



# ANNUAL REPORT

## MAYOR ADRIAN PERKINS

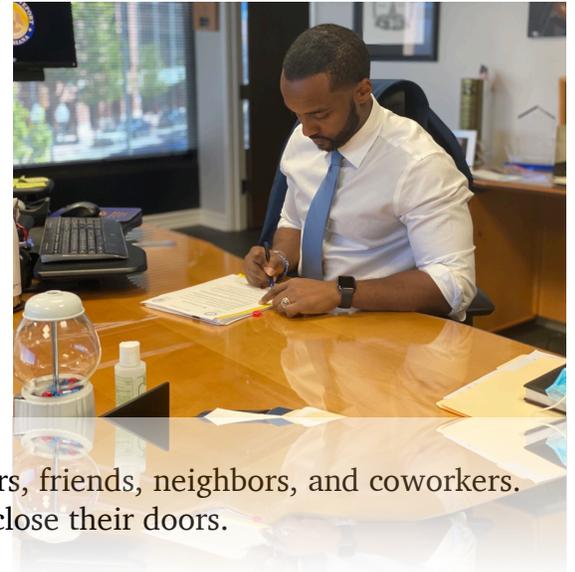
JAN. - DEC. 2020



## FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

We will forever remember 2020 as a historic year full of unprecedented challenges. I am proud to announce that your city government adapted quickly to meet those challenges and respond to the public health threat posed by COVID-19.

The CDC confirmed the first U.S. case of coronavirus on January 21, 2020 and the Louisiana Department of Health confirmed the first case in Caddo Parish on March 11, 2020. Since then, we have had over 18,000 COVID cases and lost more than 520 lives. COVID-19 has robbed us of family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. It has threatened our livelihoods and forced local businesses to close their doors.



Despite the obstacles posed by the pandemic, we were able to make significant progress on several fronts this year. I campaigned for mayor on a platform of public safety, economic development, and technology. Those three policy areas remain my administration's focus, but we had to overcome our inherited budget crisis before we could heavily invest in those areas.

The economic crisis resulting from the pandemic threatened to worsen the City's fiscal outlook. Thanks to the hard work of CAO Henry Whitehorn and CFO Sherricka Fields Jones, we successfully mitigated a \$23 million projected budget shortfall. The City of Shreveport posted an excess fund balance for 2020 and a projected Operating Reserve balance of \$24.5 million for the 2021 fiscal year, the highest in over two decades.

The City of Shreveport maintained a clean financial audit with no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses this year. The number of external audit findings fell from 27 in 2018 to 7 in 2019, all of which are either resolved or monitored. We also established a Chief Financial Officer position to realize my administration's financial priorities, improve long-term fiscal planning, and help us continue to improve the City's financial outlook.

Shreveport's improved financial outlook enabled us to make much-needed investments in public safety. We implemented a 6 percent raise for police officers and firefighters (4 percent + annual 2 percent longevity). We also budgeted for vehicle and equipment packages for each department. Together, these measures will help fully staff our police and fire departments and make our community safer.

While Part 1 crime (major crimes) was historically low in Shreveport this year, we followed a disconcerting national trend, seeing spikes in homicides and shootings. Shreveport suffered 75 homicides, which was a 74 percent increase from the previous year. When added to the hundreds of



COVID deaths we've endured, this is a heartbreaking and intolerable loss of life for one community to bear. Shreveport Police are working tirelessly alongside community partners to address this surge of senseless violence and make our community safer.

In addition to addressing public safety concerns, we budgeted for key investments to make significant improvements to city services. We are purchasing new mowers, trash packers, and a knuckle boom to improve solid waste collection and help keep our city clean.

The IT Department played a pivotal role in our 2020 efforts. IT exponentially scaled up our remote work capacity to maintain city services and keep employees safe during the pandemic. When the pandemic shined a light on the digital divide's disadvantages, IT devised an innovative, first-in-the-nation approach to mapping the divide. They mounted WiFi detecting raspberry pi's to trash trucks. Now, they are working to bridge that divide by bringing affordable internet into low-income neighborhoods.

