

Data Driven

Ritter Prepares To Open New Data Center



Plus:

Blazing Trails Across Jonesboro

Delta Peanut Ready

Record Real Estate

Digging Those Gigs

Ritter Data Center Ready To Open

The switch is ready to be flipped on Ritter Communications' new, \$8M [Data Technology Center](#). The project, which broke ground in April of 2019, has pushed ahead on schedule through rough weather and the pandemic.

According to Ritter Communications, construction of the state-of-the-art facility is now complete. What remains is finishing the installation of the massive amounts of technology that this data center will house.

Officials at Ritter say crews adapted to challenges brought forth by the pandemic and have been able to keep the project moving forward. One of the larger obstacles was delays in deliveries of materials because of Covid-19. Still, leaders at Ritter say they are expecting their final shipments to arrive in July, and they will be able to open before summer is out.

Currently, the requirements for SOC-2 (Secure Operation Control) are being finalized. SOC-2 certification indicates Ritter is prepared to properly manage data and security of that data for clients. When that process is complete, Ritter will be ready for customers.

The addition of Ritter's Data Technology Center is a win for Jonesboro. The advanced business services and cloud solutions that Ritter will offer make Jonesboro more marketable for future business investment.

"This facility can make a business relocation to Jonesboro, or expanding an existing operation here, more attractive because companies can avoid the cost and time investment of setting up expensive, dedicated IT infrastructure," said Alan Morse, President of Ritter Communications. "When combined with our 100% fiber network serving this region, Jonesboro has the technology and services to compete with cities much larger in size," Morse said.

"It's one more asset that makes Jonesboro an attractive place to start or grow a business," said Mark Young, President of Jonesboro Unlimited. "Data is currency. Knowing we can tell prospective companies that we have a facility here locally to keep their data safe is something not many cities our size can offer. It gives us an advantage in the recruiting process."

Because of Covid-19, Ritter has not scheduled a traditional Grand Opening, but they say they are working on a plan to celebrate the completion of this impressive and essential project.



Ready To Roll

Delta Peanut In Home Stretch

[Delta Peanut](#) is in the final stages of construction in Jonesboro's Craighead Technology Park. The largest current industrial project in Jonesboro should be operational by late July, according to Dirk Lindsey, the C.O.O. for Delta Peanut.

The shelling and processing equipment is installed and ready for testing, which should begin by mid-to-late July. The most significant construction task that remains is finishing the cold storage building.

Lindsey says once the structure of the cold storage building is complete, the electrical work and shelving can be installed to prepare the building to house tons of peanuts.

The next phase involves testing. Lindsey says that will happen before the end of July. The current goal is to have two weeks of testing before beginning production in August.

With the harvest coming in late September, Delta Peanut is now interviewing and hiring people for all jobs needed to operate the plant. Lindsey says they hope to have 50-75 people on staff in the next couple of months as operations at the 70-acre site accelerate. The goal is to hire approximately 130 people over the next couple of years as production at Delta Peanut grows.

Crews from Nabholz have been blessed with good weather during the construction phase. Dirt work began at the 70-acre-site in July of 2019 with the goal of being finished in the summer of 2020. An ambitious goal that is about to be met that will allow Delta Peanut to test their equipment and train new employees before this fall's peanut crop is harvested.

When the operation is fully up and running, Delta Peanut will shell over 180,000 tons of peanuts annually.



Click to play videos of the construction of Delta Peanut

Quality of Life

Connecting Downtown

A bike trail will soon be making its way into downtown Jonesboro.

Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales says construction will begin this fall on Creath Avenue for the latest installment of the city's [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#).

Kapales says the \$1 million plan calls for a two-lane bike path that will begin at the corner of Creath Avenue and Church Street and run east to Reeves Street. The Creath Avenue trail is part of the downtown hub that will eventually cross over the railroad tracks and join the A-State trail. The plan also calls for the construction of a new park at the Corner of Creath and Church.

According to Kapales, some sections of Creath Avenue will need widening to accommodate the bike path. Other areas will see narrowing to slow the flow of traffic.

