northwest Arkansas growth remains consistent through today.

The Census Bureau reported the Northwest Arkansas population increased by 24.2 people a day between April 2010 and July 2013. Assuming that same growth is continued, the Northwest Arkansas Council staff calculated that the region reached 500,000 residents on May 28.

Because reaching the 500,000 threshold makes the region more likely to draw the attention of expanding businesses across the country, the Council spearheaded an information campaign about the milestone.

The Council shared information about 500K with media outlets and those newspapers, websites, radio stations and television stations conveyed messages to 980,000 people. Mitchell Communications Group worked with Council staff to put together a 10-second video about reaching 500K, and Mitchell helped staff organize a social media photo contest that encouraged residents to share favorite pictures of the region. There were more than 300 contest entries. A message shared by Council staff about the milestone reached 150,000 Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.

“People in every corner of Arkansas were excited to live in such a fast-growing region where so much is happening.”

What’s special about Northwest Arkansas is that its growth is so widespread. Northwest Arkansas now boasts four cities — Bentonville, Fayetteville, Rogers and Springdale — with at least 40,000 residents. The Census Bureau reports that all four of those cities between 2010 and 2013 added more people to their populations than Little Rock, the state’s largest city.

But regional growth isn’t limited to those four cities. While about 16.7% of each day’s new residents are in those cities, every city of at least 500 residents in Benton or Washington counties saw its population increase during the three-year period.

Since 1990, Northwest Arkansas has more than doubled its population and the most notable change is how the region has become more diverse. There are far more Hispanics, African-Americans and Asians than in 1990. Additionally, Northwest Arkansas is home to one of the world’s largest populations of Marshalllese people.

“We’re proud that diverse individuals have helped spur this growth, demonstrating the breadth of opportunities that Northwest Arkansas offers to a wide range of people,” said Mireya Reith, executive director of the Arkansas United Community Coalition in Fayetteville. “As a Mexican-American woman who grew up in Northwest Arkansas and whose family has called this region home for more than two decades, the state’s largest city.

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“People in every corner of Arkansas, line by line, we’re ready to bring the growth,” said Mike Malone, the Council’s president and CEO. “The comments we received were overwhelmingly positive and people were excited to live in such a fast-growing region where so much is happening.”

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“We’re proud that diverse individuals have helped spur this growth, demonstrating the breadth of opportunities that Northwest Arkansas offers to a wide range of people,” said Mireya Reith, executive director of the Arkansas United Community Coalition in Fayetteville. “As a Mexican-American woman who grew up in Northwest Arkansas, I’ve seen the opportunities that Northwest Arkansas has built on the previous day’s growth and the region would have reached 500,000 residents in early May instead of late May.

Another option would have been to use the growth that occurred between the 2000 and 2010 censuses or only the growth that the Census Bureau estimated occurred between July 2012 and July 2013, the most recent estimate that’s available. In either of those cases, the calculation would have built on the previous day’s growth and the region would have reached 500,000 residents far sooner.

For example, if the Council had used the percentage of growth that occurred each day between April 2010 and July 2011 (instead of saying 24.2 people a day, you’d say the MSA grew by 0.00005231676 percent per day), the calculation would have built on the previous day’s growth and the region would have reached 500,000 residents in early May instead of late May.

How we did the math

The Council relied on the U.S. Census Bureau’s population of April 2010 and the bureau’s population estimate of July 2013 and then assumed that same 24.2 people per day would arrive until the region reached 500,000 residents on May 28, 2014. However, it’s an estimate of when the region reached 500,000. The population may have reached 500,000 far sooner.

By the Numbers

Population growth in the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area has been dramatic for nearly 25 years. Statistics kept by the U.S. Census Bureau show how consistent and widespread the growth is in the region.

6.2 Percentage growth of Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA between 2010 and 2013.

8 Metropolitan statistical areas larger than the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA that grew at a faster rate between 2010 and 2013. There are 105 larger MSAs.

24.2 People per day who were added to the region’s population between April 1, 2010 and July 1, 2013.

28 The day in May this year when the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA was expected to reach 500,000 residents.

