

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
COUNCIL

2019-
2020
ANNUAL
REPORT



Photo by Dero Sanford, courtesy of the Momentary.

CAREERS NW
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ENGAGE NW
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DIVERSITY NW
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FARE FLIGHT NW
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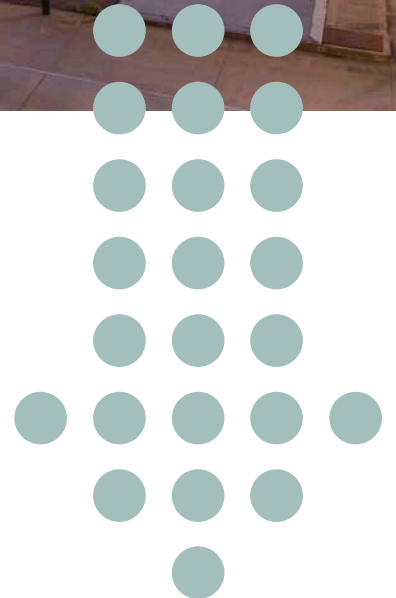
FINDING NW
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IMPACT NW
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INVEST NW
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STARTUP NW
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CACHE



FINDING NWA



**Annual Report design
by Amy Kelley Bell.**

Learn more about her work at
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**Back cover illustration
by Yang Luo-Branch
for Finding NWA.**

Download illustration at
findingnwa.com/regional-map.

Special thanks to the city of Siloam Springs, Hugo's Restaurant, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc., Mercy Northwest Arkansas, the Momentary, Northwest Arkansas National Airport, Rogers School District, Runway Group, TheatreSquared, Tyson Foods, University of Arkansas, Walmart and Walton Family Foundation for providing photography for this report.

July 22, 2020

Members of the Northwest Arkansas Council,

Northwest Arkansas, along with the rest of the nation, is facing significant challenges. COVID-19 continues to impact our way of life - causing loss of life, straining our health care system and devastating our economy. It is evident more work is needed to address systemic racism in this country. To ensure we're doing our part in Northwest Arkansas, we're announcing a racial equity pledge with support from the region's leading organizations. This pledge represents a commitment from business, education and nonprofit community leaders to make Northwest Arkansas a more just, equitable and inclusive region.

While the path forward may not be clear, robust, coordinated leadership will be needed to address these issues and build our region economically, socially and culturally. It is because of the Northwest Arkansas Council's 30-year track record of moving the region forward that I am confident we can meet this moment.



Our 2019-2020 Annual Report shows just how much COVID-19 has changed our region in a short time. We have been working to respond to COVID-19 and plan for the future in nearly every area of our work, from health care to workforce training, entrepreneurship and economic development. In addition, EngageNWA provides a strong foundation and regional infrastructure to address issues around diversity, equity and inclusion.

We are also excited about the newly launched Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange (CACHE), the regional arts and culture organization incubated at the Council. CACHE brings cohesive vision and strategy to the region's creative economy to uplift the local artist and nonprofit sector, build leadership and coordinate arts investments. We know how important arts and culture are to our region, and CACHE will help us create a more interesting and inclusive region and build a stronger economy. OZCast is a collaboration between CACHE, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, The Momentary, Oakland-based social design firm Idea2Form and Emmy-award winning documentarian Mario Troncoso.

Last, we are proud to announce Susan Barrett as the newest Honorary Lifetime Member of the Northwest Arkansas Council. A member for almost 20 years and health care expert, Susan has immersed herself in efforts to improve the region.

I've been honored to serve as Presiding Co-Chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council over this past year. I've enjoyed working closely with our organization's members and staff. And, despite our current challenges, Northwest Arkansas is positioned to emerge from this crisis stronger and more resilient. I am excited for the future.

Thank you.



Todd Simmons

Northwest Arkansas secured its place as one of the best places to live in the country long ago. People continue to relocate to the region not only for lucrative job opportunities but for its spectacular quality of life and livability.

The nation's leading publications, economists and university researchers recognize Northwest Arkansas as one of the nation's most successful regions.

Bentonville is the

5th

fastest-growing city in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among noteworthy lauds in late 2019 and early 2020 include Northwest Arkansas rankings from U.S. News & World Report, The Milken Institute, PlacesForBikes, Matador Network and Money magazine.

In 2020, U.S. News and World Report ranked Northwest Arkansas

4th in Cheapest Places to Live

4th in Best Places to Live

12th in Best Places to Live for Quality of Life

15th in Fastest Growing Places

20th in Safest Places to Live



The Milken Institute ranked Northwest Arkansas

No. 37

among 200 ranked large metros in its 2020 list of Best-Performing Large Cities.

PlacesForBikes put three Northwest Arkansas cities among its Top 20 city ratings in its 2020 report.



NO. 6 ROGERS



NO. 10 FAYETTEVILLE



NO. 14 BELLA VISTA

Bentonville also made the list at No. 38.

Matador Network deemed Bentonville one of the "Coolest Towns in America"



Money magazine named both Bentonville and Springdale "2019 Best Places to Live"



Northwest Arkansas' largest companies remain atop the Fortune 500 or the eighth consecutive year



#1

Fortune 500



Leading the Top 3, headquartered in Northwest Arkansas

#79

Fortune 500



#346

Fortune 500



Moving up 8 spots

YEAR IN REVIEW

The region had many impressive accomplishments and announcements throughout the year. The Council is highlighting a few to demonstrate why Northwest Arkansas continues to be recognized one of the best places to live in the U.S.

WALMART HOME OFFICE

In May 2019, Walmart unveiled design plans for its new home office in Bentonville. The campus, which will be constructed over the next five years, will be on roughly 350 acres and is designed for a more digitally native workforce. It will include space that encourages greater collaboration and speed. The campus will be integrated into the community trail system, for easy walking and cycling access. The outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 prompted Walmart to rethink usage of the new corporate home office design based on future ways of working.



J.B. HUNT TRAINING & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc. opened its 132,883-square-foot Training and Technology Center in August 2019. The four-story center provides room for 1,000 occupants, including employees in training, information technology and technology support.

SILOAM SPRINGS MEMORIAL PARK

Memorial Park and Chautauqua Amphitheater opened in downtown Siloam Springs in May 2019. The five-acre park, located behind the Siloam Springs Public Library, includes a splash pad, concession stand, gazebo, farmers market area, Killed in Action Memorial and the Chautauqua Amphitheater and stage.



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATIVE AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

The University of Arkansas announced a \$194.7 million grant from the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation in July 2020 to establish the Institute for Integrative and Innovative Research (I3R), transforming the research, innovation and economic development culture of the university. I3R is envisioned as a unique approach to research that will distinguish the University of Arkansas by creating a flexible, state-of-the-art collaborative framework designed to facilitate the integration of research across clusters of innovation. The grant will grow the university's research engine and also drive commercialization and entrepreneurship education.

HEARTLAND FORWARD

Heartland Forward launched in October 2019 as a “think and do” tank focused on advancing economic performance in the center of the United States. Heartland Forward will develop original policy research, convene leading voices — including through its flagship event the Heartland Summit — and advocate for policy solutions to increase economic growth across the Heartland region.

