

Going Nuts

Delta Peanut Gets Ready

Plus:
Camping Out!
Restaurant News
Park Projects Progress

Let's Get Crackin'

Delta Peanut To Create Over 100 Jobs

It's a first for the state of Arkansas, and it's happening in Jonesboro.

Delta Peanut will begin operations this fall. When it does, it will become the first peanut shelling plant in the state.

[Dirt work is already underway](#) at the 71-acre site in Jonesboro's Craighead Technology Park with the quickly approaching goal of being ready to buy and store a harvest by September. It's a 60-day sprint to what has been a 4-5 year plan. The shelling operation is scheduled to be up and running by April 2020.

"We had to establish a market here," says Tommy Jumper of Delta Peanut.

And it seemed like Northeast Arkansas, especially Jonesboro, was a great fit. Jumper says roughly 30,000 acres of peanuts will be planted regionally this year and brought to Jonesboro for drying. Until now, that harvest had to be taken to peanut shelling plants in South Georgia or West Texas, putting local peanut farmers in a costly and inefficient position to get their product to market.

Now, peanut growers in Arkansas, Southeast Missouri, and regionally will have the option to cut miles and costs, and bring those peanuts to market closer to home. And with peanut butter makers Jif in Memphis, Skippy in Little Rock and Kraft-owned Planters Peanut in Fort Smith, having Delta Peanut in Jonesboro is a logical location.

Tommy Jumper says 60 farmers/investors put in \$26.5M to make Delta Peanut happen, part of the overall \$70M project.

Jumper adds that within 3-5 years, they will have invested over \$100M. That investment, according to Jumper, will create approximately 130 direct new jobs, including those created at the Delta Peanut's buying point in Marianna.

When the shelling operation is fully up and running it will shell over 180,000 tons of peanuts annually. Over 60,000 tons of those peanuts will be on site in Jonesboro and stored in three warehouses and one "surge" warehouse. Additional buying points will store the balance in neighboring towns in Arkansas and surrounding states. The Jonesboro site will also have six drying buildings.

"We raise high-quality peanuts here," Jumper says. Now, with the addition of Delta Peanut to Jonesboro the region and its farmers will be better able to take advantage of that and share their harvest and hard work world-wide.



Workforce Development

TekStarz 2019 Opens Young Minds

You can file it under “workforce development,” but all the kids know is that they had fun.

TekStarz, Jonesboro Unlimited’s summer technology camp, once again got local teenagers excited about careers in manufacturing.

Jonesboro-area junior high students were introduced to career possibilities in the world of manufacturing. Along the way, we are dispelling some of the myths about the manufacturing world. [\(To see the video, click here\)](#)

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for these young people to see what working in a modern manufacturing facility is really like,” said Shelle Randall, Jonesboro Unlimited’s Director of Workforce Development and Existing Industry, “Because of TekStarz, they are getting to see and hear first-hand what kind of jobs are out there for them in the future.”

The teenagers did everything from spending time in a lab at Nice-Pak making the solution that is applied to wet-wipes to working a CNC machine at ASU-Newport. Over the four days of TekStarz, the campers visited Unilever, Nice-Pak, Nestle, Apex Tool Group, Post Consumer Group, ASU-Newport, Best Manufacturing, Hytrol, A-State’s Tinkering Studio, Ritter Communications and took in a safety workshop by Howell Safety and Training Solutions.

Even though they are on summer vacation, at least one teacher noticed how much her students were learning.

“I loved seeing my kiddos having fun. I hope they learned something they can carry over into their future career choices,” said Miranda Archer from Brookland Schools.

“That’s why this is more than just a summer camp, this is the heart of workforce development,” Randall said, “We need junior-high-aged kids to start thinking about the kind of careers they want to have long before they graduate from high school. Exposing them to all there is to offer in the world of manufacturing gives them ideas about the kind of jobs they want to pursue after they finish their education.”

Jonesboro Unlimited, the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce, and ASU-Newport sponsor TekStarz, along with grants and assistance from the Workforce Training Consortium, our industry partners, and the Foundation of the Fabricators and Manufacturers Association, International.