Kapales adds that the design plans are almost complete. Once finalized, he expects completion of the project by late summer or early fall of 2021.

New Downtown Park

The corner lot at the intersection of Monroe Avenue and Union Street next to the United Way building is the planned location of a new green space in Downtown Jonesboro.

The new park will create a pavilion, playground, walking track, and green space. Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales says the park's footprint will increase by closing Monroe Avenue and making the street part of the park.

The projected cost for the new park is \$200,000. The city has applied for a \$100,00 grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to help cover the cost.

Kapeles says the project is dependent on the city getting the grant.

A-State Trail

A large section of the A-State link of Jonesboro's bicycle trail is scheduled to be finished this year.

Work is progressing on the 2.25-mile section of the trail that runs from Bowling Lane near University Heights Elementary School to the Pepsi plant along Aggie Road. Jonesboro's Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales says that part of the Master Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is already in the budget and should be completed this year.



Commercial Development

Ace will have a second place in Jonesboro. Ditta Enterprises of Jonesboro is building a new Ace Hardware at 320 E. Highland Drive. Anthony Ditta says the store will cover 14,500 SF and employ 10-15 people when it opens in February of 2021.



Riceland Foods has completed a \$7.2M expansion project. Three new grain silos have been built at the Jonesboro site. According to a report in a JESCO newsletter, the three new, 75-foot-tall silos will be able to store an additional 1.8 million bushels of rice.



First Community Bank is expanding its Craighead County footprint with the construction of a new branch on Highway 49 in Brookland. When completed in February of 2021, it will be the bank's fifth branch in Craighead County. Work on the 4,300 SF bank is scheduled to begin in July.



Nabholz Construction is adding 10,000 SF to their offices on One Place in the Henry P. Jones III Business Park. The \$1M project includes 4,300 SF of new office space and 6,000 SF of shop and equipment space. Nabholz says the project should be complete by the end of the year.

Lost Pizza will soon be found in two locations in Jonesboro. The popular pizza place is adding a location in the Hilltop area of Jonesboro this fall. Plans were recently announced for Lost Pizza to move into the Hilltop Newk's location. Owners Brad and Sarah McDaniel say they will be open in September. They plan on hiring 40-45 additional people to staff the restaurant.



A second Tommy's Express Car Wash is coming to Jonesboro. Haag-Brown Commercial Real Estate announced the news in early July. The new car wash will be on Johnson Avenue next to First National Bank and anchor the 6-acre site. The development includes a road that will connect Johnson Avenue and Hudson Road.



It's movie time at the Malco Towne Cinema. The theater re-opened in late June after closing the doors because of the pandemic. Until new movies are released later this year, the Malco will be showing classics like "Jaws" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Patrons will be required to wear masks, and social distancing rules are in place.



Another fast-food franchise is coming to Caraway Drive. Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers will place a new restaurant on the former Perkin's site in front of the Highland Square Shopping Center. Haag-Brown made the announcement in June. No official timeline for construction has been announced.

Healthcare

NYTCOM Graduates First Class

The ceremony was virtual; the history-making moments were real.

For the first time in Jonesboro's history, a medical student has earned a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree on the campus of Arkansas State University.

New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) at Arkansas State University celebrated the commencement of its inaugural class on May 21.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson was among those who delivered prerecorded messages to the graduates. The Governor reminded the graduates of NYITCOM at A-State's mission and the opportunity to continue to fulfill it.

"Graduates, it starts with you," Governor Hutchinson said, "I hope each one of you will consider practicing in Arkansas upon completion of your residency."

The ceremony served the dual purpose of celebrating the commencement of the inaugural class, as well as the achievements of those who vigorously worked to see the medical school come to fruition.

New Clinic Coming To NEA Baptist

NEA Baptist is expanding its footprint around the NEA Baptist Medical Center with the addition of a new Pediatrics and Dermatology Clinic in The Reserve at NEA. The project comes from a partnership between NEA Baptist and Haag Brown Commercial Real Estate.

The new, 12,000 SF building will house both the pediatric and dermatology clinics for NEA Baptist and is the first building in the multi-phase project.