This year was full of trials and tribulations, but I am proud of what we have accomplished for Shreveport citizens. I am honored to serve alongside such a talented and dedicated team of public servants. They adapted to unprecedented challenges and worked to manage the impact of COVID-19 on our community while maintaining the city services citizens depend upon.

Working alongside dedicated public servants to better the lives of Shreveport families is the greatest honor of my life. We have made considerable progress over the past two years. In 2021, we will continue to manage the pandemic, but we will heavily invest in our recovery. We are going to build a safer, smarter, more prosperous future for Shreveport families.

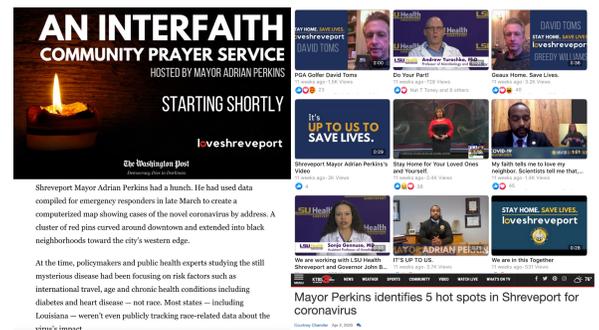
Sincerely,  
  
Adrian D. Perkins  
Mayor of Shreveport





## COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mayor Adrian Perkins held his first COVID-19 briefing on March 6, 2020, to prepare the community for the threat this pandemic posed to our community. Caddo Parish’s first COVID case was reported five days later, on March 11, 2020. In the nine months since we have reported nearly 20,000 cases and over 550 deaths. To protect the public, Mayor Perkins closed congregate facilities, like SPAR recreation centers and shifted to remote work for many city employees. Mayor Perkins held regular press conferences with medical experts to relay reliable information to the public throughout the pandemic.



In addition to increasing the City’s remote work capacity, Mayor Perkins instructed his City Engineer and Chief Technology Officer to geolocate COVID cases to track viral spread in our community. This information was used to direct resources and target messaging—an approach that saved lives and was featured on the Washington Post’s front page.

The communications department immediately initiated an aggressive public safety messaging campaign in response to COVID-19. This campaign included PSAs aired on local stations, press conferences, interviews, printed materials, celebrity cameos, as well as daily social media posts about viral spread in our community and best practices during the pandemic.

The City of Shreveport continues to partner with LSU Health Shreveport to provide COVID testing at SPAR facilities for Shreveport citizens. The City also distributed 90,000 washable masks at 10 locations to area residents. Mayor Perkins was an early and strong advocate for masks, and Shreveport was one of Louisiana’s first municipalities to issue a mask mandate. Mask usage remains a consistent feature of the City’s COVID messaging.

Mayor Perkins hosted two virtual interfaith prayer vigils to help families grieve the unbearable loss of life during the pandemic. Clergy from all faiths were invited to share insight and inspiration and to pray for our community.



## Public Safety

Shreveport Fire and Police Departments faced unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic. Each department acted valiantly, braving the frontlines to respond to the needs of Shreveport citizens.



## Shreveport Fire

The Shreveport Fire Department provided emergency services throughout the pandemic. In 2020, they responded to 44,902 calls for service, including more than 29,000 EMS calls and 1,100 fires.

The Shreveport Fire Department was instrumental in our community's response to the pandemic. They were not only Shreveport's first line of defense against the virus, but also assisted the State of Louisiana and Ochsner LSU Health with patient migration to Ochsner's St. Mary campus, which surged hospital capacity for Shreveport. They have also played a role in administering the vaccine in Shreveport.



## Shreveport Police



Shreveport police officers were also on the front lines of this public health emergency, responding to service calls as this deadly virus claimed over 550 lives. Sadly, we lost 73 additional lives to senseless acts of violence in 2020, a 74 percent increase from 2019's historic lows. While other Part 1 crimes were near record lows, this spike in violent crime is concerning and it must be addressed immediately.

Shreveport Police conducted special operations with federal, state, and local partners to get illegal weapons off our streets and apprehend violent criminals. Community-oriented policing remains one of the Mayor's key initiatives. Mayor Perkins and Chief Raymond worked within the confines of COVID safety protocols to conduct community walks and address local residents'



concerns. As COVID restrictions ease, more walks will be conducted to enhance public trust and increase the amount of information the community shares with investigators.

## Demonstrations

Following George Floyd’s death, the Shreveport Police Department worked with organizers to facilitate demonstrations that brought attention to recent and historical police use of force encounters with citizens of color. Shreveport’s protests were large, well-organized, and they remained peaceful. The success of these demonstrations is in no small part owed to the support of Shreveport Police.



In response to the demonstrations, Shreveport Police also worked to implement meaningful policy changes. All officers received additional training in cultural diversity and dealing with emotionally disturbed persons. Funding was also acquired for officers to receive procedural justice training in 2021. Finally, thanks to generous community donations, all uniformed officers will be equipped with body-worn cameras in the near future.

Mayor Perkins also announced a Commission on Race that aims to better race relations in Shreveport and identify measures that foster unity and greater understanding.

## Improving Shreveport’s Financial Outlook



The City of Shreveport had a \$1.2 million budget deficit when mayor Perkins took office. In two years, the City’s reserve fund has grown by approximately \$24 million.

Mayor Perkins’ executive budget for the fiscal year 2020 projected a \$2.6 million surplus. An IT data scientist discovered more than \$4 million in unclosed purchased orders, which helped bring the actual balance up to about \$8 million.

COVID-19 threatened to erase these gains. Mayor Perkins, CFO Sherricka Fields Jones, and CAO Henry Whitehorn successfully mitigated a \$23 million projected budget shortfall due to the pandemic. Each department proposed 2 percent, 5 percent, and 10 percent budget cuts. The City made approximately \$16 million in budget cuts. These prudent retrenchments resulted in an excess fund balance for 2020. When coupled with CARES Act reimbursements, these retrenchments resulted in a projected Operating Reserve balance of \$24.5 million for 2021, the highest level in over two decades.

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Henry Whitehorn became CAO in April.



## Economic Development and Community Development

COVID-19 was not just a public health emergency. The pandemic triggered an economic crisis as well. Small and large businesses alike were forced to close their doors; many others had to operate with restrictions that caused lay-offs or reduced hours, leaving thousands unable to pay their bills or feed their families.

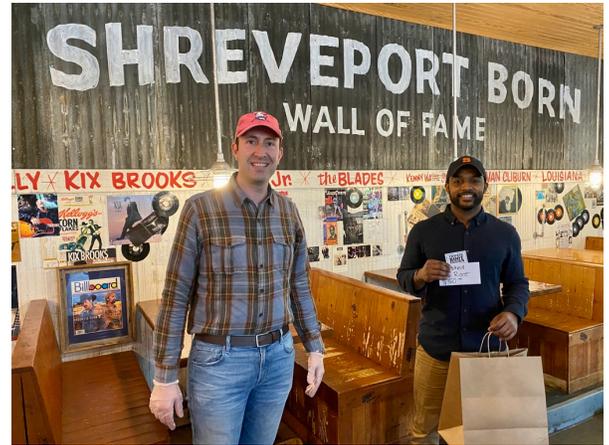
The City of Shreveport immediately partnered with the Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce, the African-American Chamber of Commerce, SUSLA, and CoHab to create Shreve.Biz, a helpdesk for local businesses impacted by COVID-19. Shreve.Biz contains useful information about the financial assistance available to businesses. It also has a volunteer team of banking, accounting, legal, and business professionals who offer free one-on-one counseling via phone or video to help business owners and managers understand and access SBA Disaster Loans, federal stimulus dollars, and private credit options.



Community Development worked with SUSLA to create the Safe Reopen Fund, which made \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds available to small, local businesses in the form of \$500 micro-loans. These loans were forgiven if the company met basic requirements, such as following state reopening guidelines. The funds could be used to cover the unexpected costs of PPE, disinfectant materials, or as working capital.

The City of Shreveport also partnered with the Cities for Financial Empowerment and the United Way of Northwest Louisiana to launch the Shreveport Financial Empowerment Center (SFEC). The SFEC is the first in the State of Louisiana. As a public service, it offers free one-on-one financial counseling that helps people tackle debt, save money, establish and improve credit, as well as find affordable banking options.

Shreveport's Economic Development Director worked with Tech Talent South to create CODESHV, Northwest Louisiana's first software development boot camp. CODESHV is a free, four-month immersive training program that prepares Shreveport residents for high-paying technology jobs.



The communications department partnered with DigiVision Billboard Network to display billboards around Shreveport that encouraged support of local businesses during the shutdown orders. Additionally, the City of Shreveport helped launch Cardshop318.com, a free online platform that enabled Shreveport residents to purchase gift cards from local businesses.

The Bayou Classic is held in New Orleans every November. This tradition was suspended due to the pandemic. The City of Shreveport agreed to host the 47th annual Bayou Classic between Grambling State University Tigers and the Southern University Jaguars. Shreveport will host game at Independence Stadium on April 17, 2021.

## SporTran

SporTran received top honors in 2020. The Federal Transit Administration named SporTran the Transit System of the Year, and the Community Transit Association named SporTran the "Top Performing Transit System" in 2020. These accolades are much deserved. SporTran reduced emissions more than any other municipal transit system in the State of Louisiana in 2020. They also created a user-friendly, on-demand service app for SporTran passengers. Finally, SporTran stepped forward to help ensure that all students could eat when schools closed during the pandemic, providing free transportation on SporTran buses on weekdays for all school-aged children.

## SPAR

2020 was an incredibly challenging year for Shreveport Public Assembly and Recreation (SPAR). The threat posed by congregate activity and contact sports halted many of SPAR's programs. However, the dedicated staff worked tirelessly to find creative ways to serve the community. SPAR staff established an E-Sports tournament and free tennis lessons for area youth. They also teamed





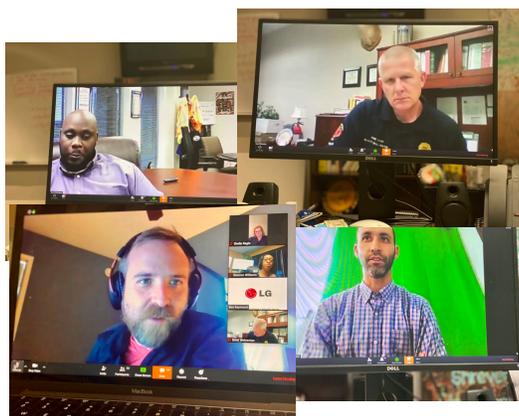
up with Pizza Hut to create Pizza Pop-Up drive-throughs at SPAR recreational centers, providing school-aged children with free personal pan pizzas during the pandemic.

SPAR manages the City’s facilities, and they were critical in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in City buildings. SPAR designed the circulation pathways and coordinated printing directional signage for the reopening of Government Plaza. SPAR staff also installed iWave air purifiers at Government Plaza, the Municipal Courts, as well as built approximately 100 safety guards so essential personnel could safely perform their duties. Environmental Services were a vital part of the City’s essential workforce, ordering and disbursing bulk gloves, masks, thermometers, medic wipes, liquid and spray disinfectants, and sanitizers. They also worked tirelessly to disinfect and sanitize the building and offices, especially areas exposed to a COVID positive person.

