

Business and Economic Climate

The economy of Springfield and Greene County is at the center of a regional explosion that is an economic engine for the state of Missouri. According to the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, statistics from March 2003 to March 2004 show that 24.2 percent of net new jobs in the state were created in the city of Springfield, although the city accounts for only 3



percent of the state's total workforce of 3 million people. Significant job growth has occurred in the professional and business, wholesale trade, retail trade, health care and social assistance, transportation/trade/utilities, education, and financial sectors. Manufacturing was the only sector not gaining, with

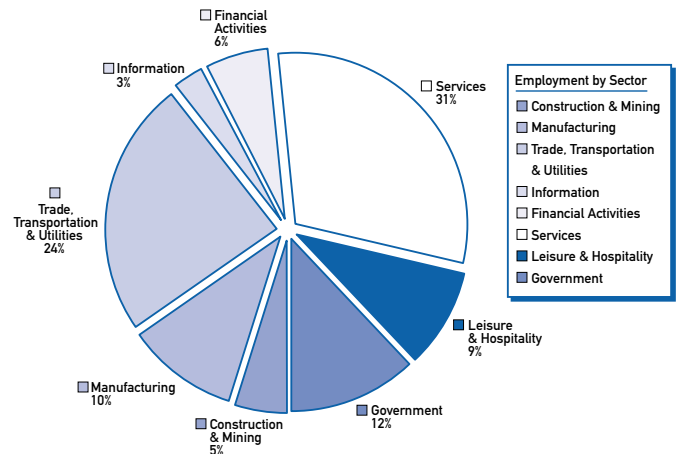
a 6.6 percent job loss during the year ending March 2004.

In addition to job growth, Springfield and the surrounding area have a lower than average unemployment rate, increasing growth in annual per capita income, and a population growth rate around 2.2%. These indicators are positive and are indicative of the strong economic climate of the region.

The Springfield Metro Area has been recognized in many ways for its accomplishments as a community. Accolades include: Top 10 Places to Live and Work (*Employment Review*), Top 40 Best [Smaller Metros] in America for Starting and Growing a Business (*Inc. Magazine*), Top 12 Midwest



Cities for High-Tech Jobs (*CorpTech, Technology Industry Growth Forecaster*), Number 6 ranking out of 331 metros for business expansion (*Expansion Management Magazine*), and Most Productive City (*Sprint Business*).



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003

The cost of living in Springfield is 11.4% under the national average (4Q-2003), and the average home sales price in 2003 was \$116,174. Approximately 92% of Springfield's businesses are considered small businesses.

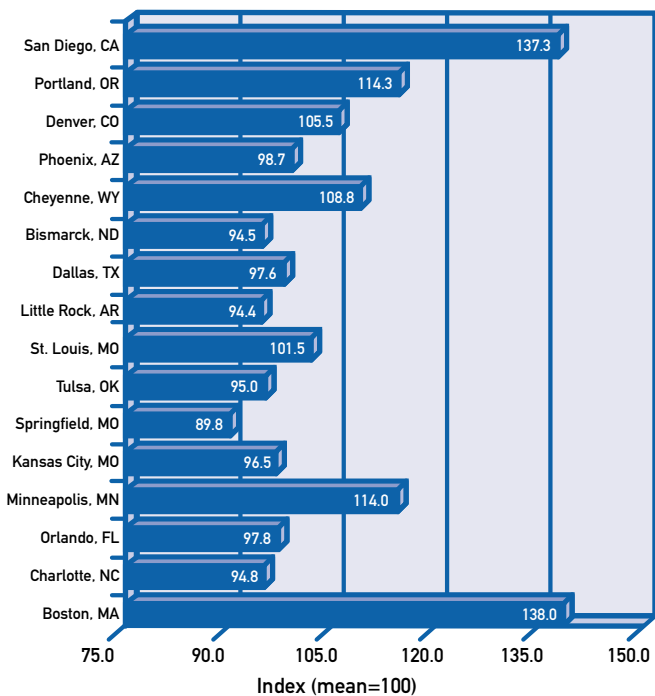




Downtown Springfield

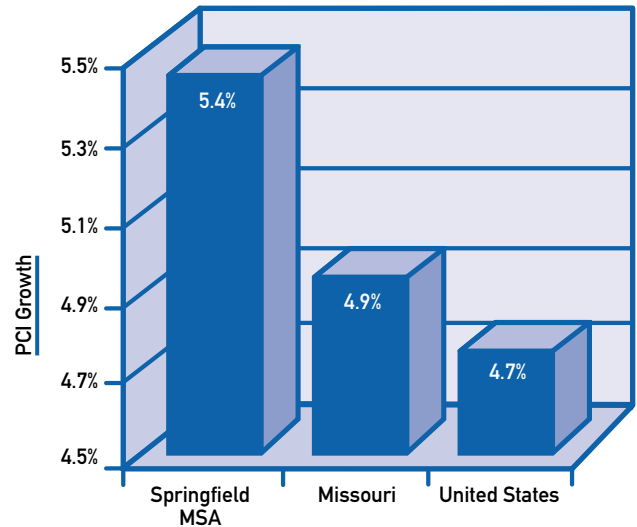


COST OF LIVING INDEX COMPARISON



Source: ACCRA, 4th Quarter 2003

PER CAPITA INCOME ANNUAL GROWTH COMPARISON



Source: USDC, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1990-2002