



# COMMUNITY FOCUS

*A Report for Springfield and Greene County*

# 2007

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## COMMUNITY FOCUS 2007

*A Report for Springfield and Greene County*

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design and production

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The 2007 Community Focus report is a summary of information compiled by many individuals and subcommittees (see back cover for a list of those people). Additional information, data and sources are available on a website dedicated to this report.

Please visit:

**[www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org](http://www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org)**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Springfield/Greene County is a unique community. We are fortunate to have so many strong, forward-thinking leaders willing to once again commit to the report card concept with *Community Focus 2007: A Report for Springfield and Greene County*.

Our community's willingness to take a candid look at its strengths as well as its weaknesses sets us apart.

We know that this area is a great place to live but we also know that we have challenges. We're not afraid to identify these challenges and then work together to overcome them.

As in the 2004 and 2005 reports, this 2007 report assigns a red flag to the growing number of children living in poverty, indicating an area that demands our attention. Our community's response to this challenge has been outstanding. Many individuals and organizations have committed financial resources and volunteer time to address the red flags. This collaboration and commitment reflect one of our strengths as a community: our ability to work together.

Many community volunteers have served on the steering committee and subcommittees. They, along with our financial supporters—Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Junior League of Springfield, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Springfield-Greene County Library District and United Way of the Ozarks—have worked diligently to produce this report. The identified benchmarks in this report allow the community to measure the impact of our financial commitment, volunteer time and other resources on changing the identified red flags over time.

I have been part of the Community Report Card since its beginning in 2003 and would like to thank the many volunteers who committed their time to this project. Like them, I believe this report can make a difference. Many of us feel that if citizens are made aware of our challenges, they will step forward with resources and volunteer time. They have!

Our community is moving toward the goal of making ours a "great community" for all its members. Together, we continue to make a difference.



**Maura Taylor**, Chair  
Community Focus Steering Committee



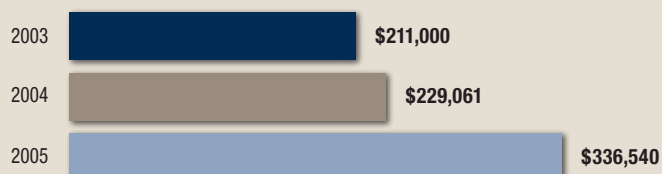
# OUR COMMUNITY: IN FOCUS

## ARTS AND CULTURE

### EVENT ATTENDANCE, Springfield Regional Arts Council

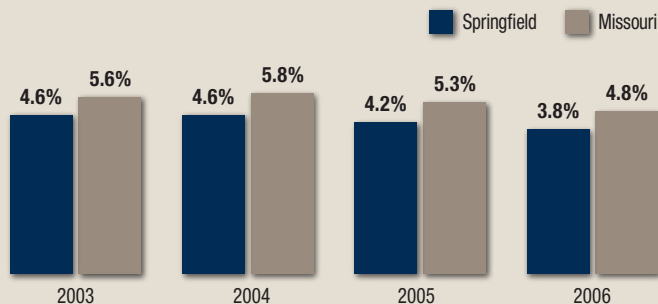
- 2003: 96,900
- 2004: 63,170
- 2005: 81,440

### BUDGET, Springfield Regional Arts Council



## BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



### PER CAPITA INCOME

- 2003: \$25,840—Springfield, \$31,484—U.S.
- 2004: \$27,012—Springfield, \$33,050—U.S.

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

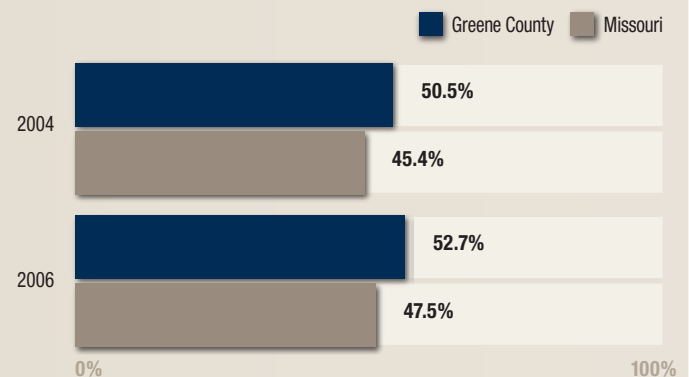
### VOLUNTEERS: Junior League of Springfield, Springfield Public Schools and United Way



- Registered voters, Greene County, 2006: 184,756

## COMMUNITY HEALTH

### MOTHERS ON MEDICAID, as percentage of live births



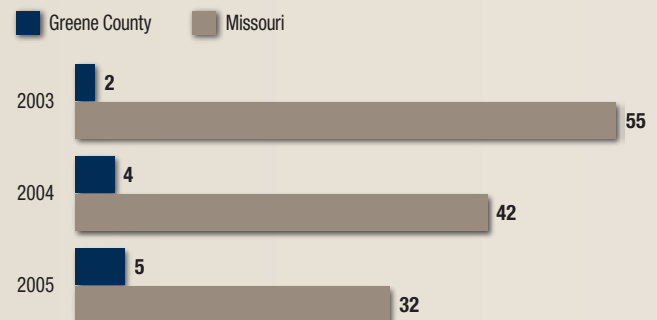
- Overweight middle school students, Springfield 2006: 37%
- Total employment in health care: 30,000
- Economic impact of health care: \$4.5 billion

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

### CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT (substantiated/per 1,000 children)

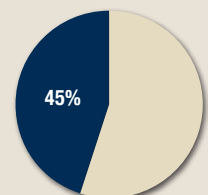
- 2003: 10.9—Greene County, 6.8—Missouri
- 2005: 8.5—Greene County, 5.7—Missouri

### CHILD FATALITIES DUE TO ABUSE/NEGLECT



### HEAD START CHILDCARE CENTERS

- Head Start centers account for 45% of accredited Greene County childcare programs.

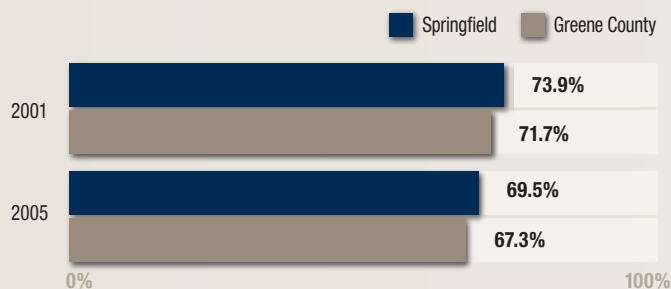


## EDUCATION

### TEACHER SALARIES

- 2000: \$32,278—Greene County, \$34,230—Missouri
- 2005: \$33,162—Greene County, \$39,070—Missouri

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENTERING COLLEGE



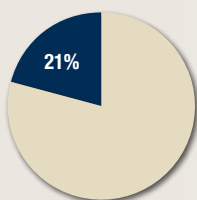
- 2007 Springfield Public School students who qualify for free and reduced lunch program: 43.5%

## HOUSING

- Median home sale price, 2006, Springfield: \$124,800
- Median home sale price, 2006, U.S.: \$221,900
- Income needed for median home: \$43,000

- Springfield households making less than \$15,000: 21%

- Children served by homeless shelters nightly: 300



## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### E-WASTE FROM COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

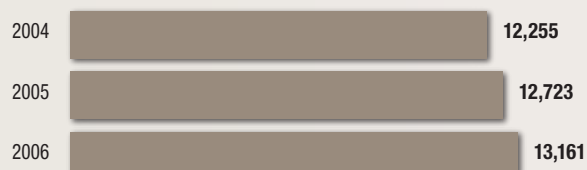


### WATER QUALITY, indicated by phosphorus discharge, lbs/day



## PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

### PROPERTY CRIME



### VIOLENT CRIME



### JUVENILE OFFENSES, referrals to court

- 2002—3,384
- 2003—2,901
- 2004—2,765
- 2005—2,346

### POLICE RESPONSE TIME, in minutes

- 2002—6.70
- 2004—8.92
- 2006—8.73

## RECREATION, SPORTS AND LEISURE

- Parks: 3,600 acres in 90 parks
- YMCA financial assistance to families: over \$1 million in 2006
- Community Olympic Development Program: One of eight in U.S.
- Professional sports: baseball, tennis, indoor football, golf

## TRANSPORTATION

- Roadway capital improvement spending, 2000–06: \$425 million
- Bus ridership, 2001: 1.5 million rides 2006: 1.9 million rides
- Air passengers, 2000–06: 25% increase
- Greenways trails: 60 miles

## COMMUNITY FOCUS

# RED FLAGS: OUR PROGRESS SO FAR

Community Focus reports of 2004 and 2005 listed red flags that pointed to selected community problems needing immediate attention.

The intent of these red flags is to focus the community's response. When these reports were published, the sponsoring organizations and others re-worked their own agendas and developed plans to address them.

We know it will take time to measure the success of our response. Solutions do not come in just two or three years. However, we are making progress in addressing these specific concerns:

**CHILDREN IN POVERTY.** The 2004 and 2005 Community Focus reports noted an increase in the number of children growing up in poverty.

Local charities responded by joining their efforts in the Grantmakers' Challenge for Children, a five-year plan, coalescing more than \$9 million in local resources for preventative solutions to targeted children's issues in Springfield and Greene County. Fueled by 26 grantmakers and philanthropists, the Challenge called on others to make their own charitable investments for the future of our children. Community Foundation of the Ozarks is the lead agency.

Perhaps the most notable outcome of the Grantmakers'

Challenge has been the opening of Isabel's House, a crisis nursery established by the Junior League of Springfield. There, children are cared for and their families receive respite, support and training. Partners in the project are Burrell Behavioral Health, City of Springfield, CoxHealth, St. John's Health System, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Missouri State University, Springfield-Greene County Parks, and United Way of the Ozarks.

Community Foundation of the Ozarks also initiated the ECHO project—Enhancing Children's Healthy Opportunities—a five-year \$1.1 million project partnering CFO with Springfield Public Schools, Missouri State University, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Burrell Behavioral Health. Two elementary schools with high percentages of students living in poverty will receive \$200,000 in 2007–08.

**HEALTH CARE ACCESS.** Jordan Valley Community Health Center has emerged as a medical home for thousands of low income families. In 2006, more than 15,000 Southwest Missouri residents used Jordan Valley for comprehensive medical, dental and mental health care.

Lack of access to dental health care is being partially addressed by the Ozarks Regional YMCA's tooth-brushing campaign in its before and after school program in 13 low-income area schools. The Head Start program has shown remarkable gains with a dental health education program for its youngest participants.

**METH TRAFFIC.** In 2005, Southwest Missouri had the bleak distinction of being a top site for methamphetamine production in the United States. Then Missouri passed a law restricting access to over-the-counter medications containing a principal ingredient used in making meth. Law enforcement agencies in Greene County report a drop in the number of meth labs seized, from 78 in 2004 to just six in the first six months of 2007.



*Isabel's House Dedication*



# PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY

Missouri's third largest city, Springfield, is located in Greene County in Southwest Missouri. Together, they represent a culture that is both urban and rural: Loft apartments and rolling farmland. A first class symphony and the Ozark Empire Fair. Jobs in nanotechnology and in shoe repair. Springfield is a vibrant city in a growing county.

**GROWING POPULATION.** The Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area is defined by Greene, Christian, Webster, Polk and Dallas counties. The population in the five-county area is growing at a rate of 1.7% annually. The workforce within the metropolitan area is 219,306 and has grown 9.3% since 2000, despite the national recession.

QUICK POPULATION FACTS	
Area	Population
Springfield City Limits	150,298
Greene County	254,779
Five-County MSA	407,092
Economic Area (27 counties)	962,824

**OZARKS BEAUTY.** Greene County is situated in the heart of the Missouri Ozarks, with the natural beauty of its lakes, rivers and mountains. More than 7,500 miles of shoreline are within a 100-mile radius of Springfield.

**ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT.** There's no shortage of amusements here. Springfield and Greene County are home to one of the finest performing arts centers around, a Double A baseball team with a stadium just three years old and a Civil War battlefield. The arts community presents First Friday Art Walks, Broadway productions, cultural festivals and operas.

**BUSINESS AND EDUCATION.** Some of the region's largest employers are St. John's Health System, CoxHealth, Wal-Mart, Springfield Public Schools, Missouri State University and Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World. The region is headquarters for Bass Pro Shops, O'Reilly Auto Parts, Jack Henry & Associates and BKD, LLP.

Springfield serves as a regional hub for health care, higher education and retail. The city boasts over 42,000 college and university students and Springfield Public School District is one of the largest in the state.

