

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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Mayor's Moment

A look back at 2019 from Branson Mayor, Edd Akers:

The first week of March, I began work on a State of Branson communication. How quickly my focus changed because of the current health pandemic. I will address and update the community on the current, fast-changing information from the COVID-19 situation, but because we receive year-end data in the first part of March, I wanted to take a brief moment to update you on how 2019 ended.

Financially, 2019 was the second-best year we have experienced in the last 5 years. It was down slightly from the record-setting 2018. The total City debt ended the year at \$190.1 million. This is down 20% over the last 5 years. The City Hall administration has really been focused on reducing debt and it is working. 2019 building permit activity skyrocketed to \$122.1 million. That is \$16 million more than the two previous years combined.

While 2019 was a banner year financially, Branson, like all other municipalities are now making adjustments for any financial impacts COVID-19 will have. I want to ensure you that every City department continues to assess and adjust budgets in relation to the COVID-19 issues impacting Branson. Some actions already taken include: reducing in staffing, hiring freeze, outside training and travel freeze.

A cornerstone of our fiscal responsibility includes maintaining reserves for unexpected situations like this which provides a buffer allowing the city to continue functioning on behalf of our citizens.

Here are some other highlights of what the City accomplished in 2019:

- Planning & Development successfully completed and adopted a new sign code as well as successfully managed the city's highest volume of plan reviews, inspections, and construction value (\$122 Million)
- Utilities completed construction of a 2,400 square foot storage building by internal personnel to store the AquaDam flood protection system, completed an equipment and structure upgrade at Lift Station 5 near Alexander Park, and completed the Cooper Creek wastewater plant component upgrades which included improvements in hydraulic flow capacity, pumping and screening capabilities. Utilities also completed a Branson North booster system which allows for more stable and consistent water pressures to homes near the entrance to Branson North.
- The Branson Police Department worked to reduce the Uniform Crime Report Part I crime (2019) by 5% while it also saw a 14% reduction in UCR Part I crime in 2018, filled 8 Police Officer positions, added a second canine, and closed the year with multiple successful community engagements including, National Night Out/16 neighborhood parties, Summer Teen Engagement Program STEP with 10 at-risk youth, Graduated class #3 Citizens Police Academy, Formed the Branson Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association.
- The Parks & Recreation Department Completed major improvements at the Branson Lakeside RV, completed several major capital maintenance projects, including pool sandblasting, gymnasium floor refinishing, improved the RecPlex walking path, extended the Sunset Park walking path and completed improvement projects in Eiserman, Epps, John Nygard, Branson North, Stockstill, and Murphy Parks.

2019 also included several high-caliber recognitions for our staff at City Hall, including National, State, and regional awards and recognitions of City employees who serve as leaders of their respective organizations.

It is my honor to witness the sincere attitude the employees at City Hall have for serving you, our citizens, stakeholders, and visitors.

Thank you,

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Mayor Edd Akers