27.4 People added per day to the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA between April 1, 1990 and April 1, 2000

41.6 People added per day to the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA between April 1, 2000 and April 1, 2010

106 Where the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA ranked in overall population in 2013. The MSA had 49,966 residents on July 1, 2013, but the region’s growth suggests it has already moved past No. 105. Santa Rosa, Calif.

20,274 The 1960 population of Fayetteville, the largest Northwest Arkansas city.

78,960 The U.S. Census Bureau’s estimate of Fayetteville’s population on July 1, 2013.

210,908 The population of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA on April 1, 1990.

311,121 The population of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA on April 1, 2000.

463,204 The population of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA on April 1, 2010.

Another way to size up growth is to look at the U.S. Census Bureau’s population change between 2010 and 2013 in Northwest Arkansas cities versus other Arkansas cities.

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Any of those scenarios and most others based on Census Bureau statistics result in the same conclusion: the
The half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2012 is starting to reap rewards, enabling the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department to make major investments in two Northwest Arkansas projects this year.

Indeed, 2014 may be looked upon in future years as an extraordinary time for Arkansas projects this year.

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The report card shows the region’s public school students are performing better in the classroom than they did five years ago.

The 2013 Northwest Arkansas Report Card, published by the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas in partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Council, provided several positive results for Northwest Arkansas students. Among the most encouraging improvements was how students are doing on the Arkansas Benchmark exams over the long term. The report, which shares information about student performance in 17 school districts, showed the average literacy score increased from 69.1 percent in 2007-08 to 81.3 percent in 2012-13. Mathematics scores rose from 73.7 percent to 78 percent in the same five-year period. “Northwest Arkansas is a diverse community, which is typified in the K-12 system; parents truly have a choice in the type of school that they want to send their student to,” said Michael Crouch, school performance evaluator for the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas. “School districts across the region have seen improvement over the past 10 years, even with increasing enrollments across the region. Coupled with improving test scores, the region is also piloting innovative programs from Pre-K, to helping students identify a career and earn college degrees.”

Telling the story of Northwest Arkansas schools is important to attracting talent to the region. Working professionals interested in jobs with Northwest Arkansas companies, want to know about such things as the region’s cost of living, quality of life and school systems. The annual report card is a great way to get an overview of the various school systems.

“The trend is clearly moving in the right direction,” Crouch said. “These trends have been positive across all subjects and age levels.”

While the trends are good, it is dangerous to say that we have no weaknesses. Despite our many bright spots, there is plenty of room for further growth. One obvious issue on the horizon is the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. A successful transition could be a boost for education in the region, and the economy in the long term.”

Sarah Taldo-Brothers, a vice president with The Griffin Co., said homeowners consider schools when identifying where they want to live. She said a home near a desirable school often sells for a higher price. “If the buyers have school-aged children, schools are one of the first factors that are discussed,” Brothers said.

The report card is one of the education initiatives from the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy being pursued by the Council, its Educational Excellence Work Group and their partners. Other education-related efforts related to the five-year development strategy include Razor C.O.A.C.H., a program to assist at-risk students in pursuing educational and career opportunities after high school graduation; Graduate NWA, a program to help nontraditional students complete college degrees and technical certifications; Reach Out NWA, a program to encourage high school dropouts to return to the classroom; and the Northwest Arkansas Higher Education Consortium, a mechanism to allow the region’s colleges and universities to work together on programs of mutual interest.

A Dollar Invested is Worth $284 to Region

Among the Northwest Arkansas Council’s primary goals is to give members a high return on their investments in the organization. For every dollar provided to the organization, the Council wants there to be large financial investments into projects and the future success of Northwest Arkansas.

The rate of return on the members’ investments from July 1, 1990 through May 31, 2014 was 28,400 percent. To put it another way, for every dollar provided to the Council by members, the region received at least $284.

Those investments into the region over the years have included such massive projects as the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport and major state and federal highway allocations. This year’s returns on the members’ investments included Northwest Arkansas funding for the establishment of compressed natural gas fueling stations, for more public transportation and for the region’s wayfinding system.
Council Loses a Founding Member

Ed Bradberry, one of the Northwest Arkansas Council’s founding members recognized as a successful businessman, community leader and philanthropist, died in June. Bradberry, a Fayetteville resident who was one of the University of Arkansas’ most generous benefactors, was 82 years old. “Ed Bradberry was one of the finest people I have ever known,” said UA Chancellor G. David Gearhart. “He was extraordinarily generous to so many important philanthropies, including the University of Arkansas. He was a real gentleman, a Renaissance man in so many ways, with so many interests.”