Springfield's two largest employers, CoxHealth and St. John's Health System, have been recognized nationally as top integrated health care networks.

Large-scale shopping destinations such as Bass Pro Shops and Battlefield Mall contribute over \$3 billion in annual retail sales.

The economic impact of the manufacturing sector is substantial, due to job creation by companies like SRC and Kraft Foods.

**HONORS.** Residents aren't the only ones singing the praises of Springfield and Greene County.

- Top 50 Adventure Towns (National Geographic, 2007)
- Safe Community (World Health Organization, 2007)
- 100 Best Communities for Young People (America's Promise, 2005 and 2007)
- Best Cities for Relocating Families (Worldwide ERC, 2007)
- Top City for Business Expansion and Attraction (Expansion Management, 2007)
- Top 25 Mid-Sized City for Entrepreneurs (Inc., 2007)
- 5-Star Quality of Life Metro (Expansion Management, 2007)

**WHAT'S NEW?** The community's economic wellness has been impacted by changes in the business sector since the 2005 Community Focus Report.

**T-Mobile** opened in 2006 and has grown to more than 700 employees. Its presence in northwest Springfield has spurred new retail and residential development. Recently ranked as a "best place to work" by the Springfield News-Leader, Springfield Business Journal, and 417 Magazine, T-Mobile has already made a significant contribution to our community.

**Roy Blunt Jordan Valley Innovation Center** opened in 2007 for cutting-edge research and development. The center houses Missouri State University researchers collaborating with corporate partners, all dedicated to the mission of product development through intensive research and pilot manufacturing. A multi-phase project, JVIC offers the promise of a high-technology environment, bringing with it quality jobs. These efforts likely will lead to additional jobs as products move from research to commercialization, an opportunity unmatched in Springfield's history.

**Edward Jones Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation** is housed at Drury University. Established in 2007, its purpose is to help students and executives develop entrepreneurial skills necessary for success in a global business environment. These lessons are learned through the hands-on experience of starting a business and supported by mentoring opportunities. "I truly believe the Center and Drury can inspire entrepreneurial dreams and energy in any student," said Todd Parnell, the center's first executive director.

# BLUE RIBBONS AND RED FLAGS

In this third edition of Community Focus: A Report for Springfield and Greene County, we have researched hundreds of indicators of our community's health and livability. As we discovered in the process, we shine in many areas and have far to go in others.


On this page, we've put the spotlight on selected conditions that merit honor or immediate attention. Some of these first


appeared in the 2004 and 2005 reports; others have made the list for the first time. Blue Ribbons show the successes and strengths of Springfield and Greene County. On the other hand, Red Flags point to community problems that need attention.

Our hope is that the Blue Ribbons cause us to celebrate while the Red Flags spark community discussion and a renewed commitment to improvement.


**BLUE RIBBONS.** We've found that we can accomplish more by putting aside turf issues and egos, looking instead for common ground. This level of collaboration is unusual for a community our size and contributes greatly to our forward progress. The 2007 report points to our strong economy, fueled by entrepreneurship, a strong health care industry and downtown development. The beauty of our surroundings, supported by the arts, schools and parks, create a quality of life to be envied.



 Collaboration among public and private entities and among organizations is making a stronger regional community.

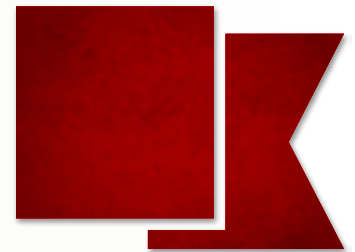
 The economy in Springfield and Greene County is strong.


- Steady job growth and low unemployment rates are fueled by both expanding and new businesses.
- Health care organizations like St. John's and CoxHealth continue their commitment to excellence, providing outstanding care and employment for people throughout the region.
- Higher education is driving workforce development.
- Center city, including Jordan Valley, is being renewed and revitalized.

 The quality of life in Springfield and Greene County is exceptional.


- Parks programs are nationally recognized.
- Proactive efforts are underway to preserve our natural environment.
- The arts community is unusually vibrant for a community our size.
- Public education achievements are significant.
- Transportation improvements ensure improved mobility and safety.

**RED FLAGS.** What diminishes the least in our community diminishes us all. We continue to be challenged by the issue of child abuse and neglect, with rates in Springfield and Greene County exceeding state numbers. A significant number of families need higher wages, proper health care and affordable housing to overcome the effects of poverty.




 The number of child abuse and neglect cases is intolerable.

- Greene County rates are higher than state averages.

 Too many families are living in poverty.

- Affordable medical, dental and mental health care is lacking, exacerbated by recent cuts in state funds.
- The region's average wage rate and income level lag behind peer cities.
- Adequate, affordable housing is outside the grasp of a significant number of residents.

 Despite recent support by voters, backing for essential services is not keeping pace with need.

- The burden of funding for public education has been increasingly shouldered by local districts.
- Crime is increasing while police officer recruitment is down and the jail is significantly overcrowded.



# ARTS AND CULTURE

*"The arts develop skills and habits of mind that are important for workers in the new economy of ideas."*

Alan Greenspan, former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman

Art galleries are opening downtown, an independent movie house is alive and well, and after nearly three decades, the Gillioz Theatre showed its new face to a proud community. These and other advancements are markers for the outstanding health of arts and culture in Springfield and Greene County. There is room to grow, however.

Funding for operating expenses remains a concern as do other challenges such as reaching audiences in the region beyond Greene County and sharing key staff positions. Addressing these issues can improve arts and culture in our community.



**COLLABORATION.** Collaboration continues to flourish in Springfield's arts and cultural community. For example, for the first time in Springfield's history, Springfield Little Theatre's Youth Performers, Springfield Regional Opera and Springfield Symphony joined the Springfield Ballet in its annual Nutcracker production in December 2006. This kind of collaboration demonstrates how organizations can merge resources to create new arts and cultural offerings that best serve the community.



**FACILITIES.** The Gillioz Theatre reopened its doors in October 2006 after being closed for 26 years. Located on the former Route 66, the facility is registered on the National Register of Historic Places. The building seats 1,131 and features a restaurant and bar as well as a banquet facility on the second floor. Already it is home to Broadway productions, theatre, arts classes, film festivals and concerts.

The Creamery Arts Center, located in Jordan Valley Park, is home to the offices of the Springfield Ballet, Springfield Regional Opera, Springfield Symphony and Springfield Regional Arts Council. It is also a meeting place for other arts and community groups such as Southwest Missouri Art & Craft Guild, Studio 55, Creamery Writers' Workshop, Missouri Film Alliance of Springfield and Jordan Valley Advisory Committee.

Phase II of construction began in spring 2007, providing

needed renovations to the 35,000-square-foot building, including an arts library, editing bays, arts classrooms and office space for the Springfield Symphony. Tuck pointing and new windows also were included in this phase.

Other arts related facilities include:

- Drury University's Pool Arts Center
- Evangel University's Barnett Fine Arts Center
- History Museum for Springfield and Greene County
- Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts, Missouri State University
- Landers Theatre
- Moxie Cinema
- Springfield Art Museum
- The Skinny Improv Comedy Theatre
- Vandivort Center Theatre



Springfield Art Museum

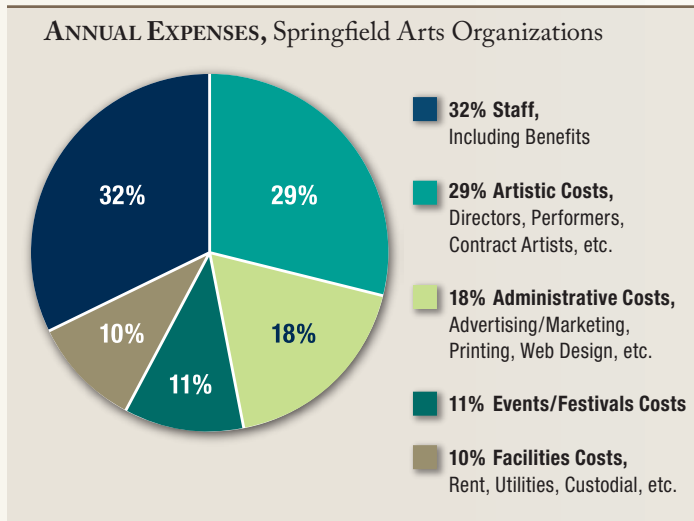


**QUALITY AND ATTENDANCE.** Responding to the needs of the growing community, arts organizations have introduced new and improved cultural experiences. Theatre venues have become more diversified, offering children's theatre, musicals, traditional theatre, and family series as well as more contemporary productions. The Moxie, a downtown venue, offers independent movies. Art galleries are multiplying, introducing the community to national and international artists. Collaboration and improved facilities also have played a role in offering patrons a high quality experience leading to a greater interest in the arts. For example, the Springfield Ballet saw an increase of more than 1,000 audience members for its 2006 Nutcracker performances, compared to 2005.



**HUMAN RESOURCES.** Because collaboration is becoming secondhand for most area arts organizations, the next logical step is pooling human resources. Several arts organizations have identified staff needs: marketing director, education coordinator, grant writer and development director.

Organizations spend a significant amount of their budgets on staff. Sharing employees would reduce the financial burden on organizations and, indirectly, on sponsors and donors. Combining staff would be fiscally responsible, similar to the way groups are sharing office space at the Creamery Arts Center.



**FUNDING.** Arts and cultural agencies are actively engaged in improving the quality of life of Springfield and Greene County. Yet many times these groups are not able to fully reach their mission due to a lack of operating funds. Although financial assistance is offered by application from several local and regional agencies, this form of income is not sustainable. Endowments have been established for many groups, but there are no formal sources of annual support.

In Mesa, Ariz., citizens passed a “quality of life” sales tax. If an annual source of income like this were available in our community, organizations could invest their energy in providing more services to residents rather than concentrating on securing overhead expenses.



*Springfield Ballet performs during Artsfest.*

**REGIONAL OUTREACH.** When the arts community serves the region, a cultural tourism for Springfield is created and the economy grows. As arts and cultural organizations showcase Springfield’s talents throughout the region, more visitors will be drawn into the city. Increasing the frequency of regional performances, workshops and traveling visual arts shows can address this red flag.

ARTS AND CULTURE SNAPSHOT			
	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
People Employed	71	76	—
Arts and Cultural Organizations	43	49	50
Museums	3	4	7
People Served by Arts and Culture Organizations	228,692	278,277	465,163*
Local Arts Festivals and Events	12	14	19
Organizations Offering Art/Dance/Music/Theatre Classes	7	8	11
Springfield Regional Arts Council Budget	\$211,000	\$229,061	\$336,540**
Number of SRAC Members	135	135	138
Springfield Art Museum Attendance	39,329	56,227	39,688
SRAC Event Attendance	96,900	63,170	81,440
Volunteers at Arts/Cultural Events	611	2,435	4,157

(Statistics based on 16 organizations’ individual reports.)

\* Number affected by Discovery Center expansion, First Friday Artwalk growth, other new events

\*\* SRAC budget increase due to grant assistance from U.S. Dept. of Education.

## ARTS FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Art in the Park	Midtown Concert Series
Artsfest	Phelps Grove Concert Series
Artsfiesta	Show Me Missouri
Bluesfest	Film Festival
Cherry Blossom Kite Festival	Japanese Fall Festival
Cider Days	Movies at Founders Park
Festival of Lights	Ozarks Celebration Festival
Firefall	Watercolor USA
First Friday Art Walks	Wednesdays at Founders Park
First Night Springfield	Winterfest

# BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

*"We collaborate. It sounds so simple, but it's a key ingredient in our community's success. I firmly believe we would not be where we are today without our collective approach to facing challenges and solving problems."*

**Jim Anderson**, President,  
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

As Missouri's third largest metropolitan economy, Springfield and the surrounding five-county region make significant contributions to the state's economy. A diverse industry base has provided a history of growth and prosperity in the region.

The region continues to foster a strong economy with solid growth. However, the community continues to be faced with the challenge of below average income levels.

