



***State of the City  
February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Mayor Russell Stroud***

Good evening, everyone. I am pleased to announce that the state of the city is STRONG.

I would like to recognize each of our elected officials on our City Council, and would like to welcome our newest elected councilman, Mr. Curtis Vaughan as well as our newly elected recorder/treasurer, Mrs. Gina Swanson. Thank you all for your service to the City of Goshen and our residents.

Let me also take this opportunity to recognize and thank our members of the Goshen Planning Commission and the Goshen Parks Commission. You each bring experience and talent to these commissions that are invaluable to our city and our progress towards the future growth of our city and our region.

I would like to thank our city staff at City Hall, Ms. KaSeana Williams, Mrs. Lacie Lawson, and Ms. Abby Bryan. Without these talented and professional young ladies I could never have accomplished what we were able to accomplish over the past year. They each go above and beyond to serve all our residents in managing City Hall and keeping us in alignment with local, state and federal regulations of municipal government. I would also like to thank Mr. J.D. Demott, our city building inspector who continues to do an outstanding job inspecting our new construction within the city.

We have remained fully staffed for Infrastructure and Facilities Management and we continue to see steady improvements in our ability to complete projects more efficiently. I would like to thank Mr. Dave Gatlin and Mr. Ivan Ivannikov for their commitment and dedication to the city of Goshen. Both completed significant training over the past year and have brought this training forward, benefiting the city with increased knowledge and skills. They were an integral part of engineering, designing and completing the construction of the new south entrance into Mill Branch Park. These two

men have formed an alliance that gets stuff done. I give my deepest gratitude to both these men for their tenacity of character and hard work.

Thank you to the Goshen City Police Department for their unwavering dedication to protecting our residents and keeping Goshen safe. You each give so much of your time, attention, enthusiasm, and integrity to your profession. We are truly appreciative of this level of professionalism and character you bring to our city. Chief Travis, you consistently raise the bar and exemplify the ideals of excellence in law enforcement. Your team, Captain Doug Stewart, Lieutenant Jessie Sorrell, Corporal Nathan Snipes, and Officer Raul Manzo, are all to be commended for your commitment to upholding the law. I am proud to say that the City of Goshen Arkansas' Police Department has continued to remain fully staffed for over 2 years now. I am extremely proud that you each continue to give your ALL in protecting our great City. Thank you for your service.

And finally, I would like to thank our partners throughout the City: Goshen Fire District and all the firefighters who volunteer to protect our community, Scott's Petroleum, Phillips 66/FastTrax, Panchos Mexican Restaurant, Dollar General, Goshen Arbor Board, Goshen Riding Club, Goshen Extension Homemakers Cooperative, the Goshen Historical Society, the Goshen Senior Center, Goshen Farmers Market, and all of the other businesses or non-profits that bring life to Goshen. We truly appreciate the impact your services provide for our citizens and communities.

As Mayor, my vision is to cultivate a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city where every resident thrives. Fostering a community that embraces diversity, champions innovation, and prioritizes environmental stewardship. Together, we will enhance public safety, improve infrastructure, and ensure equitable access to needed resources. Our city should be a model of collaboration and civic engagement, where every voice is heard, and every individual has the opportunity to contribute to a brighter future. United in our efforts, we will be able to create a city that not only meets the needs of today but also inspires generations to come.

Tonight, I would like to recap some highlights from the work accomplished in 2024 as well as work we have already begun in 2025. In 2024 we were able to maintain over one million in CD's that are continuing to draw an average of 5%. This has positively contributed an additional \$50,000 in earnings for the city over the past year. Our finance committee has continued to work tirelessly to maintain up to date transparency through regular postings of the city's finances on our city website and expedited budget review

with city council approvals. We have continued to maintain our general fund account balance of over \$700,000 month after month while increasing our city's overall assets from just over one million at the beginning of my administration to now over three million. This represents a 200% increase in overall city net worth in just over 2 years. As of today our combined bank account balances are just over 2 million dollars. We are fiscally prepared for the future. I would like to personally thank Mr. Jerry Jackson and his firm at Jackson Wealth Preservation Group for continuing to provide services to the City of Goshen free of charge. Your continued contributions to the City of Goshen are significant and greatly appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Jackson!

Through the fiduciary budgeting support of our City Council, we have been able to add value to the city through significant capital improvements. City Hall has had a complete facelift that has encompassed new interior and exterior lighting, the addition of new windows, new doors, awnings, a covered back patio, a new concrete drainage culvert, new septic system, new water diverting French drains, new security cameras, new sealant to the parking lot, new asphalt at our Fire Station, bullet resistant protection to interior city glass doors, built in filing cabinets and desks, renovated back bathroom, and storage lockers and new ceiling fans in the garage area. In addition, through the volunteerism of the Arbor Board, we were able to plant over 16 trees behind City Hall in 2024.

