

"Parks, trails, and sports bring ageless energy to our entire community."

Jerry Clark, Chair.
Springfield-Greene County Park Board

The Springfield-Greene County recreation, sports, and leisure opportunities are an essential asset to our community's overall health. In 2009, Next Generation Consulting (NGC) ranked Springfield as one of the top 20 cities of its size for young professionals to live and work in the United States. NGC Founder Rebecca Ryan says: "The next generation is very savvy about choosing where they'll live. They look carefully at quality of life factors like how much time they're going to spend in traffic commuting, if they can live near a park or hike-and-bike trail, and whether a city's downtown stays awake after five." Recreation, sports, and leisure opportunities factored into many of the indices NGC used to determine Springfield's overall ranking.

BLUE RIBBONS

Springfield-Greene County Library Activity

The Springfield-Greene County Library District offers 10 locations throughout the community and a bookmobile: with two destination libraries, the Library Center and the Library Station, and its three other city and five county branches. The libraries, with their comforting and thematic environments, are convenient places for study, free programs, and live music.

Springfield-Greene County Library Activity			
LIBRARY USAGE	CIRCULATION	ATTENDANCE	PROGRAMS/ATTENDANCE
2005	3,156,458	1,626,184	2,261/47,572
2006	3,232,679	1,632,927	1,979/47,043
2007	3,373,550	1,635,204	2,013 / 46,190
2008	3,626,792	1,678,868	4,640/52,473
2009	3,964,937	1,989,866	3,022/52,663

Source: Springfield-Greene County Library

Caves

The Springfield-Greene County area's geologic setting includes many natural caves. For example, Fantastic Caverns gives visitors a unique guided experience in the world of caves. Discovered in 2001, Riverbluff Cave has been internationally recognized as the oldest fossil cave in North America.

Community Olympic Development Program

Springfield is one of seven Community Olympic Development Programs (CODP) sites in the United States. The CODP is sanctioned by the United States Olympic Committee. It is designed to provide athletes access to the best facilities, programs, coaches, and competition in the country to enhance their opportunity to compete in Olympic sanctioned sports. The Springfield CODP currently supports tennis, ice hockey, volleyball, weightlifting, and archery.

The Dan Kinney Park and Miracle Field

The Dan Kinney Park currently features a completely accessible playground. Future plans also include the Dan Kinney Park Family Center and the Miracle Field. The Family Center is designed to meet LEED Silver certification.

The Miracle League Field and Park Pavilion is an accessible ball field built under the guidelines established by the Miracle League Association. The field has a special playing surface allowing easy access for those using wheelchairs, walkers, or anyone who finds it difficult to walk due to health issues and/or blindness.

The Dickerson Park Zoo

Dickerson Park Zoo is Springfield's up-close outdoor wildlife adventure with hundreds of animals from around the world – Asia, Africa, South America, Australia – and our own Missouri

habitat Thanks to public and private donations, the zoo has seen tremendous growth over the past decade.

The Botanical Center at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park

The Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park is home to the new Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center. The 12,700-square-foot center contains classroom, meeting, rental, office, and exhibit space, along with a roof garden, gift shop, library, and elevated plaza. Lake Drummond sits on the south of the property with a link to the Ozark Greenway's South Creek Greenway. The park also features the Dr. Bill Roston Butterfly House, The Gray-Campbell Farmstead, Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens, and the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden.



Activity at the Botanical Center

Botanical Center Playground

Adopt-An-Urban Garden Program (AUGP)

The goal of the Urban Gardens program is to offer space for growing fruits, vegetables, or flowers to people who otherwise do not have the immediate space available in their own backyards. In response to community requests, Rutledge-Wilson Farm Community Park began offering plots in 2010. Rutledge-Wilson will continue to make available its 60 garden plots with additional gardens opening this year at Grant Beach Park.

Professional and Collegiate Teams

The Springfield community serves as home to several professional sports teams including the Springfield Cardinals AA minor league franchise, the Springfield Lasers World Team Tennis league, and the Springfield WolfPack professional indoor football franchise. Additionally, collegiate teams from Missouri State University, Drury University, Evangel University, Central Baptist College, and Baptist Bible College lead the way in providing Springfield with sports entertainment year round.

Trails and Greenways

Springfield-Greene County has an extensively planned network of trails and greenways, which connect the community and special areas of interest, including but not limited to Wilson's Creek National Battlefield and the Springfield Conservation Nature Center.

Waterways

Lakes and rivers in the Ozarks provide great water activities for everyone. These waterways provide enthusiasts with a variety of activities including canoeing, boating, scuba diving, parasailing, and fishing.