**ECONOMIC DIVERSITY.** Springfield's continued economic growth has been fueled by a mixture of businesses. Recent analyses by the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce describe the annual economic impact of major industries:

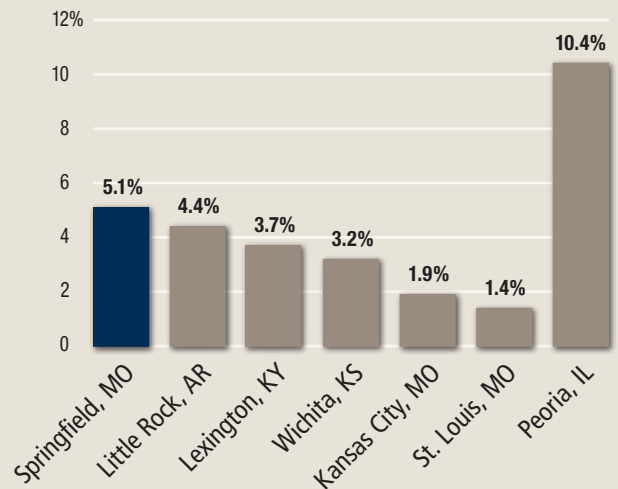
- Manufacturing—\$18.6 billion
- Logistics—\$14.3 billion
- Healthcare—\$4.5 billion
- Higher education—\$900 million

Additionally, the business climate is ripe for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Well-known companies such as O'Reilly Auto Parts and Bass Pro Shops started in Springfield and, while they continue to expand nationwide, they maintain corporate headquarters here.

## **JOB GROWTH AND LOW UNEMPLOYMENT.**

The region continues to have a low unemployment rate at 3.8%, far lower than other regions in Missouri. Additionally, steady job growth continues to bolster the local economy. The region saw 5% growth in new jobs between 2004 and 2006. This combination of low unemployment and consistent job growth contributes to the region's strong economy.

**JOB GROWTH, 2004–2006**



**COST OF LIVING.** In Springfield, the cost of living index is currently 92.1% of the national average and continues to fall far below all other comparison cities.

This lower cost of living is predominantly due to competitive housing costs and some of the lowest utility costs in the nation.



**DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION.** Private and public developments continue to bolster the revitalization that has evolved over the last decade in Springfield's center city. Since 2005, an additional \$69 million in redevelopment has been focused on downtown, bringing the total over the last decade to nearly \$375 million. As more and more citizens have opted for urban living over the last four years, the number of loft apartments downtown has increased by 314%.

Key projects completed during the past two years include:

- Renovation of Wilhoit Plaza which now houses restaurants, shops, loft apartments and a company headquarters
- A \$9 million renovation of the 1,131-seat historic Gillioz Theatre on Park Central East
- Completion of a \$4 million renovation and expansion at the Discovery Center, a children's hands-on museum in the heart of downtown and the community's first LEED-certified building (with a Gold designation). This designation, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, was granted based on stringent benchmarks for an environmentally-friendly "green" building and a focus on sustainability.

This urban renewal will continue in 2008 with construction well underway for JQH Arena, an 11,000-seat facility on Missouri State University's campus, and College Station's 14-

screen theatre and retail development, as well as the planned renovation of the Heer's development on Park Central Square.

**ATMOSPHERE OF COLLABORATION.** The level of cooperation and collaboration in Springfield is unusual in cities our size. The willingness of civic and community leaders to come together to address problems and identify solutions ensures a united effort. For example, members of the banking industry joined forces to provide low-cost loans to the City to ensure a much-needed regional crime lab. The collaboration between the higher education and healthcare communities was evident in their work with the Springfield Chamber's Healthcare/Higher Ed Task Force. Other examples are found in the ways the City of Springfield and Greene County have consolidated services for more efficiency and less overlap.

**DEVELOPMENT OF TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE.** Ozarks Technical Community College is one of the fastest growing community colleges in the nation. Most importantly, it is fulfilling specific needs identified by the region's employer base. Significant examples are its programs in transport training (over-the-road driver preparation), welding and allied health, including medical lab technician preparation.

Other higher education institutions have deliberately created curriculum to meet the labor needs of the region's largest employers.

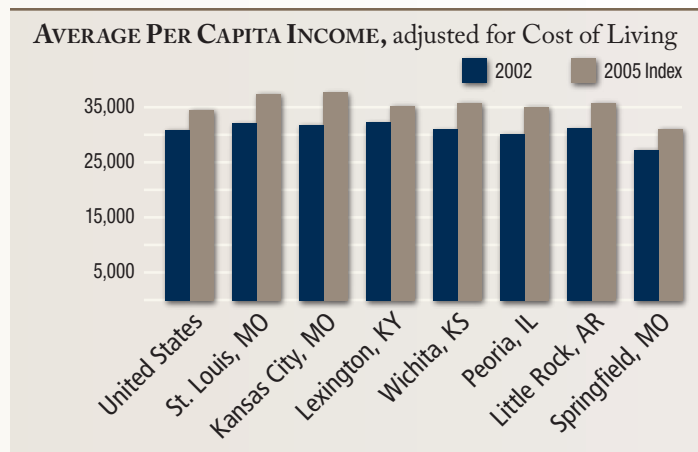
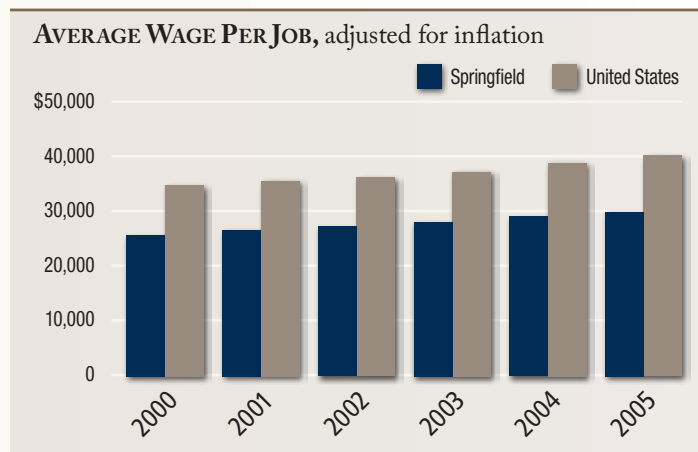
Finally, it is noteworthy that Springfield Public Schools conducted a series of focus groups with business leaders from various industries to identify future workforce needs. The findings were incorporated into the district's long-range plan.

**MINIMAL ETHNIC DIVERSITY.** Although Springfield's business climate is comprised of many different sectors and is not dominated by one specific industry, its ethnic diversity tells another story.

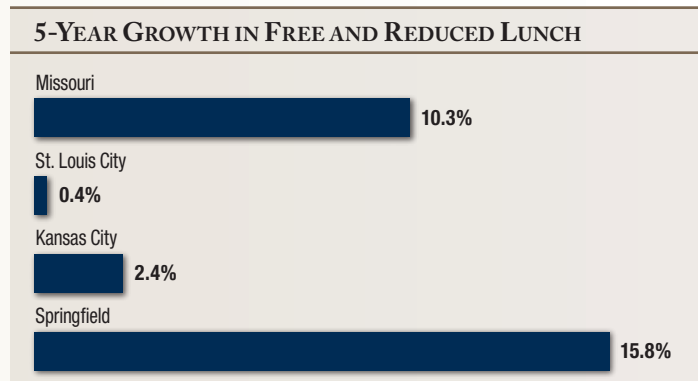
While Hispanic, Asian, and African American populations have grown in recent years, the metro area's minority population is still less than 8%. This lack of diversity can hinder the recruitment of talented professionals, ultimately limiting the region's potential. Of the more than 35,000 firms in the metropolitan area, less than 1% has a minority business owner.



**INCOME AND WAGES.** The region's average wage rate and per capita income level continue to fall below comparison cities. While this category showed substantial growth (9.4%), Springfield still lags behind on per capita income, even after adjusting the wage information to reflect cost-of-living differences.



**FAMILIES IN POVERTY.** Springfield children are more likely today to be living in poverty than two years ago. In 2007, 43.5% of students attending Springfield schools were eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, an indicator of poverty. That number was 40.7% just two years ago. The rising number of children in the free and reduced lunch program is problematic on many levels, and a symptom of the economic challenges facing many Springfield families.





# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

*“One of the unique characteristics of the Springfield community is its ability to coordinate efforts on a daily basis, but especially during a crisis. There was no better example of this than during the 2007 ice storm when neighbors helped neighbors under crisis circumstances. It’s the difference between a good community and a great community.”*

**Tom Carlson**, Springfield Mayor



**INVOLVED COMMUNITY.** Springfield and Greene County volunteers give generously of their time, talents, and resources, like citizens in many communities. What sets our residents apart are two unusual qualities. First, there is a history of strong collaboration among agencies and individuals who consistently put aside ego to work together for the benefit of all. Such collaboration is a signature strength of Springfield and Greene County.

Second, the community responds quickly to demonstrated needs. This was particularly apparent during the January 2007 ice storm that left many without power for up to two weeks. Community volunteers came out in great numbers to trim trees, clear yards and care for their neighbors, particularly the elderly.

Another example springs from the 2005 Community Focus Report that identified children in poverty and lack of access to health care as the community’s most pressing problems. This prompted the report’s five funding agencies to pledge to use the report’s “red flags” to guide their decision making.

From this pledge came the Grantmakers’ Challenge for Children, a five-year effort to address these problems. Fueled by 25 grantmakers and philanthropists, the Challenge will bring to bear more than \$9 million in local resources for local preventative solutions to targeted children’s issues.

The Junior League of Springfield established Isabel’s House, a crisis nursery for children when there is trouble at home. Families in crisis receive respite, support and training through Isabel’s House. Partners in the project are Burrell Behavioral Health, City of Springfield, CoxHealth, St. John’s Health System, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Missouri State University, Springfield-

Greene County Park Board and United Way of the Ozarks. The Junior League’s goal is to positively impact the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the community.

The Ozarks Regional YMCA responded with a tooth-brushing campaign in Prime Time, its before and after school childcare program, in 13 schools primarily located in low-income neighborhoods.

Across Springfield, local churches organized their members to become tutors in public schools, answering the call for caring adults to mentor and guide children.

**CONCERNS FOR FUTURE.** Citizen participation merits a blue ribbon for the community, but the future holds challenges as the nature of volunteerism changes.

Many volunteers need specialized training as well as education about legal issues such as mandated reporting laws. Background checks or drug testing are often required. As volunteer roles become more professionalized, agency costs increase.

In addition, minority populations are increasing. This means that volunteer recruitment and training must become more culturally sensitive to correspond with volunteer traditions in minority communities.

Regardless of these challenges, past history suggests that citizen involvement will continue to provide the important social capital that makes the Springfield region successful.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE.** There are 872 registered charitable organizations in Greene County. Below is a sampling:

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS				
Organization	Volunteers 2004	2006	Volunteer Hours 2004	2006
St. John’s Hospital	654	682	138,477	147,695*
CoxHealth	1,263	1,981	129,029	141,250
United Way of the Ozarks	2,172	2,254	20,440	22,110
United Way’s Day of Caring	1,400	1,500	8,400	9,000
United Way’s Week of Caring (2007 ice storm response)	—	728	—	4,285
Community Partnership of the Ozarks	—	7,064	—	26,590
Junior League of Springfield**	160	190	11,000	19,000
* (7/05–6/06)      ** Active members				

In addition to charitable organizations, Greene County is fortunate to have service organizations whose members give their time in a variety of ways. Below is a sampling:

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS		
Organization	Estimated Volunteer Hours 2005	2006
Springfield/Greene County Library	4,632	5,115
Springfield Conservation Nature Center	15,441	16,385
Wonders of Wildlife	14,889	17,921
Master Gardeners	10,500	15,951
League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri	1,500	1,645
Council of Churches of the Ozarks	262,820	247,740

**Community Foundation of the Ozarks.** Acting on the red flags identified in the previous Community Focus report, CFO allocated \$1 million for a five-year grant. In 2006, the grant was awarded to Missouri State University's collaborative elementary school-based ECHO (Enhancing Children's Healthy Opportunities) Project. The ECHO Project brought to two Springfield schools the partnership of Springfield Public Schools, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Burrell Behavioral Health. This project is a cornerstone of the Grantmakers' Challenge for Children.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS	
Assets 2003.....	<b>\$52.2 million</b>
Assets 2004 .....	<b>\$71.2 million</b>
Assets 2005.....	<b>\$87.9 million</b>
Assets 2007.....	<b>\$137 million</b> (as of 6/30/07)

#### Junior League of Springfield, 2006–07.

- 556 volunteers; 192 active volunteers.
- 19,000 volunteer hours
- Created Isabel's House, a crisis nursery, as a direct result of the 2005 Community Focus Report. Junior League and its partners contributed 10,000 hours to plan and develop Isabel's House. (These hours are in addition to numbers provided above.)
- More than \$2 million raised to address child abuse and neglect.

**School Volunteers.** In Springfield's public schools, 3,070 registered volunteers from the community gave 21,950 hours to students and schools, an average of seven hours per volunteer. Business and faith community involvement represents a significant portion of this support.