WHOLE HEALTH INSTITUTE



Alice Walton announced the formation of the Whole Health Institute and Chopra Library in January 2020 with a mission to radically transform health care so that whole health and well-being are affordable and accessible to all people in all communities. Whole Health empowers and equips people to take charge of their physical and mental well-being and to live their lives to the fullest. Dr. Tracy Gaudet, formerly of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, leads the institute.

THE MOMENTARY

The Momentary, a contemporary art space for visual, performing and culinary arts, opened in February 2020. Occupying a former 63,000 square foot cheese factory, The Momentary offers art and music with galleries for exhibitions, performance spaces, artist-in-residence studios, culinary experiences and a festival field. General admission is free.



BELLA VISTA BYPASS

The Arkansas Department of Transportation and community leaders celebrated the start of construction on sections of the Bella Vista Bypass at a site near the Arkansas-Missouri state line in October 2019. These projects are scheduled to be complete in 2022.

TYSON FOODS AUTOMATION CENTER



The Tyson Manufacturing Automation Center opened in downtown Springdale in August 2019, providing space for the development of manufacturing solutions and collaboration with the company's information technology team and equipment suppliers. Additionally, it serves as a team member training site on new technology.

MERCY CLINIC AND TOWER

Mercy Health System completed two major investments that opened in 2019 – a multispecialty clinic with an ER in Springdale and a patient tower and health services expansion at its Rogers hospital.

WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION'S FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVE

The Walton Family Foundation announced a new initiative to strengthen the region's capacity to grow food for its residents. Northwest Arkansas Food Systems will help connect new and existing small-scale farmers to land, technical assistance and capital. It will also improve farmers' access to local wholesale and direct-to-consumer markets by providing aggregation, sales and distribution, and processing services.



HEALTH CARE TRANSFORMATION DIVISION

The Northwest Arkansas Council established the Health Care Transformation Division in July 2019 together with the region's major health care providers. The division was formed to facilitate collaboration among health care providers to collectively improve health care in the region and to develop the region into a destination for health care - a long-stated Council priority. A 2019 study demonstrated the region had high quality and low-cost primary care but was losing nearly \$1 billion per year in economic impact due to the outmigration of high-level specialty care.





Northwest Arkansas Health Care

A Vision for the Future

The Northwest Arkansas Council's Health Care Transformation Division is committed to building Northwest Arkansas into a premier health care destination through increased access to care, increased availability of high-level specialty care and integrating wellness of mind and body as an integral component of health care. Because of its special connection to the Heartland and strong collaborative spirit, Northwest Arkansas will:

-  **Be a top 20 destination for the health sector service, attracting individuals seeking the best available medical care - reaching high into the specialties and subspecialties.**
-  **Be home to a top-tier academic medical center that combines world-class physicians and scientists developing and commercializing new discoveries.**
-  **Have a robust residency pipeline that attracts the best and brightest medical school graduates from around the world.**
-  **Be the home of a new model of integrative health and wellness that has re-envisioned the health system into one that promotes one's whole health and actively incorporates self-care and integrative treatment approaches.**
-  **Be home to a Level 1 Trauma Center and a virtual care center for effective care of many chronic illnesses, population health initiatives and effective integration of intensive services and providers.**
-  **Be a region where data analytics and virtual and digital technology will serve as a catalytic tool to transform health care, shape research and develop and deploy solutions for sustaining health.**
-  **Include regional employers as robust partners in the design and development of health care systems to best meet the health and wellness needs of their co-workers while demonstrating great return on investment.**

The division values the strong foundation in place and will support local institutions that continue to invest in the region and care for its regional population. New partners committed to this collaborative path forward will be welcome. This work will improve the region's health care institutions, employers and positively impact the health and wellness of individuals in the region, state, nation and the world.

There is much work to do. It will be a journey!



COVID-19

At the outset of COVID-19 in Arkansas, the Health Care Transformation Division members, along with Community Clinic, began to collectively plan for a potential surge in COVID-19 cases in Northwest Arkansas. Meeting as a group up to three times per week, the division pivoted its focus from collective planning for the future to clinical surge planning, increasing COVID-19 testing capacity, securing essential personal protective equipment and supporting essential front-line health care workers. The Council coordinated with division members to ensure consistent public-health messaging from the health care community.

To reach non-English speaking communities in the region, division members worked with the Council to translate all relevant public health materials intended to provide resources and promote positive messages of social distancing, personal hygiene and masking into Spanish and Marshallese.



The division also coordinated with state and regional public health officials to communicate the seriousness of COVID-19, including the launch of the 'Safe and Strong' omni-channel public service campaign to continue to focus on essential public health priorities.



To build capacity to work in communities especially hard hit by the pandemic, the Council received grants from the Blue and You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas and the Walton Family Foundation to engage community health navigators from within the Marshallese and Latinx population. The navigators are employed, trained and supervised by the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus (UAMS) and Community Clinic and will work with all division partners.



While the pandemic is ongoing, the Council is hopeful the multi-channel outreach campaign coupled with trusted navigators conducting on-the-ground outreach in hard-to-reach populations will help reduce the spread of coronavirus.



For more information, visit nwacouncil.org/health-care

Support for Health Care Organizations

An effort by the Northwest Arkansas Council supported by several local business and philanthropic partners provided much needed aid to health care entities across the region impacted by COVID-19.

Combined financial and in-kind donations exceeded \$3 million from the Blue and You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, J.B. Hunt, RevUnit, Walmart Foundation and Walton Family Foundation to support health care organizations in Northwest Arkansas in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

J.B. Hunt made an in-kind contribution of exceeded 300,000 pieces of personal protective equipment for medical facilities in Northwest Arkansas. The donation included much-needed supplies such as masks, gowns and goggles to ensure the safety of health care workers and patients during the pandemic.



Not only did J.B. Hunt donate the equipment, it was also able to coordinate international movement all the way to Northwest Arkansas – a process that involved complex logistics planning and capacity securement.

RevUnit created a web-based interface for regional hospitals to track existing cases, bed availability, status of testing and available supplies to ensure regional coordination and cooperation.

Funds from the Walton Family Foundation were used to purchase ventilators, fund public health messaging and ensure acute care hospitals in Northwest Arkansas would be able to maintain a ready workforce. The funds also attempted to prevent furloughs of clinical front-line health care workers needed to treat patients infected with COVID-19.

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation committed more than \$2 million to support organizations providing hunger relief, community support and health care services amid the pandemic.



Small Business Emergency Assistance

In March, the Council launched a joint effort with the University of Arkansas Small Business Development and Technology Center to support small businesses and nonprofits impacted by COVID-19.

The Small Business Emergency Assistance program provides services free-of-charge to assist organizations with access to U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and other federal, state and local programs.



The assistance program is supported through a grant from the Walton Family Foundation to the Northwest Arkansas Council.



The Council coordinated with the Northwest Arkansas Chambers of Commerce and other local entities to assist with staffing, communication and outreach efforts, and to ensure the needs of local businesses are matched with the appropriate experts.

Since its launch, the program
has signed up more than
250 CLIENTS

and assisted in securing over
\$15 MILLION

in funding for businesses from the Paycheck Protection Program or Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance.

At the time of publication of this report, nearly \$1.3 million in funding was pending.