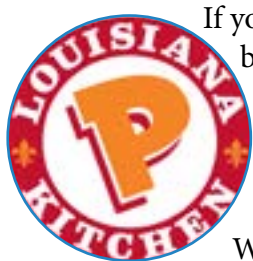


Commercial Development

Jonesboro is getting another Wendy's. Haag Brown Commercial Real Estate announced the deal in mid-May. The city's third Wendy's will be located on Hilltop between First Security Bank and Wolf Car Wash. Construction is already underway.



Growth at Nettleton Public Schools is leading to the need for expansion. The school district has purchased four portable classrooms totaling \$145,000. Nettleton Superintendent James Dunivan says there will be one classroom placed at the JR/SR HS, both Fox Meadow campuses, and University Heights Elementary.



If you're craving chicken instead of burgers, you're in luck. Another Popeyes Chicken is in the works. The newest Popeyes is being built at the corner of Parker Road and Harrisburg Road, right in front of the Walmart Neighborhood Market. This will be the second Popeyes in Jonesboro.

Jonesboro's Steak 'n Shake is under new ownership. Ward Properties, LP, out of Paramount, California, purchased the Jonesboro franchise in April for \$2.4M. The purchase price included the property adjacent to Steak 'n Shake as well.



Valley View Schools is going through a million-dollar makeover. Nabholz Construction is leading the project. The \$1.4M project includes installing a new roofing system at the Jr. High School along with electrical and plumbing upgrades. The project is funded through an Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC) with Integrity Energy Partners. The ESPC ensures there are no upfront costs to the school through savings generated by the improvements in energy efficiency.

Another hotel is coming to "hotel row" in Jonesboro. A permit valued at \$6.5M has been filed for a new Comfort Inn and Suites Hotel on Phillips Drive. It will be located right behind the Casey's General Store



A new home for The Pain Treatment Centers of America is under construction in Hill Park. CBM Construction out of Little Rock is currently working on the \$3.4M project.



The new Checkers on Red Wolf Blvd is ready to open in August. The drive-up burger joint will be the second Checker's in Jonesboro but according to Haag-Brown, this new Checkers has a different owner than the Checkers at the corner of Caraway Road and Parker Road located in the Exxon station.

Commercial Development

It didn't take long to find a new tenant for the retail space formerly occupied by LifeWay Christian Bookstore. Developer Haag-Brown has announced that a new Skechers footwear is coming to that location. The new store should be open by the end of August.



Que 49 Smokehouse is the latest addition to Jonesboro's bar-b-que roster. Que 49 opened on July 4th and is located on Red Wolf Blvd. in the Stadium Crossing strip mall in the former Slim Chickens location.



Out with the old, in with the new! A new Golden Corral Buffet restaurant is coming soon. The new buffet will be moving into the former Western Sizzlin' buffet location on Highland Drive. After some remodeling, the restaurant is set to open by the end of the year.



There's no shortage of new bar-b-que in Jonesboro. Mabry Texas Style Smokehouse is set to open on August 13. Owner Charles Mabry says they'll cater as well as run the restaurant. Mabry Texas Style Smokehouse is in the new strip mall right across from Buffalo Wild Wings.

Our Social Standing

Jonesboro Unlimited's social media audience continues to grow.

Since the beginning of the year, we have seen significant growth on all four of our social media platforms. [The release of the Jonesboro: Now You Know video](#) had a lot to do with that as it has collected nearly 50,000 views.

If you aren't following/liking us yet, take a minute to head to each of our four platforms and give us a follow/like! Just click on the icons and it will take you there.



**1,343 Followers
Up 33% In 2019**

Quality of Life

Rotary Plaza Opens

After three years of planning, the The Jonesboro Rotary Centennial Plaza officially opened in late April. Located at the corner of Monroe and Church Streets, the venue is the latest investment in downtown Jonesboro.

The project was led by the Rotary Club of Jonesboro and was aided by several other local businesses and organizations. The Rotary Club says the new park helps to beautify downtown Jonesboro while offering another place for people to gather for concerts and other outdoor events.



Bike/Pedestrian Trail Updates



Jonesboro's Parks and Recreation Department continues to surge ahead with construction of the new Bike and Pedestrian Trail. Currently, work is being done along phase 3 along Craighead Forest Road in south Jonesboro.

At the same time, planning continues on the A-State Link portion of the trail. Parks Director Danny Kapales says they hope to have that plan completed by the fall. The A-State Link would travel east-west running along Prospect and Aggie Roads, through the A-State campus, eventually connecting to downtown Jonesboro.

