



# Northwest Arkansas Council

2013-2014 Annual Report

August 13, 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 2011 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 being 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 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.





A cyclist rides across a bridge on a section of the Clear Creek Trail that's north of the Northwest Arkansas Mall. The trail's opening was celebrated by the cities of Johnson and Fayetteville in April this year.

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## 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 how 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 region's economic development. It's location in the central U.S., its abundance of white-collar workers, its talent from the colleges and universities, its entrepreneurial culture, and its recognition as a center of excellence for retail, logistics and food, work in the region's favor.

To highlight those strengths, DCI helps the Council coordinate meetings with 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.

"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 there," 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

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## 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 more 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 (ER&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 \$195 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 at 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 to 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,

“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



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

meetings with real-estate agents, and by setting up community tours. Thirty families decided to make the move to Arkansas, said Cindy Christopher of the Gates Corporation.

The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce has used the information gleaned in ER&E interviews to shape programs offered to members and to learn about members’ needs, said Steve Cox, vice president of economic development.

“Currently, there is over \$77 million in capital investments either underway or planned for the next three years just in Rogers that we have learned about through the ER&E surveys,” Cox said.

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 Gardner, ORT’s general manager.

Communities 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



## Report Card: Students Improve in Math, Literacy

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 across the region. Coupled with improving test scores, the region is also piloting innovative programs from Pre-K, to helping at-risk students, to higher education, and beyond. The report card covers both the

numbers and the stories that make a Northwest Arkansas education great."

The Northwest Arkansas Report Card ([www.nwacouncil.org/uploads/rc2013.pdf](http://www.nwacouncil.org/uploads/rc2013.pdf)) provides information about how students in school districts throughout the region performed on Arkansas Benchmark exams, as well as on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and high school end-of-course exams. There is data about the number of students in each school district, student demographics, teacher demographics, expenditures, and graduation rates.

Additionally, there is information about Northwest Arkansas colleges and universities that is focused on such things as financial aid, student retention 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. 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 for Weichert Realtors – The Griffin Co., said homebuyers 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.

# Placemaking: Cities' Downtowns, Food Systems are Being Redefined

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.

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, if it's successful, will build on solid foundations to make better places, especially in downtowns.

"Over the past two decades, consumer values have shifted, and they crave more connections to people and places," said Daniel Hintz, the former Downtown Bentonville director who the

Council contracted with as a resource to work with Bentonville, Fayetteville, Rogers, Siloam Springs and Springdale on downtown development. "People want to move to places they feel a connection to. Communities such as Austin, Asheville, Des Moines and Ann Arbor were early adopters of that. It wasn't just the downtowns, either.

upgrading their offerings as their populations increase. Bentonville's flourishing downtown restaurants are a short walk from Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and the Amazeum, a children's museum under construction. The Washington Post earlier this year recognized Bentonville for its

"in" restaurant scene and several of their chefs performed at the storied James Beard House in New York in 2013.

Springdale and Rogers, meanwhile, are making commitments to develop long-term master plans for how they'll go about downtown enhancements.

"What's happening in Bentonville is a game-changer and that's motivating Springdale, Siloam Springs and Rogers," said Scott Polikov, founder of Fort Worth, Texas-based Gateway

Planning Group in Fort Worth, which started developing a downtown plan for Rogers earlier this year. "In some sense, the communities have all caught the bug."

Polikov said Northwest Arkansas cities could use McKinney, Texas as a model for what's possible. McKinney (population 148,000) protected downtown's historic integrity while adding downtown restaurants, small business offices and residential areas. McKinney in 2012 was ranked No. 2 in *Money Magazine's* list of Best Places to Live.



Parade Magazine in July considered the Siloam Springs downtown area as one of the best "main streets" in the U.S. It was one of 16 U.S. cities nominated for the honor.

It was the cities themselves."

Along with helping with master planning efforts and supporting the downtown organizations, Hintz is helping the cities create downtown dashboards; statistical measures to keep up with how downtown areas are performing. While each dashboard will be different, the cities can use the statistics to track retail markets, restaurant sales, downtown office space availability and residential housing units.

