



State of the City Address 2025

As we reflect on the past year, several words come to mind—celebration, enterprise, momentum, and perseverance. The year 2024 was truly historic for our city, marked by significant events, economic growth, and substantial infrastructure improvements that will shape our future.

A Year of Historic Moments

Charleston had the unique privilege of being in the path of totality for the April 8, 2024, solar eclipse. After months of anticipation and preparation, we welcomed visitors from near and far to witness this extraordinary event. For two minutes and forty-one seconds, darkness fell over our city in the middle of a Monday afternoon, creating a moment of unity and wonder that we will never forget.

Just days later, on April 12, 2024, we proudly celebrated the 150th anniversary of Charleston's incorporation. The sesquicentennial weekend was filled with festivities, including a dance, parade, and fair. A highlight of the celebration was the unearthing of a time vault containing mementos from our 1999 celebration. This milestone was further recognized with a Mayoral Proclamation and a statement from Senator Boozman, entered into the U.S. Congressional Record.

Economic Growth & Business Expansion

Charleston continued to see steady economic growth in 2024. The issuance of seven residential building permits and three commercial building permits marked ongoing development, while the rehabilitation of historic buildings on Main Street brought new businesses and a vibrant gathering plaza to the heart of our city.

In November, Charleston and Prairie Township voters approved the sale of alcohol in the southern part of Franklin County. This decision opens new business opportunities and revenue streams, positioning Charleston for even greater economic expansion in the coming years.

Infrastructure Improvements & City Services

Sanitation Upgrades. The City of Charleston Sanitation Department successfully completed its years-long transition to an automated solid waste collection system. After rolling out city-issued polycart receptacles in late 2023, the automated collection truck was placed into service in June 2024. This system has already improved efficiency, enhanced safety, and helped control costs.

Highway 22 Crosswalk Project. Early in 2024, the City launched its Highway 22 crosswalk project. The ArDOT TAP Grant will cover up to \$60,000 for sidewalks and rapid flashing beacons at the School Street crossing. In collaboration with Charleston Schools and Western Arkansas Planning and Development, engineering and design efforts are underway.

Investment in Water & Wastewater Infrastructure

The City made tremendous progress in addressing aging infrastructure, investing over \$860,000 in wastewater and \$15,000 in water projects in 2024. Key projects completed include:

- Sludge removal in wastewater lagoons
- Main lift station rehabilitation – relining of the wet well, installation of two new pumps, and Mission control system upgrades
- 310KW generator installation at the wastewater treatment plant
- Six new pumps installed in auxiliary lift stations
- 600 feet of 4-inch water line replaced to improve service on the north side of Main Street

To enhance operational efficiency, the City purchased a new vacuum excavator, significantly reducing project work time while improving safety around critical utility lines.

Looking ahead, Charleston has taken proactive steps to ensure long-term wastewater management. The City partnered with Mickle Griffin Engineering to assess our wastewater treatment plant and assist with regulatory compliance. In April, city staff completed our NPDES permit renewal application, and in June, a Sanitary Survey was conducted. Additionally, the City Council awarded a \$425,000 contract for the resurfacing of water storage tanks, scheduled for completion this spring.

In late 2024, we were awarded \$56,000 through a State Hazard Mitigation Grant to install a stationary generator at the Vine Street lift station, ensuring reliable service during power outages.

Additional Projects & Community Enhancements

Utilizing the remainder of our ARPA funds, the City completed projects totaling \$158,000 across various departments, including:

- Codification of city ordinances
- New awnings at the ballpark concession stand and fire station
- Community Center upgrades – four new HVAC units, a new freezer, refrigerator, and warming oven
- Accessibility improvements – handicap parking and a wheelchair swing pad at City Park
- Pickleball court preparations, set for completion in spring 2025

Additional improvements included:

- New parking lot lighting at the ballpark
- Replacement of broken playground equipment
- Steel doors installed at Lake Park restrooms
- New exterior lighting at City Hall
- LED lighting upgrades at the Community Center

Our Fire Department also secured new SCBA equipment and a generator for the main station, ensuring our emergency responders are well-equipped.

Public Safety & Police Department Achievements

In 2024, the Charleston Police Department successfully applied for and received over \$86,000 in grant funding, which was used for:

- Department computer upgrades
- Body armor, uniforms, and accessories
- A new police vehicle, fully outfitted for patrol operations

The shop with a cop program, now in its fourth year, was able to meet fundraising goals and took 25 children Christmas shopping with each child able to spend \$200.

The statistics for Charleston Police Department activities are as follows:

- Total reports-684
- Accidents-41
- Domestic calls-25
- Traffic citations-263
- Traffic warnings-711
- Criminal citations-50
- Juvenile citations-83
- Warrants-54
- Arrests-66
- City ordinance citations-35

Looking Ahead

Charleston has made remarkable strides in 2024, and the momentum continues into 2025. Our community has celebrated its history, expanded its economy, and laid the foundation for a prosperous future. With key infrastructure improvements, business growth, and continued investment in public safety, we are poised for even greater success in the year ahead.

As we move forward, planning for growth will be a top priority. The demand for information on zoning regulations is rising, with real estate developers contacting the city almost daily. Notably, most surrounding towns have zoning regulations, while Charleston remains without them. To prepare for the future, we should consider developing a comprehensive plan. Thoughtful planning today will ensure sustainable development, enhance quality of life, and position Charleston for long-term success.

I extend my gratitude to our city staff, elected officials, local businesses, and, most importantly, the citizens of Charleston. Your support, dedication, and resilience make this community a great place to call home.

Thank you, and may we all look forward to another year of progress, opportunity, and success for Charleston.