#### Students at Higher Education Institutions.

- Drury University: .....1,725 volunteer hours
- Evangel University:.....10,780 hours
- Missouri State University:.....114,468 hours
- Ozarks Technical Community College: ...Hours not available, but service learning students engage in community volunteer work related to coursework.

**Faith Community.** The Council of Churches of the Ozarks is a faith-based organization that has provided human services for nearly 40 years. It serves more than 100,000 people in almost half of Missouri's 114 counties each year. In 2006, children made up 68% of those served.

Nine operating agencies collaborate with 80 ministry partners, as well as with agencies and organizations and thousands of volunteers and donors.

Examples of Council services include emergency food and clothing, adult day care, child care resources, handyman services, advocacy for nursing home residents, equine therapy for the disabled and senior citizens services.

The "Churches of Springfield" organization selects one middle school each year for a one-day megaproject addressing maintenance needs. The recipient for 2007 was Study Middle School.

Additionally, more than 400 church-based volunteers from this organization cleared more than 300 yards in Springfield after the January 2007 ice storm. In addition, more than 400 individuals have been trained as one-on-one reading tutors for public school students in grades K to 3.



*“Prioritizing access to care  
reflects the compassion a community  
has for its residents.”*

**K. Brooks Miller, Jr.,** Executive Director, Jordan Valley  
Community Health Center

Springfield-Greene County serves as a regional hub for health care. Two nationally recognized hospitals lead the way, supported by public health specialists and smaller health care providers, all dedicated to excellence.

In spite of these resources, major challenges remain. Access to affordable health care, lifestyle choices that contribute to chronic diseases and the possibility of emerging infectious diseases such as pandemic influenza continue to loom as major threats to our community's health. Innovative local solutions to these complex challenges must be encouraged and supported.

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY HEALTH SNAPSHOT			
	2004	2005	2006
<b>Maternal Health</b> (percent of total live births)			
Low Birth Weight	7.4	7.2	6.9
Mothers as Medicaid Participants	52.8	52.7	52.3
First Trimester Prenatal Care	89.3	87.4	89.2
Births to Mothers Under Age 18	3.6	3.5	3.3
Mothers Smoking During Pregnancy	20.4	19.2	19.4
<b>Communicable Diseases</b> (incidence per 100,000)			
Gonorrhea	128.5	86.7	104.0
Tuberculosis	3.2	2.8	2.4
HIV	2.5	5.6	7.7
<b>Deaths</b> (rate per 100,000)			
Cardiovascular Disease	354.9	325.8	321.1
Lung Cancer	65.7	68.6	71.0
Breast Cancer	13.3	13.2	18.8
Motor Vehicle Crash	14.1	18.7	17.3
Suicide	16.1	12.0	14.9



## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT. Greene

County's statistical profile shows a decrease in substantiated child abuse reports. Recent legislative changes in the last two years increased the burden of proof from probable cause to preponderance of evidence, making it more difficult to substantiate child abuse cases. Even so, Greene County is still above the state average for substantiation of sexual abuse, neglect, medical neglect and emotional maltreatment.

Also alarming is the fact that Greene County's child fatality rate due to substantiated abuse or neglect has increased (five deaths in 2005) while fatalities throughout the state are trending downward. At the time of publication, the most current data (2006) showed Greene County's child abuse and neglect rate at 7.9, still well above Missouri's rate of 5.3 per 1,000 children.

Greene County's longstanding issue with methamphetamine, coupled with the increasing rate of child poverty, continue to impact the lives of children.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLNESS			
	Greene Co. 2004	Greene Co. 2005	Missouri 2005
Child Abuse/Neglect (rate per 1,000 children)	10.1	8.5	5.7
Immunization Rate (percentage of children, public clinics)	88.6	83.5	73.1
Infant Deaths (per 1,000 live births)	8.3	4.4	7.5
WIC Nutrition Program (# of Participants)	5,666	5,864	132,225

**Health Care Policy Priorities.** The number of uninsured people in Greene County continues to increase; 8.4% of the total population, and 13.5% of those 18 years and older, are uninsured. Currently, there are 35,198 Medicaid participants in Greene County.

Those in poverty tend to delay seeking health care, mostly because of financial limitations. The result is more costly care once their illness has escalated to a more serious nature. Nearly half of all emergency room visits are publicly funded and almost 20% are uninsured.

**Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse.** As recommended in the first ever Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999), behavioral health services are an essential part of health care.

A wealth of behavioral health services are available in the Springfield area, delivered by one of the most comprehensive

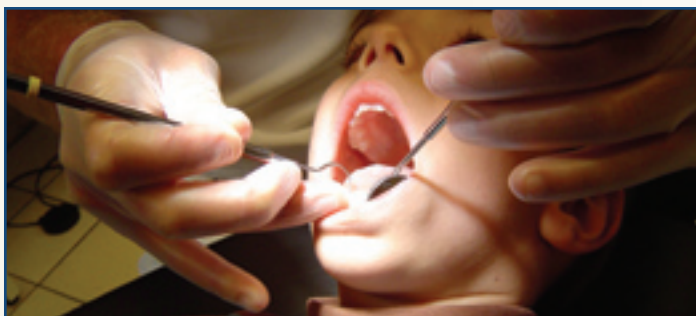


and integrated community mental health centers in the country, along with two major health care systems, a free-standing professional school of psychology, multiple university-based counseling programs and other community-based providers.

Unfortunately, access to these services is often limited due to disproportionately low mental health reimbursement rates for Southwest Missouri providers, and an absence of local funding streams for mental health, such as those that have been approved by voters in other parts of Missouri (for example, the children's mental health tax passed in St. Charles County in 2004).

The needs of indigent persons with severe mental illness can be met through state funding, and those with personal resources or employer-provided health insurance can access mental health services almost at will. However, of greatest concern is that access to mental health services is most limited for one of the fastest-growing demographics in our community: the working poor who are often uninsured or underinsured, but not eligible for entitlements such as Medicaid or Medicare.

**Oral/Dental Health.** Dental access for adults and children at or below the poverty level is still limited. Three institutions focus the majority of their efforts on the underserved, The Ronald McDonald Tooth Truck, The Kitchen Medical and Dental Clinic, and the Jordan Valley Community Health Center. Jordan Valley is by far the busiest of the three. In 2006, the center logged 14,000 "encounters," of which 80% were children.



## EMERGING ISSUES.

**Obesity and Other Lifestyle Choices.** A study by Springfield Public Schools in 2005–06 revealed that nearly 37% of Springfield middle school students are overweight. Overweight children and adolescents are more likely to become obese as adults. For example, one report found that approximately 80% of children who were overweight at ages 10 to 15 were obese adults by age 25.

Springfield Public Schools has implemented a program in all schools to provide healthy, nutritious food choices during school hours. Some vending machines and soda machines are inoperable during class hours and others are stocked with healthy selections. The school system offers physical activity before and after school.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department partners with childcare providers in Springfield to address obesity.

**Preparedness/Pandemic Training.** Since 2000, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department has been reaching out to

community partners with bioterrorism/emergency response planning activities. In 2006, the health department began preparedness efforts specifically focused on a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Pandemic influenza and its potential for region-wide illness, death and interruption of services, demands response from the whole community. An effective community-wide plan would slow the spread of pandemic influenza.

**Medical Home.** A medical home is an emerging concept among health care professionals. For example, Jordan Valley Community Health Center provides comprehensive medical, dental and mental health care for the entire family. In 2006, Jordan Valley provided a medical home to more than 15,000 residents.



**PUBLIC HEALTH FOCUS.** Community leaders understand the importance of a quality public health system.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department is the community's public health leader with support from many partners like the City of Springfield, the Greene County Commission, the Greene County Medical Society, Jordan Valley Community Health Center and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. The Health Department provides the community a broad range of services based on a national framework of essential public health services customized to our local community.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE.

Springfield's economy owes much of its robust health to the area's medical arts. Springfield is home to two of the nation's "Top 100" integrated health care networks, St. John's Health System and CoxHealth. Together, they employ nearly 15,000 individuals. Added to Lakeland Regional Hospital and Doctors Hospital, there are more than 2,000 available hospital beds in Springfield. About 800 physicians are employed here, and numerous clinics provide a range of specialties.

In all, the health care industry in the Springfield region employs well over 20,000 people and provides an annual economic impact of \$4.5 billion.



## ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.

Education and training of new health professionals is accomplished through a variety of programs available through Springfield's higher education institutions.

Missouri State University opened its new Jordan Valley Innovation Center in 2007, with departments focused on applied research in biomaterials, nanotechnologies, advanced technologies, genomics/proteomics, bio-systems software engineering and bio-medical instrument development.

**WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM.** The Springfield-Greene County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children program leads the state in providing nutrition education and supplements to pregnant women, infants and children under age 5.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD

*"In their earliest relationships, children develop a lasting sense of whether being connected to other people hurts or feels good, whether relationships are helpful or painful, worthwhile or inherently disappointing."*

John Constantino, M.D.

When the growing problem of child abuse was thrust into the spotlight by the 2004 and 2005 Community Focus reports, Springfield and Greene County launched a response. Those red flags not only raised awareness, they generated action. Most notably, the Grantmakers' Challenge for Children resulted in more than \$9 million for funding projects aimed at children's issues.

The Junior League of Springfield, in partnership with Burrell Behavioral Health, City of Springfield, CoxHealth, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Missouri State University, St. John's, Springfield-Greene County Parks Board and United Way, opened Isabel's House, a crisis nursery for children, in June 2007.

Other efforts include a Children's Bill of Rights introduced in the Missouri General Assembly, child abuse prevention training and a community-driven children's plan. In addition, Springfield-Greene County was chosen by America's Promise/The Alliance for Youth for a second time as one of 100 Best Communities for Young People.

Science now supports what early childhood experts have always known: The first years of life are critical to a child's development. Brain growth, development and learning are extraordinarily rapid during the first three years of life.

While a child's genetic makeup provides the blueprint for what he or she may achieve, early care has a decisive and long lasting impact on how children develop, their ability to learn and their capacity to regulate emotion.

Risk factors include child abuse and neglect, maternal depression, substance abuse and poverty.

**Child Health.** Maternal and child health indicators are improving in Greene County: Births to mothers younger than age 18 and births to mothers without a high school education inched down. The number of mothers who smoke during pregnancy declined. (See Community Health section.)

**Effects of Poverty.** The number of children ages birth to 18 who

are living in poverty increased from 13.6% in 2000 to 15.9% in 2005. Thirty-four percent of families are living at or below the federally defined poverty level (\$35,000 for a family of four). The number of children under age 6 on Medicaid dropped from 10,513 in 2003 to 9,464 in 2005, due more to eligibility changes than lack of need.

**Child Abuse and Neglect.** Substantiated child abuse and neglect numbers decreased, but are higher than state numbers. The number of child abuse reports in Greene County continues to be high, but *substantiated* cases decreased. Child abuse/neglect fatalities increased in Greene County, while state numbers decreased.

## CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT, substantiated cases 0–18 years/1,000 children

Indicators		Greene County	Greene County*	Missouri
Child abuse/neglect	2003	10.9	13.1	6.8
	2005	8.5	11.5	5.7
Hotline/Letter Reports	2004	5,660	—	—
	2005	5,801	—	—
Children removed from home	2004	819	—	—
	2005	766	—	—
*5-Year Mean				

## CHILD FATALITIES DUE TO ABUSE/NEGLECT

	2003	2004	2005
Greene County	2	4	5
Kansas City Region (Clay, Jackson, Platte)	6	9	4
St. Louis Region (Jefferson, St. Charles, St. Louis)	18	10	6
Missouri	55	42	32

**Three areas significantly impact the future success of our children:**

- **Community Awareness**
- **Childcare**
- **School Readiness**

**COMMUNITY AWARENESS.** Since 2005, there has been a push to increase community awareness of the significance of early childhood:

- Presentations by child protection advocate Victor Vieth, child abuse expert Dr. Toni Johnson, and child development experts Dr. T. Berry Brazelton and Dr. Joshua Snow.
- Ozarks Summit on Poverty
- Mayor's Summit on Children in Poverty
- Faith-Based Early Childhood Resource Fair



- Grantmakers' Challenge for Children
- Children's Bill of Rights (legislation proposed)
- Isabel's House, the Crisis Nursery of the Ozarks
- Musgrave Foundation's Lighthouse Child Development Center
- Quality Indicators Rating Scale for early childhood programs
- Hunger Hurts Kids symposium and backpack program
- Parent Information Resource Centers
- New early childhood centers at Logan-Rogersville School District, Shady Dell Elementary and Ozarks Technical Community College.

**CHILDCARE.** Total childcare capacity increased and accredited programs doubled. Forty-five percent of accredited programs in Greene County are Head Start centers, equating to high quality care for some of our most vulnerable children.

