



HOUSING · RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE · ARTS & CULTURE



EARLY CHILDHOOD · COMMUNITY HEALTH · TRANSPORTATION



# COMMUNITY FOCUS 2015

A REPORT FOR SPRINGFIELD & GREENE COUNTY

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS · CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE · EDUCATION · PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY



# 16.31

MILES OF NEW SIDEWALK  
CREATED, 2013-14

# 60

NUMBER OF LOCAL ARTS  
FESTIVALS AND EVENTS  
HELD IN 2013-14

# 51

NUMBER OF FOR  
IN GREENE COU

# 19.8%

PORTION OF SPRINGFIELD  
RESIDENTS THAT CLAIM TO  
VOTE IN ALL LOCAL ELECTIONS

# \$32,333

HOUSEHOLD MEDIAN  
INCOME IN SPRINGFIELD

# OVER 1,800

VOLUNTEERS FOR U  
THE OZARKS' 2014 D

# 283,970

GREENE COUNTY TOTAL POPULATION, 2013 ESTIMATE

# \$2.1M

LOCAL FUNDING FOR EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
IN 2014, DOWN FROM  
\$3 MILLION IN 2012

# 34.2%

LIKELIHOOD OF SPRINGFIELD  
RESIDENTS TO TRUST NEIGHBORS,  
COMPARED TO 65.2% NATIONALLY

# 54.6

PORTION OF SPR  
PUBLIC SCHOOL  
IN THE FREE &  
LUNCH PRO

# ▼26.7%

DIFFERENCE IN SPRINGFIELD'S  
HOUSING COSTS COMPARED  
TO NATIONAL AVERAGE

# 4.9%

GREENE COUNTY  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

# 9.6M

POTENTIAL ANNU  
GENERATION BY CH  
SPRINGFIELD SO

# 21%

PORTION OF SPRINGFIELD  
ADULTS WHO SMOKE,  
COMPARED TO 17%  
NATIONALLY

# 18,880

HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING  
WINTER ENERGY ASSISTANCE  
FROM OACAC SINCE OCT. 2014

# 68

AVERAGE DAILY  
POPULATION OF T  
COUNTY JAIL

# 25,055

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
DISTRICT TOTAL ENROLLMENT

*Statistics were provided by  
committees and are highlighted  
throughout this report. For space  
considerations, some figures may  
not appear in the printed report.*



4  
ECLOSURES  
NTY, 2014

ER  
00

UNITED WAY OF  
AY OF CARING

6%  
RINGFIELD  
STUDENTS  
REDUCED  
GRAM

KWH  
AL ENERGY  
TY UTILITIES'  
OLAR FARM

35  
Y INMATE  
THE GREENE  
IN 2014

# COMMUNITY FOCUS 2015

A REPORT FOR SPRINGFIELD & GREENE COUNTY

INTRODUCTION	2
WHAT'S NEW	3
COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE	4
BLUE RIBBON & RED FLAG THEMES	5
ARTS & CULTURE	6
BUSINESS & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	8
COMMUNITY HEALTH	10
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	12
EARLY CHILDHOOD	14
EDUCATION	16
HOUSING	18
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	20
PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY	22
RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE	24
TRANSPORTATION	26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	28

**Cristina Gilstrap**, Facilitator,  
Community Focus Report  
Drury University

**Jill Reynolds**, Chair, Community Focus  
Report Steering Committee  
The Commerce Trust Company  
Community Foundation of the Ozarks,  
Board Chair Emeritus

**Louise Knauer and Matt Lemmon**,  
Staff Support  
Community Foundation of the Ozarks

**Aaron J. Scott**  
Design and Production

**For more information:** The 2015 Community  
Focus report is a summary of information  
compiled by many individuals and subcom-  
mittees. Additional information, data and  
resources are available on a website dedi-  
cated to this report.

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

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

# INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Community Focus Report is the 7th report since its inception in 2004. The Community Focus Report is a report card that identifies the strengths (blue ribbons) and weaknesses (red flags) within various sectors of our community. This honest inquiry is necessary to know our areas of success as well as areas that need further attention. The report continues to guide initiatives and decision-making in our community. Moreover, its content is consistently used by community leaders, elected officials and citizens as they develop strategies to make our community stronger.

The blue ribbons and red flags identified in this year's report are significant. We are delighted with the strength and magnitude of our blue ribbons including our community's collaborative culture, awareness of shifting civic and cultural realities, and revitalization efforts. However, red-flag issues continue to exist despite the resources that have been funneled in those directions. Unfortunately, every facet of our community has been affected by challenges associated with poverty, insufficient funding and looming threats to our civic infrastructure. So have we made any progress since the 2004 Community Focus Report? The answer is yes. Although you will see some red flags from previous Community Focus Reports again this year, the blue ribbons highlight our community's willingness to address challenges head on.

Thank you to the 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 for supporting the 2015 Community Focus Report. These organizations continue to provide resources for this community-wide initiative because they see the positive impact the CFR is having on our community. Additionally, we would like to thank the steering committee and community members who contributed to this year's report. On behalf of all those involved, we hope you find the 2015 Community Focus Report helpful as you try to make our community better for all citizens.

Sincerely,



Jill Reynolds, CFP  
Chair, Community Focus Steering Committee



Cristina M. Gilstrap, Ph.D.  
Facilitator, Community Focus Report



Jill Reynolds



Cristina Gilstrap

In an effort to make the Community Focus Report for Springfield and Greene County a more usable document, we are introducing this year two new online features.



The first is a more interactive web presence at [www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org](http://www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org). Hosted by the Springfield-Greene County Library District, this year's online report will feature all of the content of the print report, along with links to the organizations and resources mentioned. Each section has its own html page, rather than a PDF download, making it easier to share individual topics online and via social media, and to find valuable content about our area on the web.

The second change is a partnership with the Southwest Missouri Counts! Community Health Dashboard, an initiative of the Healthy Living Alliance coordinated by the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. The dashboard features more than 100 community health indicators—not only medical but economic, social and environmental stats as well—with an indicator “dial” that shows how Greene County compares to other counties on a state or national level. (The dashboard also includes six other counties in the Springfield MSA). Indicators will be updated whenever more timely data becomes available throughout the two-year period until the next report is published.

In each section of this report, you'll see a SWMO Counts! dial and a web address, where you'll find all available indicators that are applicable to that topic. You also may go directly to [www.swmocounts.org/communityfocus](http://www.swmocounts.org/communityfocus).

The goal of both of these changes: To make this Community Focus Report a “living, breathing” document that is not only a snapshot of our blue ribbons and red flags at a certain point in time, but provides tools to better track and evaluate them over the course of the report's two-year shelf life.

Special thanks to the Springfield-Greene County Library, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, and the Healthy Communities Institute for their hard work in making these improvements possible.

## NEW ONLINE RESOURCES

**[springfieldcommunityfocus.org](http://springfieldcommunityfocus.org)**: An interactive version of the report, hosted by the Springfield-Greene County Library.

**[swmocounts.org/communityfocus](http://swmocounts.org/communityfocus)**: Community health indicators tracked by the Southwest Missouri Counts! Community Dashboard, an initiative of the Healthy Living Alliance coordinated by the Springfield-Greene County Health Department.



Each indicator shows how Greene County compares to other state and national counties, a map showing how neighboring counties are doing, and more information about the category.

# COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE

## GENERAL POPULATION STATISTICS

### GREENE COUNTY POPULATION, 2013 ESTIMATE

Inside Springfield City Limits	164,122
Outside Springfield City Limits	119,848
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>283,970</b>

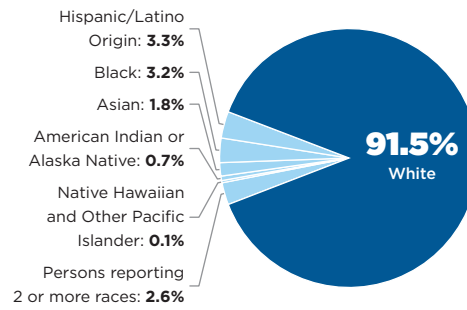
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

### GREENE COUNTY MEDIAN AGE

**35.8** 2010 **35.1** 2000

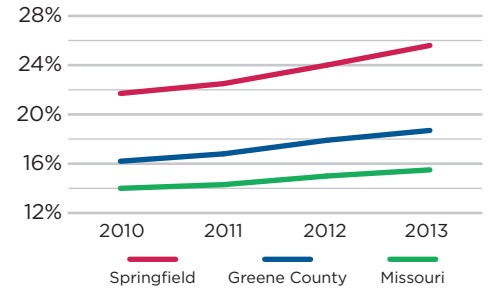
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

### GREENE COUNTY RACE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

### PEOPLE WITH INCOME BELOW POVERTY LINE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

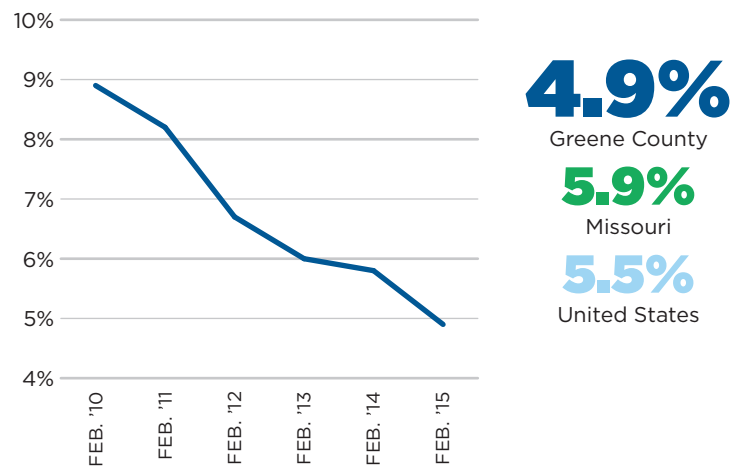
## EMPLOYMENT

### EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR FOR SPRINGFIELD MSA\*

Rank	Sector	Number Employed
1	Education & Health Services	37,000
2	Government	29,300
3	Professional & Business Services	24,900
4	Retail Trade	24,800
5	Leisure & Hospitality	19,600
6	Manufacturing	14,700
7	Financial Activities	11,800
8	Wholesale Trade	10,200
9	Transportation & Utilities	10,000
10	Other Services	8,600
11	Construction & Mining	7,800
12	Information	4,100

\*Springfield MSA (metropolitan statistical area) includes Greene, Christian, Dallas, Polk, and Webster counties. Source: USDC, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, 2014

### GREENE COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Source: USDC, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015

## EDUCATION

### GREENE COUNTY EDUCATION LEVEL ESTIMATE

**90.1%**

High school  
or higher

**28.3%**

Bachelor's degree  
or higher

Source: U.S. Census  
Bureau, 2013

### SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT\*

Grade Level	September 2014-2015 Enrollment
Elementary	12,340
Middle School	5,545
High School	7,170
<b>District Total</b>	<b>25,055</b>

\*Note: SPS is Missouri's largest school district  
Source: Missouri Student Information System Report,  
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary  
Education, 2015

### UNIVERSITIES & COMMUNITY COLLEGE, TOTAL ENROLLMENT\*

Institution	Fall 2014	Spring 2015
Missouri State University	22,385	21,179
Drury University	4,215	3,916
Evangel University & Assemblies of God	2,209	2,118
Theological Seminary		
Ozarks Technical Community College	14,396	13,071

\*Note: Combined enrollment for undergraduate, graduate, adult studies, and continuing professional studies. Source: Enrollment/Registrar Offices at Institutions, 2015

## HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS

	Persons Per Household	Household Median Income	Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	Mortgage as a % to Income	Rent as a % to Income
Springfield City Limits	2.12	\$32,333	\$106,600	24.0%	18.0%
Greene County	2.3	\$40,337	\$128,100	21.7%	15.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013

# BLUE RIBBON & RED FLAG THEMES

The goal of the Community Focus Report is to identify the overall conditions that deserve recognition and attention in Springfield and Greene County. During the development of this report, several issues repeatedly emerged representing consistent strengths (blue ribbons) and challenges (red flags) facing our community.

As you read this year's report, you will see recurring themes within the 11 sections. Overall, the following topics emerged as the blue ribbon and red flag themes in the 2015 Community Focus Report.



## BLUE RIBBONS

### COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

- A community expectation that people and organizations collaborate
- Sense of shared responsibility for addressing community needs, including public/private partnerships
- Encouraging better stewardship of limited resources through strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts

### AWARENESS OF SHIFTING CIVIC AND CULTURAL REALITIES

- Growing recognition of the benefits and challenges of our increasingly urban environment
- Increasing awareness of our changing demographics
- Recognition of the cost of chronic community issues

### COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

- Resurgence of public and private development
- Emergent and creative industries enhance community vibrancy
- Entrepreneurial culture helps foster job creation, talent attraction and retention.



## RED FLAGS

### POVERTY

- Unable to sustainably impact chronic poverty issues
- Failure to address the instability of households impacted by poverty
- Economic stratification tends to result in lack of civic participation and trust
- Addressing immediate needs limits resources for longer-term impact

### INSUFFICIENT FUNDING

- Lack of sustainable funding for prevention and maintenance efforts as it pertains to community health, housing, transportation, natural environment, recreation, and public order and safety
- Unpredictable state support for community programs and infrastructure
- Uncertain whether the community is willing and/or able to help pay for needed public improvements
- Inability to acquire or match state and federal dollars

### LOOMING THREATS OF CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Growth in urban environment challenges multiple sectors
- Expected increase in costs for air quality, wastewater, transportation, stormwater, and public safety

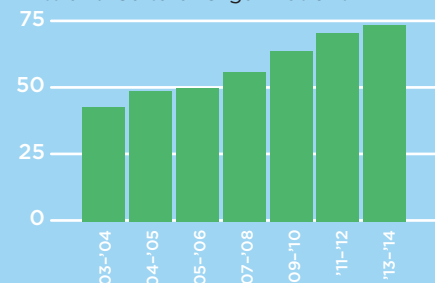


Thanks to the 11 colleges and universities that call Springfield home, the city sits on a significant talent pipeline that consists of an educated, diverse workforce. However, U.S. Census Bureau data shows a majority of these college students are moving out of Springfield after graduation. Community leaders and college professors have looked into what motivates students to stay in the area, and the majority of them cite the community as the leading factor for retention. Millennials crave strong ties to the community and diverse options—making the arts one of the key players in retention.

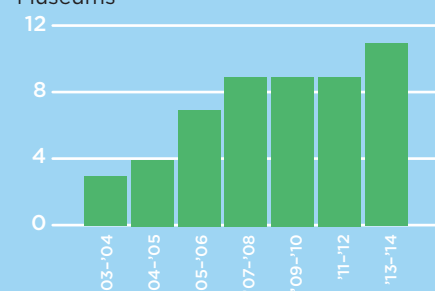
With a multitude of arts programs and organizations, numerous festivals, events and educational activities for all, the arts community is arguably one of the best in the region. Encouraging placemaking activities and development of the creative industries leads to more retained graduates. This results in a vibrant and dynamic community, a key selling point to businesses and individuals looking to relocate to Springfield.

