FROM THE MAYOR’S DESK

My first year as Mayor has been both rewarding and humbling. I am proud of the progress we made, and I am eager to continue working on behalf of Shreveport citizens.

My administration produced the city’s first truly balanced budget in years. We cut expenditures by 4.5 percent across the board and increased revenues, enabling us to bring the $1.2 million deficit we inherited up to a $2.6 million surplus by the end of 2020. This drastically improves Shreveport’s financial outlook.

In 2019, Shreveport posted its lowest Part I Crime rate since 1975, and that is a reason for all of us to be proud and optimistic about the future. It is also the reason I chose to appoint Ben Raymond as the Chief of Police. He scored higher than all other candidates on the past two exams, and during his tenure as Interim Chief, crime steadily declined. In 2019, we saw a 7 percent decrease in Part 1 Crime, and a 29 percent decline in homicides.

While 2019 was one of the safest years on record, I sat in too many living rooms and met with too many grieving families this past year. We have to do more to reduce the number of illegal weapons and violent criminals on our streets, which requires better communication between law enforcement and community stakeholders. While we made a lot of progress in 2019, our community must work together and even harder in 2020 to make our city safer.

The first year of my economic development plan was locally focused. My administration worked with local healthcare systems to ensure that this sector of our economy continues to grow. We also addressed the “brain drain” that sends Shreveport’s young people elsewhere in search of opportunity. We did this by expanding the “Mayor’s Summer Internship Program” to include 150 high school and college-aged students, demonstrating our commitment to their future. Additionally, I frequented local schools to discuss with students the vital role they will play in Shreveport’s future, and delivered commencement speeches at three area universities.

My administration promoted Shreveport to both local and out of town investors as well. In year two, we aim to capitalize on the relationships established in year one. Finally, we worked with local employers and educators to identify skills gaps and began mapping a strategy to fill those gaps.
The appointment of Shreveport’s first Chief Technology Officer paid dividends for the city. Under Keith Hanson’s direction, the Information Technology Department renegotiated the city’s phone contracts, which saved tens of thousands of dollars. These savings were used to procure FirstNet, which provides first responders with onsite high-speed internet access. FirstNet makes the job of first responders and our city safer. The I.T. Department also identified past accounting oversights from previous administrations, dating back five years, that disclosed several million dollars in open purchase orders. These funds were moved into the city’s fledgling reserve fund, improving Shreveport’s fiscal health. Finally, Keith Hanson has identified and mapped our digital divide and is working to create a free-to-residents mesh wifi network.

Waking up every day and working alongside such dedicated public servants to better the lives of Shreveport families is the greatest honor of my life. I am pleased with our progress, but in 2020, we will strive to be even better. I want to be the leader who listens to the citizens and channels their feedback into productivity and progress for our city. I am excited about what the future has in store for the City of Shreveport.

Sincerely,

Adrian D. Perkins
Mayor of Shreveport
In 2019, the City of Shreveport posted its lowest Part I Crime rate since 1975. This includes a 29 percent decrease in homicides, an 8 percent decrease in violent crimes, and a 7 percent decrease in property crimes. These improvements can be attributed to several factors. First, good police work. The clearance rate for homicide cases in 2019 was 73 percent, which is a 19 percent increase from last year and 9 percent above the national average. Second, Mayor Perkins and Chief Raymond implemented a supplemental patrol program, which added 400 more patrol shifts and created 3,200 more patrol hours. Finally, Mayor Perkins and Chief Raymond stressed Community-Oriented Policing, which improves communication and cooperation between law enforcement and the citizens they serve.

When it comes to public safety, there is still room for improvement. Though 43 homicides is a marked decrease from previous years, it is still 43 too many grieving families. Mayor Perkins made leadership changes to ensure that we continue to pursue innovative policing strategies and continue to make Shreveport safer. In addition to appointing Ben Raymond Chief of Police, Antwoine White was named Deputy Chief of Police and Marcus Mitchell was installed as the Chief Administrative Assistant.
Mayor Perkins named Brandon Fail the Director of Economic Development in April. Director Fail immediately started working to attract high-tech manufacturing projects across multiple sectors, most notably raw materials and industrial hemp. Recent large investments in operations and equipment at local companies like Frymaster prove that it is economical to produce goods in Shreveport. Mayor Perkins and Director Fail spent much of 2019 promoting Shreveport’s exceptional workforce and low cost of business to potential investors. They established relationships and initiated promising discussions, which they aim to capitalize on in year two.