**Early Care Costs.** Childcare cost is a major expense for any family, often higher than the cost of college tuition. A Greene County family with an infant and preschooler will pay an average of \$1,062 per month in day care center childcare, which equates to \$12,740 per year.

CHILDCARE COSTS			
Full Time Childcare	Average Weekly Cost		% Increase
	2005	2007	
Infant/toddler care, home	\$105	\$107	2%
Infant/toddler care, center	\$144	\$148	3%
Age 2+ care, home	\$87	\$92	5%
Age 2+ care, center	\$91	\$97	6%

More than 1,550 Greene County families are receiving state subsidies to help pay for childcare. The difference between subsidies and actual cost—and how to pay it—means care choices are sometimes based on affordability rather than quality.

Sadly, Missouri has the lowest eligibility threshold in the nation for childcare subsidies. Missouri's eligibility is at 110% of the Federal Poverty Level. This means that a single working mother earning more than \$17,500 per year would not qualify for any state assistance, even though the average annual cost of childcare in Missouri is over \$7,000 for two children.

**Head Start.** Head Start is an early childhood program for children ages birth to 5 from low-income families. In early 2007, all 670 Greene County slots were filled. In 2003, oral health education was started in Early Head Start Centers (birth to 3). Payback was dramatic. In 2005–06, 44% of Head Start children had tooth decay. Of the Early Head Start children who had received dental education, none had dental decay.

**SCHOOL READINESS.** The School Readiness Work Group, comprised of early education stakeholders, surveyed area kindergarten classrooms to assess kindergartners' preparedness. The two-year study released in August 2007, found that social and emotional skill development is at least as important, if not

more so, than cognitive development in preparing children to enter kindergarten ready to learn.


**Parents as Teachers.** The Parents as Teachers program works in partnership with public schools to improve parents' knowledge of early childhood development, parenting practices and school readiness. PAT is a free service to all children birth to 5. In 2006, 37% of eligible families participated, compared with Missouri's goal of 40 to 45%. The Missouri legislature approved Gov. Matt Blunt's recommendation for an additional \$2 million in 2007–08.


**Special Needs.** An emerging challenge is the increased number of children receiving special services through First Steps and early childhood special education. In 2006, 218 Greene County children (birth to 3 years) were referred to First Steps, a state program for children with delayed development or developmental disabilities. Participation of children ages 3 to 5 in public school early childhood special education in Greene County is 5.5%, just above the state's average of 5.4%.

**The Literacy Connection.** "While the average 4-year-old in a family receiving welfare has heard some 13 million spoken words, a child from a working-class family has heard about 26 million, and a child from a professional family almost 45 million."—Betty Hart, *Meaningful Differences*.

Literacy is one of the greatest predictors of success and should start long before a child enters kindergarten. Children who start school with undeveloped basic literacy skills are three to four times more likely to drop out in later years. Sixty percent of prison inmates, more than 75% of individuals on welfare, and 85% of unwed mothers are illiterate.

The Springfield-Greene County Library delivered "Stories to Go" to preschoolers, serving more than 17,600 children in 665 facilities. In 2005–06, Building Blocks Literacy program, Junior League of Springfield, Early Learning Opportunities Act program, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Educare distributed more than 14,000 books to young children.

 Isabel's House, offering residential childcare for children whose families are in crisis, was established in direct response to a 2005 red flag. Community education about children in poverty began with a call to action using the Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, healthy start, marketable skills, and opportunities to help others. Logan-Rogersville voters elected to build an early childhood facility. Gov. Blunt established a state-wide Early Childhood Coordinating Board for early childhood issues.

 Red flags remain the same as in the 2005 Community Focus report: the effect of poverty on children, child abuse and neglect, and community awareness of the early years. These complex generational issues require time to reverse. For example, in November 2005, Greene County voters failed to pass the Community Safety Initiative Tax, which contained funding for early childhood programs. While progress has been made, gains are not sufficient to change focus.



# EDUCATION

*"A human being is not attaining his full heights until he is educated."*

Horace Mann

At a time when public education faces growing challenges nationwide, the eight K-12 public school districts in Greene County offer children and youth a quality education. These students consistently score above state and national averages on a variety of benchmarks.

Despite mounting accountability pressures from federal and state government, rapidly diversifying student bodies, growing enrollments and uncertain funding sources, the region's school districts have demonstrated academic success.

**COMMUNITY COLLABORATION.** The county's K-12 districts are supported by strong partnerships with Missouri State, Drury and Evangel universities and their teacher preparation degree programs.

Collaborative programs include the Ozarks Education Research Initiative where school climate is being studied, allowing local districts to share data to improve student achievement. The Student Teacher Academy and Drury's partnership with Midtown schools through Yale University's Comer School Development Program are also helping students succeed.

Additional partnerships with businesses, faith-based groups, social service providers, the City of Springfield and Greene County have enhanced student achievement. Examples of collaborative initiatives include Character Education, Partners in Education, Safe Schools/Healthy Kids grant, Truancy Court, Building Blocks for Youth and Caring Communities.

The ECHO project—Enhancing Children's Healthy Opportunities—was specifically established to address two red flags identified in the 2005 Community Focus Report. Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Springfield Public Schools, Missouri State University, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Burrell Behavioral Health are partnering to meet the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of children at two elementary schools in Springfield, both of which have a high percentage of children living in poverty. ECHO is implementing integrated prevention orientation services for students, families, school staff and teachers.

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.** Greene County's student enrollment was 36,279 for the 2005–06 school year, an increase

mirroring the growth in the metropolitan area's total population. Class sizes in most schools were slightly above the state average.

Some districts are experiencing rapid growth in student enrollment, creating pressures on existing classrooms and school buildings. Four of the eight school districts have facility capital projects underway to accommodate the growing number of students and improve learning environments. Collectively, these expenditures total \$132.3 million.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

	2004	2005	Enrollment Change	Percent ± Enrollment
Springfield	24,585	24,115	- 470	- 1.9
Willard	3,098	3,508	410	13.2
Republic	2,822	3,370	548	19.4
Logan/Rogersville	1,837	1,922	85	4.6
Strafford	1,012	1,126	114	11.3
Fair Grove	1,010	1,069	59	5.8
Ash Grove	836	869	33	3.9
Walnut Grove	340	300	- 40	- 11.8
Greene County	35,540	36,279	739	2.1
State of Missouri	895,624	894,855	- 769	- 0.1

**TEACHER SALARIES.** The growing discrepancy between local teacher salaries and state averages is a concern. In 2000, the average salary for teachers in Greene County was \$32,278, while the statewide average was \$34,230, a gap of almost \$2,000. Although the county average increased slightly to \$33,162 in 2005, the gap widened by nearly \$5,000.

A competitive salary schedule for highly qualified teachers is paramount to maintaining a committed and well-prepared teaching force.

## TEACHER SALARIES



**WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?** Most students in Springfield and Greene County attend public schools, but private, parochial and home school settings expand educational options for families.

Within public school systems, choices are increasingly available.

Springfield Public Schools has initiated several academic options, including the International Baccalaureate Programmes at the elementary, middle and high school level. Springfield is the only district in Missouri to offer the International Baccalaureate from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

All eight Greene County districts offer alternative academic programs for at-risk students, and most districts participate in Missouri's A+ scholarship program.

Reflecting state and national trends, Springfield Public Schools and surrounding districts educate an increasing number of both economically disadvantaged students (as measured by the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch rates) and students with limited English proficiency.


In 2005, more than 13,000 public school students in Greene County received free or reduced lunch rates, an increase of nearly 2,000 students since 2000. The number of students with limited English proficiency was 265, an increase of 70 students in five years. In both cases, these students often face academic obstacles brought on by poverty or by inadequate language skills.

STUDENTS QUALIFYING FOR FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH				
	2000		2005	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Springfield	36.8	8,776	40.7	9,611
Willard	24.8	778	33.4	1,182
Republic	26.9	816	33.7	1,138
Logan-Rogersville	20.4	376	22.9	430
Strafford	33.4	344	36.8	412
Fair Grove	30.8	315	34.4	370
Ash Grove	30.5	257	31.1	260
Walnut Grove	35.8	118	41.4	123
Greene County	29.9	11,780	34.3	13,526
State of Missouri	36.6	329,716	41.8	364,441


**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES.** Despite these increases, Springfield and Greene County student academic performance is on par with or exceeds state averages. For six of the eight districts, the percent of graduates scoring at or above the national ACT average is higher than the statewide percentage.

Seven of the eight districts had an attendance rate above the

state average, while seven districts also had a dropout rate below the state average.

 Springfield Public Schools' dropout rate was the lone exception. The increasing number of students voluntarily choosing not to complete their education is a concern. The entire community must address this growing disengagement, as high school dropouts often present future problems for law enforcement and the work force, and create an increased demand for social services.

**ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS.** To comply with federal and state law, students are tested annually to determine academic progress using the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test. The percentage of students scoring in the levels Proficient or Advanced is reported annually to determine if a district has made "adequate yearly progress." Failure to increase this percentage or meet a target percentage can jeopardize a district's federal funding, as outlined in the federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind. Seven of the eight Greene County districts met adequate yearly progress in communication arts and math in 2005.

 **BUDGETARY ISSUES.** Adequate and equitable public funding remains a top concern for county districts. Senate Bill 287 (passed in 2005 and implemented in 2006) contains a new foundation formula whose provisions prohibit Greene County school districts from meeting state targets for full funding.

Districts must maintain minimum operating (or performance) levies of \$3.43 to receive full state funding. Since the average operating levy for Greene County schools is \$3.25, Greene County school districts will lose millions in state funding over the current formula's seven-year phase-in period.

To partially compensate for this loss of state funding, some districts' residents are bearing a larger percentage of their districts' operating budgets. Statewide, residents support 55.7% of their district operating budgets. Springfield's local contribution of 64.1% is the highest among Greene County districts, while Walnut Grove is the lowest, at 39.7%.

Balancing equitable and adequate state, federal and local funding is essential for maintaining the quality of public education throughout the region.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE						
	ACT*	2000 Percentages		ACT*	2005 Percentages	
		Attendance	Dropouts		Attendance	Dropouts
Missouri	35.4	93.6	4.5	33.7	94.0	3.7
Springfield	46.6	93.8	7.5	40.6	93.7	5.4
Willard	35.3	95.0	2.8	32.0	94.0	2.5
Republic	41.6	93.8	1.6	36.1	95.2	1.9
Rogersville	40.2	93.5	4.0	37.4	94.7	3.3
Strafford	47.7	94.7	2.4	43.1	95.9	1.4
Fair Grove	39.6	94.4	2.7	36.5	96.2	3.0
Ash Grove	31.3	95.0	2.4	53.2	96.0	0.0
Walnut Grove	40.0	95.4	3.7	33.3	94.9	3.7

\*Graduates scoring at or above national average

# HOUSING

*"During the 2007 ice storm, most of us had a brush with homelessness—and felt powerless to change our circumstances. Many in our area must deal with this reality every day."*

**Patty Van Weelden**, Housing Assistance Director,  
Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

Everyone needs a place to call home. Springfield and Greene County indicators show strong growth in new housing starts and homeownership rates are up.

Much less visible are those who are without a home. On any day, about 600 individuals are homeless in Greene County. More alarming, over 50% of these are children whose educational achievement, development and future success



depend, at least in part, to housing stabilization.

There is a growing disconnect between

household income and housing prices. Predatory lending and payday loan businesses are booming. Foreclosure rates in Greene County are escalating at an alarming rate.

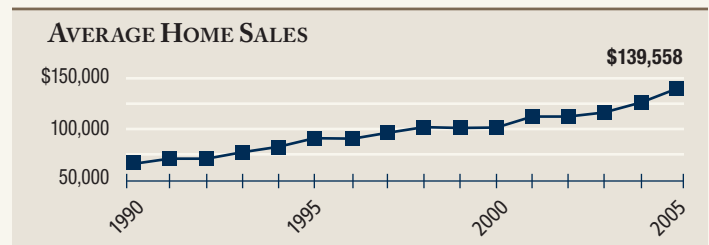
A strong collaborative force of citizens and organizations is at work promoting the Affordable Housing element of Vision 20/20. The plan calls for the creation of a city/county housing office and a local Housing Trust Fund to address the housing needs of our county's most vulnerable population.

**CAN WE AFFORD IT?** As Springfield's population continues to grow at 2.2% annually, residents enjoy the benefits of a stable economy and the cost of living remains well below the national average. Housing costs in Springfield rose 5.1% from 2004 to 2005, but still remain 18.8% below the national average.

