

I truly believe that last year will be considered a year of transition for this community. A year when it became very apparent that North Little Rock is transforming into a vibrant, exciting and evolving place offering big city amenities while retaining smaller city advantages. Although the foundation for this transformation was built over several years, it was 2007, with an enviable combination of plans and projects that confirmed its reality.

Since the opening of Alltel Arena, no development has brought attention to our City, especially our downtown, as has the completion and opening of Dickey-Stephens Park. After a setting attendance record of more than 5,000 fans per game, to say its first year as the new home of the Arkansas Travelers professional baseball was successful would be an understatement. With its 5,288 fixed seats, all with great site lines that are oriented towards the pitchers mound; its huge concourse with a store, a restaurant and many concession stands that all face the ballfield; its comfortable luxury suites; its picnic areas; its quirky outfield fence; its berm seating; its affordable ticket, food and drink prices; its state of the art scoreboard; its location near to downtown entertainment areas; and, its panoramic view of the Little Rock skyline, it is no wonder that Dickey-Stephens Park was the most talked about, written about and honored new stadium in all of professional baseball.

Adding to the downtown development momentum, were several projects that both were accomplished and announced. Clean up of a polluted city owned property ideally located southwest of Dickey-Stephens Park began last year. On Washington Avenue, across from Alltel Arena, a 262 unit luxury apartment was built on the former Jackson

Cookie site. The Enclave on the River opened its door in January of this year. It looks to be the first of many downtown residential developments.

Plans for a 57 unit townhouse development along the River Rail Trolley on Maple Street were approved by both the Community Planning and Historic District Commissions. The City Grove Townhomes will be built on 3 city blocks between 4th and 7th Streets. Developers of this urban infill project studied successful developments in other major cities before preparing their plans for this exciting project.

At the intersection of Broadway and Main, across from City Hall, the 3 story, 2.5 million dollar Argenta Place mixed use development was under construction for most of the year. After months of negotiation, Argenta Place was redesigned to reflect the historic character of the downtown and will house a restaurant, other street level retail space, second floor office space, as well as, second and third floor residential condominium units.

Plans for a residential subdivision west of downtown along the Arkansas River were approved. Based on the concepts and philosophies of the “new urbanism” movement, Rockwater Village will be a pedestrian friendly, traditional neighborhood development featuring narrow winding streets, with sidewalks and bicycle paths, where houses occupy larger percentages of their respective lots. The location will make it accessible to both Burns Park and downtown by trail or street, an advantage that few urban neighborhoods can duplicate. Plans for another three story mixed use development on Main Street were approved, as were those for a 3 story office building on the southeast corner of Main and Seventh Streets that will be home to Twin City Bank’s operations and offices. There was another important announcement that will influence future downtown

development. Mountaire Feeds announced that it sold its animal feed production operation and that their downtown “feed mill” will be closed. This decision will make another well located downtown site available for future development.

In addition to events at Alltel Arena, baseball games at Dickey-Stephens Park, tours of the newly air conditioned Razorback Submarine, cruises on the Arkansas River Queen, rides on the RiverRail Trolley, as well as biking and hiking on the river trail, the North Little Rock downtown experience presented even greater opportunities when four new restaurants opened their doors to the dining public. The creation of another experience occurred with the 5.8 million dollar renovation of the Junction Bridge. When it is opened to the public in May of 2008, the bridge will connect the downtowns of North Little Rock and Little Rock. Also, the Junction Bridge will connect the river trails in both cities and complete a 15 mile loop that crosses the Arkansas River via the Junction and Big Dam Bridges. Because these renovations are for pedestrian use, the U.S. Corps of Engineers policy of not allowing unused bridges to remain in place will not be applicable. I am pleased that interest in downtown North Little Rock continues to be strong and that opportunities for quality development projects abundant.

The past year produced another transformational trend that may not be as noticeable, yet it is important. There was a discernable trend toward becoming a “green community.” Given our emphasis on strong code enforcement, abandoned tire removal, drainage ditch and street cleaning, in addition to free residential solid waste and leaf collection, a more appropriate description could be a “green and clean” community. The City’s first certified green office building was built by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality on the banks of the Arkansas River in Northshore Business Park.

The six story, 2.3 million dollar building became home to more than 300 employees in July. During construction, 60 percent of wood, papers, plastic and metal discarded at the site were recycled. Solar water heating, recycled carpet, extensive insulation and sunlight reflecting glass all contributed to the building receiving a Silver Certificate for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The City Grove Townhomes should receive a LEEDS designation from the Green Council. The Rockwater Village, with its traditional neighborhood design and pedestrian emphasis, will use LEED guidelines. Rockwater Village anticipates a LEED certification. Additionally, on the 1600 block of Marion Street, east of Pike Avenue, the Argenta Community Development Corporation built the first 3 of 9 planned, 1,300 square foot infill houses that should also get Silver certifications.