## ARTS & CULTURE IN SPRINGFIELD, 2003–2014

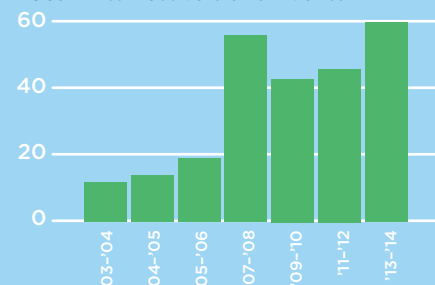
Arts and Cultural Organizations



Museums



Local Arts Festivals and Events



Source: Springfield Regional Arts Council Arts/Culture Survey, 2015

substantial programming to the benefit of the area. Since 2013, the following partnerships have taken place:

- The Springfield-Greene County Park Board deepened its collaborative connection to the arts by funding the SRAC Executive Director position and developing arts-enriched programming throughout the system.
- Drury University Arts Administration students conducted community impact evaluations for the ideaXfactory and the Springfield Art Museum's public programs in April 2014.
- Moxie Cinema started a new initiative to build community awareness around specific issues being addressed by local nonprofits and universities.
- The Brick City Design Studio, a fully functioning, fee-based graphic design studio embedded in the curriculum of Missouri State University's Art + Design Department and

## BLUE RIBBONS

### ARTS EDUCATION EFFORTS

Although the John F. Kennedy Center's Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child program was mentioned in the 2011 and 2013 Community Focus Reports (CFRs), significant progress has been made in the past two years. In 2009, Springfield was named as the program's second city in the nation to provide equitable access in the arts for every child in the Springfield Public School (SPS) district. Before the initiative began in 2009, every SPS student in grades 2–5 participated in

an arts experience provided by a community arts organization. The following programs have been added since 2013 to address arts equity and access issues:

- “My Studio to Go,” a visual arts pilot program providing monthly art supplies for all students to take home in grades 2 and 6;
- An annual live opera performance provided by Springfield Regional Opera for students in kindergarten and first grade; and
- An annual performing arts experience provided by Missouri State University for students in eighth grade.

Outside of the schools, arts and cultural organizations continue to focus their efforts in providing access to the arts for families. Springfield Little Theatre's education program has reached an all-time high of 1,800 participants. The Springfield Art Museum released its new branding and strategic plan that includes a focus on promoting family learning through the visual arts. “Growing Up in the Arts,” a collaborative program of the Springfield Regional Arts Council (SRAC), continues to provide weekly arts education instruction year-round to students ages 3–13 from the Lighthouse Child & Family Development Center (serving ages birth to 5) and the Springfield Community Center (serving ages 6–13).

### COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Since the 2005 CFR, collaboration has been a significant factor in shaping the success of the arts and culture community. These relationships enable organizations to share resources and enhance educational experiences, producing



Students at Holland Elementary receive their “My Studio to Go” supplies.



staffed with senior-level students, takes on local clients to complete branding campaigns, web-design projects, and other design needs.

- Studio 55, an association of artists and patrons dedicated to making opportunities for artists in their later years, partnered to host exhibits and classes at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center and the Library Center.
- The Springfield-Greene County Library District partnered with the SRAC to host several arts projects, including the Mantel Collection at Midtown Carnegie Branch Library. The organizations also hosted a Flash Fiction Contest with artists interpreting the stories live at Artsfest.
- Students from Ozarks Technical Community College's Department of Fine Arts and Humanities Acting Fundamentals class wrote original plays to address bullying issues and performed for SPS fifth graders in partnership with the district's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

## PUBLIC ART

As included in the 2013 CFR, Springfield has seen a rise in interest regarding public art. Although the City Council has yet to take up a "percent for public art" initiative, many programs have emerged in the past two years.

Random installations of public art continue to emerge in the form of temporary installments from Drury University's Art of Space and the ideaXfactory. The "yarn bombing" trend has appeared in Springfield and has been prominently featured in local media as numerous trees and lampposts have been given a colorful yarn makeover downtown.

Recently, the Moon City Creative District has made gains in rejuvenating the identity of the Woodland Heights Neighborhood. Rezoning policies are now in place to turn blighted industrial, commercial and residential buildings and land into artist live/work spaces. Monthly events like the Moon City Jam draw musicians from around the area to Big Momma's Coffee and Espresso Bar for a night of music and community. Utility light poles in the District now boast mini-murals painted by local artists and a mural is planned for an overpass within the district as well.

Farmers Park, a multi-use private development designed for low-impact and

long-term sustainability, is working to grow the local creative community by providing a venue for local and regional artists, in the same way the development provides a venue for local farmers and vendors. In 2014, Farmers Park and the SRAC partnered on the Farmers Park Arts Project



A local artist paints a utility pole in the Moon City Creative District.

to select up to seven artists, including conceptual artist Matthew Mazzotta, for permanent art installations.

The Springfield Sculpture Walk, mentioned in the 2013 CFR as a possible initiative, is now a formal organization under the SRAC's umbrella. The unveiling of the program is set to occur in downtown Springfield in spring 2016.

## RED FLAGS

### CAPACITY BUILDING

Springfield arts organizations continue to provide quality programs for the community, but only by sacrificing other areas of capacity in order to do so. Due to the lack of private and public funding support for operational expenses, arts and culture organizations do not have sufficient capital to:

- Update and maintain their administrative systems including critical hardware and software needed to do business efficiently and effectively.
- Compete in the market for salaries and benefits to attract and retain key creative talent.
- Repair and maintain aging facilities.

Evan Bennett, executive director of the Springfield Ballet, said in the 2015 Arts and Culture Survey: "Each one of our

organizations is growing more and more dependent on software for donor records and alumni tracking and we are crippled by the cost of the upkeep of these systems." In addition to current program funding opportunities by area funders and donors, more opportunities for day-to-day

operational funding are needed to address the aforementioned capacity issues. Addressing these capacity issues is critical to ensure our arts and culture organizations meet market and technology demands.

### TIMELY CULTURAL DATA

Timely data on audiences and programming is key to the development of any arts organization, but collecting it takes considerable financial and staff resources from already over-taxed organizations. Area arts organizations do not have resources to devote to collecting detailed data and analysis.

Even the SRAC, the umbrella organization for the community's arts programs and organizations, is unable to devote the time or financial resources to hire consultants to mine the data for the community. Some larger organizations, such as Springfield Little Theatre, are able to gather demographic information from their patrons, but a robust and cohesive look at Springfield's arts ecosystem needs to be compiled in order for administrators to understand their current and potential audiences' behaviors.

### LACK OF SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Sustainable funding has been an ongoing issue for the arts and culture sector since the 2004 CFR. Little progress has been made to address the significant need for consistent funding. Ongoing fluctuations and the volatile nature of state and federal funding since 2009 have required arts and culture leaders to return to overburdened donors for operating and programming support every year. According to the 2015 Arts and Culture survey, 58 percent of respondents stated that the most significant barrier to growth is access to financial resources.

As a key component in economic and workforce development, investing in arts and culture is critical. According to Americans for the Arts' Arts and Economic Prosperity III study, Missouri nonprofit arts organizations generate \$1.1 billion in economic impact activity annually. Leveraging this impact with sustainable public support for the arts builds a stable environment for creativity and communities to thrive. Some strides have been made to remedy this ongoing threat, including the Hotel/Motel Tax Reallocation grant funds for capital projects and the Springfield Arts Collaborative endowment-building campaign. State appropriations for the arts through the Missouri Arts Council have increased nominally since 2013 to \$4.8 million, but this amount is only roughly 25 percent of what should be allocated for the arts according to state statute. Consistent public investment is needed to truly address the issues of capacity building, data collection and creative workforce development.

Follow Greene County's progress on categories related to this section at the

SWMO Counts! Community Health Dashboard:  
[www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_artsandculture](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_artsandculture)



# BUSINESS & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A strong economy is critical to so many areas of community life. Not only do healthy businesses spend money in the local economy, but they put people to work, and these workers can buy houses, cars and strive to provide themselves and their families with a higher quality of life. Additionally, all levels of government depend on this spending cycle to generate tax revenue to fund vital public services like transportation systems, infrastructure, schools, public safety, and other community programs. Often, the business community is a leader in addressing important local issues, such as strong governance, diversity, sustainability, poverty, and civic engagement. When businesses are strong, the community is strong.