**JOBS**

Job growth is the primary focus of Mayor Perkins’ economic development strategy. In 2019, job growth was marginal. Our interstate system, river port, and airports continue to make Shreveport an attractive location for businesses looking to expand their operations. In July, Indiana-based SuperATV announced a $4.35 million investment at its Shreveport site, which supplied 117 direct and indirect jobs that pay a living wage.
HEALTHCARE

The healthcare industry continues to expand in Shreveport. Mayor Perkins joined Governor John Bel Edwards and BRF CEO, Dr. John George, in March to break ground on the $14 million Center for Molecular Imaging and Therapy, which will conduct life-saving research and produce radio-pharmaceuticals. This investment ensures that Shreveport will compete in a global market expected to eclipse $7 billion over the next five years. LSU Health Shreveport also enlarged its footprint in 2019, breaking ground on the new $60 million Center for Medical Education. This expansion means more doctors, allied healthcare professionals, and a larger economic impact in our area.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

Providing support for existing local businesses is another core component of Mayor Perkins’ economic development strategy. “My Government Online” is a tool that was launched in March. It removes a lot of the red tape that frustrates business owners, allowing contractors and citizens to submit applications online to the Permits and Inspections Office, as well as Engineering, Fire Prevention, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission. It also allows them to submit plans and documents electronically, track application progress, and pay permit fees online with a credit card.

Another key development came out of the Fair Share office. Mayor Perkins tapped Quinn Eubanks, formerly of the Louisiana Office of State Procurement, to serve as Fair Share Director. Eubanks updated the office’s vendor directory and simplified the application process, making it easier for minority and women-owned small businesses to participate in the program. This helps Shreveport create an equitable economy and build capacity within all communities.

The “LoveShreveport” campaign was launched in conjunction with the Mayor’s first city-wide cleanup. This campaign is now being used to support all things local and to improve city morale. The “Love Shreveport” brand is utilized every week to spotlight Shreveport businesses and to encourage people to shop locally.

ADDRESSING THE “BRAIN DRAIN”

Shreveport’s population has been dwindling for years. The exodus of talented, educated young people is particularly concerning. Young people are the future of Shreveport. We have to retain them and find ways to attract more young people to our area to grow our economy. Addressing this problem was one of Mayor Perkins’ first-year priorities. He expanded the summer internship program from a couple of dozen to include more than 150 high school and college-aged students. He toured local high schools and delivered commencement addresses at area colleges, stressing the role young people play in Shreveport’s future. He also visited universities around the country, touting the opportunities available in Shreveport.
Mayor Perkins appointed Shreveport’s first Chief Technology Officer, Keith Hanson, in January. Over the past year, the new CTO revolutionized the Information Technology Department, adding an external focus to the department’s traditionally introspective mission. Under Hanson’s leadership, the I.T. Department renegotiated the city’s phone contracts, saving tens of thousands of dollars. These savings were rolled into FirstNet, which provides Shreveport Police Officers and Firefighters with reliable internet access on the scene, making their jobs and our community safer.

The new CTO reorganized and reoriented the I.T. Department, adding a special projects team. The new special projects team also included a data scientist devoted to extracting valuable information from the City’s previously under-utilized data. The data scientist ran a query that discovered an oversight from previous administrations and revealed several million dollars lingering in open purchase orders. These funds were transferred to the City’s Operating Reserves, which were alarmingly low when Mayor Perkins took office.

The CTO digitized the city’s budget, as well. He created an online transparency tool known as “The People’s Budget.” This tool enables citizens to see exactly how their tax dollars are spent. It breaks the budget down into user-friendly charts and interactive graphs, turning hundreds of unintelligible pages into an easy to navigate document that anyone can understand.