“ In this unprecedented season, the help and support provided by ASBTDC and the Northwest Arkansas Council has been a lifeline to help navigate everything from PPP to marketing and HR decisions.

- JASON PIAZZA
Owner, Hugo's

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES FOR REOPENING NORTHWEST ARKANSAS BUSINESSES

Yes, We're **Open** ★★★★★

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COUNCIL
May 29, 2020

As businesses move toward reopening following COVID-19 closures, there are many health and safety factors to take into consideration. The Northwest Arkansas Council's Health Care Transformation Division, in collaboration with the Northwest Arkansas health care community, compiled the following resources to aid businesses in the region with return-to-work efforts.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS, BASED ON CDC GUIDELINES:

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace using EPA-approved products.
- Manual cleaning and wiping down of surfaces is the preferred method. Alternative disinfectant equipment and technologies such as antiviral metals, ultraviolet sterilization, spraying and fogging and air purification methods are acceptable but should not be substituted for basic cleaning and disinfecting procedures.
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility per CDC guidelines.

PG. 1

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS RESOURCES

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY

Joint Statement from NWA Health Care Providers | Northwest Arkansas Health Care Guidance for Employers

Testing | NWA Health Care PSA

ARKANSAS GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
COVID-19
The ADH landing page for COVID-19 related information with topic-specific guidance documents and reopening directives for different venues and businesses.

ARKANSAS ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASK FORCE
Arkansas Ready
The main page of the Governor's recovery task force, with news and industry-specific guidelines and resources available to the public to guide business reopening.

HEALTH CARE

INDIVIDUALS	PROVIDERS	PHARMACIES	PROCEDURES
High Risk Individuals	Health Care Providers	Pharmacy Guidance	Resuming Elective Procedures, I
Getting Tested	Health Care Facilities	Pharmacy Resources	Resuming Elective Procedures, II
Self Home Quarantine	Orthotists, Prosthetists, Podiatrists		

VETERINARY
Veterinarians
Veterinary Clinics

DENTAL
Dentists
Dental Offices
Resuming Elective Dental Services

EMS
Guidance for EMS
Emergency Responder Activities

EDUCATION & CHILD CARE

SCHOOL	CAMP
Childcare	Summer Camps
Educators	Camps, Day & Overnight
Education	

PG. 5

BACK-TO-WORK EFFORTS

As businesses continue to plan for reopening following COVID-19 closures, there was much concern on how to do that safely. The Council collaborated with the Northwest Arkansas health care community on a comprehensive resource guide to aid businesses in the region with return-to-work efforts.

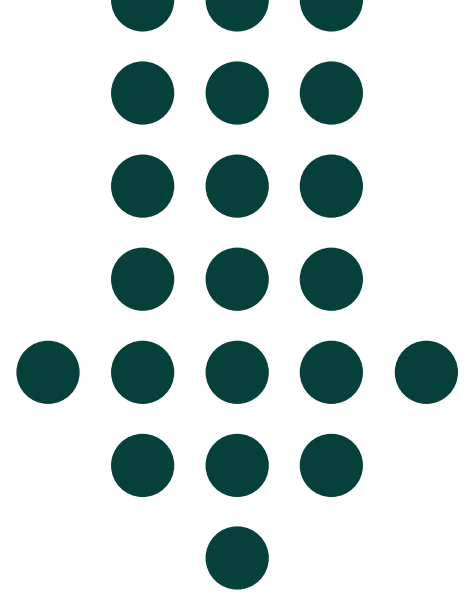
The Council launched the resource in May 2020 during a back-to-workplace webinar for more than 160 employers in the region featuring a panel of regional health care experts. The guide, along with other valuable resources can be found at

nwacouncil.org/health-care

In its first year, the Council's regional arts organization worked to lift up the region's arts sector, established a new brand and built a team of talented creatives.

Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange (CACHE) formed to act as the central regional agency committed to connecting, supporting and developing the region's arts and culture community. In the coming years, CACHE will bring cohesive vision and strategy to the region's arts and culture activity to uplift the local artist and nonprofit sector, build municipal leadership and coordinate ongoing arts investments to achieve full value.

With COVID-19, the global arts field - creatives, nonprofits and the for-profit creative industry - is forever changed. CACHE will provide the leadership to create a more equitable arts marketplace, connect our region with world-renowned best practice leaders and artists and develop a robust, culturally diverse, creative hub.



ARTS + CULTURE



MEET THE CACHE TEAM

Since its inception in August 2019, CACHE has raised nearly \$3.5M through support from the Walmart Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. CACHE is presently leading more than 10 initiatives serving the region's arts and culture sector.



ALLYSON ESPOSITO
Executive Director



SIMONE COTTRELL
Manager
Arts Resource Desk

JESSE ELLIOTT
Director of Creative
Ecosystems

KELSEY HOWARD
Program Director

SAM LOPEZ
Artist Organizer

BLAKE WORTHEY
Artist Organizer



ARTS AND CULTURE BRIDGE FUND

The bridge fund for small and mid-sized arts and culture nonprofits, supported through a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, provided \$500,000 in grants to 24 arts and culture nonprofits across Northwest Arkansas impacted by COVID-19. Grant recipients have a unique opportunity to reimagine their future, rejuvenate their work and rethink their audiences' needs. Many of the grantee organizations serve the region's most vulnerable communities, and it's critical to support them as they stabilize and plan for the future.



OZCast



Digital Series

OZCast is an experimental variety-style digital series exploring the diverse multidisciplinary landscape of the artists, communities, and places in Arkansas and the Heartland. Via voices, processes, and collaborations, creativity is inherent in everyone's lives – and this creativity can help people stay resilient, sustainable, and inspired through these trying times and beyond.

The OZCast series will showcase four artists weekly throughout the year. In total, more than 50 local, regional, and national artists will participate, contributing video works, performances, visual arts, creative processes and immersive technology practices. Content will be created for both the virtual and physical worlds, serving as a bridge into re-opening physical spaces and highlighting venues, public places and natural settings throughout the region. The show offers an entryway into the arts through powerful works, masterful storytelling and illuminating behind-the-scenes footage.



Music Ecosystem Strategy and Action Plan

CACHE worked with British music industry think tank Sound Diplomacy to complete a Music Ecosystem Strategy and Action Plan for NWA, which engaged more than 500 people from the region's community and music industry leaders. Research showed Northwest Arkansas' music ecosystem produces a \$389 million annual economic impact and is responsible for 3,972 jobs in the region.

Sound Diplomacy made several recommendations to elevate the region's music ecosystem. Key opportunities to be addressed over the next three years include:

- Establishing a full-time staff dedicated to the development of a music ecosystem.
- Activating cities to strategically support music.
- Developing platforms for the region's diverse, culturally rich communities.
- Creating grants, residencies, exchanges, workshops and more for musicians.
- Supporting the creation of dedicated artist-centric spaces.
- Nurturing, growing, and attracting music businesses and music-related technology and multimedia sectors to support local artists.
- Building partnerships with K-12 schools, arts education organizations, and higher education to create intentional pipelines of local skills and creativity.