Park Projects Completed

A handfull of projects at Jonesboro City Parks are complete or nearly finished. The biggest project to wrap up is the newly paved parking lot at Southside Softball Complex. Scheduled for completion at the end of July, the \$552,000 project replaced the gravel parking lots with new pavement while also installing new lighting in the parking lot and ball fields. In addition, a new concession stand has been built for the players and fans.

A new parking lot has been finised next to the Pump Track at Craighead Forest Park. Danny Kapales says they added two ADA parking spaces to the original plan for the lot.

Two drinking fountains have been installed at Craighead Forest Park and Joe Mack Campbell Park. The fountains were paid for through a grant from the U of A Cooperative Extension Service.



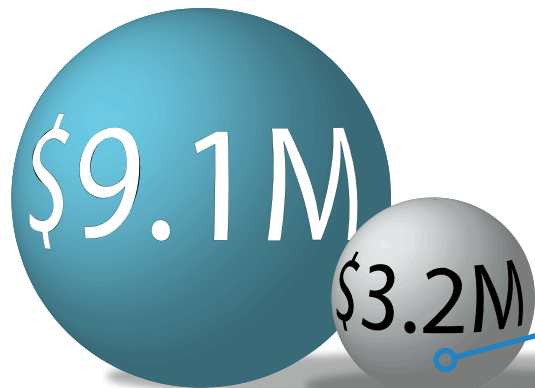
Sales Tax Revenue

City & County Combined (2.0%)



Q2-2019 / *april
may
june*

Increase in collections from
YTD of 2018



Q2-2018 / *april
may
june*

Largest May total since
Public Safety Tax expired



Q2-2017 / *april
may
june*

Largest June total since
Public Safety Tax Expired

Infrastructure

Grant Gets Project On Rails

A nearly \$3M grant will help ease rail traffic and increase safety in the Jonesboro Industrial Park and Craighead Technology Park.

The grant, provides just over \$2.3M from the Federal Rail Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program and includes \$650,000 from the City of Jonesboro and economic development partners.

According to a press release from the City of Jonesboro, the grant will provide side rails for parallel tracks storage and relocate a switch away from Commerce Drive, which will soon be widened to five lanes by the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

"This is a great award for us," Mayor Harold Perrin said. "the new rail lines will help serve current businesses and new ones that plan to locate here."

Mayor Perrin expressed his gratitude to City Traffic Operations Engineer Mark Nichols, City grants writer Hillary Starnes, as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation, Congressman Rick Crawford and U.S. Senators Rick Boozman and Tom Cotton, for the winning grant.



County Crisis Unit Ahead of Schedule

Craighead County's Crisis Stabilization Unit is under construction. The \$758,000 building, being built adjacent to the Craighead County Sheriff's Department, is scheduled for a ribbon cutting on September 12. Craighead County Sheriff Marty Boyd says, despite the weather, the project is ahead of schedule. When complete, Boyd says the facility will have 16 beds.

The building, which is being funded by the state, will be owned by Craighead County and operated by Mid-South Health Systems.

The facility will allow officers to help individuals with mental illnesses by offering them treatment rather than incarcerating them, something Boyd said is needed in Craighead County.

The Craighead County Crisis Stabilization Unit is one of four in the State of Arkansas.



Jonesboro Rising

Can The Rest of the Delta Bottle This?

Published in the Arkansas Democrat Gazzete: May 24, 2019

Even the highway to Jonesboro is refreshingly new.

We settled down for a meal in Jonesboro at a fast food joint the kids like. The adults from the other parts of the state marveled about how this town in northeastern Arkansas has changed in the last, oh, 20 years or so. It seems that construction is going on all over. And not dirty construction, with piles of rubble and sheetrock thrown out in front of industrial complexes. But pretty construction. Homes. Gardens. Buildings at the college.

But surely it can't all be explained by Arkansas State University. Jonesboro has been home to ASU for years. Even when Jonesboro was grayer and smaller. But take a drive to that campus when you get a chance. Everything seems newly painted. Nor a cigarette butt on the ground. Not a go-cup thrown on the lawn. What, is this a college or a golf course?

We don't know which is the cart, and which is the horse. Is Jonesboro a welcoming, engaging, alluring place because of the college, or is the college attractive because of Jonesboro? Why not both?

