

Chapter 3

Public Works (Street Department) by Benjamin Hunt

Building the Infrastructure for Bella Vista's Future

"A city's infrastructure reflects its priorities. Every road we maintain, every bridge we improve, every drainage system we expand, and every piece of equipment we invest in represents a commitment to the people who call Bella Vista home."

Chapter Overview

One of my goals is to transition us into a self-sustaining Public Works Department which is why I will keep referencing that name. Public Works is one of the most visible functions of city government. Although we don't have a traditional Public Works department yet, residents experience its work every day through our Streets Department.

- When they drive to work
- When stormwater drains properly after a heavy rain
- When roads are maintained
- When traffic moves safely
- When public facilities are clean and well maintained
- When public spaces are accessible
- When equipment is ready during emergencies
- Most people never think about Public Works until something fails

My goals are different. I want Bella Vista to become a city where residents notice how well things work - not because they are constantly being repaired, but because they have been properly planned, maintained, and improved before problems occur. This includes finding ways to be self-sustainable with our own crews instead of contracting work out to third parties. That is the difference between reactive government and proactive leadership.

Mission

To provide safe, reliable, efficient, and sustainable public infrastructure that supports Bella Vista's continued growth while protecting taxpayer investments through long-term planning and responsible asset management.

The Twenty-Year Infrastructure Challenge

Bella Vista is growing rapidly.

- Every new home
- Every new business
- Every new neighborhood
- Every additional resident
- Places additional demand upon our infrastructure
- Roads experience greater traffic volumes
- Drainage systems handle more runoff
- Public facilities require expansion
- Equipment ages
- Maintenance demands increase

The question is no longer whether Bella Vista will grow. The question is how we catch up our infrastructure while also preparing for the additional growth that is coming.

My administration will ensure that our Streets Department/Public Works plans not only for today's demands but for the Bella Vista of 2047.

My Infrastructure Philosophy

Infrastructure is not an expense. It is an investment. Every dollar invested today reduces costs tomorrow. Every road maintained today delays expensive reconstruction later. Every drainage improvement completed today prevents future flooding. Every bridge inspected today improves public safety. Every piece of equipment replaced before failure increases reliability and reduces emergency repair costs. Planning saves money. Neglect costs money.

Strategic Priorities

1. Preserve Existing Infrastructure

Before building new assets, we must protect the investments residents have already made. Preventive maintenance extends asset life and reduces long-term costs.

The first responsibility of Public Works is stewardship.

2. Build for Twenty Years of Growth

Infrastructure should never be designed only for today's population. Yes, I realize we're already under water here but we have to face the reality of where we are. Everything needs to be questioned.

- Road capacity

- Road width
- Stormwater systems
- Fleet capacity
- Public facilities
- Bicycle lanes
- Traffic management
- Maintenance operations

Every project should consider projected growth over the next two decades.

3. Asset Management

Every public asset should have:

- An inventory
- A condition assessment
- A replacement schedule
- A maintenance history
- A lifecycle cost analysis
- A funding strategy

Good decisions require good information.

4. Prioritize Safety

Public Works plays a critical role in public safety.

- Road conditions
- Bridge inspections
- Traffic control
- Signage
- Drainage
- Sidewalks
- Street lighting

Every project should improve safety for residents, visitors, and first responders.

5. Technology and Innovation

Modern Public Works departments rely on technology to improve efficiency. Are we operating at a modern level? I don't think we are from my available view.

My administration will evaluate what we have in relation to:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Asset management software
- Work order management
- GPS fleet tracking
- Preventive maintenance scheduling
- Digital inspections
- Drone-assisted infrastructure assessments where appropriate
- Data dashboards

Technology improves accountability and reduces long-term costs.

Roads and Transportation

Roads are among the City's most valuable public assets, and we have over 500 miles of it. Residents expect safe, dependable transportation routes.

My administration will look deeply into:

- Long-range pavement management
- Traffic flow analysis
- Intersection improvements
- Future roadway expansion
- Coordination with Benton County, ARDOT, and neighboring municipalities
- Safe pedestrian and bicycle connections where appropriate
- Strategic planning for growth corridors

Every major roadway project should be evaluated not only for today's traffic but for projected demand twenty years into the future.

Drainage and Stormwater

Stormwater management protects homes, businesses, roads, and public safety.

As development continues, drainage systems must be evaluated for long-term capacity.

My administration will support:

- Watershed planning
- Culvert assessments
- Flood mitigation
- Preventive maintenance

- Drainage system mapping
- Infrastructure upgrades in growth areas

Stormwater planning should begin before development - not after problems arise.