A resurgence in development can be seen all over downtown Springfield, including work completed over the summer at the Woodruff building, now called Sky Eleven.

## BLUE RIBBONS

### STEADY ECONOMIC GROWTH

Springfield's economy has grown steadily in the last five years, with job growth consistently bucking state and national averages. As of June 2015, the Springfield metropolitan statistical area's (MSA) unemployment rate was 5.4 percent, compared to 5.8 percent for Missouri and 5.5 percent nationally. Our workforce has grown more than 10 percent over the last decade, the equivalent of 20,353 new jobs, and the size of our labor pool is now 230,330.

Economic diversity has played a significant role in the stability and growth of the regional economy since the 2005 Community Focus Report (CFR). Even with the major economic impacts of higher education and healthcare, which have seen significant growth in recent years, no one economic sector truly dominates business activities. Manufacturing, logistics, corporate and back office, information technology, professional services, retail, and other types of businesses—large, small and even startups—flourish in Springfield.

### RESURGENCE OF DEVELOPMENT

A blue-ribbon staple present in several past CFRs has been the significance of the

redevelopment in Springfield's downtown that began in the 1990s. With many of the economic indicators now back at pre-recession levels, Springfield is seeing another resurgence of development, most visibly in the downtown area. Since Jan. 1, 2013, there has been almost \$200 million in new development downtown. Despite the revitalization of many downtown buildings, some of the major architectural anchors, such as the Heers, McDaniel and Woodruff buildings, stood vacant for years in desperate need of attention. Now, through significant investment from the private

sector, all have been redeveloped.

While growth may be more noticeable downtown, development also is occurring across the city within a wide variety of industries, reaching far beyond the urban core including the Farmers Park Development, the former Solo Cup

plant, the Mercy Orthopedic and Rehabilitation hospitals, and additions to Partnership Industrial Center West.

### HIGHER EDUCATION & TALENT ATTRACTION

As noted in all previous CFRs, the region's numerous higher education institutions are tremendous contributors to our economic vitality. Nearly 50,000 university and college students are gaining new skills in Springfield, and businesses tap into this large, and in-demand, labor pool. In addition, in January 2014, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce launched the Talent Attraction Initiative to help employers

Springfield is constantly growing, adapting and thriving. Our unique ability to partner and collaborate within our community has led to a great deal of innovation and growth in our economy and will also be essential to mitigate our challenges.

**DEBBIE SHANTZ HART**

CHAIRMAN-ELECT, SPRINGFIELD  
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

recruit talent from outside of the Ozarks. The effort is specifically designed to target individuals with significant experience, a gap in the talent pipeline identified through direct feedback collected by the Chamber from area employers. This focus on the talent pipeline has risen to the top of the priority list for many local institutions and is in direct response to companies' needs. The public school system, the higher education systems, government agencies, and the business community are all collectively focused on how to ensure the best and brightest call Springfield home.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

Springfield has made significant progress in fostering a culture that allows entrepreneurs to start and grow new businesses. As mentioned in the 2013 CFR, Missouri State University's eFactory, located in the Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center, has become Springfield's front door for entrepreneurship. It offers physical space for start-up and early-stage companies, business counseling services, peer-networking opportunities, and other benefits for the entrepreneurial community. Since 2013, several new programs and events have launched including the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups, Mercy Research and Development's SPIN66, Startup Weekend, and the Go BIG pitch competition. Additionally, Springfield was recently named as the 3rd best city in the nation to start a business and the top city when it comes to accessing resources for startups, in a study published by personal finance site WalletHub.

### LOW COST OF LIVING

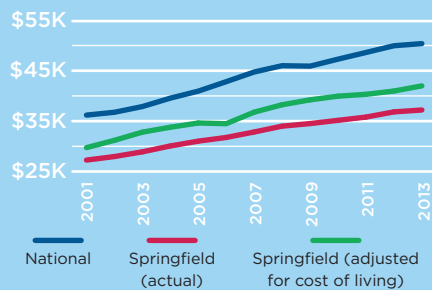
A blue ribbon since the 2004 CFR, Springfield's

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

### Unemployment in the Springfield MSA



### Comparison of Average Wages, 2001-2013



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2004-2014

low cost of living means a person's income goes further here than in other cities. The 2014 average annual Cost of Living Index ranked Springfield the second least expensive place to live in Missouri and 55th in the nation. Overall, Springfield's cost of living is 9.6 percent below the national average. The difference is especially significant in housing costs at 26.7 percent below national averages. Springfield's low cost of living encourages in-migration and continued economic growth.

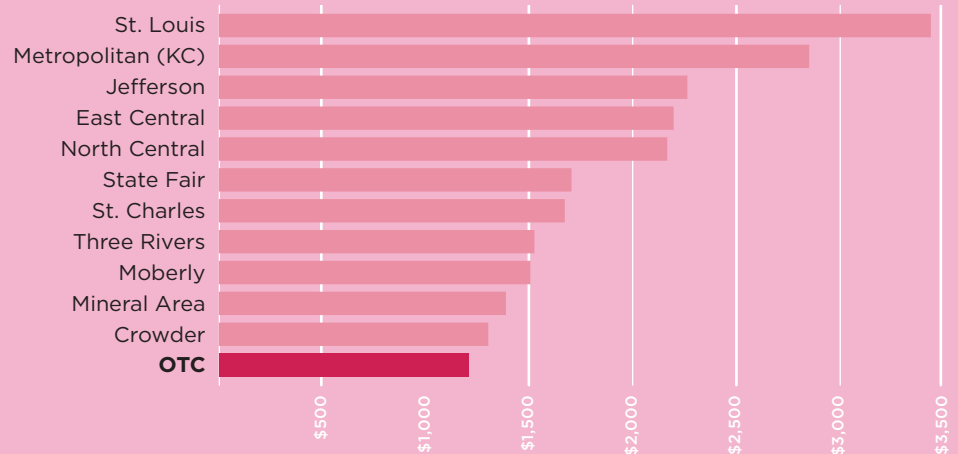
## RED FLAGS

### TALENT PIPELINE

A community's supply of qualified labor is one of the most important issues in economic development. Not only is labor a top factor for companies deciding where to locate a facility, it also can influence their decision on where to invest and create jobs at existing facilities. Historically, the Springfield region has been fortunate to have a sufficient workforce for new and existing companies, but that may not always be the case. As the baby boomer generation leaves the workforce, there are not going to be enough people in subsequent generations to fill their positions. As unemployment continues to fall, individuals with highly specialized skills will be in extremely high demand. Developing a workforce pipeline and retaining talent with these high demand skills will be crucial to attracting and retaining employers

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING INEQUITY

### Appropriations per Full-Time Equivalent Student for Missouri Community Colleges



Source: Missouri Community College Association, 2014

and maintaining Springfield's growth in the years to come.

### FUNDING FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAMS

Missouri currently ranks 44th in the nation for higher-education funding. Not only are our public institutions fighting for fewer dollars at the state level, but there is constant inequity of funding for the southwest Missouri region. Additionally, the talent pipeline red flag is directly affected by dramatic reductions in proven programs, such as customized training, which are designed to help Missouri companies develop and retain a competitive workforce. Increased funding for workforce training programs could make a big impact, not only for businesses in the community, but in the lives of Missouri workers. Adequate funding for education at all levels also helps to move communities forward.

### FRAGILE SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As noted in past CFRs, concern continues about public support for economic development. Recently, the most controversial local issues have centered on economic development, redevelopment of infill sites and zoning issues. With fewer open "greenfield" sites available for new development, more redevelopment within city limits is likely to increase friction. Springfield's economic development policies need greater clarity and adherence to remove uncertainty for neighborhoods, businesses and developers. Additionally, there is a persistent need to educate elected officials and citizens on how supporting economic development brings long-term regional economic prosperity. Establishing and maintaining a supportive climate is imperative for continued business investment and job creation.

