

2017 Fayetteville State of the City Address – draft 4

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome (again) to this special meeting of the Fayetteville City Council. It has been my privilege to serve as your mayor for this past year, and it is a great honor this evening to deliver this first-ever State of the City address.

First, I want to thank every citizen of the City of Fayetteville who has shown confidence in my performance as mayor during my first year in office. I thank the members of the City Council for a cooperative spirit during this past year. It is our fervent desire to work together to present this city as one with a rich history but even more so one with a promising future. My desire is to be a dedicated and honorable servant leader who demonstrates integrity and who welcomes all citizens to be an active part of our community.

I look forward to another year of working with the city council, city staff and other community members to take advantage of the improving economy to ensure we are elevating the quality of life for every citizen in our increasingly diverse city.

We are in this together, and I believe if we embrace the principles of community and teamwork, we will succeed. If we focus on doing what is best for the good of all, we will continue to be a successful city in the coming year and in years to follow as we face unprecedented growth.

We cannot afford to maintain a status quo and watch surrounding communities surpass our economic development and managed-growth efforts. We must press forward in our efforts to deter crime. We must continue to set the pace for high educational standards. We must aggressively pursue and attract quality businesses through a robust economic development plan.

The world is changing, and so is Fayetteville. We must embrace and capitalize on these changes. We must put any personal differences aside

in order to maintain and improve the quality of life we all moved here to enjoy. Tonight, I call on all of us to embrace change and prepare our unified community to make the most of it. That, I believe, is what good leadership is about.

Tonight, I want to encourage all citizens of Fayetteville to get involved in your community. Get involved through volunteerism, through public service and through constructive communication. Become active guardians of our democracy, and take pride in our unique city.

There is only one Fayetteville, Georgia on this planet, and we should all want it to benefit from what can be achieved when we work together and not in opposition.

Fayetteville has a bright future in part because we have a strong history of community and government working well together, and this past year was no exception. In fact, we as your elected officials and city staff have increased efforts to connect with the community in 2016, and your response was nothing short of outstanding. Whether it was showing up to one of our Comprehensive Plan Update meetings, completing Comprehensive Plan surveys or participating in Downtown Master Plan workshops, we called for participation, and you answered. We have seen greater attendance at our city council meetings, and we are seeing increasing attendance at our public events and celebrations. We look forward to connecting even more in the year to come.

I want to say a very special “thank you” to members of our community who took time and energy in 2016 to show support and love for our public safety personnel. We believe we have some of the best police officers and fire fighters anywhere, and we are grateful every time they go above and beyond the call of duty in service to the city, its residents, businesses and welcomed guests. I salute them for their service, and I thank you, the community, for doing the same.

As well, I extend that same gratitude to the rest of our excellent city staff. These employees serve behind customer service counters, behind desks and even behind landscaping equipment. They're behind the scenes, but they're at the forefront of our efforts to bring Fayetteville up to premiere city status.

Looking back at 2016, it is a pleasure to share a few highlights:

1. We hired 5 new police officers, and now our police department is fully staffed for the first time since 2006. Within the next couple of weeks, we anticipate announcing our new police chief, who will be ready to face the challenges and growth opportunities ahead.
2. Our police department increased its presence in the community through outreach programs such as Junior Police Academy, Citizens Police Academy, Coffee with a Cop and others. It should come as no surprise that we have consistently ranked high in many "safest city" surveys.
3. Fayetteville property owners were pleased to learn our city-wide ISO fire protection rating improved from Class 4 to Class 3, and I am pleased to tell you our fire fighters are doing their best to improve beyond that standard.
4. To that end, we were excited in 2016 to add Truck 9 to the Fire Department fleet.
5. As with our police department, we have increased staffing and training in our fire department to provide better coverage for a growing city.

And our city is growing.

6. Not only have we watched with great enthusiasm as the 234-acre Pinewood Forrest multi-use project takes shape on the west side of the city just across the street from Pinewood Atlanta Studios, but on the south side of town we have also seen ground broken on Oakleigh Manor, which is our first new residential subdivision to begin construction since the beginning of the most recent recession.
7. We also saw the groundbreaking and early construction of Lafayette Square, a premium-quality apartment community nearing completion out on Hwy. 54 West, which is another first since the recession.

And our city is going to keep growing.

8. Our Planning and Zoning staff approved 12 site development plans in 2016, which is an increase from 4 in 2012.
9. Residents who have lived in Fayetteville a long time tell me they know growth is unavoidable, and they ask that we do all we can to maintain the quality of life we all enjoy. And that's why I am pleased to report that in 2016 the City of Fayetteville has made great strides toward updating our city-wide Comprehensive Plan as well as creating a new Downtown Master Plan. In the process of developing these plans, the public was thoroughly engaged. We are listening to what our citizens and community leaders are saying, and we are incorporating their thoughts into these guiding documents.