In 2004, the median salary in Springfield was \$23,780, an increase of only 4.1% since 2001. Inflation jumped 6.7% during the same period. Housing costs rose 18.2%. Many low- and

moderate-income families are experiencing soaring rent rates and fewer opportunities for homeownership.

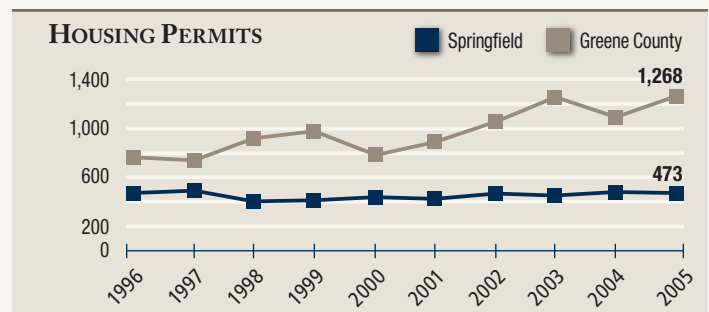
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has set the standard for calculating housing costs at 30% of adjusted gross household income. Overall, about a third of Springfield households paid more than 30% of their adjusted gross income for housing in 2005.



**LOCAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.** New single family residential development in Greene County (excluding Springfield) hit a record high in 2005 at 1,268 permits issued, up from approximately 1,100 in 2004. Just one year later, county permits for single-family development stabilized at 968.

Springfield permits for new residential construction remained steady at 473 in 2005. Average home sale prices have increased dramatically over the past two years, rising from \$125,000 in 2004 to \$139,550 in 2005 while still remaining at 30% below national averages.

More than 220 new housing units have been developed in downtown Springfield. Urban Districts Alliance reports the average monthly rent for downtown units at \$800 to \$1,000.



## HOUSING CHALLENGES.

**Local Housing Office and Trust Fund.** The Affordable Housing element of the Vision 20/20 plan calls for a city/county housing office to develop housing resources and coordinate information. The plan also calls for creation of a local Housing Trust Fund that would bridge the gap not



covered by state and federal funds, a gap that looms largest for the working poor. Although the City of Springfield has adopted these initiatives as priorities and there is strong support from a coalition of citizens and housing organizations, funding is not available to begin these proposals.

**Foreclosures.** High home values have created an opportunistic atmosphere that leaves many households in financial ruin. According to the National Association of Realtors' chief economist, "...sub prime lenders granted mortgage loans with low starter (teaser) interest rates to high-risk borrowers without sound underwriting. Many of these loans were made to borrowers with little or no documentation of their financial capacity to service debt and required little or no down payment, leaving borrowers with virtually nothing at stake in the property if something went wrong." The result is a national epidemic of foreclosures.

National foreclosure rates rose 45% over the past year. Foreclosure rates in Springfield increased 20% from 2005 to 2006 and 300% since 1997.

The ripple effect of foreclosures is far reaching. Poor credit and poor rent history are creating a larger reliance on supportive services, straining the limited housing resources available for low income families, seniors, disabled and the homeless.

**Public and Assisted Housing.** Federal resources for subsidized housing are not meeting local needs. In fact, due to increased costs of rental housing, fewer families are being served with the same dollars. Applicants for housing assistance can expect to wait 18 months to three years to access services.

**Shelter for the Homeless.** Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area Continuum of Care reports nearly 600 individuals on any given night are seeking refuge in shelters located in our community; 320 of these are children.

**Disconnect.** According to the Center for Housing Policy's 2006 report, Springfield families earning above \$43,000 annually should be able to purchase a median priced home.

HUD's 2006 fair market rent rate for a two-bedroom unit in Springfield-Greene County is \$524. This means a person must earn at least \$10.08 per hour to afford a two-bedroom housing unit. The disconnect between income and housing costs can be further demonstrated by the fact that one in five households has an income of less than \$15,000 per year.

**Senior and Disabled Housing.** Over 450 qualified elderly and disabled households are in the current assistance application pool but are not being served due to lack of funding. Sixty-seven percent of households served by the Housing Authority of Springfield are elderly and disabled.

**People with Mental Illness.** Local psychiatric units report a sharp increase in demand for supportive housing. One facility designed for inpatient care for a maximum of 10 days is allowing

individuals to remain hospitalized for up to 90 days due to the shortage of supportive housing beds.

## ADDRESSING THE NEED...TOGETHER.

Developers, public service providers, elected officials and community leaders are pooling resources to create quality, affordable housing opportunities.



The City of Springfield is a champion of local affordable housing initiatives, through the use of federal Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds

and the American Dreams Down Payment Initiative, the local loan program for shelter providers aimed at decentralizing homeless services on Commercial Street.

The City also provides strong support to the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance to revitalize center city housing stock.

**NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING.** Through historic tax credits, the Missouri Housing Trust Fund and HUD, many of Springfield's treasured edifices have been given new life as affordable housing units. Examples include:

*Affordable Homes Development* will construct 31 two- and three-bedroom apartments which will rent for \$385 and \$424 per month, financed through the Missouri Housing Development Commission's low-income housing tax credit program. Bond financing through the Department of Economic Development, resources from MHDC as well as a Community Development Block Grant will drive the development of 32 single family homes leasing for \$605 a month.

*Carlson-Gardner Properties:* Historic renovations of four buildings located on Walnut Street were completed in 2005, creating 32 affordable one- and two-bedroom apartments with a rent range of \$347 to \$422. This renovation was recognized with a Preserve Missouri Award from Missouri Preservation.

*Affordable Housing Action Board* released four new units in 2005 and three new units in 2006 priced below HUD fair market rent.

*Habitat for Humanity* built eight homes in 2005 and 10 in 2006.

*Senior Housing:* In 2005, Greene County voters passed a Senior Services Fund that is helping citizens age 60 and older remain in their homes. Of the \$1.4 million collected in 2006 through this property tax, nearly \$184,900 was awarded for housing related needs.

*Homeless Services:* Continuum of Care secured over \$750,000 from HUD to support homeless services in Christian, Greene and Webster counties. The City of Springfield provided \$20,000 to support this funding.

*Special Needs Housing:* In 2005, Burrell Behavioral Health broke ground on a 14-unit housing facility for individuals with disabilities, through a special grant from HUD.

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

*“Clean air, clean water, like freedom, isn’t free. It takes work and resources and commitment to keep what we have and to make it even better.”*

**Peter Herschend**, Member, Upper White River Basin Foundation and Co-owner, Herschend Family Entertainment

Ask any resident what they love about Southwest Missouri and most will mention its natural beauty: streams and lakes, forests, rolling hills and limestone bluffs. Rapid population growth provides exceptional economic development opportunities, but also brings intense pressure to bear on these irreplaceable natural resources.

**PROACTIVE EFFORTS.** The community has proactively addressed ways to promote a clean and healthy environment:

- The Watershed Committee’s Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill will be a state-of-the-art education/demonstration facility. The group is raising about \$1.7 million to complete the \$7.5 million project.
- Through a partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, City Utilities and the City of Springfield Solid Waste Management Division, methane gas from the City’s sanitary landfill is being converted to electricity. Three megawatts of power are produced and incorporated into CU’s grid, the equivalent of providing electricity for 1,200 homes for a year.
- Springfield is home to the first and only state certified electronics waste recycling facility with the Computer Recycling Center. National companies as well as local residents have contributed to the increase in the materials recycled at the CRC—from 205 tons in 2001 to 527 in 2006.
- Drury University has made a formal commitment to sustainability, joining only 25 colleges and universities on the Climate Commitment Leadership Circle.
- Greene County has completed a comprehensive management plan that balances the desire to protect the area’s natural environment with economic development, including agriculture.

## EMERGING ISSUES.

**Energy conservation efforts.** Following the recommendations of the Power Supply Community Task Force, City Utilities received voter approval to build a new coal-fired power plant. One of

the results of the community discussion leading to the election was a strong interest in an aggressive energy conservation effort. Included in the power plant election was funding for conservation education and positive incentives from City Utilities. Some of these incentives have been put in place. Others are being planned. Energy conservation is seen as a critical step toward protecting our community’s air quality as well as lessening our dependence on oil.

**Ethanol plants.** At the time of publication, a large facility designed to produce ethanol is proposed to be built near Rogersville. Environmental concerns, including air quality, waste management and ground water depletion, are part of the community’s concerns about the plant’s location. Part of the discussion has brought more public awareness to the lack of groundwater protection laws in Missouri.

**CAFOs.** Springfield-Greene County shares the statewide concern regarding the locating of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and the ability of local jurisdictions to regulate such large-scale agricultural operations. Environmental concerns include air quality, waste management, water quality and odor control. Counties lacking planning and zoning authority have turned to health regulations in an attempt to regulate/control both the locating and operating of CAFOs. Agriculture groups are divided as to their support of CAFOs, further bringing to light the plight of the small, independent “family” farm versus the larger corporate agricultural operations.

**AN ICE STORM LIKE NO OTHER.** The long-term effects and costs of the January 2007 ice storm will be felt for many years.

Damage to the urban forest in Springfield was significant, with thousands of trees lost. Residual tree loss will continue for two to three years as damaged trees, left standing in an effort to save them, fail to survive. The dollar cost of maintenance and replacement, negative impact on property values, plus the environmental costs—storm water management, air quality contributions, temperature moderation/energy savings, wildlife/bird habitat—are still being assessed at the time of publication.

Several groups are working together to educate the public in proper care for damaged trees and in reforestation, knowing this is an opportunity to ensure the diversity of our urban forest.





**WATER QUALITY.** Trend lines suggest that community stewardship has been effective in improving water quality.

- In August 2006, Greene County voters approved a quarter-cent sales tax for parks, a portion of which will fund water quality projects.
- In 2007, the City began a program to reduce storm and groundwater entering the sewer system through commercial and residential connections.
- For five years, the City of Springfield has led the way in storm water management, meeting stringent federal quality requirements.
- Phosphorus reduction has been exemplary. A \$24 million expansion to the Southwest Wastewater Treatment Plant, completed in 2005, will provide capacity into 2015. A \$22 million expansion of the Northwest Wastewater Treatment Plant, currently underway, will remove both phosphorus and nitrogen ahead of regulations.
- The City of Springfield Public Works Department has invested more than \$12 million to acquire more than 170 flood-prone and undeveloped properties since 1994.
- The Springfield-Greene County Health Department offers free water testing to private well owners.



## **STORM WATER MANAGEMENT FUNDING.**

Springfield faces funding shortages to address increasing water quality requirements for storm water management issued by the national Clean Water Act. In addition, the city's estimated 600 miles of storm water infrastructure are aging; this, with rapid growth in the county, makes replacement inevitable. Although the quarter-cent parks sales tax passed in August 2006 will provide some short-term funding for targeted projects, a permanent funding source is needed.



## **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT FUNDING.**

A stable funding source is needed to secure the sustainability of Springfield's Integrated Solid Waste Management System which depends on landfill tipping fees; no general or tax revenue goes to the ISWMS. Only about 300 tons of trash per day of the 850 tons Springfield citizens generate goes into the landfill, the balance going to out-of-town landfills owned by national solid waste corporations.

## **RELATED ISSUES.**

**Health and Environment.** Community Partnership of the Ozarks Environmental Collaborative and Springfield-Greene County Environmental Advisory Board have completed a five-year planning project that assesses the environment as it relates to human health issues. Springfield was the first city in Missouri and one of the first 10 nationally to undertake this effort.

**Stewardship Ozarks.** In 2006, Community Foundation of the Ozarks launched Stewardship Ozarks Initiative, an effort to strengthen regional organizations committed to conservation efforts through an endowment building challenge and enhanced conservation grant making. Community Foundation

has committed \$100,000 per year to this effort. The challenge should result in more than \$1 million in conservation endowment and sustainability.

**Green Building.** Springfield-Greene County has embraced the "green building" concept, with Discovery Center being the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified green building in Springfield in 2007.

Habitat for Humanity, partnering with Greene County, now has under construction the area's first Low Impact Development, utilizing "soft" storm water management and including trails and landscaped common areas. Residents are coached in techniques for greening individual landscapes.

Springfield's first platinum-level LEED-certified commercial shopping center is under construction. Springfield Home Builders Association is promoting "green building" and using those practices in the construction of its new office.

**Air Quality.** Springfield is in compliance with the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards. However, due to threshold changes in these standards, our population growth and climate, we are growing closer to unacceptable levels for ground level ozone and fine particulate.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department is now forecasting air quality levels for these pollutants at: [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).