Cultural Planning

CACHE partnered with Rogers to lead a cultural planning effort and create an action plan for arts and culture for the city for the next ten years including public art, park activation, programming and cultural spaces. Through support from CACHE, the City of Rogers established the first municipal arts and culture-focused job in NWA.



What's Ahead

CACHE's goals are to:

- Foster "place attachment" through inclusive cultural programming and offerings to augment workforce attraction and retention.
- Increase strategic resources, funding, and partnerships - philanthropic, governmental, corporate and higher education.
- Provide or facilitate planning, grants, programs and initiatives that deepen the cultural identity and strengthen the creative economy.
- Build the next generation of local arts workforce/leadership for the region's growing arts institutions.
- Develop creatives' practices and work by learning from them what they need to succeed.
- Enrich the daily lives of all residents by making all forms of art present and impactful in public spaces, conversations and community problem-solving.





ENGAGE 

Participation in the 2020 census, a new report on Northwest Arkansas' increasing diversity and racial equity workshops were the centerpieces of EngageNWA's work in the most recent year.

The Northwest Arkansas Council's EngageNWA program works to convene and connect leaders in business, government and the community to build an inclusive region.

Census 2020

EngageNWA worked closely with local and state leaders in the months leading up to the start of the 2020 Census to ensure an accurate count. Programming focused on some of the region's hard-to-count populations, and the results are encouraging. Companies such as Tyson Foods and Simmons Foods emphasized the importance of their workers participating in the Census.

As part of the project, the Council created resources for partners and launched a paid media campaign with Univision and Telemundo and EngageNWA's network to increase outreach and awareness within the Spanish-speaking community.

Arkansas receives nearly \$10 billion annually in federal funding under various programs, according to a report from the George Washington Institute of Public Policy. The Arkansas State Data Center estimates a 1% undercount could result in \$170 million in lost funds over 10 years for Benton and Washington counties. Census workers will begin visiting homes in August for those who haven't responded.



Business Survey and Cohort

The Council partnered with the University of Arkansas Center for Business and Economic Research on a survey to gauge the business community's awareness and involvement around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Nearly 180 organizations across Benton and Washington counties responded and contributed to the following key insights:

- 60% of respondents do not have specific DEI programs and acknowledge difficulty in sourcing, contracting and accessing talent pools.
- 71% of respondents do not have workforce demographic goals.
- 52% have an internal group responsible for supervising D&I efforts.



Grant support from the Walmart Foundation and Walton Family Foundation will allow Engage to build on these findings, provide support and expand DEI competencies to five chambers of commerce and 15 small- to mid-sized businesses later this year.

Diversity

EngageNWA in March released “Engage the Future: A Look at the Growing Diversity in Northwest Arkansas,” a report that documents the region’s diverse population growth over the last 10 years, provides comparative analysis with several peer regions and highlights the racial and ethnic diversity in the region’s school districts. This tool can help launch and strengthen local DEI efforts and set a benchmark for regional leadership and workforce demographics.

The region’s racially and ethnically diverse populations increased from less than 5% in 1990 to nearly 24% in 2010. Since then, the diversity has continued to increase. In 2019, the region was nearly 28% diverse and is expected to grow to almost 31% by 2024. While Northwest Arkansas is making great strides through efforts such as diversifying recruitment pipelines and engaging employees top to bottom in education and training opportunities, more work needs to be done in recognizing and addressing attitudes, behaviors and policies that impede progress.



Meet EngageNWA’s new outreach director, Lourdes “Lulú” Peredo



DIVERSITY ^{NW} _{AR}

With support from the Walmart Foundation, the Council relaunched DiversityNWA.com and Northwest Arkansas Diversity Resource Guide to ensure all community members from diverse populations have the information and resources they need to both acclimate to the region and take advantage of its rich array of offerings.



What’s Next

Engage will be focusing on expanding its reach by targeting small and mid-size businesses with content and programming that address DEI-related needs. Additionally, Engage’s new outreach director will be working with local government on strategies to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion and on developing plans to maximize regional impact.

Northwest Arkansas Leadership Pledge



The senseless killings of George Floyd and so many other Black lives recently shined a spotlight on the racial inequities that still exist in this nation. The Northwest Arkansas Council led conversations with community and business leaders to address systemic racism and build a better region for everyone. This pledge represents a commitment from Northwest Arkansas leaders to take action, and the Council invites others to join this effort.

Diversity and inclusion are vital to the well-being and success of our employees, communities and businesses. We stand committed to fostering and expanding a more just, equitable and inclusive region for all by purposefully addressing systemic racism in the communities in which we operate.

In pursuit of the objective of a diverse and inclusive community, we are committed to the following guiding principles:

Education & Training. Supporting educational initiatives designed to provide a deeper understanding of the historical underpinnings of systemic racism and help identify and eliminate unconscious bias. We will continue to make our workplaces safe environments for such education by fostering open, frank and respectful discussions about these complex issues.

Community & Workplace. Working to ensure that our workplace environments are free of discrimination and that we advance the hiring, development, retention and promotion of diverse talent and invest in initiatives designed to reduce the effects of prejudices in our communities at the local, regional and national level.

Public Policy. Supporting administrative and legislative measures that advance equality and justice and further the acceptance and advancement of all individuals, regardless of personal demographics including race, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs.

Continuous Improvement. Engaging thoughtfully on the issues by listening to and learning from each other, promoting transparency by sharing practices that have worked and failed, and helping keep each other accountable by encouraging the continued enhancement and evolution of policies and strategies to help overcome challenges and improve well-being for all.

Sign the pledge at nwacouncil.org/pledge

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In its first year, the Council's StartupNWA program has become an important connection between investors, entrepreneurs and region's companies.



IC² Report

"Innovate Again, Innovate Here"

Greg Pogue, deputy executive director and senior research scientist of the IC² Institute of The University of Texas at Austin, conducted research regarding entrepreneurship in the region and recommended steps to diversify and strengthen Northwest Arkansas' economy. Pogue presented his findings to more than 230 business and community leaders at the 2019 State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report luncheon. He encouraged leaders to increase regional collaboration to create a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

- Expand funding and "oxygen" for startups and small businesses.
- Promote the University of Arkansas as the region's entrepreneurial hub.
- Create strategies to respond to current and future workforce needs.
- Focus on entrepreneurial and support activities to grow and promote an innovation-minded culture.

STARTUP NWA AR

Pogue suggested the region return to its entrepreneurial roots. Walmart, Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt Transport Services were all established in the region and are now among the largest companies in the world.

Pogue suggested the region had iconic, world-changing entrepreneurs in retail, logistics and food, but an ecosystem to support future entrepreneurs hasn't evolved naturally. Pogue said the innovative legacy must be re-established, nurtured and strengthened.

The region has made notable progress, including the University of Arkansas collaborating with Northwest Arkansas employers, creating a data science degree program and increasing research expenditures. Pogue mentioned innovation activities of Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt, Walmart's decision to build a new headquarters in Bentonville, and the region's recent engagement with Plug and Play Tech Center, an innovation platform that's now connecting Walmart, Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt with some of the world's leading startups.



Cultivating Angels

StartupNWA conducted an angel investing landscape study last fall, identifying significant gaps in the region's budding ecosystem. The study found that the region has no true angel group purely for accredited investors and a lack of angel investing education. There's also investor fatigue, with only a few company founders who have successfully exited companies and able to provide mentorship.

