



City of PARAGOULD

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State of the City

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Progress does not happen in isolation. It is the result of dedicated people—often working quietly behind the scenes—who show up each day with a shared commitment to move a community forward. In Paragould, that spirit of collaboration is not merely aspirational; it is embedded in who we are and how we work.

Such momentum was on full display when more than 40 leaders from eight states visited Paragould in March, as part of the Delta Regional Authority's Leadership Institute. They came here hoping to learn from our collective experience and carry those lessons back to their own communities. Their visit served as a powerful reminder that the progress we are making together in Paragould is being recognized well beyond our city limits.

Last year highlighted the strength and resilience of our people. In March, our community faced a devastating tornado. In the days that followed, Paragould responded in the only way it knows how—by coming together. Neighbors helped neighbors. City employees, first responders, churches, nonprofits, and volunteers stepped forward with compassion and resolve. Their response was both humbling and inspiring.

That same spirit emerged again just weeks later as we prepared for a potential flooding event. Our city employees and citizens worked side by side to fill more than 6,000 sandbags, protecting homes and businesses across our community. These moments define who we are: a city that rises together when it matters most.

Like any year, 2025 brought both challenges and opportunities. The announcement of Tenneco's closure affected hundreds of Paragould families. While this news was difficult, our chamber team has worked diligently, and once Tenneco completes its evacuation, I fully anticipate an announcement of new industry soon thereafter.

Paragould celebrated significant economic and community milestones this year. Several new businesses, including Chick-fil-A and Let's Roll, opened their doors, bolstering the local economy. May marked the return of the Loose Caboose Festival after a decade, drawing over 20,000 visitors for its 25th anniversary. We also marked a historic partnership between Arkansas Methodist Medical Center and Baptist Health Systems, alongside St. Bernard's \$7

million investment to expand local clinics, securing long-term access to high-quality healthcare. Additionally, the city opened its first Baby Box, providing a critical safeguard for our most vulnerable residents. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to healthcare, community well-being, and sustained growth in Paragould.

We celebrated the ribbon cutting of the Station Powered by First National Bank—a historic 10,000-square-foot former power plant transformed into a vibrant community asset. Later in the year, a group led by Dr. Vern Ann Shotts, Loraine Atwill, and Tracey Brengard, along with countless private donors, gifted a beautiful Steinway piano to the Station, further enriching this shared space.

In May, the city held its second land bank auction, building on efforts that have spurred the construction of nearly 35 new homes. What was once a blighted area has transformed into one of Paragould's most promising neighborhoods. The former 4th Street Green Apartments were removed to make way for a new pocket park, and the 8-Mile Creek Trail was extended through the Northend District, enhancing pedestrian access to the junior high and high school campuses. Identity banners now line the district, and a new arch near Harmon Park will soon welcome visitors to this revitalized neighborhood.

Throughout the summer, work continued at Linwood Cemetery with the installation of new fencing, fabrication of a new entrance arch, and the planting of more than 60 trees—advancing the City Council's commitment to restoring our tree canopy and preserving this historic space.

In September, collaboration was again on display as city, county, and chamber leadership came together for the Chamber's second benchmark trip. Leaders spent four days in Appleton, Wisconsin, learning from their successes and strengthening relationships that will benefit Paragould for years to come.

It is both a privilege and an honor to serve as your mayor, and I am excited to present the 2026 State of the City to the Paragould City Council and our citizens, including a synopsis of each department's accomplishments during the 2025 calendar year.

Code Enforcement

During calendar year 2025, Code Enforcement personnel responded to 2,408 complaints, a notable increase from 1,649 complaints in 2024, reflecting both growing service demands and the continued commitment of officers to maintaining community standards. Complaints included 1,834 property cleanup cases, 437 junked or inoperable vehicle complaints, and 137 condemnation cases, with property maintenance concerns representing the largest portion of activity. These cases involved 1,313 grass or vegetation violations, 394 junk or debris violations, and 82 properties involving both conditions, resulting in 117 citations issued to achieve compliance. Enforcement related to junked vehicles resulted in 88 citations, while condemnation cases addressed unsafe structures affecting neighborhood safety and livability.