Fleet and Equipment Management

Reliable equipment is essential for reliable government.

- Every vehicle
- Every truck
- Every road grader
- Every mower
- Every piece of emergency support equipment

Must be maintained through planned replacement rather than emergency replacement.

A comprehensive fleet replacement program reduces repair costs, improves reliability, and protects employees. I also want to evaluate what we don't have and find out what we need to be self-sustaining.

Public Facilities

City facilities should reflect the professionalism of the organization they support.

Every facility will be evaluated for:

- Capacity.
- Condition.
- Accessibility.
- Energy efficiency.
- Future expansion.
- Operational needs.

Facilities built today or in the near future should serve Bella Vista for decades.

Infrastructure Readiness

One of the first initiatives of my administration will be developing an Infrastructure Readiness Assessment. This assessment will evaluate how far behind the City's infrastructure actually is, what to do about it, and how to get it prepared for projected growth over the next twenty years.

The assessment will include:

- Roads.
- Bridges.
- Drainage.
- Fleet.
- Facilities.
- Traffic capacity.
- Maintenance staffing.
- Equipment.
- Capital funding.
- Future development impacts.

The purpose is simple. Never again allow Bella Vista's infrastructure to become a public safety issue.

Public Works Performance Measures

Residents deserve measurable results. We will implement Performance Indicators which will include:

- Pavement condition index
- Road maintenance response times
- Bridge inspection compliance
- Fleet availability
- Work order completion times
- Preventive maintenance completion rates
- Stormwater maintenance schedules
- Capital project delivery
- Resident service requests completed
- Equipment downtime

Performance will be published in real time through public dashboards (coming soon).

Legal Authority

Public Works operations are authorized through a combination of Arkansas statutes, municipal authority, and state transportation regulations.

Municipal Affairs

- A.C.A. § 14-43-601 – Defines municipal affairs and provides cities authority over matters affecting local infrastructure and public services.

Streets and Public Improvements

- A.C.A. § 14-301-101 et seq. – Grants municipalities authority over the care, supervision, construction, alteration, repair, and maintenance of streets, alleys, bridges, sidewalks, and other public ways.

General Municipal Powers

- A.C.A. § 14-54-101 – Grants municipalities broad corporate powers necessary to own property, enter contracts, acquire equipment, and carry out municipal purposes.
- A.C.A. § 14-54-103 – Authorizes municipalities to establish and maintain public improvements necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents.

Public Works Contracting

- A.C.A. § 22-9-201 through § 22-9-204 – Establishes competitive bidding requirements for public improvements and construction contracts.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

- A.C.A. § 25-20-101 through § 25-20-108 – The Arkansas Interlocal Cooperation Act, authorizing municipalities to cooperate with counties, neighboring cities, and state agencies on infrastructure projects.

Transportation Coordination

- Coordination with the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) for state highways and federally funded transportation projects.

National Best Practices

My administration will align Public Works operations with nationally recognized standards, including:

- American Public Works Association (APWA) – Accreditation standards, asset management, emergency preparedness, and operational excellence.
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Pavement preservation and bridge management best practices.
 - American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) – Roadway design, maintenance, and transportation planning standards.
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First 100 Days in Action

- Conduct a comprehensive citywide infrastructure assessment
 - Create a complete inventory of Public Works assets
 - Evaluate pavement conditions on all City-maintained roads
 - Review bridge inspection reports and maintenance schedules
 - Assess fleet conditions and replacement needs
 - Review drainage infrastructure in identified growth areas
 - Begin development of a twenty-year Infrastructure Readiness Plan
 - Establish Public Works performance dashboards
 - Identify grant opportunities for transportation and infrastructure improvements
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Measuring Success

Residents should have these expectations and we will meet them:

- Better maintained roads.
 - Reduced emergency repairs.
 - Improved traffic flow.
 - More reliable stormwater systems.
 - Better maintained public facilities.
 - Modernized equipment.
 - Greater transparency regarding infrastructure projects.
 - Lower long-term maintenance costs through preventive planning.
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Closing Thoughts

Public Works is about more than asphalt, concrete, and equipment.

It is about creating the foundation upon which every neighborhood, every business, and every family depend.

Strong infrastructure supports economic growth.

- Protects public safety.
- Preserves property values.
- Improves quality of life.

My commitment is simple:

- We will no longer wait for infrastructure to become a crisis before acting.

- We will anticipate.
- We will prepare.
- We will invest wisely.

We will build an infrastructure system capable of supporting Bella Vista for the next twenty years and beyond. Because planning ahead is not optional. It is our responsibility.