The study's recommendations included educating accredited investors on best practices for investing in early-stage startups, a benchmark analysis of top-performing angel groups across the nation and strategies for co-investing alongside external funding partners. In February 2020, the Council began a next-phase project for creating a successful angel investing community.

Angel investors are vital to Northwest Arkansas because they have hands-on involvement in the growth of small- and medium-sized companies. They provide skills, expertise and contacts for businesses, helping founders overcome obstacles. Northwest Arkansas has incredible corporate talent who, when equipped with knowledge and experience in the early-stage investing asset class, can have a powerful impact on broadening the region's economic base. This network helps build an ecosystem where entrepreneurs can start, grow and exit ventures.



Connecting Entrepreneurs

StartupNWA serves as a regional resource, connecting local and inbound entrepreneurs with regional ecosystem players. It acts as a connector for startups in various stages to resources and partner organizations such as Revolution, the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center, Winrock International, Venture Center, Innovate Arkansas, the Center for Advancing Innovation, Endeavor Northwest Arkansas, Grit Studios, Venture Noire, Startup Junkie and Plug and Play.



Diversifying the regional economy is a top theme in the Council's strategic plan, and the IC2 Institute's report underscored the importance of intentionally nurturing Northwest Arkansas' entrepreneurial ecosystem. Having StartupNWA as a dedicated resource at the Council provides new capacity to pursue work that helps entrepreneurs achieve better connectedness and gain market access.

- JEANNETTE BALLEZA COLLINS

Entrepreneurial Development Director
Northwest Arkansas Council

That connectedness is boosted by Plug and Play Tech Center, an entrepreneurial accelerator launched in Northwest Arkansas in July 2019.

PLUGANDPLAY

The Plug and Play program matches startups with corporate clients to launch technology-focused pilots. The selected startups receive workspace, resources and access to corporations, investors, mentors, universities and government representatives. The Council's important contributions included onboarding the founding partners Walmart, Tyson Foods, and J.B. Hunt Transport Services and University of Arkansas, as well as garnering support from Walton Family Foundation and Arkansas Economic Development Commission. Georgia-Pacific and Crowley Maritime Corp. have also joined the program.

"We're always going to need to be innovating," said Jeff Hensley, vice president of research and development at Tyson Foods. "We have to have products and solutions ready for both our consumers and customers. Now, more than ever, we need to turn up the heat on innovation."

Piloting and Learning



StartupNWA began a pilot of its own in April that's based on an identified need to act as a liaison between industry partners, Northwest Arkansas Council members and the University of Arkansas.

By seeking alignment between the needs of enterprise and mid-sized companies and the intellectual property available through University of Arkansas Technology Ventures, the pilot's objectives include positioning the university as a beacon of innovation and to increase collaboration.

As part of that effort, StartupNWA is supporting Science Venture Studio (SVS), a program started by Fayetteville-based Startup Junkie Foundation. One of the SVS goals is helping early-stage technology ventures apply for federal grants. SVS provides assistance to small businesses preparing grant proposals, as well as guidance related to market validation, business model development, and applied technology.

StartupNWA managed stipends that enabled the University of Arkansas Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation to start a pilot venture internship program that placed 23 interns for 10 weeks with early-stage startups, entrepreneurial support organizations, or venture finance firms. The program provided data that will help shape the design of a larger regional internship program.

Additionally, StartupNWA spearheaded the start and business engagement efforts around Facebook's Career Connections initiatives in Northwest Arkansas this summer. The initiative sets out to provide college students with access to meaningful careers while contributing to local business growth.

Economic Development

INVEST ^{NW} _{AR}

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

The Northwest Arkansas Council has refocused its business recruitment program through outreach to highly targeted, complementary employment sectors. The Council retained Austin-based Avalanche Consulting to help develop an economic development plan for the region.

As a part of the strategy process, Avalanche delivered the following:

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING ANALYSIS

This in-depth analysis of the region's current demographics and economy benchmarked the region against competitor regions to highlight areas in which Northwest Arkansas is outperforming its peers and identified areas in which the region is falling short.

GLOBAL FORCES ANALYSIS

This analysis of competitive forces posing threats and opportunities to the region's economy emphasized how emerging trends may potentially impact the region's existing employers. This analysis added even more nuance to the narratives that emerged in the Economic and Benchmarking Analysis. It examined future disruptors in technology, demographic change, automation and globalization to inform conversations and strategies for innovation-based economic development.

UNIVERSITY ASSETS EVALUATION

This evaluation highlighted existing assets and competencies at a university that can potentially fuel regional economic activity. To lend context, the report compared production and research and development expenditures at the university against a handful of other universities.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Through the analyses described above along with stakeholder input, Avalanche developed a specific list of the region's differentiating strengths, competitive weaknesses, and opportunities/threats for economic growth. The SWOT looks at an array of topics – workforce and education, infrastructure, quality of place, entrepreneurship and innovation, and business climate.

TARGET AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION AND PROFILES

Through an analysis of existing industries, regional assets and global trends, this report identified industries and niche sectors to be the region's economic development target audiences.

INNOVATION STRATEGY, BEST PRACTICES & IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The Council's three- to five-year strategic plan includes a framework (vision, goals, priorities), tactics (specific actions to take, timing, and roles/responsibilities), and metrics. The roadmap will address challenges and opportunities revealed in the SWOT, and may include a variety of topics such as marketing, business climate, talent and education, infrastructure, entrepreneurship and organizational capacity.

Per the recommendation of Avalanche, the Council developed messaging around its targets and started outreach to companies in May 2020. The Council will contact companies in targeted industry sectors for the next 12 months.



Workforce Development

High-performing regions across the United States work to ensure there are sufficient education and training opportunities available to meet the workforce demands of leading employers.

That's especially true in Northwest Arkansas as companies across the region seek talent with a wide range of skills and, in some cases, require their current workforce to acquire new skills.

“ What I'm most proud of in terms of the Council's role in workforce development in the past year has been our ability to bring employers together with students and job seekers to develop programs and onboarding models that make an immediate impact. Building awareness, making connections, and working with educators to build apprenticeships, upskilling current workers and attracting new talent to the region is all part of the effort.

- JOE ROLLINS

Workforce Development Director
Northwest Arkansas Council

Joe Rollins, the Council's workforce development director, assists schools with the development of training programs focused on technology, health care careers and in other high-need employment categories.

Workforce development has changed markedly because of the COVID-19 pandemic as the model has shifted to online job training.

State leaders, along with the region's colleges and universities, its technical school and Northwest Arkansas high schools have responded, demonstrating a willingness to provide more training in new ways that match the available jobs. That's allowed companies to look to local schools to find the talent needed for long-term success.





The Council's career awareness, exploration and hiring connections website continues to grow in popularity, and has been embraced by all 16 Northwest Arkansas' school districts. Post-secondary institutions see the website as an important tool for career awareness and employer engagement.

The website is changing and features are being added to serve the region's needs as the site has become a larger outreach tool for employers.

The Arkansas National Guard and military service organizations have praised CareersNWA as an effective way for transitioning servicemen and women to identify the region's most appropriate available jobs.