As the cost of energy sky rockets for our citizens and its government, many proactive energy conservation measures were implemented this past year. To help our residential customers, the Electric Department hired and trained a Home Energy Auditor who is conducting energy audits on an ongoing basis. Energy conservation kiosks were acquired and installed in locations across the City. Energy conservation information is made available at the kiosks. Sixth grade North Little Rock School students participated in “Living Wise”, our first energy conservation education program.

Energy conservation at city buildings can be a major contributor to our green effort. With that and cost savings in mind, the City hired a nationally recognized energy auditor to conduct an energy efficiency audit of 30 buildings. The study was completed last year. Long term energy reduction improvements will be financed through guaranteed short term cost savings. Previous City alternative energy projects paid by dividends.

Renewable energy produced at the Murray Lock and Dam Hydroelectric Plant and at the city landfill supplied and astounding 17 percent of our total 2007 power usage. Additionally, traditional traffic signal lights across the City began being replaced with light emitting diode (LED) lights that use significantly less energy and last much longer.

Finally, in a coordinated effort to make our river trails and downtown more bicycle friendly, the Central Arkansas Transit Authority buses were equipped with 60 bike racks and Main Street Argenta installed several bike racks throughout downtown. A recent poll conducted by Yale University and the Roper Poll found that 3 of 4 Americans want their own local government to do more to reduce global warming. In another, a Yale University/Gallop/Clear Vision Institute study found that 64 percent of Americans disagreed that the action of a single person can not make a difference in reducing global warming. As this report shows, North Little Rock citizens and their local government can make a positive contribution in the effort to protect our environment.

As always, the public's safety received much of this administration's attention throughout 2007. Again, our Police and Fire Departments received national and state recognition and interest in innovative public safety initiatives.

In response to a growing problem of building material theft at residential and commercial sites, a Police Department officer designed an inventory sheet that allowed construction site managers to record all the material and equipment at the site. These inventories improved the chances of stolen item recovery. In cooperation with the Home Builders Association, legislation was drafted to directly address the serious problem of construction site theft. House Bill 2361, which was signed into law by Governor Beebe, makes it a felony to steal property from a construction site permitted by

a local government. For his efforts, Officer Gene Whitley was named Regional Police Officer of the Year by the Office of the Arkansas Attorney General.

The Department's innovative LeadOnLabs program was implemented in 2006, However, last year was the one that it really showed results. The computer program designed to track the purchases of inordinate amounts of cold medicines and other ingredients used in the production of methamphetamine from several stores was fully operational in 2007. Pharmacies are notified when the program identifies someone purchasing more ingredients than one person could use from several stores. Thirteen other Arkansas local law enforcement agencies have implemented this model program. As a result, there has been a noticeable reduction in the number of labs across Arkansas. For his work on this project, North Little Rock police officer Tim Willis was selected from 2,100 applicants as the recipient of the Elks Club National Enrique Camarena Award. He had previously won the Arkansas Award. This program was featured in the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Division's 2007 publication "Award Winning Community Policing Strategies."

Because of these and other innovations and successes, Chief Bradley was invited to speak at the International Association of Police Chiefs 2007 Convention in New Orleans.

Our firefighters had their share of innovations, successes and honors in 2007. Assistant Chief Bob Mauldin was honored at the Arkansas Firefighters and Chiefs Convention where he received the Lifetime Achievement Award, as well as the Sewell Award from the Association of Fire Chiefs. It is an honor for accomplishments exemplifying the position of fire chief. Initiated by the Fire Department, North Little

Rock became the first city in Arkansas to ban the sale of novelty lighters shaped like figures attractive to children. Arkansas Children's hospital estimated that nearly one third of their children burn patients were injured after setting or playing with fire. They believe a majority of the injured were playing with lighters. Additionally, many novelty lighters do not meet U.S. Consumer Product Safety standards. After it became law, many other Arkansas city and county governments requested copies of our ordinance.

In 2007, the Fire Department produced some impressive statistics. The Training Division conducted over 10,500 hours of training. The Department had 9,034 incidents that generated 13,667 responses. Losses from structure fires amounted to \$9,357,314. However, the total value of property affected was \$72,949,259. The in structure saved figure of \$63,591,945 amounts to a save rate of 87.17 percent.

Their ongoing community outreach through citizen involvement effort met with great success last year. Our Youth Fire Setters Intervention Program continued to counsel kids that have been involved in fire related incidents and those whose parents are concerned about possible involvement. The popular portable smokehouse continued to train our young citizens in fire escape procedures. Through last year, almost 2,000 children have been trained.

Over its decade of existence, the Police Athletic League has grown from 120 fall football players to 1,200 youngsters involved in 18 different year around activities. Our community's nationally recognized program has steered kids from the street to the ballfields, gymnasiums and classrooms. Undoubtedly, it has been a major contributor to the significant reduction in youth crimes in the Rose City neighborhood. In 2007, a PAL program was started in the Levy neighborhood. Also helping improve police-youth

relations and trust were the Youth Police Academy and the Community Resource Officer Program which was expanded to include Poplar Street Sixth Grade School.

