

Business and Economic Conditions

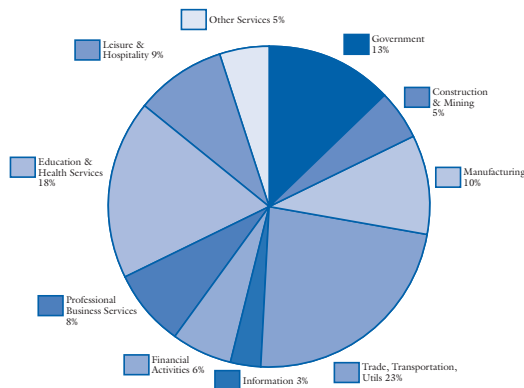
"I can't think of a more exciting time to be living in our region than right now! I believe historians will record the time we're living in now as truly a renaissance period in the growth, development, and redevelopment of our area."

Jim Anderson, President, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

The Springfield/Greene County area is thriving economically and has many assets to benefit its citizens. At the same time, the economic prosperity is not equally distributed.

Diversity of Businesses/Entrepreneurship. Springfield's thriving business community is one of its greatest strengths. Health care, retail, higher education, manufacturing, and tourism provide a strong foundation for a diverse economy. The metropolitan area does not depend on any one sector, which helps to sustain continued growth, even during times when other Missouri and U.S. cities have sluggish economies. Springfield's economic environment bolsters the entrepreneurial spirit and cultivates small business growth.

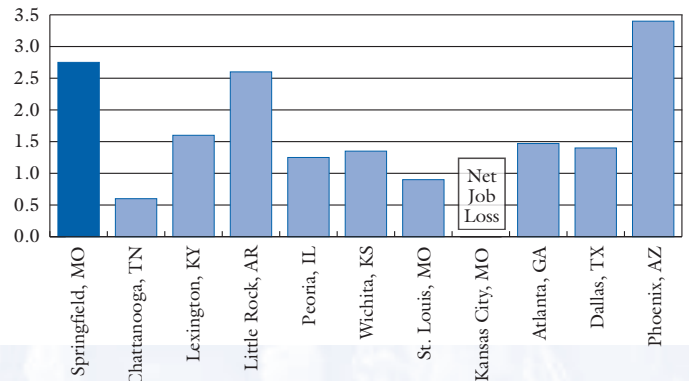
EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Data from Current Employment Statistics series from Bureau of Labor Statistics.

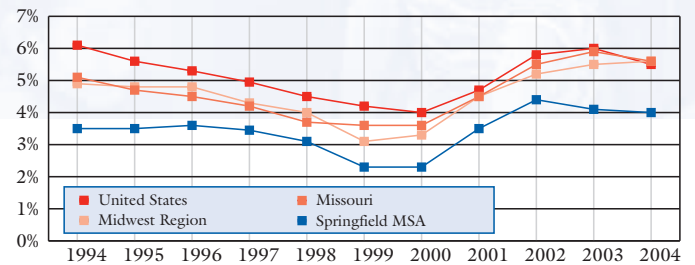
Strong Economy with Steady Job Growth and Low Unemployment. The region's economy is robust and continues to outpace the rest of the state. The local economy's consistent job growth accounts for nearly one third of the new jobs in the state, yet the area represents only 7% of the state's workforce.¹ Additionally, the region's unemployment rate is 4%, far lower than around the state.¹ Both steady unemployment and strong job growth are key factors that contribute to the area's strong economy.

2004 JOB GROWTH RATE



Data from Local Area Unemployment Statistics Series of Bureau of Labor Statistics.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Data from Local Area Unemployment Statistics Series of Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Low Cost of Living. The cost of living in the region ranks considerably lower than every other comparison city. With a cost of living index at 89%, it is less expensive to live in Springfield than in nearby cities such as St. Louis, Kansas City, Tulsa, or Little Rock.²

Bustling and Thriving Downtown. The revitalization efforts of Springfield's downtown/center city area have changed the city's landscape. Significant development dollars invested during the past 12 months continue a trend that began several years ago. Public and private developers have invested over \$130 million in center city renovation projects, including loft apartments, corner grocery stores, upscale retail boutiques, coffeehouses and restaurants, and art galleries.⁴ This urban renewal has been further enhanced with the addition of Hammons Field and the Springfield Cardinals, an expo center with 100,000 square feet of new exhibition space, and parks and greenways at Jordan Valley Park, all within walking distance from one another.