Fayetteville, its downtown square, its farmers market and the Dickson Street entertainment district on the eastern edge of the University of Arkansas campus have long been considered primary hubs of the region, but other communities are



## Rapid Growth Leads to 500K Milestone

Northwest Arkansas reached a new growth milestone this year, welcoming the 500,000<sup>th</sup> 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 30-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 knew we'd reached the milestone," 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



Laura Guenther's photo of her 4-year-old son, Cannon, on the Bentonville Square won the Northwest Arkansas Council's photo contest in May. The contest helped celebrate the fact that

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 Marshallese 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 growth comes as no surprise."

The region's other most notable changes as the population has surged is in quality-of-life amenities. Just since 2008, the region has added Arvest Ballpark in Springdale, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, the Walmart



AMP in Rogers, the Pinnacle Hills Promenade shopping center in Rogers and the Razorback Regional Greenway. Additionally, a children's museum called Amazeum is planned for Bentonville.

Communities, school districts and institutions of higher education in Northwest Arkansas show up on dozens of national rankings lists, recognizing the cities, their excellent schools, low unemployment, impressive job growth, low crime rates, affordability and business opportunities as key reasons for their strong showing.

Since 2001, the region has generated more than 60,000 net new jobs, and average annual wages recently topped \$46,000. With a cost of living 10 to 15 percent below the national average and a growing list of world-class amenities, Northwest Arkansas should continue to be a destination for thousands of new residents each year.

## 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.

For example, if the Council had used the percentage of growth that occurred each day between April 2010 and July 2013 (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.

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 determined the MSA hit 500,000 residents far earlier than May of this year.

Any of those scenarios and most others based on Census Bureau statistics result in the same conclusion: the

## 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 491,966 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.

### Northwest Arkansas cities

Springdale	4.58
Fayetteville	4.53
Bentonville	4.10
Rogers	3.49
Bella Vista	1.00
Centerton	0.88
Gravette	0.75
Siloam Springs	0.69
Lowell	0.52

### Other Arkansas cities

Conway	4.13
Jonesboro	3.61
Little Rock	3.23
North Little Rock	3.18
Bryant	2.23
Fort Smith	1.21
Texarkana	0.08



## Region's Highway Building Hits Highest Point since 1999



The city on July 2 celebrated the opening of the Fayetteville Flyover, a \$6.3 million improvement that allows College Avenue motorists to more easily drive to Interstate 49. Motorists became familiar with the flyover's green appearance in the weeks before the construction was finalized.

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 Northwest Arkansas in terms of infrastructure improvements.

The Highway Department this year started the largest section of the Bella Vista Bypass and will open construction bids for the first section of the U.S. 412

Bypass of Springdale in November. Additionally, the state continues to make major investments into the interstate highway through the region that was renamed I-49 this year, taking major steps forward in its goal of widening the highway to six lanes from Bentonville to Fayetteville.

Meanwhile, cities are making major road investments of their own.

That's especially true in Springdale and Fayetteville. In July, Springdale opened the Don Tyson Parkway connection to I-49, and Fayetteville opened a flyover that allows

northbound College Avenue motorists to more easily reach I-49.

Northwest Arkansas hasn't experienced this much big-ticket highway construction since 1998 when I-49, which was known as I-540 until this year, was finished from Alma to Fayetteville. Total cost of that project was near \$450 million; the highway opened to traffic in January 1999.

What's not known is how much the major projects in the region will reduce traffic congestion, but it's widely believed big highway construction projects



coupled with less expensive improvements to city streets are necessary to significantly reduce delays.

A 2012 study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, which was commissioned by the Northwest Arkansas Council, showed traffic congestion in Benton and Washington counties costs about \$103 million each year. Regions with similar populations have congestion costs near \$60 million annually, the researchers said. Traffic delays and the ease with which a company can ship products they manufacturer to other parts of the U.S. are important considerations when companies decide where they want to locate new operations, meaning good transportation and highways are helpful to economic development.

The Connecting Arkansas Program, which is being funded by the voter-approved sales tax, is providing major benefits to Northwest Arkansas. Many Northwest Arkansas Council members were supportive of the sales tax.

A six-mile portion of the Bella Vista Bypass, costing \$53 million, was started earlier this year and is the first project funded by the new sales tax. The U.S. 412 Bypass of Springdale will be among the first taken on at a projected cost of \$125 million.