Mayor Perkins also charged the CTO with expanding access to low-cost, high-speed internet for Shreveport citizens. This is a monumental task. Still, Hanson has already identified and mapped Shreveport’s digital divides using public data and is in the process of creating a free-to-residents mesh wifi network.
Improving Shreveport’s Financial Outlook

The 2020 Budget aggressively seeks to secure Shreveport’s financial future. In years past, the City of Shreveport borrowed from the reserve fund to create the appearance of a balanced budget. In contrast, Mayor Perkins increased revenues and cut expenses to produce the city’s first truly balanced budget in years.

Mayor Perkins inherited a $1.2 million deficit. To address this issue, he proposed a sanitation fee, which the City Council passed on March 26, 2019. This $7 user-fee increased revenues and reduced the $8.4 million subsidy from the general fund for curbside solid waste collection. On April 9, 2019, Mayor Perkins introduced a budget amendment to ensure that sanitation workers received a pay increase.

Mayor Perkins’ Chief Administrative Officer, Sherricka Fields Jones, spearheaded the 2020 budget process. They worked to increase funds for public safety while cutting expenditures. In October, Mayor Perkins proposed an Executive Budget that accomplished just that. The 2020 budget was passed on December 10, 2019, becoming Shreveport’s first balanced budget in nearly a decade. This budget cut expenditures by 4.5 percent, which is projected to bring the Operating Reserves up from a $1.2 million deficit in 2019 to a $2.6 million surplus by the end of 2020, a net gain of $3.8 million.

Shreveport remains a resource-constrained city, but the 2020 Operating Budget invests the taxpayer’s money more prudently. It is a fiscally responsible document that cuts costs, invests in public safety, and amends practices from years past that have jeopardized Shreveport’s credit rating and threatened our financial future.
New Management

The Consent Decree project is a federally mandated overhaul of Shreveport’s sewer system. The agreement between the Department of Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the City of Shreveport was reached in 2014. In years past, this project has been plagued by redundancies and poor work quality that frustrate citizens and gouge prices. After taking office, Mayor Perkins learned that the cost of the Consent Decree would exceed $1 billion. He also had concerns about the impact on private property, project design, work quality, and budget management. To address all these issues, Mayor Perkins immediately sought new management for the project.

In April, Mayor Perkins chose Burns & McDonnell to manage the program. Burns & McDonnell is a nationally recognized program management firm with a wealth of experience overseeing consent decrees and large infrastructure projects across the country. They thoroughly reviewed our Consent Decree program, including its financial capacity, and concluded that the current program was unaffordable for Shreveport citizens. They adjusted the schedule and prioritized the work to maximize the project’s remaining funds. They are also assisting the administration with renegotiating the City’s agreement with the Federal Government.

Finally, Burns & McDonnell’s use of technology improves project delivery. They utilize a state of the art geographic information system (GIS), which is a powerful tool that feeds the data associated with a particular project into an interactive map, as opposed to a static spreadsheet. This reduces inefficiencies, cuts costs, and minimizes inconveniences for Shreveport citizens.

Bonton Associates is a Baton Rouge-based engineering firm that assists Burns & McDonnell with project delivery, supervising the program’s design and construction. They previously worked on Baton Rouge’s consent decree. Envision Media & Marketing and Sustainable Design Solutions round out the new program management team. All together, they achieve nearly 50 percent Fair Share participation, which means more local and minority involvement. Moreover, Bonton Associates opened a permanent office in Shreveport, benefiting our local economy.

The new program management team is charting a new course for Shreveport’s Consent Decree that streamlines program management, reduces waste and inefficiencies, and is more affordable for Shreveport citizens.
Future Leaders of Shreveport

Mayor Perkins’ summer internship program was one of the largest and most diverse in the City’s history. The “Future Leaders of Shreveport Summer Internship Program” was expanded to include more than 150 local high school and college-aged students. More importantly, it was an investment in Shreveport’s future.