**Solid Waste Management.** Springfield-Greene County's Integrated Solid Waste Management System, approved by voters in 1991, includes curbside recycling; as well as centers for household chemical collection, yard waste and other recycling. Springfield is one of only three Missouri communities offering the full range of services for managing solid waste and the only one to include an award-winning market development program.

Private businesses have developed around waste reduction and recycling including Nestle Purina PetCare Company, which manufactures animal bedding/litter products from waste paper. The state's first and only certified electronics recycler, Computer Recycling Center, is located in Springfield.

Due to a statewide reallocation of funding for solid waste programs, Waste District "O," which includes Greene County, has seen an increase in grant funding from \$90,000 to \$250,000 per year.

**Water Quantity.** Maintaining the current supply of high quality, abundant and inexpensive drinking water has emerged as a future concern as the area continues to experience population growth. Approximately 70,000 people in Greene County depend on groundwater wells for their primary drinking water source.

In response, Greene County has undertaken a comprehensive groundwater study, to be completed in Fall 2008 at a cost of \$557,000. The last study was completed in 1986. This study is expected to shed light on groundwater levels and withdraw rates.



# PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

*"We can be proud of the strong relationships between law enforcement agencies in our community. This sharing of resources is not only economically sound but also more efficient."*

Jack Merritt, Greene County Sheriff

Springfield and Greene County have joined a small group of U.S. communities recognized for their efforts to become safe communities. On the other hand, as the area's population increases, the demand for safety services continues to rise, stretching critical resources.

The community is meeting problems head-on, mobilizing to fight gangs and passing a 9-1-1 sales tax, among other efforts. Police staffing and jail overcrowding are challenges that must be addressed.

Springfield is one of three communities in the country recognized by the World Health Organization as a "Safe Community." Only 110 communities throughout the world have received such distinction. Among the indicators of a WHO Safe Community in Springfield are programs that target high-risk groups and those that promote safety for vulnerable groups.

In addition, Springfield-Greene County was chosen by America's Promise/The Alliance for Youth as one of 100 Best Communities for Young People. The award is presented to places that have developed programs built on five promises for youth; among them is creating safe places to learn and grow.

The region's population rise affects police and fire departments and other safety organizations. In 2006, the Springfield Fire Department marked an all time high for service calls and added a twelfth fire station in 2007. Police calls for service have also dramatically increased.

In 2006, more than 36,600 people participated in risk reduction educational programs sponsored by the Fire Department. Fire officials installed 743 free smoke alarms.

PUBLIC SAFETY SNAPSHOT, City of Springfield

	2004	2005	2006
Traffic Accidents	6,898	7,226	6,915
Alcohol Related Accidents	259	225	226
DWIs	1,752	1,415	1,099
Red Light Violations	1,431	1,378	938
Domestic Disturbance Calls	4,877	5,286	5,590
Police Response Time to Priority 1 Calls (in minutes)	8.92	8.16	8.73



**COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION.** The community came together in 2006–07 to aggressively tackle two major problems associated with a surge in crime: gang activity and illegal use of drugs.

The Police Department targeted gang-related activity, resulting in more than 450 arrests and the confiscation of weapons, drugs and cash. The Greene County prosecuting attorney empanelled a special grand jury to investigate gang activity.

A graffiti reporting and paint out program helped eliminate the visual blight that accompanies gang culture. Education programs sponsored by Community Partnership of the Ozarks curbed gang activity. The Gang Task Force brought a national expert to Springfield who spoke to middle and high school students and trained school personnel to respond to the problem.



**9-1-1 SALES TAX.** To enhance police and fire response and citizen access to emergency services, Greene County voters in 2007 passed a one-eighth of one cent sales tax to support and upgrade the 9-1-1 emergency call center.



**CRIME LAB GRANT.** The Southwest Missouri Crime Lab received a federal grant for \$1.5 million in 2007 to construct a state-of-the-art \$5.9 million facility in downtown Springfield. The city of Springfield is matching the federal commitment and the state of Missouri allocated \$400,000 to cover the funding gap. Due to open in October 2008, the lab will reduce the time it takes to analyze evidence for investigations and trials. The state's only other full-service crime lab is in Jefferson City.





**JUVENILE OFFENSES DECLINE.** The Juvenile Justice system handles a wide variety of juvenile cases, including neglected children and status offenses (acts that are prohibited by law based on age or "status" of the offender, such as disobeying a parent or being truant).


Partnerships among agencies and community groups are addressing the issues young people face. The declining number of

offenses indicates that these efforts are proving effective. From a long-term perspective, this is important since reducing juvenile deviance correspondingly reduces the probability of adult criminal behavior.


REFERRALS TO JUVENILE COURT, Greene County			
Year	Law Violations	Status Offenses	Total
2002	2,693	691	3,384
2003	2,235	666	2,901
2004	2,212	553	2,765
2005	1,808	538	2,346

 **ICE STORM RESPONSE.** Order and safety were challenged this year with an ice storm that paralyzed the area for many days in January 2007. At the height of the storm, three-fourths of the population of Springfield was without power. Public safety and community agencies and volunteers worked around the clock to get the community back to order, with no deaths in Greene County. A multi-agency resource center provided disaster relief services.

 **POLICE OUTREACH.** It's rare that a public safety group seeks input—both good and bad—from the people they serve. Springfield's Police Department each year conducts a citizen survey. In 2006, survey results showed that 83% of those responding believe police are serving the community's needs. Almost three fourths reported they considered their neighborhoods to be safe. Respondents concurred with police that drugs (44%) and gangs (31%) are the two greatest crime problems facing Springfield today.

 **METHAMPHETAMINE LAB REDUCTION.** In 2005, Southwest Missouri had the bleak distinction of being a meth center for the United States. Changes in state law restricted access to cold and allergy medications containing pseudoephedrine, one of the principal ingredients of methamphetamine. This dramatically reduced the number of meth labs in the region.


	2004	2005	2006	2007
Labs Seized	78	37	21	6 (as of June 30)

 **METHAMPHETAMINE USE.** The number of Southwest Missouri methamphetamine labs dramatically dropped by 2007, but undercover drug purchases, possession arrests, and hospital emergency room overdose reports strongly suggest that methamphetamine use is still a very serious regional problem.


While local production declined, the drug is now being brought in from Mexico and other regions and use remains high.

Meth use by parents and caregivers puts children at high risk. It also plays a significant role in the escalating number of property crimes, as users resort to stealing, forgery, and identity theft to obtain money to buy the drug.


Demand for drug treatment remains strong. In Greene County, admissions for meth treatment went from 358 to 512 from 2004 to 2006.

 **RISING CRIME RATES.** Government statistics indicate a rise in violent crime and property crime in Springfield and Greene County during the last few years. This rise has been attributed to increases in both drug use and gang activity. Aggressive steps are being taken by law enforcement, the prosecutor's office and the community to address this problem.


CRIME RATE, City of Springfield			
Year	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Total
2004	857	12,255	13,112
2005	892	12,723	13,615
2006	1,001	13,161	14,162

 **POLICE RESPONSE TIME.** The time required for law enforcement to respond to a citizen's call for service varies based on many factors, primarily related to the seriousness of the crime and the number of available officers.

In Springfield, the police department has a goal of arriving on the scene of the most serious calls in less than six minutes. Unfortunately, Priority 1 response time has steadily increased from 6.70 in 2002 to 8.73 minutes in 2006. The actual impact of a slow police response varies based on the circumstances presented, but this trend clearly has a negative effect. One of the variables impacting response time is staffing, addressed below.

 **POLICE STAFFING.** Area law enforcement agencies are significantly understaffed and face ever-increasing difficulties in their attempts to fill vacancies with qualified applicants. This is a nationwide trend, but one that is especially challenging at the local level, as agencies are unable to compete with the pay and benefits offered by larger departments. Inadequate staffing has a negative impact on public safety and service issues such as response time, crime prevention and the ability to assign cases for follow-up criminal investigation.

CALLS FOR SERVICE, City of Springfield		
Year	Total Fire Calls	Total Police
2003	13,493	118,136
2004	13,933	153,061
2005	14,724	164,334
2006	15,020	153,532

 **JAIL SPACE.** Greene County Justice Center is significantly overcrowded. Steps have been taken to address the situation, but the facility runs at maximum capacity on an almost daily basis. This has a negative impact on public safety, as many suspects who used to be kept in jail are now being released to free up space. This also creates a dangerous environment for the custody staff working there, as the ratio of inmates to jailers steadily increases.



# RECREATION, SPORTS AND LEISURE

*"If people concentrated on the really important things in life, there'd be a shortage of fishing poles."*

Doug Larson

Springfield and Greene County have been recognized again and again for the quality programs that the recreation, sports and leisure community provides its citizens. One of the most prestigious was in May 2007 when the World Health Organization designated Springfield a "Safe Community" in recognition of its efforts to create and maintain a safe and healthy community for all citizens.

These recreation opportunities know no boundaries, serving all ages and abilities of citizens as spectators, participants and athletes. Residents enjoy an enhanced quality of life 365 days a year because of the recreation, sports and leisure activities in our region.

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS.

Springfield and Greene County residents value parks, open space and greenways; these were among the first elements of the Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan. Citizens continue to demonstrate support by twice passing sales taxes for parks. In 2006, the tax was renewed by voters so subsequent phases of the plan could be finished.

The Springfield-Greene County parks system surpasses both the quality and quantity of facilities and programs in peer cities. Recognized as a Gold Medal Award Winner by the National Recreation and Park Association, the Springfield park system was also recognized by NRPA in 2007 as one of 37 park agencies in the U.S. that have shown "dynamic leadership to advance community health and livability."

The Park Board oversees more than 90 city-county parks and facilities covering 3,600 acres. These include state-of-the-art facilities such as Jordan Valley Park and the Chesterfield and Doling family centers.

The growth of this system provides the opportunity to host local, national and international competition, directly impacting the local economy. For example, Springfield is a host city for the 2007 Tour of Missouri, a new international professional cycling event that ranks among the nation's top three cycling events. In any given year, softball, tennis,

golf, hockey, soccer, volleyball and Community Olympic Development Programs generate more than 8,000 sleeping room reservations.

Jordan Valley Park is regarded as the catalyst for center city revitalization. The two-rink Jordan Valley Ice Park was the first facility completed under Vision 20/20 and serves as a cornerstone



for Jordan Valley Park, which includes Hammons Field, the Expo Center, the Creamery Arts Center, Springfield Rotary K-Park (an outdoor classroom) and Founders Park. Development of Jordan Valley Park continues; once completed, it will encompass more than 200 acres.

Vision 20/20 continues to inspire the creation of new parks, facilities, services and trails. Ground-breakings in 2007 alone included Rutledge-Wilson Farm, Lost Hill Park, Valley Water Mill Park and Lake Springfield Park.

Springfield is one of only eight Community Olympic Development Program sites in the United States. Sanctioned by the U.S. Olympic Committee, the CODP provides athletes access to the nation's best facilities, programs, coaches and competition to enhance their ability to compete in Olympic sanctioned sports. These programs are currently held at Cooper Park, Jordan Valley Ice Park, Doling Family Center, Chesterfield Family Center and St. John's Sports Medicine Health Tracks.

Rivercut, a premier public golf course, consistently ranks in the top five public courses in the state of Missouri.

**PARTNERSHIPS.** The Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Ozarks Regional YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield have each broadened their scope with special programs that focus on childhood development, families and needs of the Springfield R-12 school system.

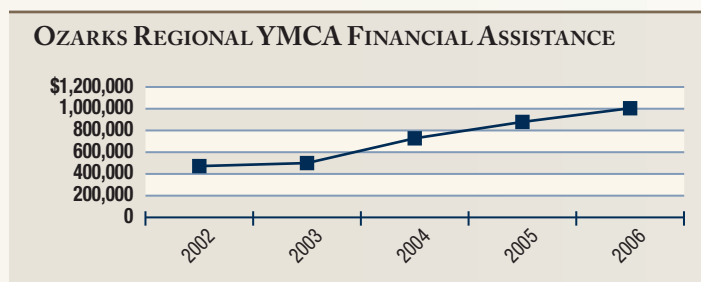
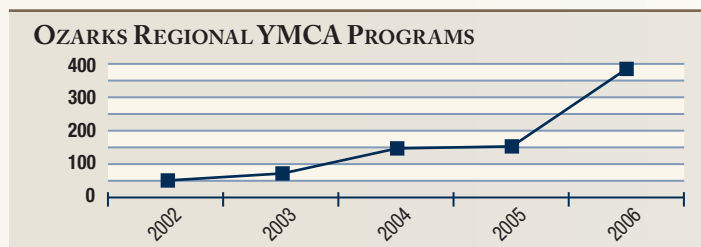
**SPARC.** The school-park concept, School Parks Are Reaching Communities (SPARC), is supported by a park sales tax aimed at the development of 27 school parks over a 25-year period. The schools use the parks during the day and the City-County park system provides programs before and/or after school. In 2007, the Park Board is on track to complete SPARC parks at six schools.



