

Chapter 7

Public Safety & Law Enforcement

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Protecting Our Community Through Leadership, Partnership, and Preparedness

"Public safety is the foundation upon which every successful community is built. Families choose where to live, businesses choose where to invest, and visitors choose where to spend their time based in large part on whether they feel safe."

This chapter is more a view of philosophy, governance and priorities more than it is an actual action plan. I will work diligently with Chief Graves to understand the department's current status and areas where improvement could and should be made. Together we will plan for the future of the department and how we intend to structure that plan.

Chapter Overview

One of the first responsibilities of government is protecting the people it serves.

- Every resident deserves to feel safe in their home
- Every child should be able to play in their neighborhood without fear
- Every business owner should have confidence that their investment is protected
- Every visitor should leave Bella Vista with the impression that this is one of the safest communities in America

Public safety is not measured solely by crime statistics.

It is measured by preparation.

- By response
- By professionalism
- By trust
- By relationships
- By leadership

The Bella Vista Police Department already serves our community with dedication and professionalism.

My responsibility as Mayor will be to ensure those officers continue to have the leadership, staffing, technology, training, equipment, and community support necessary to continue providing exceptional service as Bella Vista grows over the next twenty years.

Mission

To provide a safe, secure, and welcoming community by supporting professional law enforcement, investing in our officers, strengthening community partnerships, and planning ahead for the public safety needs of future generations.

The Twenty-Year Public Safety Challenge

Bella Vista continues to grow.

More residents mean:

- More homes
- More vehicles
- More visitors
- More traffic
- More commercial activity
- More emergency calls
- More special events
- Greater demands on law enforcement

Growth should never reduce public safety. Instead, planning should ensure our police department grows with the community it protects.

Preparedness—not reaction—must guide every decision.

My Public Safety Philosophy

The men and women who wear the badge deserve more than our appreciation.

- They deserve leadership
- They deserve modern equipment
- They deserve excellent training
- They deserve adequate staffing
- They deserve clear direction
- They deserve the confidence that City Hall is planning for their future instead of simply reacting to today's challenges

Supporting law enforcement is not demonstrated only through words.

It is demonstrated through planning, investment, and leadership.

Strategic Priorities

1. Recruit and Retain Outstanding Officers

Exceptional policing begins with exceptional people.

My administration will support efforts to:

- Recruit highly qualified candidates
- Retain experienced officers
- Provide competitive compensation
- Expand professional development opportunities
- Strengthen leadership development
- Promote officer wellness

A strong department begins with taking care of the people who serve our community.

2. Plan Staffing for Twenty Years of Growth

Public safety staffing should not lag behind population growth.

We will regularly evaluate:

- Officer-to-population ratios
- Call volume
- Response times
- Patrol coverage
- Specialized unit needs
- Future growth areas

Planning ahead helps prevent staffing shortages before they occur.

3. Invest in Technology

Modern policing depends upon reliable technology.

My administration will support continued investment in:

- Mobile data systems
- Computer-aided dispatch
- Body-worn cameras
- In-car camera systems
- Digital evidence management
- Crime analysis software
- Real-time information sharing
- Cybersecurity protections

Technology should improve officer safety, accountability, and operational efficiency while respecting constitutional rights and individual privacy.

4. Strengthen Community Partnerships

The safest communities are those where residents and officers trust one another.

My administration will encourage continued community engagement through:

- Neighborhood meetings
- Citizen education programs
- School partnerships
- Business outreach
- Youth engagement
- Volunteer programs
- Community policing initiatives

Trust is built through consistent interaction—not only during emergencies.

5. Prepare for Emergencies

Police officers respond to much more than crime.

They respond to:

- Severe weather
- Traffic crashes
- Missing persons
- Mental health crises
- Natural disasters
- Search and rescue operations
- Public events
- Regional emergencies

Preparedness saves lives.

My administration will support ongoing emergency planning, interagency training, and regional coordination.

6. Build a Data-Driven Department

Good leadership relies on accurate information.

Performance measures should include:

- Response times
- Clearance rates
- Calls for service
- Community engagement
- Training hours
- Staffing levels
- Officer retention
- Traffic safety trends
- Crime trends

Data should guide decisions, staffing, and resource allocation.

Officer Wellness and Professional Development

Law enforcement is demanding work.

Officers routinely face stressful and difficult situations.

Supporting officer wellness is essential to maintaining a healthy, professional department.

My administration will encourage:

- Leadership development
- Peer support resources
- Mental wellness programs
- Physical fitness initiatives
- Continuing education
- Career advancement opportunities

Healthy officers are better equipped to serve our residents.

Community Policing

Effective policing is built on relationships.

Community policing is not a program. It is a philosophy. It means officers know the neighborhoods they serve, and residents know the officers protecting their community.

We all should agree problems are addressed before they become crises.

Trust is strengthened through communication, visibility, and partnership.

Regional Cooperation

Public safety extends beyond city boundaries.

Bella Vista benefits from strong partnerships with:

- Benton County Sheriff's Office
- Neighboring police departments
- Arkansas State Police
- Fire and EMS agencies
- Emergency management organizations
- State and federal law enforcement partners

Working together improves emergency response and resource sharing.

Legal Authority

Law enforcement operations are governed by Arkansas law, constitutional protections, municipal authority, and professional standards.

Municipal Police Authority

- A.C.A. § 14-52-101 through § 14-52-203 – Authorizes municipalities to establish, organize, equip, and maintain police departments and defines municipal policing authority.

Municipal Affairs

- A.C.A. § 14-43-601 – Recognizes public safety and police services as municipal affairs, subject to state law.

Law Enforcement Certification

- A.C.A. § 12-9-101 through § 12-9-404 – Establishes standards for the certification and training of law enforcement officers through the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training (CLEST).

Emergency Management

- A.C.A. § 12-75-101 through § 12-75-131 – The Arkansas Emergency Services Act, authorizing emergency management planning and coordination among local, state, and federal agencies.

Constitutional Protections

All law enforcement activities must comply with:

- The United States Constitution.
- The Arkansas Constitution.
- Applicable federal and state laws protecting individual rights, due process, and equal protection.

National Best Practices

My administration will encourage policing practices consistent with nationally recognized standards, including:

- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) – Professional standards, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) – Leadership, ethics, training, and community policing.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – Crime reporting standards and investigative best practices.
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) – Constitutional policing, officer wellness, and community engagement guidance.

First 100 Days

- Meet individually with police leadership and officers
- Review staffing, equipment, and future personnel needs
- Evaluate response time trends and call volume data
- Review recruitment and retention strategies
- Assess technology and communications capabilities
- Evaluate emergency preparedness and mutual aid agreements
- Begin development of a Twenty-Year Public Safety Master Plan
- Establish a Public Safety Performance Dashboard for residents

Measuring Success

Residents should experience:

- Safe neighborhoods
- Professional and visible policing
- Strong community relationships
- Reliable emergency response
- Officers equipped with modern technology
- Improved transparency and accountability
- Recruitment and retention of high-quality officers
- Public confidence that the department is prepared for future growth

Closing Thoughts

A safe city is not created by chance. It is created through thoughtful leadership, careful planning, professional training, strong partnerships, and a community that supports those who protect it.

As Mayor, my responsibility will be to ensure our officers have every opportunity to succeed. When we invest in our police department, we are investing in the safety of every family, every neighborhood, every business, and every future generation that chooses to call Bella Vista home. Because public safety is not simply another city service. It is the foundation upon which every other success is built.