We thought about Jonesboro and our recent visit there when we saw Emily Walkenhorst's story on the front page the other day: Arkansas is following a national trend. Rural areas are losing people. The urban areas are gaining.

The Delta is contracting-not the land, but the people. And the counties around Little Rock and the northwestern part of the state are gaining population.

Except Jonesboro. It's the outlier. It's smack-dab in the middle of the Delta, in a rice field no less, and it's booming. What gives?

The little town of Brookland, Ark., a suburb of Jonesboro, saw its population more than double since the last Census, from 1,642 people to 3,491. This while towns all down the River are watching their children leave. You could say Craighead County has the advantage of keeping its young people at ASU, but Pine Bluff and Monticello have colleges, too.

Yet in 2010, the Census Bureau reports that Craighead County had about 96,500 people. That number has increased each year since, to an estimated 108,500 now. Jefferson County, which has UA-Pine Bluff, and Drew County, which has UA-Monticello, have lost people in the last decade. We're not sure what explains it. But other counties and towns in the Delta need to find out what it is and try to replicate it. If not bottle it.

A lot of good things, right things, are happening in the middle of a rice field in northeastern Arkansas. People are moving there. Businesses are opening. It's a chamber of commerce dream. Jonesboro is rising.

It's an outlier. But it doesn't have to be.



Project Updates

Ritter Data Center

Ritter Communications broke ground on its new \$8M Data Technology Center. The new facility is located right next door to Ritter Communication's headquarters in Jonesboro on Mayfield Lane in Hill Park. The facility will have over 8,800 square feet of space, dedicated to multi-user cloud and data storage.

On the Ritter Communications website, the company states this new facility won't just be a first for Jonesboro, but the entire Mid-South region.

The building is being constructed by Nabholz Construction and is currently underway with an expected completion date of mid-2020.

To read more about the building's specs and see a virtual tour, [click here](#).



Nearing Completion

Jonesboro's Risever steel fabrication facility is nearing completion. The building and offices are complete. Work now is focusing on getting the interior of the factory floor ready for production. This includes the installation of the painting area.

Despite losing dozens of days of work because of poor weather, it took the crews from Forcum-Lannom eight months to complete the building.

Risever has begun the process of interviewing personnel to help manage the facility. After the final touches are complete, a grand opening will be held. To see a time-lapse video of the construction of the plant, [click here](#).



Hotel Eyes November Finish

The new Embassy Suites Hotel and Red Wolf Convention Center is closing in on a finishing date. Susan Woodring, the Sales Manager for the new 203-suite hotel, says they should be expecting their first guests in early November.

[With over 200,000 square feet of space](#), including the convention center and a Houlihan's Restaurant, the new Embassy Suites will be the largest hotel in Jonesboro.

Woodring adds the new hotel will create over 125 new jobs.



Healthcare

St. Bernards Opens New Clinic

St. Bernards opened a unique new clinic in Highland in May. The clinic is in partnership with Highland School District and also houses the Highland School Based-Clinic, which is open to employees and students of the district.

St. Bernards says Dr. Nick Guinn and APRN Venita Ninemire will lead the health care team at the new clinic.

With the school-based clinic, St. Bernards and Highland School District leaders hope to see a reduction in absenteeism while improving overall health-related problems for students.



NYIT Starts Summer Research Program

Nine local high school students are sharpening their science skills over the summer at the NYIT-COM SHARE Program.

SHARE, which stands for Summer Health Academy for Research Exploration is an eight-week program focusing on laboratory work and professional and career development activities. The goal is to expose the students to several potential careers in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Medicine) fields.

The SHARE program is funded by American Chemical Society, #ProjectSEED, NYITCOM, Arkansas Biosciences Institute and Community Health Centers of Arkansas, Inc. Each student receives a stipend for participating in the program, a critical element of SHARE.



New Orthopaedic Clinic Breaks Ground

Jonesboro Orthopaedic Sports Medicine (JOSM) broke ground for its new clinic in late June. The \$6M project is under construction at 1010 S. Main Street on the former site of Central Baptist Church in downtown Jonesboro. Dr. Spencer Guinn says JOSM's new clinic isn't just moving it's growing.