In addition to regular programs, SPARC began a walking program to target childhood obesity. The Step Club involves about 2,000 students and parents each week in 25 schools.

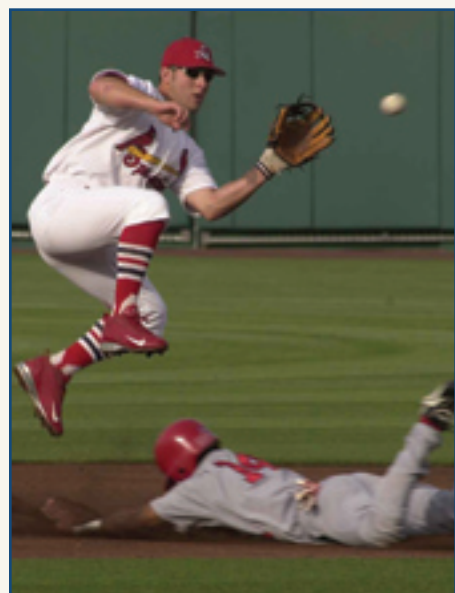
**OZARKS REGIONAL YMCA.** In 2006, Ozarks Regional YMCA provided 385 programs and awarded over \$1 million in financial assistance to children and families. Prime Time, a before and after school child care program, serves 2,260 children daily at 43 schools.

In response to the nation’s obesity problem, Ozarks Regional is one of 30 YMCAs in the U.S. participating in a pilot program to reduce obesity and promote healthy living. Also, a mobile YMCA unit takes healthy activities into neighborhoods.



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS.** Children ages 6 to 18 participate in activities on three campuses. In 2007, attendance is expected to increase 10 to 15% due to remodeling of the Musgrave unit and a new Henderson unit.

**PROFESSIONAL/COLLEGIATE TEAMS.** Springfield Cardinals, Double A minor league franchise of the St. Louis Cardinals; Price Cutter Charity Championship, a PGA event; Springfield Lasers, World Team Tennis; Springfield WolfPack, professional indoor football; and Missouri State University, Division 1



NCAA, combine with Drury University, Evangel University, Central Baptist Bible College and Baptist Bible College to provide sports entertainment.

**SPORTS MUSEUMS.** Missouri Sports Hall of Fame and Missouri Softball Museum preserve and highlight our unique sports history through permanent and interactive displays. The History Museum for Springfield-Greene County also features sports exhibits.

**OZARK GREENWAYS.** Springfield’s planned network of trails and greenways calls for 130 trail miles, with completion to date of 85 miles, connecting citizens with areas of interest like Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield and Springfield Conservation Nature Center.

**WATERWAYS.** Nearby lakes and rivers offer water enthusiasts a wide choice of activities. The world’s largest sporting goods store, Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, was started in Springfield. Next door is Wonders of Wildlife Museum & Aquarium.

**CAVES.** Riverbluff Cave has been internationally recognized as the oldest fossil cave in North America; fossils date back at least 830,000 years and possibly over one million years. Rocks and mud sealed the cave for about 55,000 years until 2001 when a construction crew blasted a hole in one end while building a roadway. Other caves are Crystal Cave and Fantastic Caverns.

**LIBRARY.** Springfield-Greene County Library District’s two destination libraries, the Library Center and the Library Station, and its other six branches offer summer reading clubs, free programs and concerts and an educational toy collection for preschoolers.

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY ACTIVITY		
	2005	2006
Visits	1,626,184	1,632,927
Program attendance	76,454	83,946
Checkouts	3,156,468	3,232,679

**DISCOVERY CENTER.** The Discovery Center has become the premier science education resource in Southwest Missouri, offering interactive exhibits, programs, special events, videoconferencing, outreach programs and professional development. Through a recent expansion project, Discovery Center has led the way in sustainable design and construction with a LEED-Certified Gold building. *(See Natural Environment section.)*

**DICKERSON PARK ZOO.** The Dickerson Park Zoo has seen tremendous growth over the past decade thanks to public and private donations. Recognized for its contributions to Asian elephant research, the zoo celebrated the birth of an elephant calf, Nisha, in July, 2006. It is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and participates in several Species Survival Plans for endangered and threatened species.

# TRANSPORTATION

*“You and I come by road or rail, but economists travel on infrastructure.”*

**Margaret Thatcher**, former British Prime Minister

Transportation is more than planes, trains and automobiles. It's essential to the health of a community, both in terms of the success of its economy and in access to essential services.

While residents continue to rank “traffic” as one of their number one concerns, the City of Springfield and Greene County have been successful in planning and completing several transportation improvements.

As far as bicyclists and pedestrians, much progress has been made to make the community more friendly and accessible but continued work is necessary.

The public transit system is serving more riders but additional routes and shorter travel times are needed to make the transit system more practical for more commuters, including those who are disabled.

Springfield-Branson National Airport continues to experience increased passenger loads and service to additional destinations. A new midfield terminal is under construction and scheduled for completion in 2008.

**ROADWAYS.** The City of Springfield's capital improvement program funds high-priority transportation needs through a quarter-cent sales tax. More than \$425 million in capital improvement projects have been completed in the past six years. Renewed by voters in February 2007, the sales tax will raise an estimated \$25 million for transportation improvements.

The City of Springfield partners with the Missouri Department of Transportation to use an eighth-cent sales tax for improvements on state roads within the city. This renewable sales tax allows city government to move more quickly on projects while state funding is pending.

Greene County does not have a sales tax in place to fund transportation improvements outside the Springfield city limits. With the majority of population growth occurring outside the city limits, a funding source is needed to finance improvements on the urban fringe.

Springfield's average commute time is comparatively low. In 1990, the commute time was 15.7 minutes compared to 17 minutes in 2000. The national average commute time is 26.5 minutes. The upward trend is expected to continue as population and traffic volume increase.

Several important roadway improvement projects are either underway or beginning soon. Essential funding has resulted from passage by Missouri voters of Amendment 3 in 2004 as well as from assistance on specific projects from our local congressional delegation. Among the most recent transportation projects are:

- Interstate 44/U.S. 65 interchange improvements (*underway*)
- U.S. 60/ U.S. 65 interchange improvements (*begins 2009*)
- Improved access to the airport's new midfield terminal (*begins 2009*)
- Weaver and Campbell Streets intersection improvements (*begins 2007*)
- U.S. 60/Glenstone Avenue/Republic Road interchange improvements (*begins 2007*)



**ROAD SAFETY.** Because safety is a top priority, Springfield and Greene County are making intersection improvements to decrease accident rates.

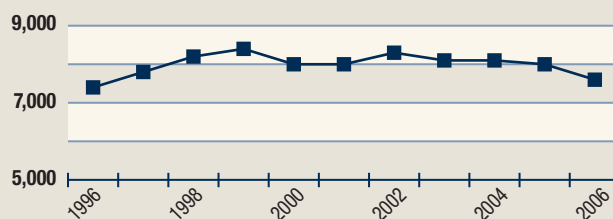
Traffic crashes in the City of Springfield in 2006 were the lowest reported in nine years. The City's “Drive Responsibly” campaign focuses on the top four contributors to crashes: following too closely, inattention, speeding and failure to yield.

City Council has approved installation over the next two years of photo red light enforcement cameras at up to 16 intersection approaches. The first camera was operational in June 2007 at National Avenue and Battlefield Road.

City Utilities provided a grant in 2004 to assist in the conversion of traffic signal lamps from incandescent lamps to LED-type, resulting in better motorist visibility.

In partnership with MODOT, Springfield has developed a state-of-the-art Intelligent Transportation System that uses technology to improve the flow of traffic. Springfield's system was highlighted in USA Today on April 20, 2005.

## SPRINGFIELD TRAFFIC CRASH HISTORY



**Pedestrian-Friendly Changes.** Capital improvement plans have included funding for pedestrian concerns. Since 2003, 16 miles of new sidewalks have been constructed by Springfield and Greene County, primarily near public schools.

Ozark Greenways continues to work on the Vision 20/20 plan to create more than 130 miles of interconnecting trails.

The organization is promoting the Safe Routes to School program, creating safe infrastructure for a pedestrian-friendly community, and provides trail connections to six area public schools with additional connections planned.

City Utilities provides public transit service to each high school, six middle schools and many elementary schools. Ongoing discussion between stakeholders continues, as the Springfield Public School system works to find ways to address student transportation. Although improved, there is still much work to be done to make the community truly pedestrian-friendly.

**Bicycles as Transportation.** Active bicyclists in the Springfield area use an extensive on-street signed bicycle network with additional improvements planned. While great strides have been made, many more miles of on-street bicycle improvements are needed.

More than four miles of bicycle lanes have been constructed in Springfield and Greene County and more than 60 miles of “Share the Road” routes exist within the city and Greene County.

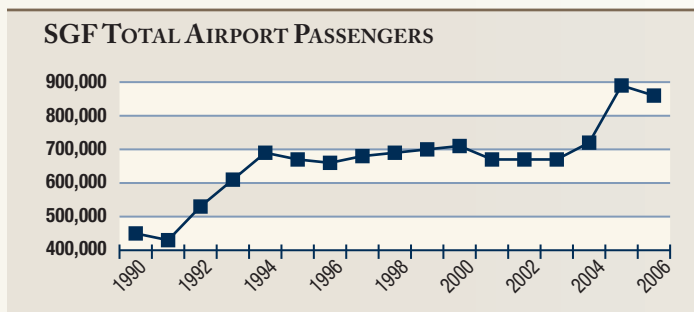
Approximately 60 miles of Ozark Greenways trails are available to bicyclists, including 17 miles of trail extending to Bolivar.

All City Utilities buses have bike racks; the Park Central bus transfer station offers free secured bicycle storage; bike racks are required on new commercial construction. City Utilities partners with Ozark Greenways to promote alternative transportation through their annual Bike, Bus, Walk Week in May.

**AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS.** Springfield-Branson National Airport serves as the region’s primary airport. The total number of airport passengers is increasing and the airport is growing. When compared with similar markets, Springfield has more destinations.

The current terminal is operating at capacity; a new mid-field terminal, scheduled for completion by late 2008, will accommodate increasing demand for many years.

- Between 2000 and 2006, passengers flying in and out of the airport increased by 25%.
- Non-stop service to 12 cities is available from SGF, up from six in 2000.
- The number of available daily seats is 1,941, up from 1,217 in 2000.
- Departure studies consistently find about 60% of passengers traveling for business and 40% for leisure.



**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.** City Utilities operates a fixed route bus system as well as a paratransit system for disabled passengers. The fixed route system operates on a set schedule seven days a week. As of spring, 2005 all CU buses use bio-diesel as their fuel source.

Ridership in 2006 was the highest recorded in recent history: 1.9 million rides. A survey showed 72% of riders either have no driver’s license or no access to an automobile. Service to additional locations and reduced travel times would attract a wider variety of riders. These improvements will require additional funding.

CITY UTILITIES BUS SYSTEM		
	CU Total Passengers	CU Bus Miles
2001	1,515,611	1,127,665
2002	1,509,686	1,215,805
2003	1,539,264	1,229,100
2004	1,545,267	1,191,807
2005	1,659,279	1,188,991
2006	1,903,926	1,201,815

Security cameras have been installed in each bus, adding an element of safety to the system. Security cameras installed at the Park Central transfer facility send a live feed to the transit office.



For those who are disabled, City Utilities’ Access Express provides curb-to-curb service by reservation within the city limits. Older Adults Transportation System (OATS) provides limited service both inside and outside the city limits and several not-for-profit agencies provide paratransit services to clients.

However, there is a growing need for door-through-door service for the many elderly and disabled individuals without transportation. The high cost of liability insurance for this type of service contributes to this shortage. Additional funding is needed to meet increasing paratransit demands.

Coordination is needed among the more than 20 not-for-profit transportation providers. The Ozarks Transportation Organization is developing a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan that will enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of services and facilitate the most appropriate cost-effective transportation possible with available resources.



This project was completed with support from the following organizations,  
whose leaders pledge to use the information in the report to guide their future decision-making:

*Community Foundation of the Ozarks*

*Junior League of Springfield*

*Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce*

*Springfield-Greene County Library District*

*United Way of the Ozarks*

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<i>Ann Elwell</i>	<i>Bernie McCarthy</i>	<i>Maura Taylor</i>	

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# COMMUNITY FOCUS

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