State Sen. Uvalde Lindsey, retired executive director of the Council, described Bradberry as “always the voice of doing the right thing.” “Ed was a level-headed, pragmatic businessperson and had a sense of doing the right thing always,” Lindsey said. “He was just nice and it permeated his attitude.” Bradberry was born in Crossett, grew up in Monticello, and attended Rice University where he met his wife, Karlee. He worked for several companies in the petroleum industry before founding Continental Ozark, where he was CEO for 17 years. He later started his own investment firm, B & B Resources, serving as CEO for 45 years. He made Northwest Arkansas his home in the 1970s, and he became active in the community as a business leader and philanthropist.

Bradberry was a charter member of the Council and the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority, reflecting his commitment to the region’s growth. He had also deep ties to the University of Arkansas. In 2003, Bradberry and his wife were recognized in the Towers of Old Main, which honors the UA’s most generous benefactors.

Survey: Employers Predict 2,000 New Jobs

Northwest Arkansas Chambers of Commerce and the Northwest Arkansas Council determined early this year that local companies planned to add more than 2,000 new workers.

The information, which was collected in 529 interviews in 2013 by outreach specialists from Chambers of Commerce in Bentonville-Bella Vista, Fayetteville, Rogers-Lowell, Siloam Springs and Springdale, was gathered as part of the annual Employer Retention and Expansion (ERE& E) program. Among the most significant findings in the 2013 survey:

• Employers indicated they would hire 2,037 new workers in the next three years. Employers surveyed in 2012 expected to fill 965 new positions over three years.

• Employers planned to invest $795 million in expansions over three years.

• Employers in 2013 identified more than three times as many “community strengths” as “community weaknesses” when asked about Northwest Arkansas. The “strengths-to-weaknesses” ratio was similar in 2012.

• Respondents gave the region high marks for its business climate, vibrant economy and quality of life.

• Respondents listed infrastructure, skilled labor availability and transportation as top concerns.

The ER&E program allows outreach specialists to interview representatives of leadership teams in businesses, nonprofit organizations and local governments. The responses are entered into the Synchronist Business Information System database maintained by the Council. It allows the Council to track the information provided by the companies. By collecting this information, it allows the Chambers of Commerce and the Council to go work on issues that are affecting employers in a specific community or to work to address regional challenges,” said Mike Harvey, the Council’s chief operating officer.

“Getting feedback on potential issues has been valuable as the input from our members helps shape the programs that the Chamber offers moving forward. Having hard data that more than one industry or business faces a problem has helped speed up the resolution process and helps keep Rogers and Lowell as top business-friendly communities.”

Council staff worked on several regional...
Economic developers in Northwest Arkansas work hard to keep the region on the list of places companies are considering for expansions, hoping the right combination of factors result in major jobs announcements.

Site selectors, the people who help companies evaluate where they should expand, work just as hard to eliminate Northwest Arkansas and every other community, knowing that they can evaluate communities effectively if they can get down to a short list of finalists. That’s why the business of company expansions works, and 2013 proved to be a banner year for Northwest Arkansas in terms of big-time jobs announcements and expansions. The region stayed on lots of site selectors’ short lists.

In a five-month span, Serco announced it would provide about 1,500 jobs in Rogers, Redman and Associates said it would move 74 jobs from China to Rogers, and South Coast Baking said it would bring an operation to Springdale, providing for 150 jobs.

Those came as Northwest Arkansas is just starting to gain visibility on a national stage and the Northwest Arkansas Council is working with local chambers of commerce and Development Counsellors International (DCI) of New York to accelerate the Council’s efforts to bring in more site selectors, the people who help communities evaluate communities, with the help of a region’s economic development leaders. The DCI of New York to accelerate the Council’s efforts to bring in more site selectors, the people who help communities evaluate communities, with the help of a region’s economic development leaders.

A mid-course assessment determined that so many components of the 2011-2015 Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy are complete that it’s time for the region’s leaders to take on a new set of challenges.