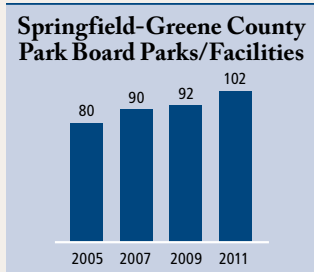


Bridge by the Cave at Sequiota Park

Parks and Open Space

Springfield and Greene County residents value parks and open space; voters continue to demonstrate their support with the passage of a park sales tax not once, but twice. Most recently, voters approved the renewal of the 2006 Greene County Park Sales Tax to finish subsequent phases of the County-Wide Parks Open Space and Greenways Comprehensive Plan.

The Springfield-Greene County Park system is a National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Gold Medal Award Winning Department. Springfield and Greene County are privileged with a park system that far surpasses both the quality and quantity of facilities and programs that are typical of municipalities this size and larger. In serving the residents of Springfield-Greene County, the Park Board oversees more than 102 city-county parks and facilities encompassing more than 3,600 acres including historical and state-of-the-art facilities such as Cooper Park, Fasnicht Park, Lake Springfield Park, Valley Water Mill Park, the Botanical Center and gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park, Dan Kinney Park, and multiple School-Park sites.



Source: Springfield-Greene County Park Board

The growth and development of this system provide the opportunity to host numerous community events, ranging from local to international competitions, which directly affect our local economy. In 2010, 35 major athletic events were studied. The economic impact information was calculated for those participants and/or attendees who do not reside within the Springfield-Greene County area. The economic impact (visitor spending) of these 35 athletic events that used Park Board facilities was conservatively estimated at \$6,750,000 spent within the community on hotels, meals, shopping and more.

The parks system currently works with more than 200 agencies and organizations on an annual basis to support and grow its facilities, programs, and special events. It is essential to the social capital of our community to continue to cultivate this network of collaborative agencies and organizations.

The success of this can be seen in both the bonding and bridging that occurs between the Springfield R-12 Public School District and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board within the School-Parks Are Reaching Communities (SPARC) program. The school-park concept is supported by current and future county-wide park sales tax referendums to develop 27 school parks over a 20-year period. Since its inception in 1998, SPARC has grown to include 26 school sites that have either before- or after-school programming through the school-park shared usage programming concept.

As a result of these collaborative relationships, responses to red flags within the community can more easily be addressed. The Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Ozarks Regional YMCA, and The Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield have broadened their scope with special programming that focuses on some of the special needs of the Springfield R-12 Public School district, areas of childhood development, and entire families.

RED FLAGS

Obesity*

As cited in the Community Health section of this report, childhood obesity is at epidemic proportions in our country and Greene County's rate is higher than the national average. Complications associated with obesity have led scientists to predict a shorter life expectancy for children of this generation. Without a continued effort to encourage active play and nutritious eating habits, these rates will continue to rise and chronic disease

will persist and increase.

In response to the critical nature of childhood obesity, the Healthy Kids Academy was established through collaborative efforts between the YMCA and the Missouri Foundation for Health. Healthy Kids Academy was implemented in the YMCA Prime Time before- and after-school childcare program to provide education on nutrition, reading labels, healthy eating habits, and tooth brushing. Specific periods of vigorous and moderate activity are a part of each day and only healthy snacks are provided for participants.

Additionally, SPARC began a walking program to target childhood obesity. The STEP CLUB now serves 19 schools reaching both students and parents with 1,200 participants per week. Children learn healthy eating habits and participate in school-park after school activities that are obtained through the Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition (WECAN) website and program curricula. Springfield was chosen as an intensive site for this nationally acclaimed program that is a collaborative effort between the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

Securing Green Space and Conservation

Previous *Community Focus* reports discussed the need to secure green space and set aside parks for wildlife habitat and recreation due to urban sprawl. Additionally, conserving the environment, and thus preserving the quality of community waterways, is a growing concern*.

With continued urban sprawl, a comprehensive plan to secure natural areas and preserve the environment for future parks, open space, and greenways of Greene County is essential. A strategic and evolving plan has been implemented to obtain new park land and property acquisitions through private donations, grants, and countywide Parks sales taxes.

Springfield and Greene County continue to experience success with this master plan, which was implemented at the following park sites: Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park, Rex P. Kreider Park, Lake Springfield Park, Valley Water Mill Park, Dan Kinney Park, and Lost Hill Park.

In collaboration with Springfield Public Works and Greene County Commission, the Springfield Park Board is working to establish the best practices and implementation in upgrading park lakes, waterways, and streams. For example, the Dickerson Park Zoo water quality improvements, Sequiota Park waterways and lake improvements, and Fasnicht Park waterway improvements are scheduled for completion in 2011.



Sequiota Park Lake

Economic Conditions*

The current economic conditions reported in the 2009 *Community Focus* report remain largely unchanged. Many agencies continue to operate their facilities and/or programs at capacity or greater. There is also an increase in the number of financial aid requests made to these agencies. While there is significant increase in use and financial aid request, the agencies are faced with limited resources to match this increased demand.

* Indicates Emerging Issue in 2009 Community Focus Report