SPAR oversees festivals and city permitted events. They regularly calculated occupancy loads for all community centers, Independence Stadium, Festival Plaza, and Government Plaza based on phased State guidelines for public gatherings, which was instrumental in our area’s management of COVID-19. Finally, SPAR partnered with Caddo Parish Schools to ensure that the Class of 2020 received an appropriate graduation. They made Independence Stadium available so every Caddo Parish graduate could enjoy a full graduation ceremony and walk across the stage with their family present.

## Technology

The City of Shreveport’s IT Department rapidly increased the city’s remote work capacity in response to the pandemic, permitting city employees to work from the safety of their homes for the first time in Shreveport history. This vital initiative reduced viral spread and enabled the city to continue serving its citizens.



The City of Shreveport Chief Technology Officer created a special projects team in 2019, which became indispensable in 2020. They worked with the City Engineers Office to map viral spread in the community, providing the data needed to target resources and messaging. The Washington Post featured this life-saving pandemic response on their front page.

In response to the problems the digital divide poses for virtual learning, the IT Department launched an innovative, first-in-the-nation approach to mapping the digital divide. They mapped internet adoption across the city by mounting small computing devices, called Raspberry Pis, to Garbage Trucks that “listen” for wifi connections as they drive past each house. This “mapping” is the first major step toward providing low-cost, high-speed internet for all Shreveport citizens. In November, the City of

Shreveport was awarded a \$200,000 grant from AEP SWEPCO to expand wireless internet access to residents from SPAR recreation centers.

## ENGINEERING

The City Engineers Office continued to develop a permitting process to oversee excavations in the right-of-way and managed numerous capital improvement projects. Engineering also completed installing a new program manager for the City of Shreveport's consent decree program to restore Shreveport's sewerage system. Having completed the transition, Engineering transitioned oversight of the Consent Decree to the Department of Water and Sewer in 2020.



## PUBLIC WORKS

On August 28, 2020, Hurricane Laura passed through Shreveport as a Category 1 storm. Shreveport sustained widespread damage due to high winds and heavy rain. The Streets and Drainage Division worked in concert with Solid Waste to conduct a comprehensive cleanup of the storm damage while maintaining normal operations. Additionally, the Permits and Inspections Division of Public Works revamped the permitting process, making it easier for customers to apply and pay for permits in person or online.

## Airports

Wade Davis was named Shreveport Director of Airports in December of 2019. In 2020, Davis and his team completed a critical runway extension that enables Shreveport Regional Airport to accommodate larger aircraft and increase economic development opportunities. The \$11 million runway-extension project was made possible with funding from the Federal Aviation Administration and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development-Aviation Division.



# GOOD NEWS!

The Washington Post featured the City of Shreveport's use of technology to respond to the pandemic and mitigate the healthcare disparities revealed by the pandemic. Mayor Perkins was among the first elected officials in the nation to address the disproportionate toll exacted on African-Americans by COVID-19.



**UNDERCOVER BOSS**

Shreveport was featured on CBS' Undercover Boss. Mayor Perkins went undercover in Shreveport Police, Fire, and SPAR. Dicks Sporting Goods Foundation, Clean Harbors, Ivan Smith, and Rhino Coffee donated rewards to the City and participating employees. The episode was watched by over 2.5 million viewers.

Mayor Perkins participated in the Bloomberg-Harvard City Leadership Initiative. Through this initiative he participated in meetings led by Former Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as well as Dr. Anthony Fauci.



# 2021 LOOKING AHEAD

## Public Safety

Mayor Adrian Perkins and the Shreveport Police Department are focused on reducing violent crime as we head into 2021. The multifaceted approach will include special operations with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners. Mayor Perkins and Police Chief Ben Raymond will redouble community-oriented policing to build community trust and cooperation.



## Economic Development

In 2021, Mayor Perkins and Economic Development Director Brandon Fail are laser-focused on job creation to help Shreveport's economy recover from the pandemic induced downturn.



## Technology

CTO Keith Hanson and his team will build on their work in 2020, moving forward with plans to bridge the digital divide. The IT Special Projects team will also work to leverage technology to save money and make Shreveport neighborhoods safer in 2021.