"The Reserve at NEA will complement our goal of delivering healing in an environment that is a significant improvement from the stigma of institutional facilities of old," said Sam Lynd, CEO of NEA Baptist.

Dirt work has already begun at the site with construction scheduled to be finished by late spring or early summer of 2021.

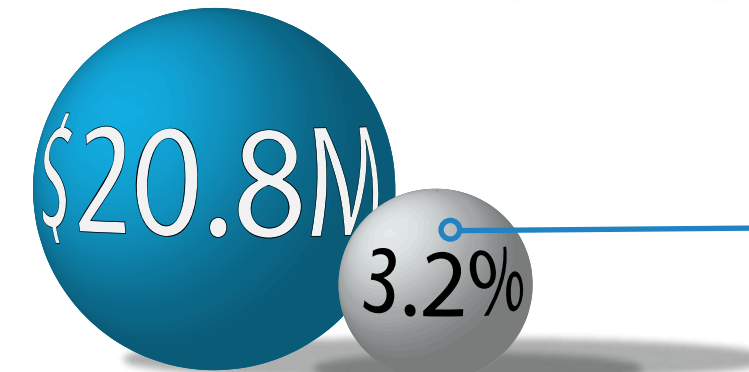
St. Bernards Celebrates 120 Years

July 5th marked 120 years of St. Bernards serving Jonesboro and the surrounding area. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, St. Bernards didn't have a party, instead, they [released a video](#) on social media of employees of St. Bernards saying why working at St. Bernards means so much to them.

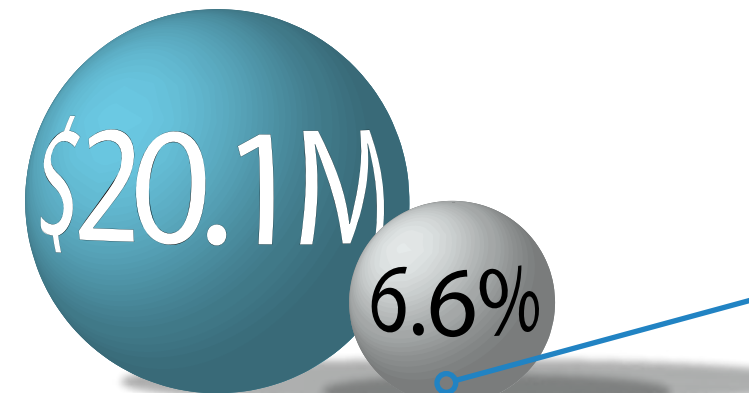


Sales Tax Revenue

City & County Combined (2.0%)



2020 / *jan thru june*
Increase in collections from first two quarters of 2019



2019 / *jan thru june*
Increase in collections from 2018 (\$1.24M)



2018 / *jan thru june*
Increase in collections from 2017

Commercial Construction

Year-To-Date 2018-2020



2020 / *jan thru june*

Includes \$8.5M in permits (12) for new construction



2019 / *jan thru june*

Total included \$38.8M in new construction permits



2018 / *jan thru june*

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

Permit totals include: new construction, apartments, additions, alterations, & signs

Residential Construction

Year-To-Date 2018-2020

2020 / *jan thru june*

Record number of permits due to rebuilding after tornado



2019 / *jan thru june*

Included 184 permits for new single family homes



2018 / *jan thru june*

Included 204 permits for new single-family homes



Permit totals include: new homes, additions, alterations, duplex, storage, & swimming pools