### INCOME & WAGES

Identified as a red flag since the 2005 CFR,

average wages remain lower in Springfield than in many peer communities. Even adjusting for a low cost of living, which is one of our community's strengths, income and wages still lag. Lower wages do reduce overall business costs, but they also exacerbate other economic problems faced by Springfield's employers, such as attracting talented professionals and overcoming poverty. Despite some increases in average wages over the last decade, Springfield still falls behind its peers and this wage gap is growing.

### IMPACT OF POVERTY

Since first recognized in the 2005 CFR, poverty in Springfield continues to be a significant social and economic problem. Even with the decline in unemployment, more than half of the children in Springfield Public Schools receive free or reduced-cost lunches (see *Education* section, p. 16).

Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Springfield surpassed St. Louis to become the Missouri city with the highest percentage of families in poverty, while also having the lowest per capita income in the state. Poverty creates immense societal problems that our community must address, including increased rates of crime, domestic violence, substance abuse, and reduced educational attainment. It also intensifies and creates significant economic problems. For example, increasing crime rates affect our ability to attract professionals from outside our community, and reduced educational attainment has obvious negative consequences for workforce quality and productivity.

Follow Greene County's progress on business and economic development issues, including

household income, poverty levels and more, at the SWMO Counts! Community Health Dashboard: [www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_businessandeconomicconditions](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_businessandeconomicconditions)





# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

As we study citizen participation in Springfield and Greene County, we consider many forms of individual engagement including voter behaviors, individual charitable giving and volunteerism. Additionally, the civic infrastructure of our community plays a role when assessing the overall citizen participation. While our community struggles with issues of participation, some reaching back to the initial Community Focus Report (CFR) in 2004, new successes have emerged.

“

We rely on citizen input and involvement in just about everything we do. We are fortunate to have more than 380 people participating in task forces, boards and commissions and continue to create new avenues for citizens to provide feedback. An engaged community is a healthy community.

**GREG BURRIS**

SPRINGFIELD CITY MANAGER

”

percent locally compared to 26.2 percent nationally). This sense of volunteerism as a priority is evident particularly in youth programs. Students in Springfield Public Schools (SPS) are strongly encouraged to volunteer through a variety of channels. Students who participate in the A+ student scholarship program are obligated to volunteer at least 50 hours, and many student clubs also include a component of volunteerism. Additionally, college students participate heavily in volunteerism for Springfield and Greene County as well as nationally and internationally.

The United Way of the Ozarks' Day of Caring is another example of Springfield's volunteering nature. On Aug. 22, 2014, 1,800 volunteers contributed more than 11,000 hours benefiting 70 nonprofit organizations. The Day of Caring program continues to grow and expand each year, since starting in Springfield 23 years ago.

## CHARITABLE PARTICIPATION REMAINS HIGH

Charitable giving as a percentage of income remains higher in Springfield than in the surrounding areas and is markedly higher than the national average. According to the 2014 "How America Gives" study, Springfield residents gave 4.27 percent of their income in 2013, compared to

## BLUE RIBBONS

### REVITALIZATION OF THE CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Opportunities to participate have existed to address region-wide issues in Springfield and Greene County, but recent improvements to the civic infrastructure have given backbone to the growing need for community involvement by citizens.

The City of Springfield has increased its infrastructure to enhance and encourage citizen involvement. It expanded the public information director position to include civic engagement and created the Citizen Resource Center, where individuals can submit citizen service requests and alert city staff of community issues.

Additionally, Springfield's university community has expanded its structure of service learning and volunteer programming for students. It established the Missouri State Center for Community Engagement, which houses service learning, volunteer opportunities and community-based research. Student engagement is further

supported through Drury University's Center for Nonprofit Leadership and the Evangel Community School of Arts.

Civic infrastructure addressing community needs associated with children in poverty also has been developed through the Impacting Poverty Commission, Every Child Promise and Kids First Committee. Recent improvement in this infrastructure was illustrated when many of these groups worked together to bring youth poverty expert Dr. Ruby Payne to Springfield for a multi-day community-wide event. In October 2013, Dr. Payne met with nearly 2,000 community members through lectures, roundtable discussions and breakout sessions.

Additionally, the Healthy Living Alliance's SWMO Counts! website has provided Springfield and Greene County with a resource for community health data.

### STRONG VOLUNTEERISM

Civic health indicators from the 2014 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Current Population Survey (CPS) Supplements on Volunteering, Voting and Registration, and Civic Engagement comparing local, state and national data show Springfield residents are over 10 percent more likely to volunteer than the national average (37.6



Volunteers show off their work in making the homes of elderly individuals safe during the United Way Day of Caring.



Performers celebrated Give Ozarks Day, held May 5, 2015, with an event in Jordan Valley Park.



3.18 percent statewide and approximately 3 percent nationally. This is higher than all similarly sized and larger metro areas in Missouri, with Joplin (4.02 percent) as the second highest. This higher-than-average giving has been reflected in previous CFRs.

Additionally, charitable giving to local grant-making institutions remains high. The United Way of the Ozarks recently completed a very successful year, having received more than \$3.2 million in gifts during its annual campaign drive, and the Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) received a record \$46.5 million in contributions to charitable and nonprofit agency funds in 2014.

While charitable giving remains high, it is also changing to reflect a younger and more tech-savvy donor. The CFO provided a platform for an online giving opportunity in 2015 with the first-ever Give Ozarks Day. Nearly 150 regional nonprofits used this 24-hour online fundraising opportunity to raise more than \$1 million in charitable gifts. This method of charitable development will likely change the landscape of giving and is reflected nationally in the trend to create giving days, as was exemplified in Springfield on Give Local America Day (the first Tuesday in May).



## LOW NEIGHBORLY TRUST

Springfield residents struggle with neighborly trust. When compared to national and state data from the Civic Health Indicators, residents in Springfield were significantly less likely to trust others in their neighborhood. Springfield residents were only 34.2 percent likely to trust their neighbors most or all of the time compared to 65.2 percent of individuals trusting their neighbors in a national survey. This is in contrast to a similar likelihood to talk with neighbors (Springfield: 46.6 percent; U.S.: 42.5 percent) or assist neighbors (Springfield: 21.1 percent; U.S.: 13.8 percent).

While it is difficult to determine why Springfield residents are likely to talk to or assist neighbors, but unlikely to trust them, it is possible other factors are in play. While Springfield residents may have a few neighbors they know and trust, it appears residents are unlikely to trust all their neighbors. This is reiterated when one considers the high level of alienation Springfield residents of lower income and educational levels felt when surveyed for the Springfield/Greene County Social Capital Survey Report. This inability to reach across socioeconomic lines hinders Springfield's work in creating quality bridging capital, which was mentioned in previous CFRs. Bridging capital, as described in the Social Capital Report, is bringing together individuals who are different from one another with regard to social class, race,



**A Springfield City Council candidate speaks with a small group of citizens in a "speed dating" format at the League of Women Voters Candi-dating event. This method of candidate interaction has received praise nationally.**

gender, age, and other individual traits. While we as a community are effective at assisting our neighbors, we struggle to make our community members trust each other when these members are alienated due to financial instability or educational issues.

## LACK OF COMPETITIVE ELECTION RACES

From January 2012 through April 2015, a surprising 55.56 percent of candidates in Greene County ran uncontested for state senator, state representative and City Council positions, according to the Greene County Election Summaries. This lack of competition for important decision-making positions in our community suggests a lackluster attitude about both the process of running for office as well as the impact these positions have on the community.