Dr. Guinn says they plan to add another surgeon to their staff in the coming weeks and have plans to add three or four doctors soon. By increasing the total number of doctors, Guinn says JOSM will also add another 8-10 members of their support staff.



Commercial Construction

Year-To-Date 2017-2019



YTD-2019 / *jan
thru
june*

Includes \$38.8M in new
construction from 27 permits



YTD-2018 / *jan
thru
june*

Biggest 6-month total since
2011 (\$200.3M)



YTD-2017 / *jan
thru
june*

Includes \$25.7M in new
construction from 16 permits

Residential Construction

Year-To-Date 2017-2019

YTD-2019 / *jan
thru
june*

Includes 184 permits for
single family homes

265
Permits

\$30.9M

YTD-2018 / *jan
thru
june*

Most permits in 6-month
period since 2010 (343)

293
Permits

\$35.4M

YTD-2017 / *jan
thru
june*

150 new home permits
Fewest since 2013 (149)

260
Permits

\$31.2M

New Home Sales

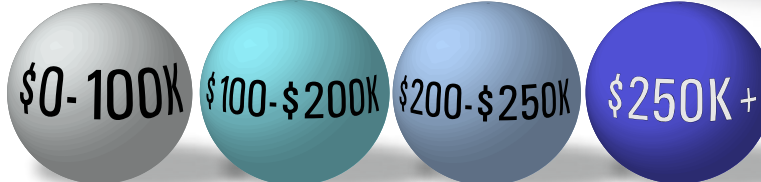
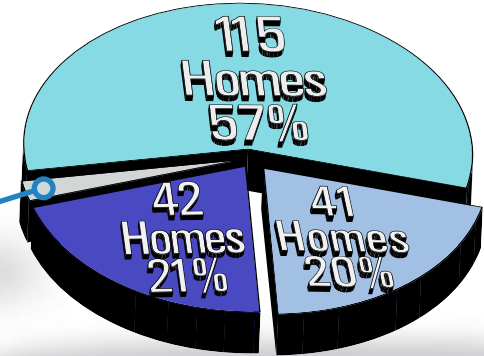
Year-To-Date 2018-2019

**203
Homes
Sold**

YTD-2019/ *jan thru june*

90% Increase over last
five years

5 Homes
2%

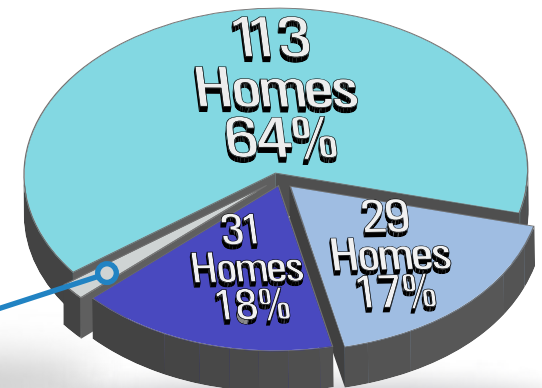


**176
Homes
Sold**

YTD-2018/ *jan thru june*

35 more homes sold than in
YTD 2017

3 Homes
2%



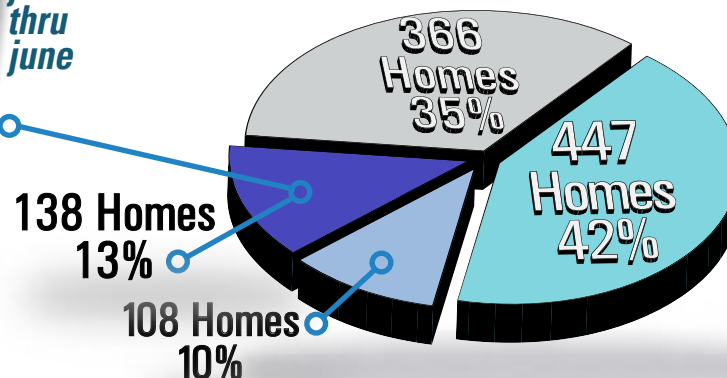
Existing Home Sales

Year-To-Date 2018-2019

**1,059
Homes
Sold**

YTD-2019/ *jan thru june*

60% increase in sales over
five-year average



**943
Homes
Sold**

YTD-2018/ *jan thru june*

181 more homes sold than
1st 2Qs of 2017