Most aspects of the five-year development strategy, which was launched in January 2011, are either fully complete or established in a way that will allow for ongoing, future successes.

The mid-course assessment by Raleigh, N.C.-based Economic Leadership earlier this year suggested that the Northwest Arkansas Council and its partners should finish up the five-year strategy’s key components in 2014 and that it should turn 2015 into the first year of a new three-year strategic plan.

The Council’s Executive Committee approved development of the new three-year plan at its meeting in June. Economic Leadership will lead the effort, and the new, written strategic plan should be complete by December.

Ted Abernathy, the Managing Partner of Economic Leadership and economic policy advisor to the Southern Governors’ Association, said Northwest Arkansas partners have done well in pursuing the objectives and strategic actions described in the five-year plan. The goals in the five-year plan centered on topics related to better schools, infrastructure upgrades, improving community vitality and increasing job opportunities in Northwest Arkansas.

“We found that everyone in Northwest Arkansas deserves congratulations for diligently and systematically implementing the recommendations from the strategy,” Abernathy wrote in his mid-term assessment completed earlier this year. “We also found that as the Council moves forward for the next few years, there are opportunities to establish a more aggressive program of work and also address the threat of losing momentum.”

In its report, Economic Leadership noted that several of the strategic actions accomplished such as the establishment of a regional wayfinding system and organizing a regional diversity summit “will make all future efforts easier and difficult projects possible.” “Collaboration is made possible by trust, and trust is developed over time, and is usually dependent on past actions, recognized proficiency, or alignment of beliefs,” Abernathy wrote. “The successes of the implementation over the past three years are, in part, due to the quality of the leadership and staff of the Council.”

Abernathy over the next few months will meet with business, government and economic development leaders in Northwest Arkansas as he helps put together the region’s new three-year plan.

“Ted’s conversations with people in Northwest Arkansas as part of his mid-course assessment told us our next plan should have fewer than the 55 strategic actions than were in the original five-year plan,” said Mike Malone, the Council’s president and CEO. “He’s said it may be that we need fewer, more impactful undertakings in our next plan, and that’s one of the things he will help us determine.

Ted has an incredible knowledge about what makes regions successful on a national level, and we want to use his insight to shape where we should go in our new three-year plan. We know for certain that we can build on our first plan’s success.”

Council works to tell region’s story

“This is an important group for us,” said Mike Harvey, the Council’s chief operating officer. “They’re handling about 70 percent of the significant location work that we see, so establishing these relationships and learning more about their process makes a difference for us in the long run.”

Yet, often people in Northwest Arkansas and other regions across the U.S. never know they were candidates for company expansions, said Ray Watson, a Dallas site selector with MaximusAlliance.

“Northwest Arkansas, for example, was considered last year as one of 98 possible sites for a 1,000-job call center because of its workforce, its high percentage of people who speak both Spanish and English, and its central U.S. location, Watson said. However, Northwest Arkansas was eliminated because it didn’t meet certain “critical success factors” that included having a high unemployment rate and a population of at least 1 million people. Both population and high unemployment were important because the call center is expected to have high employee turnover. The call center ended up in Texas.

“One of the weaknesses you do have is just knowledge about the area,” Watson said. “It’s not a well-known area beyond Walmart, and so you’ve got to work to introduce more [site selectors] to it.”

Alison Benton, a site selector for Aliquantis in Dallas, said site selectors are familiar with the area but not nearly enough have visited the region. Benton was in the region for a client who wanted to consolidate some scattered U.S. manufacturing operations into the same region, but the project wasn’t completed.

“How you’ll do depends on whether someone has been here,” Benton said. “Northwest Arkansas on paper seems extremely remote but is in a central location in the U.S. If you haven’t been there, it’s hard to get your mind wrapped around what’s really there. The numbers show there’s lots of business activity, but what’s it look like and what’s it feel like? People in New York just have no idea.”

Additionally, the Council has a contract with DCI, a place marketing agency, that includes reaching out to site selectors in cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and New York. In the fall, a group of site selectors will be visiting Northwest Arkansas to learn more about why business expansions would make sense for many companies.

Kristen E. Gibson, assistant professor of molecular food safety microbiology at the University of Arkansas, leads trade journalists on a tour of her research laboratory in July.