Nearly two dozen people attended the Citizens Police Academy where they learn more about what it takes to serve and protect both residents and visitors. This increased understanding promoted citizen support, in addition to showing how each one of us can be of assistance in public safety, the epitome of citizen involvement. Finally, National Night Out continues to have greater participation as neighborhood residents gather to: strengthen police and community relations; let criminals know that neighborhood residents are involved, aware and organized; increase citizen support for and participation for anti-crime programs; and, to meet new neighbors, see friends and, generally have fun.

Our aggressive code enforcement effort continued throughout the year. An innovative Nuisance Abatement and Property Maintenance Code was adopted by the City Council. In another public safety first, North Little Rock implemented the first “City Tools Act” which was passed by the Arkansas General Assembly. The new state law allows cities to place liens on abated properties for the cost of bringing those properties into compliance. We then have the option to foreclose on the property and either place it in a “land bank” or sell it. It was another record year for the issuance of code violation citations. Code Enforcement officers, who are constantly responding to citizen generated calls, attended over 50 neighborhood meetings to further improve communications, mutual trust and our ability to be both proactive and response.

Communications with the public and among agencies is critical to effective public safety programs. That is why the Emergency Services Department spent \$187,197 to improve our ability to receive and locate wireless telephone emergency calls. We applied

for and received a Homeland Security Grant to purchase more radio equipment that facilitates interagency communications. Interagency, interdepartmental and intergovernmental communications were critical to the Pulaski County Evacuation Exercise conducted in December. The Exercise identified issues and procedures regarding the evacuation of a large number of residents, workers and visitors during a weapon of mass destruction terrorism incident. As stated previously, the safety of residents and visitors to our community has the highest priority.

In addition to honors bestowed upon the Police and Fire Departments and Dickey-Stephens Park, North Little Rock and Little Rock were jointly selected by the National Historic Trust as one of its 2007 Dozen Distinctive Destinations. The Trust's annual selection of twelve selects communities is based upon historic preservation and tourist attraction factors. This prestigious designation confirms what many have been working toward and believe has been, to a large degree achieved; that these cities are nationally recognized as interesting, and exciting places to visit and, as we know, live.

An important contribution to the success of the temporary one cent sales tax vote that financed the construction of Dickey-Stephens Park was the promise to expend 5 million dollars of that revenue on an expansion of the Patrick Henry Hays Senior Citizens Center. That promise was fulfilled this past year. Already one of the most successful senior citizen centers in the nation with nearly 13,000 members, the needed expansion was started and finished last year. The new addition adds 22.80 square feet for another conference room, 2 indoor swimming pools, table tennis and billiards rooms, an expanded craft room and a state of the art computer lab for life long learning. We now have a 60,000 square foot building dedicated for use by seniors and mostly operated by

seniors. The incredible amount of 13,291 hours of volunteer time served at the Senior Center contributed a great deal to the City of North Little Rock's designation as Volunteer Community of the Year for 2007.

Directly across from the Senior Center, the Community Center completed a 1 million dollar renovation including new men's and women's locker rooms with saunas, renovated basketball/volleyball courts, as well as a new aerobic area and weight lifting room. Our Parks and Recreation Department added to the long list of 2007 honors received by the City. In October, the recently renovated and expanded Burns Park Tennis Center, which now has 23 outdoor and 6 indoor courts, racquetball courts and a new pro shop, was selected by the United States Tennis Association as a recipient of its Outstanding Facility Award.

Our emphasis on community outreach and citizen involvement has been tremendously enhanced by two entities that should be recognized. Ten years ago, your city government worked with the North Little Rock School District to create NLRTV. This high school student operated "station" broadcasts on the cable channel dedicated for city government. In addition to televising city council and School Board meetings, the NLRTV produces and presents a civic issue discussion program, special school events, its own news program and numerous other programs. For the 6th time in the decade it has been "on the air," the NLRTV was awarded the All Arkansas Award for Broadcasting by the Arkansas Scholastic Press. Obviously, this innovative use of a government access channel has been beneficial to both citizens and students.

After years of work, the Office of the City Clerk completed the job of making all of the more than 8,000 city ordinances electronically accessible by the public.

Additionally, the Office now makes the City Council meeting agenda and the proposed legislation available on the internet.

The extensive effort to improve community relations was complemented by lesser, but important effort to better international relations. During the 6th year of its existence, North Little Rock hosted 11 teenagers from our Sister City, Uiwang City, South Korea. South Korean students stayed with local families as they visited the Governor's Mansion, the Clinton Presidential Library, City Hall, Dickey-Stephens Park (and ballgame), Blanchard Springs Cavern, the Ozark Folk Center, and floated the beautiful Buffalo River. These grass roots effort to share goodwill and increase awareness and knowledge of two countries and cultures will pay positive dividends as the youth of both nations become adults.

Creating new and sharing existing information communications and investigation techniques were some of purposes for the International Police Association's Conference on Terrorism. This multi-agency, multi-nation conference was held in 5 Italian cities and attended by 4 representatives of the North Little Rock Police Department.

The case that 2007 was and will be known as a "Year of Transition" for the City of North Little Rock has, I believe, been made throughout this report. However, it is also apparent that this exceptional year will be remembered as one of achievements, accolades and awards.