Through proactive communication and consistent follow-up by Code Enforcement officers, the majority of cases were resolved through voluntary compliance, with 1,572 property cleanup cases and 43 condemnation cases corrected by property owners. When compliance could not be achieved, the city completed remediation on 208 properties and 10 unsafe structures, ensuring public safety and neighborhood stability, with condemnation remediation costs totaling \$43,368.46. The continued rise in caseload highlights the hard work and dedication of Code Enforcement personnel, whose efforts play a critical role in protecting property values, improving neighborhood appearance, and maintaining quality of life throughout the community.

Planning & Development Office

The Planning and Development Office successfully completed a comprehensive revision of the City of Paragould's decades-old zoning code. The updated code was presented to the Paragould City Council and formally adopted in August. In conjunction with this effort, the department has begun developing a Subdivision Code and a Stormwater/Drainage Design Manual, which will serve as companion documents to the new zoning code.

I commend the Planning and Development staff, as well as the many community members who generously volunteered their time, for their dedication and hard work on this monumental undertaking. The department is finalizing the process of choosing a planning firm to assist with a rewrite of the subdivision code and stormwater manuals. Following the completion of the city's 20-year strategic plan in 2021–2022 and the adoption of the new zoning code in 2024–2025, the development of these comprehensive documents represents the next logical step. This effort will result in the first code of its kind for the City of Paragould.

In 2025, the Planning and Development Office issued a total of 1,650 permits, including building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, roofing, demolition, storm repair, and fencing permits, representing more than \$67.5 million in total project valuation. Of this amount, approximately \$28 million was attributed to commercial investment. During the year, the department issued 112 single-family dwelling permits and 14 duplex permits, resulting in 140 new residential units. Additionally, the Inspectors Office conducted 2,397 inspections throughout the year.

Street

In 2025, the Public Works Department focused on strengthening the core infrastructure that supports daily life in the community through targeted investments in streets, sidewalks, equipment, and facilities.

Key priorities included addressing aging roadways, with approximately \$1.2 million in asphalt overlay projects completed to improve street conditions and extend roadway life. Walkability was enhanced through \$375,000 in new sidewalk construction along 4th Street, 3rd Street, and South 14th Street.

The department also invested in critical equipment, including a new long-reach excavator, increasing operational efficiency and expanding capacity for drainage maintenance and infrastructure work.

A major milestone in 2025 was the completion of the new Public Works Facility, which improves coordination across maintenance, streets, and sanitation divisions, protects the city's fleet, reduces long-term maintenance costs, and provides a modern, professional work environment. Last year represented a year of strategic investment and construction, strengthening the foundation for the future of Public Works.

Airport

Kirk Field Airport continued to flourish in 2025 through targeted infrastructure improvements and strategic investment. The airport added two executive hangars, bringing total capacity to 61 T-hangars and five executive hangars, and completed the expansion of Taxiway B to improve runway access. These projects totaled more than \$1.5 million and were fully funded through federal and state grants.

To support increasing aviation activity and the City of Paragould's ongoing growth, the city plans to construct a sixth executive hangar and is working with a regional flight school seeking to relocate to Paragould. The city is also planning upgrades to the Kirk Field terminal to better serve residents and corporate visitors. More than \$800,000 in grant funding has been secured to support these projects.

Police

2025 marked a pivotal year of transition and progress for the Paragould Police Department, defined by leadership change, operational continuity, and strategic growth. After 35 years of service—16 as Chief of Police—Chief Todd Stovall retired in September. Captain Brent McCain served as Interim Chief to ensure stability, followed by the appointment of Chad Henson as Chief of Police on November 17 and the promotion of Brent McCain to Deputy Chief. This transition closed a distinguished chapter while laying a strong foundation for the department's future.

Despite leadership changes, the department strengthened its workforce and public safety capacity. Twenty-two officers were hired, bringing total staffing to 67 officers, with the city's commitment to a 70-officer force fulfilled in the current budget, including two additional School Resource Officers. Community engagement remained a priority through Citizens Police Academy sessions, Leadership Paragould participation, and contributions to the City Beautiful project, reinforcing transparency and public trust.

Operationally, the department remained highly active, issuing over 15,000 traffic citations and warnings, responding to 885 accidents, completing more than 11,000 reports, and making nearly 3,900 arrests across all divisions. The department also secured \$86,095 in grant funding to support equipment and digital forensics capabilities, along with \$40,939.75 in overtime reimbursement to meet operational demands. As the department moves forward, 2025 stands as a defining year of transition, resilience, and forward momentum under new leadership.