Atmosphere Of United Collaboration. Setting the region apart from others around Missouri and the U.S. is its ability to collaborate effectively and plan for the future. Community and civic leaders believe strongly

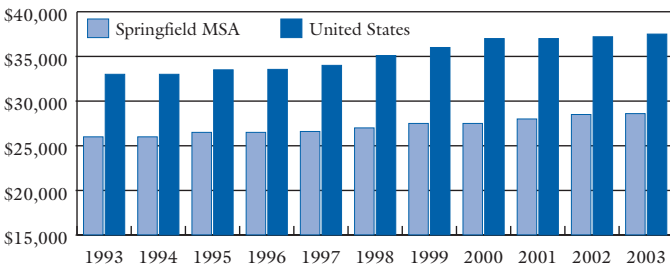
that uniting our efforts to address challenges means greater quality of life for all of us. One example of this is the Ozarks Regional Economic Partnership, where 67 organizations (representing cities, counties, and chambers of commerce) collaborate to plan for the region's future.

Conscious Effort to Develop Tomorrow's Workforce. Ozarks Technical Community College, now in its 15th year, has significantly affected workforce development in this community. The fastest growing community college in the country, OTC has filled the need for associate degrees for a trained workforce. Additionally, each higher education institution including Drury University, Evangel University, Missouri State University, and OTC strive to create curriculum to meet the labor needs of the region's largest employers such as CoxHealth and St. John's Health System.

Finally, the community understands that the effectiveness of its future workforce depends upon how well we instill core values in our young children. As a result, several community programs have been established during the past year. Two examples include the Community Partnership's Building Blocks program and the long-term, community-wide Character Education initiative, which has over 600 partners, including schools, churches, businesses, and service organizations.

Income and Wages Lag Behind Comparison Cities. Our average wage rate and per capita income levels are notably lower than in other comparison cities. Even adjusting wage information to reflect cost-of-living differences, Springfield remains below comparable cities. Additionally, our wage rate growth has slowed over recent years, widening the gap between Springfield and the national average.

AVERAGE WAGE PER JOB *(Adjusted for Inflation)*



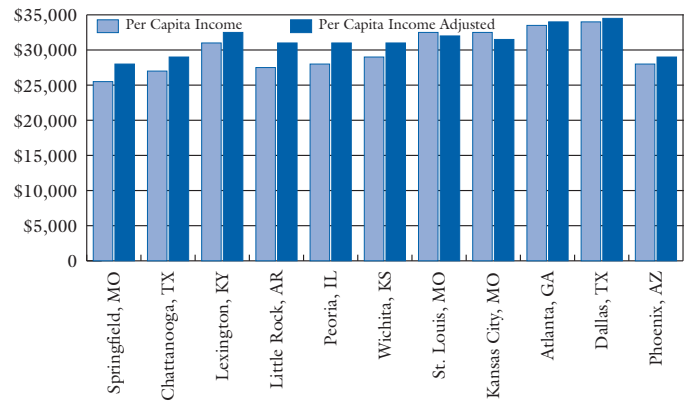
Average Wage Per Job data from Bureau of Economic Analysis; Inflation adjustments done using Consumer Price Index from Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Editor's Note: Throughout this document, we refer to comparison cities. These 10 cities represent cities comparable in size and demographics to Springfield, as well as a representative sample of large metropolitan cities across the state and nation.

Footnote: Key Data Are Unavailable
The Steering Committee that formulated this report sought data to provide the reader insight into the disparity of income levels within the five-county area. After exhaustive research and partnership with local university faculty, all agreed that data showing the distribution of income are not currently available.

Data Sources:
1) Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004
2) ACCRA, 2004 average
3) Bureau of the Census, 2003 estimate
4) Urban Districts Alliance, 2005

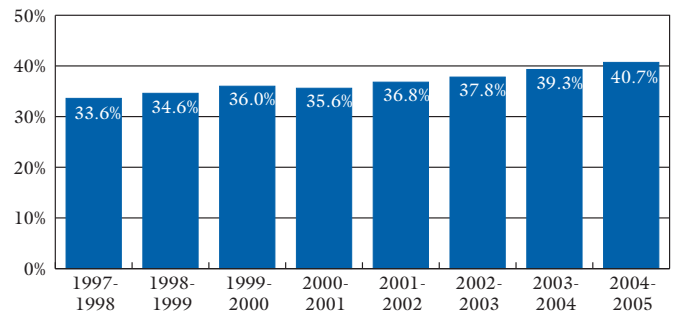
PER CAPITA INCOME *(Adjusted by Cost of Living Index)*



Per Capita Income data for MSAs from Bureau of Economic Analysis; Cost of Living Index data for cities from ACCRA.

Families in Poverty. A growing number of families are living below the poverty level, as suggested by the dramatic growth in number of children enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. This troublesome trend has significant implications; the lingering effects of poverty can be felt in every area of community life. Child abuse and neglect, family violence, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and other societal problems happen in every segment of society but are most prevalent among the poor. The economic cost of lost potential and productivity is staggering, and the cost of treatment burdens all Springfield and Greene County residents.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RECEIVING FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH, SPRINGFIELD R-12 SCHOOLS



POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL