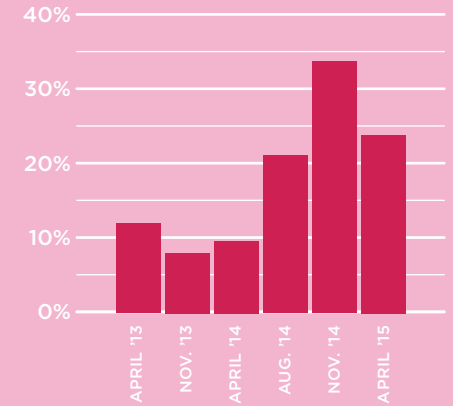
Springfield continues to struggle to maintain diversity in its leadership, as was mentioned in the 2013 CFR. In addition to frequently running unopposed, candidates for local and state office from Springfield and Greene County are mostly white males, which inaccurately represents our community's racial and gender makeup.

Lack of competition for important community decision-making roles may negatively impact voter turnout.

## VOTING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS REMAINS SPARSE

Voter turnout on local election days continues to be very low despite the opportunity for voters to participate in important local decisions. This red flag has been identified since the 2004 CFR. The Civic Health Indicators showed that only 19.8 percent of Springfield residents claim to always vote in local elections, which is significantly less than the national average of 33.1 percent. Additionally, these self-reported numbers inflate the actual voting numbers. In reality, corresponding Greene County Election Summaries note voter turnout in Greene County was 9.63 percent in the April 2014 and 12.18 percent in the April 2013 local elections.

## GREENE COUNTY VOTER TURNOUT



Source: Greene County Clerk, 2015

There are sometimes anomalies in voting behavior regarding local civic issues. When local elections involve a more emergent or hotly debated issue, such as the April 2015 ballot issue seeking repeal of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity amendment, individuals voted in higher than normal percentages, with 23.86 percent of registered voters participating. Participation, even in these circumstances, is still lower than that of national elections.

Additionally, many eligible individuals are not registered to vote, and the number of registered voters in Greene County has actually decreased in recent years despite overall population growth. In the April 2015 election, Greene County noted 172,016 registered voters, which decreased significantly from 184,850 only two years ago for the April 2013 election. The most recent data on Greene County's population shows 221,361 individuals 18 and over in 2013, which means only about 82 percent of eligible voters were registered at that time.

Some programs currently exist to address issues of voter turnout and engagement. In 2015, the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri introduced a new method of interacting with local political candidates. This event, "Candi-dating," allowed small groups of citizens to meet candidates in a speed-dating format. Citizens and candidates held rapid five-minute conversations before moving to the next candidate. This method has been well received nationally and is being implemented by other communities. SPS also is involved in addressing voter engagement through government curriculum in all K-12 social studies classes and the continued inclusion of a one-semester civics class (Liberty and Law) required for all students to graduate. These programs exemplify civic dedication to the meaning of citizenship as Greene County grows and changes.

Follow Greene County's progress on voter turnout, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard:

[www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_citizenparticipation](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_citizenparticipation)



The health of our community is a critical component to creating an attractive, successful and vibrant place for people to live, play and work. It is proven that focusing on health and wellness opportunities and integrating health-care services can impact our community's social determinants of health and subsequent outcomes in a sustainable manner. Springfield must continue pursuing full-scale investment in comprehensive health and wellness opportunities and integration across the continuum of care, which will lead to increased economic development, higher educational attainment and overall improved quality of life.



## WORKSITE WELLNESS

The Springfield business community is slowly but surely coming to understand the importance of offering employee wellness programs. Rising health-care costs and a depleted workforce over the last few years have forced companies that previously viewed wellness programs as a bonus to realize they may be key to their overall success.

Many companies now understand that improving the health of employees directly improves the health of the organization's bottom line. Additionally, improving population health leads to a greater ability to acquire and retain talent, both at an employee and community level. Efforts made by businesses to encourage and promote health should be applauded and boldly continue to create the best Springfield possible. JMARK, a local information technology firm, has realized success after implementing an employee wellness program in 2010. Participation in the employee wellness program has continually increased and now hovers around 90 percent, surpassing national averages. Participating employees have achieved more than a 5 percent decrease in high cholesterol levels and more than a 4 percent decrease in blood pressure levels. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that a 1 percent reduction in health risks such as weight,

blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol risk factors would save \$83 to \$103 annually in medical costs per person. Although some employers are making progress in worksite wellness, many have yet to launch comprehensive wellness benefits.

Over the past several years, Springfield has made great progress in the area of employee wellness with the addition of many employers



When we first considered a wellness program, we were focused on the renewals and what our company would gain in savings moving forward. Little did we know that in the first steps of the program, it would actually save the life of at least one key person in our organization. From that point forward, wellness has become about the heart and soul of our company.

**THOMAS H. DOUGLAS**

OWNER OF JMARK BUSINESS SOLUTIONS



incorporating wellness programs as part of their employee benefit structure. The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) conducted a study of Springfield business in 2014. WELCOA was interested in how Springfield stacked up against national statistics regarding their wellness programs. Springfield scored lower in all but one of the seven categories. Springfield may not be leading the charge to improve the health of our community, but we are now at least in the race with a number of companies initiating change to offer support and encouragement to employees by offering worksite wellness programs. Continued focus on increasing the number of employers that offer simple, well-designed programs with quantifiable results is necessary to support

our community and contribute to overall population health improvement.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFRASTRUCTURE

Springfield continues its great tradition of a strong health-care infrastructure. Many great efforts also have contributed to improving and promoting a health and wellness infrastructure over the past few years, strengthened by the leadership and infusion of CDC funding through the Healthy Living Alliance. Infrastructure is important for supporting businesses striving to promote and reward healthy employees by giving people of our community opportunities to engage. This infrastructure also will support the health-care systems in the efforts they are undertaking to improve the health of the populations served.



## COMMUNITY HEALTH COORDINATION

Unsustainable growth of health-care costs and poor health outcomes call us to reevaluate ways to improve the community's health. When care coordination is fragmented, individuals struggle to understand access points and how to self-manage their conditions, which further drives poor health outcomes. In Springfield, there is little coordination across the full continuum of care (from the hospital to the home), especially when individuals need medical, behavioral and/or oral health services. There is little coordination between health-care providers and social service agencies that can address issues like hunger, shelter, transportation, and other ancillary needs. Greater investment in collaboration is needed to ensure all individuals understand how to manage their health and are connected to the appropriate resources; thus, ultimately improving the community's health.

To coordinate care in an effective manner, data-sharing investments are essential. Not unlike other national attempts, Missouri tried to build a data-sharing platform for providers to exchange patient information, but the effort has faced many roadblocks. If providers and employers are to take more responsibility to improving the community's health, data must be shared and frequently analyzed to determine what indicators can be changed.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES

When compared to Missouri and the United States, Springfield consistently ranks poorly, indicating that it is an unhealthy place to live. Recognizing that community health is determined by several interrelated factors, Springfield should

Employees from downtown businesses participate in yoga on the square, sponsored by the Healthy Living Alliance.



focus on health and wellness services in a coordinated care model to reduce individual and economic costs and improve health outcomes. This is a low-cost, high-impact way to improve health and change behaviors in a sustainable way.

Health outcomes are somewhat driven by those who have health insurance and access to care. Prior to the enactment of Missouri's Health Exchanges, approximately 17 percent of Springfield citizens were uninsured. Since then, 38 percent more citizens have enrolled in coverage, increasing access to care. Health systems, employers and community health agencies should be more incentivized to collaborate, providing greater health and wellness services that help improve our community's health outcomes.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

About 25 percent of the population experiences a behavioral health disorder each year, and these individuals are likely to enter primary medical care services with a co-morbid physical health condition. About 6 percent of the population experiences a serious mental illness in a given year, and co-occurring health conditions are even more devastating among this group. Those with serious mental illness die an average of 25 years younger, account for 60 percent of chronic disease incidences and cost employers an average of \$80-\$100 billion annually, according to the American Hospital Association. Greene County is home to an estimated 18,800 adults with untreated serious mental illness, with total estimated costs of \$124.5 million. These costs include direct medical expenses, incarceration and criminal justice involvement, disability payments, lost wages, and reduced productivity. Actuarial analysis indicates other troubling red flags, including 13 deaths by suicide, 2,321 incarcerations and 3,051 cases of adult unemployment, all due to untreated mental illness. Because Medicaid has not been expanded in Missouri, 37,260 individuals were dropped from coverage in 2014, further decreasing access to critical behavioral health services among a population at very high risk. The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City reports as the number of behavioral health providers and psychiatric beds decline due to shrinking reimbursements and budget cuts, many adults and children face limited access options.