It's critical for companies to engage and collaborate with the region's schools to develop workforce training programs that align with the companies' needs. This engagement is important and keeps educators up-to-date about the current demands of the changing workplaces.

Apprenticeship Pipeline

The Northwest Arkansas IT Workforce Development Strategy, developed in early 2020, continues to evolve to meet employers' demands. Information technology apprenticeships focused on software development and cybersecurity have demonstrated initial success for employers and apprentices. In the coming months, offerings will be expanded to include data analyst, general IT, robotics, medical and machine learning. As the region looks to rebuild jobs lost due to the pandemic – and also to add new entry-level talent – the training and placement programs offer cost-effective opportunities. Interested employers should contact the Council to learn more about the opportunities to onboard these talented candidates and keep them here in Northwest Arkansas.

“ Movista has enjoyed partnering with the Northwest Arkansas Council and Arkansas Center for Data Sciences to launch the first Apprenticeship Program in NWA. We have been honored to lend a hand in developing entry-level technology talent in the region, and have benefited greatly from the dedication of everyone involved.

This program connected us to driven apprentices with a natural aptitude for technology. The cost-support of training was invaluable – after the training and internal rotations, these individuals quickly became high-functioning, valuable members of our team. We're looking forward to continuing to partner in the effort to develop talent in the NWA region.

- APRIL SEGGEBRUCH
Co-Founder and COO
Movista



After COVID- 19 impacted employee retention in some industries, as well as the ability to offer face-to-face training, the Council partnered with the University of Arkansas Professional and Workforce Development, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District to launch a training model focused on 75 high-needs training areas via a digital learning model that can be completed from home. The program is available at no cost to qualified applicants. The partners are targeting dislocated workers and those needing upskilling to gain employment in the wake of COVID-19.

In addition, with the early release of students across Arkansas due to COVID-19, another grant was obtained from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services to target out-of-school high school seniors. The funding will be used to promote pre-apprenticeship training through the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative. This is an extension of the apprenticeship model allows for a trial cohort of 100 students for digitally delivered apprenticeship coursework in high-need areas. Those high-need job areas include information technology, health care, manufacturing, transportation and logistics.



With support from the Walmart Foundation, the Council worked with NewAmerica to develop a strategy to mitigate the risks of automation in the regional economy. Two recommendations and strategies emerged from that process:

- **Assess the system currently in place to upskill displaced or low-wage workers and move them into high-demand, more resilient occupations with a living wage. A task force was formed to explore potential models to support this effort.**
- **Provide guidance and technical support to human resource professionals on a skills-based hiring approach to increase the size of candidate pools. The Council is currently researching best-practices and will work with Northwest Arkansas Human Resources Association (NOARK) to implement a regional strategy.**

The Council started a feasibility study for a one-stop training center with wrap around services targeting the working poor in the region in March. The purpose of this study is to assist the Council to evaluate the probability of success and the practicality of an adult-focused workforce development program. Workforce Matters will perform an operational feasibility study to measure how well an adult workforce development program will work in Northwest Arkansas and how internal and external customers will react to it. The results of that assessment will be available in August 2020.

FINDING ^{NW} _{AR}

Digital Engagement



Finding NWA continued to evolve as a go-to resource for talent recruiters, out-of-state job seekers and newcomers. This past year, the website saw traffic jump to 33% – attracting 72,000 visitors with 57% of that traffic coming from visitors beyond the region. In addition, the program’s social media presence increased by nearly 25,000 followers – bringing the total following across LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to just over 50,000. Much of this growth can be attributed to the continued investment in dynamic regional content.

The Council has worked to elevate its presence on LinkedIn to expand talent recruitment and retention efforts. This strategy deploys talent attraction campaigns to support local employers seeking to fill jobs with the best talent in the country.

Over this past year, 27 campaigns targeted various professions including software developers, engineers, data scientists/analysts, cybersecurity, corporate attorneys, medical directors, nonprofit directors, product managers and senior-level finance executives, and resulted in more than 300 talent leads with an expressed interest in relocating to the region.

Recruiting Talent

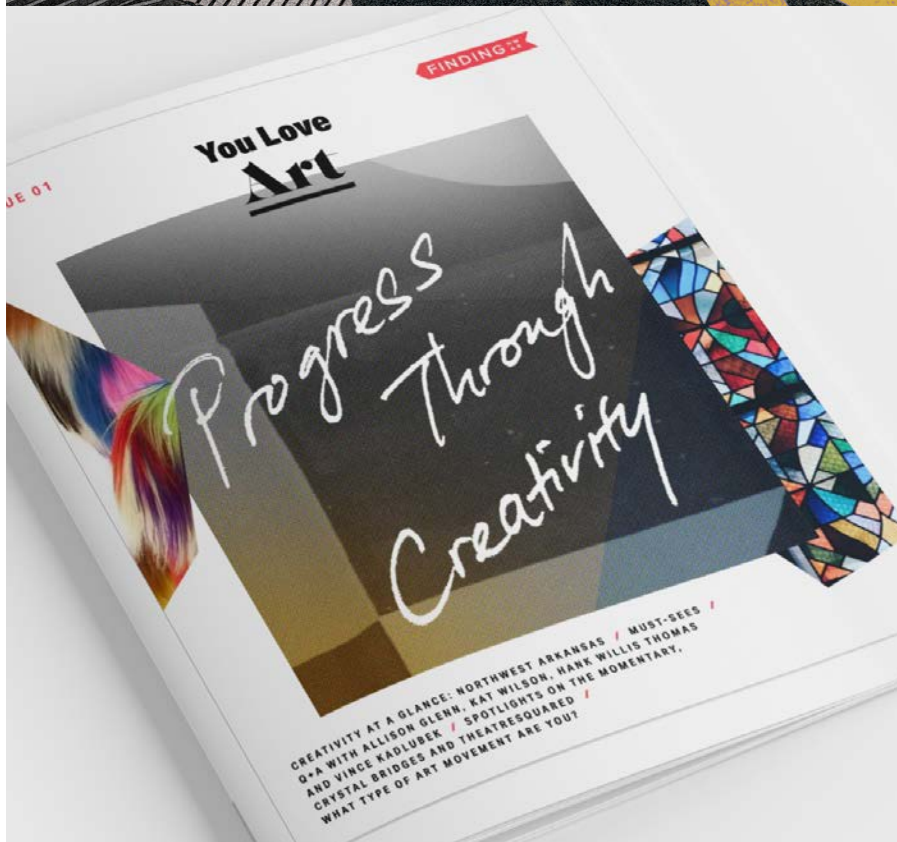


NORTHWEST ARKANSAS RECRUITER'S TOOLKIT

In October 2019, the Council convened talent recruiters from across the region to explore ways Finding NWA could provide support. In early 2020, Finding NWA launched the Northwest Arkansas Recruiter's Toolkit, which now hosts over 70 creative assets and supports over 50 professionals on the frontlines of talent engagement. This living resource will be updated to meet the needs of regional companies.

FINDING ^{NW} _{AR}

YOU LOVE SERIES



Finding NWA's "You Love" speaker series launched in June 2020 to explore points of passion covering a spectrum of topics from art and culinary experiences to outdoor exploration, music and entrepreneurship. The Council organized 10 events throughout the summer convening local and national experts to inspire community and conversation during these challenging times.

The Council sponsored this series with support from the Walton Family Foundation to highlight regional amenities and attract talent to the region.

After the event, participants receive digital magazines or "zines" which creatively showcase regional treasures.

LEARN MORE AT

findingnwa.com/northwest-arkansas-you-love-series/



You Love The Outdoors

TAKE ON THE DAY

Infrastructure



Work with XNA

The Northwest Arkansas Council enhanced its efforts over the last year to promote great air service in the region.

The Council launched FareFlightNWA in June 2019 to promote air travel from Northwest Arkansas National Airport by drawing attention to airlines' best fares and nonstop destinations.

The program's efforts online and through over 20 community presentations demonstrated the many affordable options for travelers and the advantages of flying from XNA over more distant airports.

In the weeks after the program was established, low-cost carrier Frontier started XNA service to Denver. The airport also saw American Airlines start service to Miami, and Allegiant expanded its XNA footprint by providing flights to Phoenix/Mesa and Nashville.

The new air services helped lead to record-breaking air travel as more than 920,000 people boarded XNA flights.

FareflightNWA's messaging highlighted not only great prices on low-cost carriers, but also affordable nonstops on airlines with flights to destinations such as New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Often flexibility in travel can result in more affordable fares.

Federal data showed XNA fares decreased throughout 2019. The \$485 average roundtrip in 2019 was \$51 less than 2018.

The messaging changed after the COVID-19 pandemic crushed air travel at XNA and across the nation, starting in March 2020. FareFlightNWA focused attention on safe travel, wearing facial coverings and ensuring that passengers were prepared when arriving at XNA.

“ Working with the Council enables us to broaden our reach in Northwest Arkansas and further assist travelers utilizing XNA. Through its FareFlightNWA program and understanding of the area's flying needs, the Council is a vital partner.

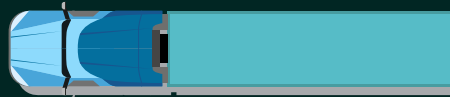
- AARON BURKES
CEO

Northwest Arkansas National Airport

 **FARE FLIGHT** NW
AR



Issue 1 Highway Campaign



The Northwest Arkansas Council remains an advocate of projects that improve the infrastructure in a region of the state dealing with unprecedented growth. The Arkansas Good Roads Foundation is proud to have the Council as a Good Roads member, and appreciates the thought leadership the Council offers in discussions about Issue 1. The extension of this sales tax matters more than ever to Northwest Arkansas communities that have lost significant revenue due to the pandemic.

- JOE QUINN
Executive Director
Arkansas Good Roads Foundation

The Vote for Roads, Vote for Issue 1 campaign advocates for a half-cent sales tax extension that goes before voters on Nov. 3. It's essential to ensure the completion of Northwest Arkansas' biggest highway projects.

Many of the state's leading organizations, including the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, The Poultry Federation, the Arkansas Trucking Association, the Arkansas Asphalt Pavement Association, the General Contractors of Arkansas and the Council, support the campaign.

The Council continues to prioritize infrastructure projects and works consistently with the Arkansas Department of Transportation, the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission and city and county officials to ensure decision makers understand the needs of Northwest Arkansas companies.

The sales tax extension will provide new funding for the widening of Arkansas 112 from Fayetteville to Bentonville, building the westernmost section of the future U.S. 412 Bypass of Springdale and constructing a new roadway to Northwest Arkansas National Airport.

Funding will also come to Arkansas counties and cities if the sales tax is extended. Benton and Washington counties as well as larger cities such as Fayetteville, Rogers and Springdale will receive more than \$1 million per year, but the revenue is also important to smaller cities and counties statewide.

Recycling

Companies across the region are increasingly prioritizing sustainability and recycling. The Council took two significant sustainability-related actions in 2019.

The Sustainability Consortium at the University of Arkansas explored how Northwest Arkansas can expand its regional circular economy. Having more local companies using recycled glass, metal, paper, plastic and other materials contributes to so-called "circularity" by creating jobs and reusing materials before being discarded in landfills.

The Boston Mountain Solid Waste District expanded its 10-year master plan study to include the Benton County Solid Waste District in the recycling-related portion of the work. MSW Consulting of Orlando was engaged to explore how all communities can recycle the same basket of goods to increase recycling volumes and gain knowledge of what's being recycled.

The Council plans to work to ensure that recommendations in the two studies are carried forward. The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, solid waste districts, city leaders and local companies will work together to make Northwest Arkansas more circular in its use of materials.



Having the Northwest Arkansas Council as a partner in studying regional recycling is beneficial because the Council is able to enhance the relationships with cities and ensure that companies are part of the conversation about what's best for the region.

- ROBYN REED
Director, Boston Mountain Solid Waste District

Down on MAIN STREET

Major Investors



Northwest Arkansas Council Team

NELSON PEACOCK
President and CEO

MIKE HARVEY
Chief Operating Officer

JEANNETTE BALLEZA COLLINS
Entrepreneurial Development Director

NATE GREEN
Communications Director

KATHRYN HUNT
Office Manager

JOE ROLLINS
Workforce Development Director

ROB SMITH
Policy Director

STACEY STURNER
Project Manager

ENGAGE

MARGOT LEMASTER
Executive Director

LOURDES PEREDO
Outreach Director

FINDING

ARON SHELTON
Program Director

ALICIA MCCALLEN
Social Media Manager

CACHE

ALLYSON ESPOSITO
Executive Director

SIMONE COTTRELL
Arts Resource Desk Manager

JESSE ELLIOTT
Director of Creative Ecosystems

KELSEY HOWARD
Program Director

SAM LOPEZ
Artist Organizer

BLAKE WORTHEY
Artist Organizer

nwacouncil.org

Northwest Arkansas Council Executive Committee

2019 - 2020 Presiding Co-Chair:	Todd Simmons
Presiding Co-Chair Elect/Secretary:	Karen Roberts
Co-Chair:	Jim Walton
Co-Chair:	Noel White
Co-Chair:	Joseph E. Steinmetz
Co-Chair:	Nick Hobbs
Chair Emeritus:	Alice Walton
Vice Chair/Treasurer:	Marshall Saviers
Co-Chair's Appointee:	Stuart Scott
Co-Chair's Appointee:	Canem Arkan
Chambers of Commerce Representative:	Graham Cobb
Nominating Committee Representative:	Carl George
Nominating Committee Representative:	April Seggebruch
Nominating Committee Representative:	Scott Spradley



Honorary Lifetime Members

Susan Barrett
Bill Clinton
John Paul Hammerschmidt

Uvalde Lindsey
Scott Van Laningham
Alice Walton



TODD SIMMONS

2019 - 2020 Presiding Co-Chair

Todd Simmons, CEO of Simmons Foods, a manufacturer of poultry, pet, and animal nutrition products based in Siloam Springs, served one year as the presiding co-chair of the Northwest Arkansas Council.



2020 - 2021 Presiding Co-Chair
KAREN ROBERTS

Karen Roberts is the executive vice president and general counsel for Walmart Inc. In this role, she oversees the legal department, which is responsible for handling all legal matters affecting the company in its domestic and international markets.