See OUTREACH, Page 12

Council starts development of new three-year strategy

Ted Abernathy, managing partner of Economic Leadership and economic policy advisor to the Southern Governors’ Association, talks with Tim McFarland and Mike Harvey. Abernathy helped the Northwest Arkansas Council determine whether work described in the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy is being completed on schedule. He traveled to Northwest Arkansas this year.
Officers of the Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Held</th>
<th>Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (2013-2014)</td>
<td>Mark Simmons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (2014-2015)</td>
<td>Rosalind Brewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Past Presiding Co-Chair (2012-2013)</td>
<td>John Tyson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice Chair / Secretary / Treasurer</td>
<td>Scott Van Laningham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair Emeritus</td>
<td>Alice Walton</td>
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<td>Chair Emeritus</td>
<td>John Paul Hammerschmidt</td>
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Members of the Executive Committee

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<tr>
<th>Type of Appointment (term of appointment)</th>
<th>2013-2014 Executive Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Co-Chair (1-year term)</td>
<td>Mark Simmons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair / Secretary / Treasurer (indefinite term)</td>
<td>Scott Van Laningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of NWA Chambers of Commerce (through January 2015)</td>
<td>Wayne Mays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Chair's Appointees (1-year term)</td>
<td>Rick Barrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair Emeritus (1-year term)</td>
<td>John Elrod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee Representative #1 (3-year term) (term expires in 2014)</td>
<td>Becky Paneitz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee Representative #2 (3-year term) (term expires in 2015)</td>
<td>Chip Pollard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee Representative #3 (3-year term) (term expires in 2016)</td>
<td>Mitchell Johnson</td>
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2013-2014 MAJOR INVESTORS

Outreach
The world is learning about region, thanks to the Council’s work with a New York firm

ER&E Program
Region's companies predict they'll hire at least 2,000 workers over next three years

Achievement
Northwest Arkansas students are improving in mathematics, literacy

Placemaking
Council and its partners support work to improve downtowns, support local food

Population Growth
Region's population reached an important milestone on May 28

Infrastructure
Highway investments by state, cities raise spending to highest point since 1999

Economic Growth
Study: Northwest Arkansas economy should be among the best through 2020

Strategic Plan
The Council nears the end of five-year plan, new three-year plan in the works

Leadership
Sam's Club leader will serve as the Council's presiding co-chair in 2014-15

Members
The Council includes more than 100 business and civic leaders in Northwest Arkansas
August 15, 2014

Members of the Northwest Arkansas Council:

Greetings and welcome to the 2013-2014 Annual Meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Council. I can report to you today that your involvement and excellent work is helping the Council and its partners as we go about building a greater Northwest Arkansas.

The annual report that you are reading highlights some of the work being accomplished by Northwest Arkansas Council staff and members, but it does not address everything. In fact, the Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy that’s guided the Council’s work since January 2013 includes 55 strategic actions meant to upgrade infrastructure, strengthen our schools, improve quality of life and create jobs. All of those things are occurring in Northwest Arkansas!

The annual report includes information about how we’re telling site selectors and others across the nation about Northwest Arkansas, how our schools are improving, and how the companies already here plan to expand. There are stories about how Northwest Arkansas cities intend to enhance their downtowns, how highways are being built at their fastest rate since 1999 and how our region celebrated that we’ve reached 500,000 residents.

Finally, there’s information about how we’re about to embark on our next strategic plan, one that will build on what’s already been accomplished. We expect to maintain some of what’s been started while taking on new challenges.

It has been an honor to serve as President Co-Chairman of the Northwest Arkansas Council, and I’m certain this organization will find new successes under the leadership of new president co-chairman Rosalind Brewer. She’ll be terrific in her new role here.

Thanks to each of you for your support of the Northwest Arkansas Council and for helping Northwest Arkansas grow jobs and economic opportunities.

Sincerely,

Meryl Simmons
President Co-Chairman

Fayetteville resident Greg Moody illustrated the front and back cover of the Northwest Arkansas Council’s annual report. It shows the Walmart AMP, the wayfinding system, the Razorback Regional Greenway, the planned Amazeum, I-49, the region’s population milestone, Graduate NWA, a corporate expansion project, Ozark Regional Transit, the Fayetteville Flyover and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.