The Mayor was able to maximize the potential of this internship program by utilizing public/private partnerships, which enabled interns to work for local businesses and the city government. Local businesses hired interns through the internship program and they donated money to fund additional positions. High school students received $10 per hour and college students earned $12 an hour. They worked in a variety of fields: healthcare, engineering, recreation, legal services, technology, human services, public safety, business services, accounting, and science.

This program provided local young people with the opportunity to do meaningful work and it showed them how they can make a difference in their community. Through a partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, two interns attended the 2019 National Youth Summit in Los Angeles. This trip was paid for by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.
Public Safety

Reduce Crime

There were several high profile crimes this year, which we have to address moving forward, but 2019 was a historically low year for crime in Shreveport. Part I Crimes hit a 45-year low. Overall crime was down 7 percent; violent crime was down 8 percent; homicides were down 29 percent; and property crimes were down 7 percent. Shreveport Police’s clearance rate rose to 73 percent this year, which is up 19 percent from last year and is 9 percent above the national average.

Community-Oriented Policing

Mayor Perkins and Chief Ben Raymond placed significant emphasis on community-oriented policing, stressing the need for officers to get to know the citizens they serve. This year the Shreveport Police Department organized 69 community gatherings, which was up from the previous year.

Increasing Police Presence

Mayor Perkins and Chief Raymond implemented a supplemental patrol program. This program requires every officer, corporal, and sergeant not assigned to Uniformed Services Division to periodically ride supplemental patrol shifts. Chief Raymond and Deputy Chief White ride patrol as well. In total, this amounts to an additional 400 patrol shifts or 3,200 more hours patrolled per calendar year.

Partnering with Other Agencies

Mayor Perkins called a public safety meeting with officials from state, local, and federal agencies in June. The Caddo Parish Sheriff’s Office and Louisiana State Police committed to helping patrol Shreveport and aid with special operations that targeted illegal weapons. This not only adds to the already increased presence of law enforcement, but it also enables us to more effectively get illegal weapons and dangerous criminals off our streets and out of our neighborhoods.
The Economy

Appoint Full-time Economic Development Director

Brandon Fail was named Director of Economic Development. Brandon is a graduate of Harvard University and Yale Law School. He is also a former McKinsey consultant. His economic strategy focuses on Shreveport’s strengths. He is actively pursuing job growth in the manufacturing and film industries, and looking for companies looking to resphere administrative jobs in expanding downtowns with affordable real-estate.

Fair Share

Mayor Perkins promised to build an economy that works for all of Shreveport, which requires the city to distribute its business equitably. The Office of Fair Share has a stated goal of 25 percent participation, but reported participation has not eclipsed 14 percent in years past. Under the direction of Quinn Eubanks, Fair Share has modernized its vendor directory and streamlined its application process, making it simpler for minority and women-owned small businesses to participate in the program. As a result, the program has renewed 28 firms, enrolled 30 new firms, achieving a 19 percent participation rate in 2019.

Medical Corridor

Mayor Perkins promised to help bolster existing industries, such as healthcare, that are fundamental to Shreveport’s economy. In February, he established the “Shreveport Healthcare and Development Corridor Board.” This board consists of representatives from most of the major healthcare providers and healthcare-adjacent industries in Shreveport, including Ochsner LSU Shreveport, the VA Medical Center, Barksdale Air Force Base, LSU Medical School, Boudreaux’s Pharmacy, and BRF.

Fly Shreveport

International Status

One of Mayor Perkins’ first actions as Mayor was to call on the City Council to approve the application process for Shreveport Regional Airport to seek international designation. The Council approved this measure in January of 2019.

Airport Director

Mayor Perkins immediately replaced the Airports Director. Tom Jones and Stacy Kuba served as the Interim Director until the Mayor nominated Wade Davis to serve as the full-time Director. He was confirmed on December 10, 2019. Mr. Davis previously served as Executive Director of the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority, where he was instrumental in the FAA’s expansion of the Ogdensburg International Airport from a Class III to a Class I airport, which included a $26 Million runway expansion to accommodate larger jets.

New Flights

Shreveport Regional Airport saw substantial passenger growth in 2019 with 681,790 passengers flying through Shreveport, which is an increase of 8 percent from the previous year. Shreveport also added more flights with non-stop service to Destin and larger planes to accommodate the influx of passengers.
Environmental Control Unit

Mayor Perkins assured voters he would combat littering. The Mayor kept his word, forming the Environmental Control Unit, a division of Shreveport Police, to crack down on illegal dumping and litter related crimes.

Property Standards

Immediately after taking office, Mayor Perkins appointed Terrence Green as full-time Director of Property Standards, just as he promised during the campaign. Since then, Property Standards conducted 6 neighborhood sweeps, issuing 41 citations and removing over 3,400 tires.

Sanitation Worker Pay-Raises

In years past, Shreveport has struggled to keep pace with trash collection through the holidays. Earlier this year, the City Council passed Mayor Perkins’ proposed sanitation fee, which enabled the City to raise wages for solid waste employees and maintain an adequate staff. As a result, Public Works Director Gary Norman and his staff were able to stay on schedule throughout the holidays.

Beautification

In his inaugural address, the Mayor promised to ornament downtown with shrubbery and landscaping. He began this project by renovating the abandoned landscaping in front of Government Plaza.

Technology and Transparency

Universal Broadband

CTO Keith Hanson and the City's I.T. Department have worked with ISPs and utilized open data, such as census records, to identify Shreveport's digital divide. They have mapped Shreveport's coverage, as well as our blind spots. They are currently working to create a free-to-residents mesh wifi network.

Transparency Tools

CTO Keith Hanson created an online dashboard that allows citizens to view the Operating Budget. This dashboard translates hundreds of pages of line item text into interactive charts and graphs that are easily discernible to the average citizen. The Mayor also directed the CTO to create back-end tools for the City Council, which enable them to see purchase orders in real-time. This increases transparency, improves oversight, and helps facilitate good government.

Using Tech to Improve Water & Sewage Service

The Water Department has struggled for years to gain the citizen's trust. There is still a long way to go, but we are working toward that end. Smartphone meter readers were implemented, which provide for greater accuracy by requiring a picture of the meter, a manual read, and the system pings the read location. New billing software has also been installed. This software is more intuitive and it is easier to scan for errors. Finally, a “text bot” was created to help customers quickly and conveniently request extension and report payments.
The City of Shreveport partnered with the Shreveport Common, SRAC, and Caddo Parish to create Shreveport's first urban green space. This urban green space, known as “The Common Park,” is located in the historic nine-block area at the western edge of downtown Shreveport called the “The Shreveport Common.” This area is the epicenter of downtown Shreveport’s growth. In June, Mayor Perkins joined city leaders and the proprietors of Every Man a King Distilling and Revenir to break ground on their $5 million investment in the historic Arlington Hotel. The Arlington is located in the Shreveport Common and will soon be home to a micro-distillery, a modern French restaurant, and a speakeasy.

In August, Mayor Perkins organized a citywide cleanup. He joined staff, city workers, and more than 800 volunteers from around Shreveport to pick up litter and clean up our community. Thousands of pounds of trash was collected in neighborhoods all across Shreveport. Following the event, volunteers met at the Fairgrounds for food, fun, prizes, and music.
Mayor Perkins invited Carla Cooke, daughter of legendary musician Sam Cooke, to Shreveport in June to issue a formal apology for how her father was treated when he came to Shreveport to perform in 1963. This was covered by CNN, the New York Post, Billboard Magazine, and other national outlets.

Mayor Perkins was 1 of 41 mayors from around the world selected to participate in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. This coveted program provides mayors and their executive staff with training and resources to improve government services in their respective cities.

TILLMAN FOUNDATION AWARD

Mayor Perkins was honored alongside Senator John McCain by the Pat Tillman Foundation at their annual Tillman Honors ceremony in Chicago. Mayor Perkins participated in a panel discussion with Cindy McCain, who received the award on behalf of her late husband. This recognition was covered by the NFL Network and ABC’s The View.