Three additional Northwest Arkansas projects are being funded by the sales tax in 2015.

The region's largest cities all have their own projects that will dramatically change how traffic moves.

Don Tyson Parkway's \$23 million connection to I-49 allows motorists to

move from the far reaches of eastern Springdale to the interstate with less delay.

It also will pull some east-west traffic off U.S. 412 (Sunset Avenue in Springdale) to the north and Johnson Mill Boulevard to the south of the Don Tyson Parkway connection, said Patsy Christie, Springdale's planning and community development director. Additionally, major road improvements are nearing completion of

U-turns, and we expect those U-turns to be reduced to near zero," Brown said.

Rogers and Bentonville are acquiring land and moving utilities to prepare for large road construction projects that are planned.

Rogers is moving the utilities lines this year for three projects worth a combined \$36 million scheduled for completion in 2016. Those utility

relocations are the beginning of two projects that will widen portions of Perry and Bellview roads. The third project — one that will straighten out Monte Ne Road from Oak Street to New Hope Road in the eastern part of the city — is the largest at \$15 million, said Steve Glass, the city's planning and transportation director. Bentonville started the right-of-way appraisal process in May for the land it will need to build an Eighth Street interchange at I-49.

Two-lane Eighth

Street, from I-49 to Southwest I Street, will be widened to five lanes or four lanes with a center median, depending on the location.

The \$53 million project involves city, state, federal and private funds. There's lots of work that must occur before construction can start in late 2016 or early 2017 as the city must acquire land and relocate utilities, said Mike Churchwell, Bentonville's transportation engineer.

The major commitments by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, cities and voters should continue to improve traffic movement in Northwest Arkansas and those improvements will continue into 2015 and beyond.



Northwest Arkansas Council members, city mayors and county judges traveled to Little Rock in April to celebrate the designation of Interstate 49 in Northwest Arkansas with Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Director Scott Bennett and Highway Commissioners Dick Trammell, Tom Schueck, John Ed Regenold, Robert Moore and Frank Scott.

Johnson Mill Boulevard, providing a better roadway into the city of Johnson.

In Fayetteville, the city completed the \$6.3 million Fayetteville flyover. Funding from the 2005 federal highway bill paid for 80 percent of the project. The city covered the remainder, said City Engineer Chris Brown.

The flyover should reduce traffic at College's intersection with Joyce Boulevard near the Northwest Arkansas Mall. It's one of the busiest, most contested intersections in the entire region, and much of the congestion was caused by northbound drivers on College who made U-turns so they could go south and then west to reach I-49. Those U-turns should be less frequent because motorists can use the flyover instead.

"The traffic studies estimated that about 25 percent of left turns at Joyce are

## NWA Economy Looks Strong Through 2020

A report published in June predicted Northwest Arkansas will be the third fastest-growing economy among large metropolitan areas in the U.S. through 2020.

The forecast, prepared by IHS Global Insight, was released at the U.S. Conference of Mayors annual meeting in Dallas. The report shows the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) economy should grow by 4.2 percent annually through 2020. Only the economies of the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA in Texas (4.4 percent) and Raleigh-Cary (MSA) in North Carolina (4.3 percent) are expected to grow at a faster rate.

"This report confirms some trends that we already know about the Arkansas economy," said Kathy Deck, a University of Arkansas economist. "The majority of the state's economic output comes from our two largest metropolitan areas and, in particular, the fast rate of growth of Northwest Arkansas means that the state will increasingly rely on the region's success for the state's prosperity. The projected high rate of growth for the gross metropolitan product in Northwest Arkansas is a result of the enormous and varied number of infrastructure, education, and community investments that have been made over the past couple of decades."

The full report showed the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA in 2013 had the nation's seventh fastest-growing economy among large metropolitan areas. It grew 3.8 percent last year, the report showed.

Northwest Arkansas is consistently recognized as one of the nation's top economies.

## 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 business person and had a sense of do the right thing always," Lindsey said. "He was



Ed Bradberry

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 also had 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.