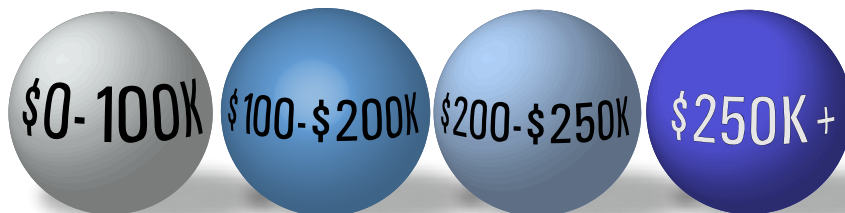
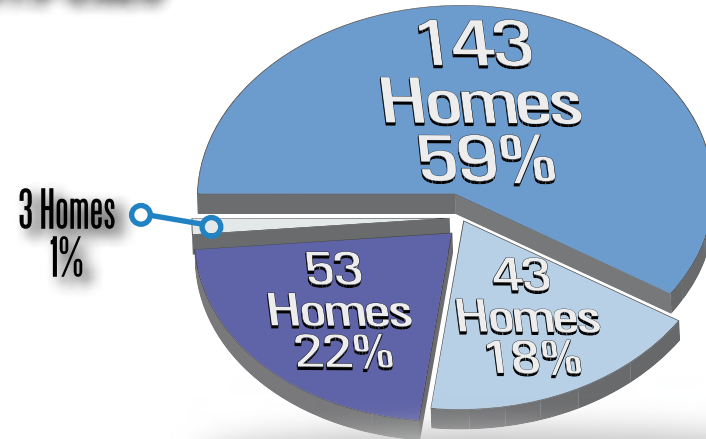
New Home Sales

Year-To-Date 2019-2020

242
Homes
Sold

2020 / *jan thru june*

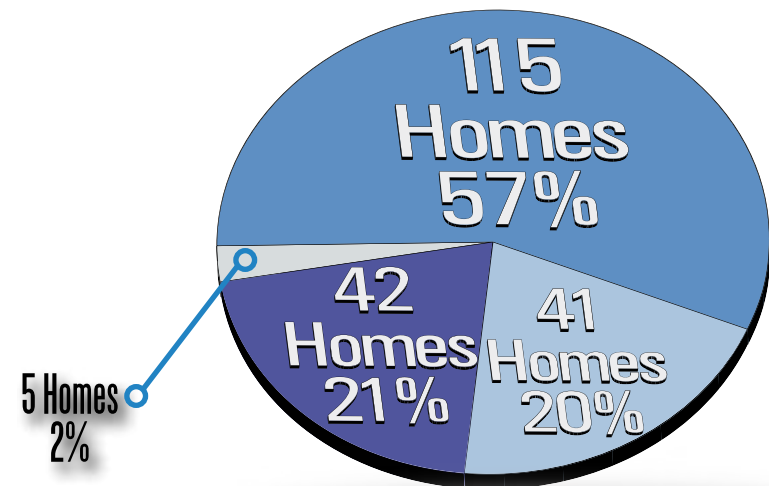
58 homes sold in June.
Biggest month on record.



203
Homes
Sold

2019 / *jan thru june*

90% increase in sales
over previous five years



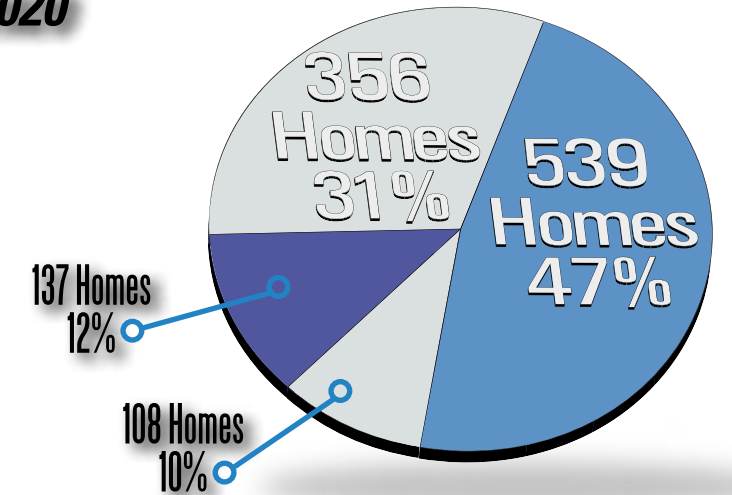
Existing Home Sales

Year-To-Date 2019-2020

1,140
Homes
Sold

2020 / *jan thru june*

264 homes sold in June.
Most ever in one month



1,059
Homes
Sold

2019 / *jan thru june*

60% increase in sales over
five-year average