Fire

In 2025, the Fire Department responded to 4,326 incidents, a 9 percent increase from the prior year. Funding from the Public Safety Tax supported the hiring of six additional firefighters, bringing total line staffing to 51. This staffing level places the department at or slightly beyond current facility capacity, resulting in space constraints at multiple stations. Station 4 now houses two beds in a single bedroom, and Station 3 has an additional bed located within office space. To address these limitations, the department-initiated planning for a new fire station on the south side of the city. Architectural and engineering plans are currently in development.

The department also created a new Lieutenant position within the Administrative Division to lead Community Risk Reduction efforts. Through this role, the “Steps to Safety” program was launched to support the community’s aging population. Incident data analysis identified falls and lift assists as a major driver of EMS activity. In 2025, the department responded to 457 fall-related incidents and 345 lift assists, totaling 802 calls. These responses involved assisting individuals with mobility challenges and were handled independently or in coordination with AMMC ambulance services.

The “Steps to Safety” program focuses on identifying and reducing common slip, trip, and fall hazards in and around the home, with the goal of decreasing preventable incidents and reducing the risk of serious injury among older adults. The program is funded through the department’s budget and a Giving Tree Grant from the Arkansas Community Foundation, Greene County Chapter. Since launching in November, presentations have reached approximately 235 seniors, with additional outreach planned for 2026.

911

In 2025, working in close coordination with city, county, and state emergency services, the Paragould–Greene County 911 Center handled 1,606 alarm calls, 11,199 calls for the Sheriff’s Office, and 31,626 calls for the Paragould Police Department. In addition, staff answered 19,592 incoming 911 calls and placed 20,402 outgoing calls in support of emergency operations. In total, the 911 Center assisted citizens more than 84,000 times throughout the year, providing critical support during emergencies and high-stress situations.

Several major accomplishments were achieved in 2025. The City of Paragould secured a \$320,000 grant to replace 12 tornado sirens severely damaged during a tornado event. This

funding allowed for the full replacement of all sirens originally installed in 2006, ensuring reliable warning capabilities for residents. An additional \$120,000 grant supported upgrades to outdoor warning sirens in smaller Greene County communities. Through this effort, Paragould donated sirens requiring minor repairs to Marmaduke, Lafe, Oak Grove Heights, and Delaplaine, bringing these cities into an integrated National Weather Service warning system and improving countywide emergency notification.

The City of Paragould and Greene County also partnered in 2025 to consolidate Emergency Management services. This collaboration strengthened coordination, reduced costs through shared resources, and centralized 911 and Emergency Management operations to improve overall response efficiency.

Professional development remained a priority, with 911 operators completing 1,842 hours of training during the year. Continued investment in training, technology, partnerships, and personnel ensures that Paragould and Greene County are supported by a skilled, prepared, and dependable emergency services team ready to respond when needed most.

Parks

Throughout 2025, the Parks Department made substantial progress through strategic investment, expanded programming, and major infrastructure improvements. The department secured more than \$1 million in grant funding (\$1,003,500), along with \$25,000 in private donations, supporting facility enhancements, recreational expansion, and long-term development.

Grant funding supported several targeted improvements, including the planting of 25 trees along the 8 Mile Creek Trail and the installation of water bottle filling stations at the Community Center, improving sustainability, accessibility, and visitor experience.

A major focus in 2025 was continued expansion of the 8 Mile Creek Trail. Phase 4 is nearing completion at a cost of \$519,000, extending the trail southwest toward Bland Baseball Field and supported by a \$300,000 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant. Parks also received \$500,000 TAP grants for both Phase 5 and Phase 6. Phase 5 will construct a pedestrian bridge across 8 Mile Creek, connecting the trail to Bland Park, the Paragould Country Club, and multiple surrounding neighborhoods. Phase 6 will continue trail expansion toward Paragould Primary School, with the long-term goal of reaching Reynolds Park.

Comfort and accessibility improvements were also prioritized. The City Council allocated \$25,000 for a new shade structure at Labor Park, significantly enhancing the splash pad area for families during the summer months.