Because behavioral health conditions co-occur with chronic disease and this combination can substantially worsen associated health outcomes, Springfield should integrate and co-locate behavioral health services with health-care and other community services. Communities that have pursued this model have experienced significant improvements in physical and behavioral health outcomes and employer-related costs.

Follow Greene County's progress on categories mentioned on this page, including mortality rate, poor mental health days, at the SWMO Counts! Community Health Dashboard: [www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_communityhealth](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_communityhealth)



TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ozarks Greenways**  
Linear trail network encourages non-motorized transportation.

**Let's Go Smart**  
Community partnership to encourage wise transportation choices (biking, buses, walking, etc.)

**City of Springfield: The LINK**  
Accessible route for walking and biking along low-volume, slow-speed streets throughout Springfield's core linking to activity centers.

**City of Springfield Complete Streets Policy**  
In December 2014, the City of Springfield passed this policy so that streets, walkways and greenways trail should be planned, designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to provide a transportation system that gives all users options to safely and conveniently travel to their destinations.

**Healthy Living Alliance: Walkable Neighborhood Project**  
Aims to create good sidewalks, safe streets, slower traffic, healthy residents, and neighborhood communities, increase local businesses, and create walkable destinations close to where people live.

HEALTHY EATING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ozarks Regional Food Policy Council**  
Food Hub Project will provide improved access to locally grown healthy foods as well as economic development for local producers.

**Springfield Public School (SPS) food policy changes**  
SPS has made great efforts to increase access to healthier food options and has provided additional guidance through policy to promote healthy alternatives to celebrating birthdays and other occasions.

**Healthy Living Alliance: Local Sprouts**  
YMCA project to feed local, healthy snacks to children in childcare programs has been successful in increasing consumption of healthy, locally grown produce.

**Local Farmers Markets**  
The C-Street Farmers Market, the Farmers Market of the Ozarks and the Greater Springfield Farmers Market continue to grow and serve members of our community and support the message of eating healthy.

LEISURE ACTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Springfield-Greene County Park Board**  
The award-winning parks department offers more than 100 sites, including parks, facilities, four golf courses, and a zoo.

HEALTH FACTORS

	Greene County	Missouri	U.S.
Adult Smoking	21.0%	23.0%	17.0%
Adult Obesity (BMI ≥30)	29.0%	31.0%	34.9%
Physical Inactivity	24%	27%	20.0%
Teen Births PER 1,000	37.0	41.0	34.2
Sexually Transmitted Infections PER 100,000	451.0	464.0	446.6
Food Environment Index	7.4	7.3	--

HEALTH OUTCOMES

	Greene County	Missouri	U.S.
Breast Cancer Incidence PER 100,000	123.9	122.6	122.7
Cervical Cancer Incidence PER 100,000	6.4	8.1	7.8
Colon & Rectal Cancer Incidence PER 100,000	39.8	45.6	43.3
Lung Cancer Incidence PER 100,000	72.3	76.1	64.9
Prostate Cancer Incidence PER 100,000	115.4	121.8	142.3
Diabetes PER 100,000	8.4	9.59	9.09
Heart Disease	3.18%	4.82%	4.40%
High Blood Pressure	26.6%	29.5%	28.16%
Infant Mortality PER 1,000 BIRTHS	6.7	7.2	6.5
Low Birth Weight	7.1%	8.0%	8.2%

Sources: Community Commons, Community Health Needs Assessment, 2015; [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org); American Hospital Association



Children who attended preschool when the first Community Focus Report (CFR) was published in 2004 are now approaching their junior year of high school. Since that time, early childhood education has become a pivotal issue in our community. What of those children—the class of 2017? What can we predict from their years as preschoolers? Some wonderful things have happened, including a growing community awareness and attention to early childhood needs, local programs to support young children like the Mayor's Commission on Children and Isabel's House Crisis Nursery and incredible collaboration among early childhood agencies, business, and our faith community. The challenges children face in the early years, however, have not gone away. We are still dealing with high child abuse and neglect rates, child poverty, inconsistent pre-kindergarten investment, and lack of school readiness that put these children at high risk of dropping out while remediation costs burden an educational system strapped for funding. When we fail to invest in the early years of our children's lives, the costs are spread throughout the rest of the community, with effects including a lack of education, a deprived talent pipeline, negative impact on economic development, a lower tax base, and poorer health outcomes.

Local businesses also have become more active early childhood collaborators:

- When CPO and PAT planned the first annual Big Rig Night in July 2014, 50 local businesses donated large vehicles and staffing to make the event possible. More than 1,600 families came to Battlefield Mall to explore and learn about transportation vehicles.
- Pediatricians within local health systems are distributing K-Kits to Springfield children at three-year-old well-child exams thanks to a Community Foundation of the Ozarks grant. Kits offer activities and supplies to encourage family interactions and skill-building.

## EVERY CHILD PROMISE

In an ambitious attempt to establish a comprehensive local solution to improve the quality of life in Springfield and following the leadership of the Springfield News-Leader's 2013 CFR blue ribbon, ECP has focused on the youngest and most vulnerable in our community, children prenatal to six years. Its goal is to empower families with opportunities to access resources and support, so children start kindergarten "ready to learn." The ECP Strategic Plan, developed by citizens and community leaders, charts a bold vision for creating opportunities for our youngest citizens. The theory is simple: Improving access to services for all children prenatal to six years will improve critical metrics across the early child developmental spectrum and translate into more children ready for kindergarten, and ultimately improved K-12 scholastic performance. The group has raised \$1.2 million to develop pilots with the goal of offering local, adaptable solutions to improving school readiness.

## SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL BOARD COMMITMENT

Improvement of local kindergarten readiness levels is impossible without school districts playing an integral role. The SPS Board of Education stepped up, demonstrating its understanding of the importance of children starting school ready to learn. The Board added an early childhood/pre-kindergarten section to its annual strategic plan, allotted local funds to hire additional parent educators for PAT, and expanded its summer school program for pre-K students.

## DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Since the May 2013 announcement that the Dolly Parton Imagination Library was coming to Greene County, approximately 3,000 children have been registered for the program and have received quality children's books. The early literacy program operates on a straightforward principle: Get quality, age-appropriate books into the hands of enrolled children monthly, from birth through age five. The goal is to help develop childhood

## BLUE RIBBONS

### COLLABORATION

Collaboration is at the heart of Springfield's early childhood blue ribbons. Although it was a blue ribbon in the 2013 CFR, it has become even more integral to our community. When limited resources are maximized through collaboration, the needs of children and families are better met. Recent examples of collaborations include:

- The Springfield-Greene County Library District continues to develop strong relationships with community agencies. It is pursuing grants to support literacy implementation by other organizations, expanding programming for young children and families and providing trainings to help other organizations understand early literacy and ways their staff can weave it into their work with parents to benefit children.
- A collaboration among Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Every Child Promise (ECP), Victory Trade School, Springfield Public Schools (SPS), and Lighthouse Child & Family Development Center is providing high-quality

preschool, along with a wrap-around HUB to support children and families in the surrounding neighborhood.