The city has also purchased a new Can-Am side by side ATV with a front detachable snow plow, a new 72" Hustler commercial lawn mower, and an International 4300 articulating Bucket Truck with a 49 foot boom. These purchases have definitely benefited the city by allowing us to accomplish more efficiency of work. We continue to commit significant resources to our streets and bridges, by trimming trees, applying gravel to roads, grating roads, resurfacing streets, replacing and clearing culverts, repairing and replacing signs. We will continue to work on these projects as well as replacing all street signs within the city by the end of the year with easily visible reflective signage.

We were able to complete almost all of the renovations at the Community Building in 2024. The additional exterior disabled accessible bathroom and side entrance were completed with a disabled ramp, the front disabled ramp was also completed, the broken window along the north west side of the building was replaced, the retractable door to the kitchen opening was installed, an additional gas range was installed, the bike

wash station and bike repair stand were completed, the additional picnic tables were installed at the playground, the additional park bench donated by Mrs. Linda Stroud was installed, the rock garden picnic area over the septic system was installed, the security cameras were installed, and the Wi-Fi extender was installed for broader Wi-Fi capacity into the park area behind the Community Building. We look forward to the final completion of a few items in 2025 with the refinishing of the stage, the installation of a rock retaining wall behind the Community Building to prevent water intrusion, further landscaping, the installation of additional electrical circuitry for outdoor food vendor use, and front door repairs.

Through our Parks Commission and their fortitude in obtaining the HUD grant, we were able to complete the purchase of the remaining park property. We used the additional HUD grant funds to pay for the majority of the construction of a new entrance into the North side of the Park off highway 45. We are also continuing to oversee and administer the ARDOT TAP grant, with hopes to finally get this project started early this year. We were also applied for and were awarded the Arkansas State Parks and Tourism grant that will enable us to build a Trailhead/Pavillion with bathrooms at the south side of Mill Branch Park. We will officially be awarded this grant on March 6th 2025. This grant serves as the matching grant offsetting the overall cost of the 4.9 acre parcel that was purchased by the city in 2023. This parcel was a strategic purchase to provide access to the south side of Mill Branch Park via Fire Tower Rd. We were also excited to have hosted the first annual “Highlands Gravel Classic” bike race in 2024 with plans to continue this in April of 2025.

Looking more towards the remainder of 2025, we have many goals to accomplish. We are looking to build a new shop building behind City Hall for our infrastructure and facilities management. This project is anticipated to cost between \$250,000.00 and \$350,000.00. This is a significant capital improvement project but is needed to support the continued and improved services we plan to deliver to our citizens within the city. Our growth and development committee in coordination with our Planning Commission is working diligently to look at our future footprint for commercial zoning as we re-look at our land use map while working to better develop a city “Master Plan”. We are eager to look for how we get better connected as a city and for additional grant opportunities to help accomplish this goal.

Safety also continues to be of utmost concern for this administration. We are proactively looking at ways to make our infrastructure and public facilities safer. This has included the installation of cameras for surveillance, bullet resistant glass coatings, and better security for our city buildings. We will also analyze ways to improve the safety of city streets, city intersections, and ways to decrease crime. We requested assistance from Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) in 2024 to evaluate the intersection of state highway 45, Goshen-Tuttle, and Blue Springs and it was determined that we did not qualify for a stoplight at this intersection based on traffic volume. Although this was disappointing, we were able to successfully have the speed decreased through the main portion of the city from 40 MPH to 35 MPH which is beneficial for traffic safety. ARDOT also completed the resurfacing highway 45, which has been a significant improvement.

As part of a safe environment and safety for our city we have started the enforcement of ordinance 52 and have successfully passed an animal control ordinance. Ordinance 52 has raised some concerns as it includes things like unkept properties that can pose safety risks to surrounding neighbors that impact the safety of our citizens. We put into use our retired patrol vehicle for code enforcement, and now as an animal control vehicle as well. We anticipate we will utilize our soon to be retired patrol truck for animal control and will continue to use the ford explorer for code enforcement. While we do not want to disrupt or cause angst by enforcement, we understand it's needed for the safety of all our citizens who these violations may impact.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the residents of Goshen for their support, encouragement and engagement over the past year. This administration's number one goal is and will continue to be, to serve our city and each of our citizens with humility and respect.

All these things can be accomplished if we work towards a better tomorrow, respecting our past and leading purposefully for our city's future. We must be better to do better. Let us be a team vigorously working for ALL our citizens. Let's lean into 2025 and beyond, unified in bringing growth and development to Goshen. Let's keep the state of our city STRONG. Thank you and may God Bless our great City.