### OUTREACH From Page 4

national media outlets, industry trade journals and online publications to ensure that they know about important news. Spurred by DCI, publications across the U.S. have written about Northwest Arkansas topics such as the preservation of Fayetteville's Mount Kessler, the Razorback Regional Greenway, the

region's growing business startup scene and the development of a disposable insulin patch pump by a Fayetteville company.

DCI also helped share information about the region reaching 500,000 residents in May. Benton noticed that communication when it was shared.

"That's something that would be impressive," she said. "But not having 500,000 is something that could eliminate

### PLACEMAKING From Page 7

The work to support Northwest Arkansas downtowns is occurring as new attention is helping local farmers and food businesses effectively make their food available to local consumers. In July, Karp Resources in New York presented its findings, showing what needs to occur to help such places as restaurants, hospitals and schools utilize local fruits, vegetables, meats, milk and other products.

Most Northwest Arkansas residents

in a survey said they'd purchase locally produced foods if they were available. Karp's assessment describes a plan for making local food more available.

The infrastructure projects that support placemaking include the Razorback Regional Greenway that connect the downtowns of Bentonville, Rogers and Fayetteville as well as the region's impressive mountain bike trails. The Council last year hired Misty Murphy as regional trails coordinator to work with communities in promoting trails to





## Council Starts Development of New Three-Year Strategy

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 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.

"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 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."



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



**Mark Simmons**, chairman of Simmons Foods Inc., is the outgoing presiding co-chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council. Earlier this year, Simmons was inducted this year into the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame.

**Rosalind Brewer**, president and CEO of Sam's Club, takes over as the Northwest Arkansas Council's presiding co-chair. In 2013, Forbes recognized her as one of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women.



## Officers of the Council

Position Held	Officer
Presiding Co-Chair (2013-2014)	Mark Simmons
Presiding Co-Chair (2014-2015)	Rosalind Brewer
Past Presiding Co-Chair (2012-2013)	John Tyson
Vice Chair / Secretary / Treasurer	Scott Van Laningham
Chair Emeritus	Alice Walton
Chair Emeritus	John Paul Hammerschmidt

## Members of the Executive Committee

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

## 2013-2014 MAJOR INVESTORS







## 2013-2014 Members

**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  
**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**, McKee 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**, Southwestern Energy  
**Greg Fogle**, Nabholz Construction Services  
**Cathy Foraker**, AT&T  
**Alan Fortenberry**, Beaver Water District  
**Ed Fryar**, Ozark Mountain Poultry  
**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**, Arkansas World Trade Center  
**Tom Hopper**, Crafton Tull & Associates  
**Dina Howell**, Saatchi & Saatchi X  
**Dennis Hunt**, Stephens Inc.  
**Walter Hussman**, WEHCO Media Inc.  
**Mitchell Johnson**, Ozark Electric Cooperative Corp.  
**Eli Jones**, University of Arkansas  
**Robert Jones III**, Conner & Winters  
**Evelyn Jorgenson**, NorthWest Arkansas Community College  
**James Keenan**, The Raven Foundation  
**Jeff Koenig**, Upchurch Electrical Supply Company  
**Peter Kohler**, UAMS Northwest  
**Bob Lamb**, Consultant

**Peter Lane**, Walton Arts 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 Mathews**, McDonalds of Northwest Arkansas  
**David Matthews**, Matthews, Campbell, Rhoads, McClure & Thompson  
**Wayne Mays**, Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce  
**Tim McFarland**, Elevate Performance  
**Dan McKay**, Northwest Health System  
**Jeff Milford**, AEP SWEPCO  
**Elise Mitchell**, Mitchell Communications Group  
**Mike Moss**, Moss Financial Group  
**Becky Paneitz**, Inseitz Group  
**Neal Pendergraft**, Donald W. Reynolds Foundation  
**Gene Pharr**, Arkansas Farm Bureau  
**Buddy Philpot**, Walton Family Foundation  
**Eric Pianalto**, 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 Santoleri**, Rockline Industries  
**Archie Schaffer**, Tyson Foods  
**Charles Scharlau**, Southwestern Energy  
**Jeff Schomburger**, Procter & Gamble  
**Anita Scism**, Endeavor 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 Taldo**, 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**, Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods  
**Charles Zimmerman**, Walmart Stores  
**Randy Zook**, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce



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