



CITY OF WARD

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CHARLES GASTINEAU
MAYOR

KRYSTAL RUMMEL
CITY CLERK

State of the City Report March 19, 2024

This report is presented pursuant to A.C.A. 14-58-302

To the City Council, City Clerk, City Attorney, City Employees, Planning Commission Members and of course, our citizens, I offer my 2024 State of the City Report.

First and foremost, I want to thank the men and women that work day-in-and day-out providing services to our citizens and beyond. From the Department Heads down to the newest employee, our collective goal is to provide the best and most professional service we can. Are we perfect in all we do? No, but we continually strive to provide that level of service by updating our products and processes along the way. Secondly, I want to thank our City Council for the work they do. Without them none of what we do would be possible. While we may have disagreements from time-to-time between council members and or myself, in the end, our goal is the betterment of the city and ensuring tax-payer dollars are spent correctly and fairly. Finally, I want to thank the citizens of this great city. It is for you that we – as city employees and elected officials – do what we do. Not for one, but for all.

I continue to be inspired by the words of President John F. Kennedy:

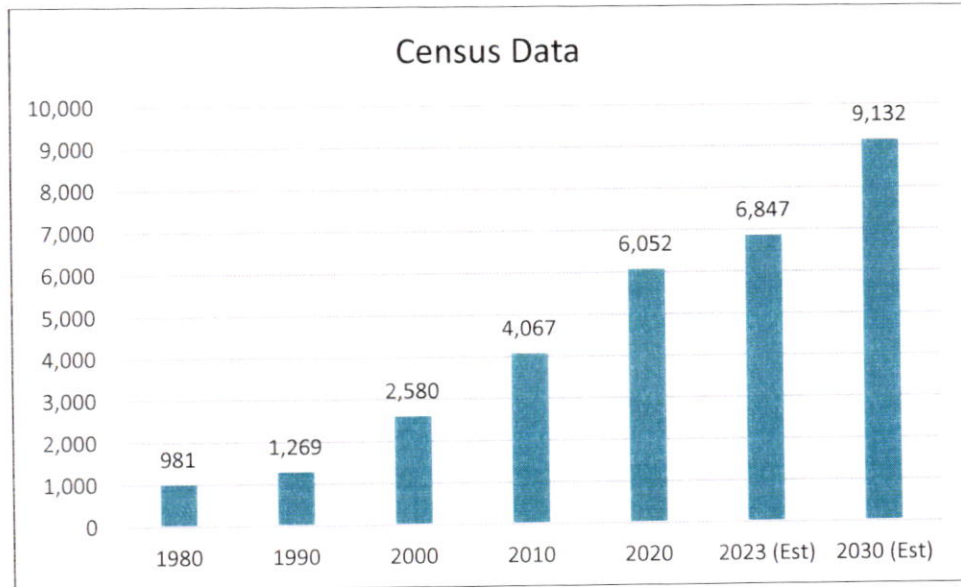
**“Change is the law of life.
And those who look only to the past or present
are certain to miss the future”**

I am also inspired by the words of George Bernard Shaw:

**“Progress is impossible without change,
And those who cannot change their minds
cannot change anything.”**

Attached you will find the 2023 Financial Statements for our General, Street, and Water/Wastewater Funds. These are presented in accordance with A.C.A. 14-59-116 and 14-237-113. Overall, the City of Ward continues to be financially sound and growing.

The City of Ward and the region as a whole continues to grow making northern Lonoke County one of the fastest growing regions in the state. Fact is, the City of Ward is not only the 2nd largest city in the county, we are now the 10th largest and the fastest growing – by far – city in Central Arkansas. Metroplan estimated our population change was 12.6% since 2020¹. At a 4.2% annual growth rate, the population of Ward will be over 10,000 in 10 years. The chart below is pretty telling of our growth pattern.



Some additional facts from the Census Reporter² about our city:

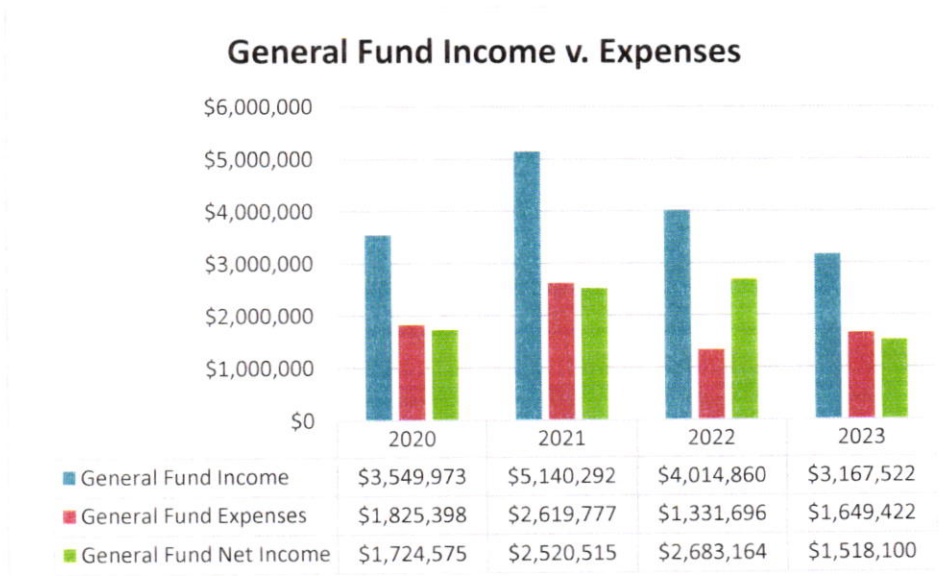
- Median Age: 29.5
- Median Household Income: \$74,688
- Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing: \$159,700
- Education Attainment:
 - High School Graduate or Higher: 90.3%
 - Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 17.5%
- Population with Veteran's Status: 7.3%

¹ <https://metroplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/DemographicReview2023.pdf>

² <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0573130-ward-ar/>

Financial Overview

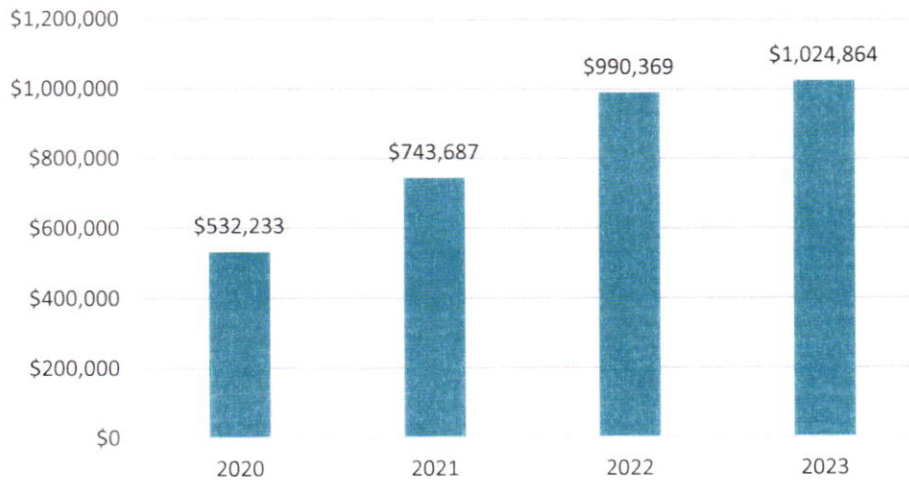
Overall, the finances for the city are in fine shape. Although general income was down for 2023³, expenses were up as we were spending some of the ARPA monies to upgrade our water meters. My thanks to HR/Finance Director Courtney Ruble and Deputy Director of Administration, Jamee McClain for keeping the books straight along with our contracted Certified Public Accountant, Don Davis.



Contained within the general revenue fund is the city’s portion of the county’s sales tax. This division between the county, and all the cities in the county, is based solely on the latest census numbers. As shown, the city’s share of the county sales tax is up which is due, in large part, because of the retail growth in Cabot. Yes...please shop Ward first, but if not Ward, shop Cabot, Austin or any other retail store/restaurant in Lonoke County as the City of Ward still benefits when you shop anywhere in the county. As you can see, the growth in the area directly affects Ward. Overall, Ward’s portion of the county sales tax is up 3.48% over the previous year.

³ 2021 Income includes federal Covid relief funds and American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, 2022 income includes American Rescue Plan monies from the federal government and the county.

County Sales Tax Share



City sales tax revenue continues to rise at a moderate rate, and as stated last year, although we don't have a lot of "brick-and-mortar" businesses in town, sales tax revenue continues to rise because internet sales and point-of-delivery sales are taxed at the local rate. Meaning, whenever you buy something online or at a "big-box" store and have your goods delivered to your home, Ward sales tax is charged and remitted to the city. Overall, city sales tax revenue increased 5.21% over the previous year.

City Sales Tax