10. Earlier, I mentioned Pinewood Atlanta Studios, and it is worth including the fact that in 2016 this world-class movie studio grew to become the largest studio of its kind in North America outside of Los Angeles, California. And the studio campus is still growing.
11. Fayetteville in 2016 also became home to the state's first-ever Georgia Film Academy, which is located on the Pinewood Atlanta Studios Production Center campus and features its own, fully-featured movie studio facility. This academy in particular helps our local community benefit from the local expanding movie industry job market.
12. Just down the street from Pinewood Atlanta Studios, Georgia Military College's Fayetteville campus enjoyed its first full year of operation in our city. Enrollment at GMC has exceeded expectations, and now they are drawing up plans for a second academic building.
13. Piedmont Fayette Hospital in 2016 was named by Health grades to be one of America's Top 50 Hospitals. They are currently expanding their emergency department to better meet the needs of our growing community.

I think you get the point: that Fayetteville is growing, so how are we responding to this growth? How are we preparing the city we love to accommodate these developments? Here are a few more 2016 highlights I'd like to share with you.

14. The long-awaited Hwy. 92 and Hood Avenue Realignment Project, which was the dream of the late City Engineer Don Easterbrook, was begun and nearly completed in 2016. In fact, we

dedicated Easterbrook Way, which connects Hwy. 92 North and Hwy. 85 with North Jeff Davis Drive, in memory of Mr. Easterbrook just a few days ago. When the final connections are completed in the next few weeks, you will see much-needed traffic relief along the Hwy. 85 corridor and especially in the Historic Downtown district.

15. We completely resurfaced Jeff Davis Drive late last year.
16. We completed a much-needed drainage project at the Fayette County High School campus.
17. We purchased and began implementation of new financial software in 2016, and we appreciate the public's patience as we continue to work out the conversion from our old system.
18. The Ridge Nature Area was opened to the public in 2016. We want to thank Southern Conservation Trust, who manages The Ridge Nature Area and who has done so much to offer this great amenity to our city. We have still only begun to make this a top-notch recreation destination where families and outdoor enthusiasts can get healthy and stay healthy while enjoying a well-preserved natural environment.

Looking back at our Historic Downtown District...

19. We were pleased to announce in 2016 the sale of the former Travis Hardware building to Twisted Taco, which shows their long-term commitment to our city.

20. And just down the sidewalk, we announced that Gremlin Growlers will also be setting up shop on our Courthouse Square.

21. Radio station 92.5 “The Bear”, which has been a fixture in the City of Senoia for several years, announced in 2016 it will be relocating to a building on the south side of our Courthouse Square, and we anticipating their first broadcasts from that new location literally any day now.

Many of you are already aware of the March 21 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum, and I want to encourage you to participate in that. A complete project list for the City of Fayetteville is available on our website, www.fayetteville-ga.gov, and if you have any questions, please contact us at City Hall for the answers.

Much is happening in Fayetteville, and our city is being recognized as a prime location to take advantage of a great school system, a strong and dedicated law enforcement department and an excellent fire service. We have teams of devoted city staff members in all of our departments who are ensuring Fayetteville maintains a high all-around quality of life. People are moving to Fayetteville. Businesses and jobs are beginning to move to Fayetteville. As I’ve said in this room several times before, we want Fayetteville to be a premiere city in the State of Georgia and in the Southeast United States, and that won’t just happen by chance. It takes planning.

22. And that is why in 2016 we adopted a strategic, city-wide economic development plan, and we restructured our City Hall staffing to better focus on these economic development opportunities. As we move into 2017, you will see and hear more about these efforts, which will include a brand-new city website and much more social media engagement so we can better

connect with our current residents and better tell Fayetteville's story to guests who will come to visit our great city.

23. Moving forward, we are looking to adopt a competitive incentive plan to attract businesses that offer competitive salaries to our workforce.

These successes of the past year were brought to fruition in large part because we have a cooperative city government. We work well together, and we work through our differences with grace and in the spirit of cooperation. And while I am very pleased to highlight these successes, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge our gratitude toward the Fayette County government and those of our neighboring municipalities with whom we have cooperated for the betterment of our much larger Fayette community. We have a positive relationship with the Fayette Chamber of Commerce and the Fayette County Development Authority. We have taken the lead to foster this cooperative relationship.

As an aside, I feel it is also appropriate to mention that while it was a lot of fun competing with a certain other municipality in last year's dragon boat races on Lake Peachtree, I expect to see that Mayor's Cup trophy in this city council chambers later this year.

Again, I sincerely appreciate the confidence Fayetteville residents have placed in me, in my city council colleagues and in our city staff to lead this blessed city into the future. We have been good stewards of the financial resources entrusted to us. Two further 2016 highlights are worth mentioning this evening: One is that the City of Fayetteville for the 19th consecutive year earned the prestigious Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting given by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada; and the other is that your city was also awarded for the ninth consecutive year the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award by that same organization.

As your mayor, and on behalf of the city council and city staff, I commit to you, our Fayetteville residents, that we will continue to be good stewards of all of the resources entrusted to our leadership. Working together, we will see Fayetteville become a premiere city.

Close: “Thank you, and may God bless you, and may God continue to bless Fayetteville, Georgia.”