Community programming and events saw strong participation in 2025. The Aquatics Park hosted a record 439 attendees during Greene County Night. Parks also hosted its first annual Home Run Derby at Bland Park for participants ages 12 and up, with all proceeds donated to the AMMC Foundation. In addition, Parks hosted five baseball and softball tournaments, drawing teams and visitors to the community.

Looking ahead to 2026, 12 baseball and softball tournaments are already scheduled, reflecting continued demand for park facilities. Parks will also host its first-ever skateboard competition at Labor Park, further expanding recreational opportunities. Last year marked a year of meaningful growth, strong community engagement, and continued investment in quality of life for Paragould residents.

Grant Dept

In 2025, the City of Paragould applied for \$3.7 million in grant funding through federal, state, and private institutions. As of December 31, 2025, \$2.24 million in grant funding has been received. \$50,000 in grant funding is still undecided. Just a few of the awarded grants include funding for airport taxiway improvements, new airport hangars, 16 new tornado sirens, two phases of trail expansion, a blood pressure kiosk for the community center, and AEDs for the fire department.

Downtown

In 2025, Main Street Paragould continued to advance downtown as a thriving economic, cultural, and community hub through strategic investment, beautification, and expanded programming. Downtown welcomed five new businesses and four new murals, while streetscape enhancements improved walkability, aesthetics, and visitor experience.

Main Street Paragould achieved Main Street America Accreditation under new national standards—the first program in Arkansas to do so—securing \$70,000 in combined business grant and tornado relief funding. Power Plant Park remained a centerpiece of community life, highlighted by the January opening of *The Station*, a more than \$4 million facility that hosted major events and public rentals. Signature events such as the 25th

anniversary Loose Caboose Festival drew more than 20,000 attendees, demonstrating strong citywide coordination and public engagement.

Programming expanded to more than 40 events in 2025, with continued growth of the Farmers' Market, successful community races, and new downtown attractions including a revitalized Pruett Park, a 30-foot Christmas tree, and the return of movies at the historic Collins Theatre. The year also marked the transformation of a formerly blighted block into the "All Things Paragould Building", housing the Chamber, Main street and many others, symbolizing continued reinvestment and momentum in downtown Paragould.

Economic Development

In 2025, Paragould Forward advanced workforce development, community revitalization, industrial growth, and entrepreneurship, reflecting the organization's expanded mission and strategic focus.

Through the G.I.N. Skills Pipeline, 52 participants graduated from workforce readiness programs emphasizing soft skills, financial literacy, and time management, with direct employer connections upon completion. The program delivered over 490 hours of instruction, offering 93 community classes and 20 youth camps throughout the year.

Paragould Forward supported key community development initiatives, including securing funding to complete the Power Plant Park project and advancing a downtown parking redesign that will improve functionality, drainage, lighting, and access for downtown businesses. Community pride and engagement remained strong with our annual Clean Sweep, which included a fall event for the first time. More than 600 volunteers participated in mural projects and citywide cleanups, removing over 1,000 tires from Paragould streets.

In industrial recruitment, Paragould Forward helped a local manufacturer add 24 new jobs and continued work on Axis's rail spur project, expected to generate 20 additional manufacturing positions. To date, \$1.64 million in infrastructure funding has been secured for the South Industrial Park. The organization also continues to prepare for future reuse of the former Tenneco facility once decommissioning is complete.

To support entrepreneurship, construction was completed on the Downtown Small Business Incubator HUB, which is now accepting applications for microbusinesses. The HUB provides startup space and resources through partnerships with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center and Paragould Forward.

Overall, 2025 underscored the reason for the organization's rebrand as Paragould Forward reflecting a comprehensive approach that extends beyond traditional economic development to include workforce readiness, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, community engagement, and long-term quality of life.

Finally, it was amazing in 2025 to see the work that can be accomplished when **"A LOT OF PEOPLE GET TOGETHER AND WORK, WITHOUT CARING WHO GETS THE CREDIT"**. We are a community that supports and uplifts each other, truly embodying the spirit of *"The Friendly City."* The previous year has set a high bar for achievement, and I am certain 2026 will only continue to see Paragould flourish in Northeast Arkansas.

Respectfully submitted,



Josh Agee

Mayor of Paragould