Northwest Arkansas Council Current Members

JAY ALLEN, Jay Allen Communications
WES ASHTON, Black Hills Energy
RAMSAY BALL, Cignus Real Estate
SUSAN BARRETT, Individual Member
RICK BARROWS, Multi-Craft Contractors, Inc.
J. NEFF BASORE, Cooper Communities, Inc.
STEVEN BEAM, Burns & McDonnell
ROD BIGELOW, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
ROGER BOSKUS, Miller Boskus Lack Architects
CLETE BREWER, NewRoad Capital Partners
STEVE BROOKS, Eldridge Brooks Partners
TIM BROUGHTON, McKee Foods
JULIANNE BROWN, Symphony of Northwest Arkansas (SONA)
JOHN BROWN, III, Windgate Foundation
RAYMOND BURNS, Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce
ED CHOATE, Delta Dental
SARAH CLARK, Mitchell
STEVE CLARK, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce
ED CLIFFORD, The Jones Trust
GRAHAM COBB, Greater Bentonville Area Chamber of Commerce
JUSTIN COLE, Rich Baseball Operations
JOHN COOPER, III, Cooper Communities, Inc.
MATT CRAFTON, Crafton Tull
LANE CRIDER, Beaver Water District
MARCY DODERER, Arkansas Children's Hospital
MIKE DODGE, Carroll Electric Cooperative
CONNER ELDRIDGE, Eldridge Brooks Partners
JOHN ELROD, Conner & Winters
DAVID ERSTINE, CBRE | Brokerage Services
PAUL ESTERER, Newmark Moses Tucker Partners
JOHN EVANS, Landmark CPAs
CATHY FORAKER, AT&T
TROY GALLOWAY, Arkansas National Guard
BROCK GEARHART, Greenwood Gearhart
CARL GEORGE, Georges, Inc.
CHARLES GEORGE, Georges, Inc.
DARIN GRAY, Cranford Johnson Robinson and Woods
STAN GREEN, Clear Energy Services / Lindsey Green Properties
MARY ANN GREENWOOD, Individual Member
D. SCOTT HANCOCK, Centennial Bank
GARY HEAD, Signature Bank of Arkansas
DAN HENDRIX, Arkansas World Trade Center
JESSICA HENDRIX, Saatchi & Saatchi X
NICK HOBBS, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc.
TOM HOPPER, Individual Member
BROCK HOSKINS, Garver
ARTHUR HULBERT, Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce
JEFF HUNNICUTT, Highlands Oncology Group
DENNIS HUNT, Stephens, Inc.
WALTER HUSSMAN, Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
MITCHELL JOHNSON, Ozarks Electric Cooperative
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JEFF KOENIG, Individual Member
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STEVEN LANE, Colliers International
RANDY LAWSON, Lawco Energy Group
BRANDON LEFEVRE, APAC-Central, Inc.
TODD LEWIS, Conner & Winters
JIM LINDSEY, Lindsey Management
J.D. LOWERY, Arkansas Electric Cooperatives
WARREN MCDONALD, Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield
PEARL MCELFISH, UAMS-Northwest
TIM MCFARLAND, Elevate Performance
KATHRYN MCLAY, Sam's Club
JEFF MILFORD, AEP/SWEPCO
MIKE MOSS, Moss Insurance
BECKY PANEITZ, Individual Member
DENTEN PARK, Northwest Health Systems
MICHAEL PARKER, Nabholz Construction of NWA
NEAL PENDERGRAFT, Reece Moore Pendergraft, Attorneys at Law
ERIC PIANALTO, Mercy Northwest Arkansas
CHIP POLLARD, John Brown University
JOHN RAUSCH, Rausch Coleman Homes
CRAIG RIVALDO, Arvest Bank Group
KAREN ROBERTS, Walmart
REYNIE RUTLEDGE, First Security Bank
ADAM RUTLEDGE, First Security Bank of NWA
MARSHALL SAVIERS, Cushman & Wakefield | Sage Partners
ARCHIE SCHAFFER III, Tyson Foods
LARRY SHACKELFORD, Washington Regional Medical System
MINDY SHERWOOD, Procter & Gamble
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TODD SIMMONS, Simmons Foods
JIM SMITH, Smith | Hurst
SCOTT SPRADLEY, Tyson Foods
STEVE STAFFORD, Anstaff Bank
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CARYL M. STERN, Walton Family Foundation
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KIRK THOMPSON, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc.
JOHN TYSON, Tyson Foods
JERRY VEST, Regions Bank
MATT WALLER, University of Arkansas
ALICE WALTON, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
JIM WALTON, Arvest Bank Group
ROB WALTON, Walmart Stores
PERRY WEBB, Springdale Chamber of Commerce
JEFF WEBSTER, Endeavor Foundation
NOEL WHITE, Tyson Foods
RANDY ZOOK, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce
STAN ZYLOWSKI, Movista

Honorary Lifetime Member SUSAN BARRETT



Community leader Susan Barrett became the sixth Honorary Lifetime Member of the Northwest Arkansas Council at the organization's Annual Meeting on July 22.

Barrett, a Colorado native and Rogers resident, worked as president and CEO of Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas from 1999 until her retirement in 2008. She's remained active in health care matters since retirement, serving as the volunteer leader of the Northwest Arkansas Council's Health Care Transformation Division after it was established in 2019.

The Council's other Honorary Lifetime Members are former President Bill Clinton; late Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt; philanthropist and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art founder Alice Walton; long-time Northwest Arkansas Council executive Uvalde Lindsey; and retired Northwest Arkansas National Airport executive Scott Van Laningham.

Barrett has remained an active leader with the Northwest Arkansas Council for years. Dick Barclay, a Council member who died in 2019, nominated Barrett to be a member not long after she moved from Southeast Kansas to Northwest Arkansas in 1999.

Barrett said she wanted to be part of the Council because it was full of "good, decent people with a forward-thinking vision to better the region."

When the Council created work groups to lead components of work described in a five-year strategic plan in 2010, Barrett was selected to lead the Infrastructure Work Group. More recently, Barrett has worked closely with Council President and CEO Nelson Peacock, the Council's staff and health care leaders to assure coordination in the region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barrett's record of achievement goes beyond health care.

She led an effort more than a decade ago to raise \$20 million for the Interstate 49 exit at Pinnacle Hills Parkway. She was instrumental in an effort to convert the former St. Mary's Hospital into the Center for Nonprofits at St. Mary's after Mercy opened its new hospital in 2008. She's served on many boards and commissions in Northwest Arkansas, ending six years as chair of the John Brown University Board of Trustees on July 1.

“Health care leaders in our region and those of us who work for the Council have such high regard for Susan because she understands the issues, knows the players and has the confidence and respect of everyone who works with her. She's consistent, humble, kind and determined, and all of those attributes make her the perfect person to be our organization's newest Honorary Lifetime Member.

- NELSON PEACOCK
President & CEO
Northwest Arkansas Council



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WELCOME TO

καλως ΗΡΩΑΤΕ

Bienvenue

Chào mừng

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

환영

स्वागत हे

Welcome

ようこそ

Karuwainene

كوب الة

Bienvenido

Artist: Yang Luo-Branch, Yillustrations.com