- Discovery Center of Springfield, Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC) Head Start and Missouri State University have collaborated to ensure our highest-need children have regular access to science through visits to the Discovery Center and classroom activities.
- Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) and SPS Parents As Teachers (PAT) have collaborated to implement "K-Prep," a monthly parent-child program focused on building school-readiness skills within SPS elementary schools.



A preschooler enjoys Big Rig Night at Battlefield Mall.





All of our community's children, whether or not they're living to their full potential, are the next generation of our workforce. Everyone benefits from a community where families strive to ensure that the next generation will have a better quality of life than they did.

**TIM ROSENBERY**

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION



literacy skills before a child ever sets foot in a kindergarten classroom. The Imagination Library's vision is to give children the gift of reading.

United Way of the Ozarks is the lead fundraising partner, and the Springfield-Greene County Library administers the program. Solely supported by donations and sponsorships from organizations, businesses and individuals, the program uses all funds raised to purchase and distribute books from the Dollywood Foundation. The first phase of the program serves children in ZIP codes 65802, 65803, 65806 and 65807, with a long-range goal of serving all children in Greene County.

## RED FLAGS

### KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Kindergarten readiness continues to be a red flag as an area where many Springfield children struggle. In the recent 2014 Kindergarten Readiness Study, teachers report 28 percent of local students are not prepared to enter kindergarten based on DIAL 4 scores and social and emotional skill development. This latest number represents a 40 percent increase of unprepared students from the 2010 study.

Drivers of the negative change include an increase in child poverty, fewer pre-K slots in major educational programs, inadequate subsidy rates to help parents afford quality pre-school, financial hardships on families hit by the recession, and limited family support resources. Current needs outstrip capacity for services addressing these issues due to cutbacks in all funding sources — federal, state, private grants, and local donors.

The constant seesaw effect of these cuts creates difficulty in maintaining quality programs and services including attracting and retaining quality teachers, keeping classroom space, paying staff competitive wages, and having services needed to really make a difference in the readiness level. Research shows children who receive high-quality pre-K experiences are more prepared for kindergarten, and typically more successful in school and life. Affording access to effective, sustained high-quality programs requires dedicated public and private support. The ECP's success will be measured

based on improvements to the "Kindergarten Readiness" level established in the 2014 study.

### FUNDING INSTABILITY

An ongoing threat to the local early childhood landscape is the instability of local, state and federal funding. Without dedicated, reliable funding streams, it is difficult for grant-funded programs to remain stable. Stability is at the heart of quality early childhood services. In 2013, Congress enacted the sequester, which cut millions of dollars in federal funding from local early childhood programming. In Missouri, a similar strangulation of programming occurred when the governor withheld much of the early childhood funding. In FY 2014, the sequestered funding was restored. In early 2015, withheld state funding was released. As a result, early childhood programs ride a pendulum that swings rapidly between scaling back and ramping up, with changing expectations and regulations. The impact of the pendulum swing is inefficiency and waste. If the funding source reduces funding levels or withholds a portion of the funds, which was the case with both the federal sequester and the Governor's decision to withhold state dollars, programs must rapidly respond by scaling back. That can include furloughing staff, dispersing equipment and materials and restricting access to services. When funds are restored, programs must again rapidly respond by ramping up, hiring and training new staff, acquiring space, equipment, and/or materials, and enrolling new participants. Funding instability affects programs' ability to recruit and retain employees and creates a marketing and messaging issue when recruiting clients.

### CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect rates continue to be a concern in Greene County, having been an issue in every CFR since 2005. Although rates declined from 2004 to 2007, in 2008 abuse numbers trended up once again. In 2013, the rate climbed to 8.93 children per 1,000 substantiated for abuse and neglect. There is a slight glimmer of hope, as 2014 showed the rates declining. However, Greene County rates remain much higher than Missouri state averages. Our support organizations continue to buckle under the burden of children entering the system, as resources are not keeping pace with abuse and neglect rates.

While 2013 state statute changes have clarified the mandated reporter role, additional changes in public policy and law, along with funding for enforcement of both, remain critical to protecting our children from this devastating injustice. Our community needs to find a way to address the issues, so children are not forced to endure the trauma of abuse and neglect.

### ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

An increasing number of young children in our community exhibit challenging behaviors, including violent outbursts, destruction of property and harm to self or others. Children with challenging

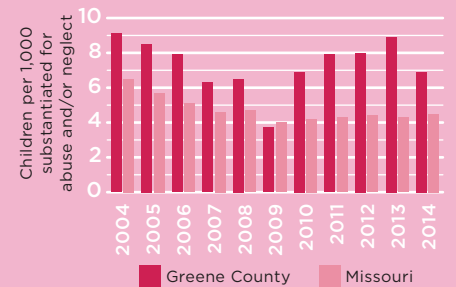
## EARLY CHILDHOOD CHALLENGES

### Comparing Local Early Childhood Funding to School Readiness



Sources: Mayor's Commission for Children  
Kindergarten Readiness Surveys 2004-2014 and local  
early childhood funding totals, 2014

### Child Abuse and Neglect, Greene County vs. Missouri



Source: Missouri DSS Children's Division Child Abuse  
and Neglect Annual Reports 2004-2014

behaviors are at increased risk for abuse, being expelled from their child care program and lacking appropriate skills to succeed in kindergarten. Challenging behaviors not addressed during the early childhood years are often exacerbated as children enter the elementary years. This often leads to later expulsions and drop outs among these children. Resources in our community for children with challenging behaviors, their families and early childhood programs who care for them are lacking. Studies suggest that in Missouri, 12 pre-school children per 1,000 are expelled each year, which is 17 times higher than the K-12 rate. An accurate accounting of children with challenging behaviors in our community who are being expelled from early childhood programs is needed, as well as funding to support corresponding strategies for reducing such behaviors. Possible strategies include increasing children's social/emotional skills, increasing child and family protective factors, reducing class sizes in early childhood programs, more day treatment for children with extreme challenging behaviors, and early childhood mental health consultation.

Follow Greene County's progress  
on early childhood-related issues,  
including child abuse and childhood

obesity, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health

Dashboard: [www.swmocoounts.org/cfr\\_earlychildhood](http://www.swmocoounts.org/cfr_earlychildhood)



Sometimes the big kid on the block can sit back and take it easy. As Missouri's largest school district, Springfield Public Schools (SPS) boasts considerable assets: Successful students, high-quality teachers, a supportive community, not to mention innovative programs that pull out the individual strengths of students.

With size comes challenge. Shifting demographics, such as the rising number of students from low-income families, call for a change in the way SPS addresses student performance. Are resources like computers and tablets distributed equally across the district? Are students graduating with the knowledge and skills they need for college or career? And how does the district bridge the achievement gap for students in poverty?

Many of the answers are coming from the district's change in leadership, the hiring of a new superintendent. Dr. John Jungmann's "Listening and Learning" tour, conducted in the first few months of his tenure, is providing direction for the district and a foundation for this report.

conservationists and field experiences. The arts community has rallied around the John F. Kennedy Center's Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child initiative (see *Arts and Culture* section, p. 6), crafting arts programming for students in grades K-8, allowing all children to grow and learn through experiences with art, music and dance. Impressed by the reach of the Any Given Child program, a community partner worked with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) and SPS to create My Studio to Go, a project that puts art materials into the hands of under-resourced students.

Stakeholder input gathered during Dr. Jungmann's Listening and Learning Tour revealed a desire to leverage the existing P-20 Council to connect students across the region with partners in business, industry and education. Area superintendents and businesses are working to



The Springfield community values and supports its school district, but there is a strong desire for it to become even better. At SPS, we want to empower and support all students to discover and pursue their potential, so my entry plan report outlines strategies that will help us achieve that outcome potential.

**DR. JOHN JUNGMANN**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



launch the Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Professional Studies (GO CAPS) to increase relevant, college and career-ready educational opportunities for high school students. The program will increase the availability of internships and shadowing experiences that help students and educators understand the community's quality careers.

Additional opportunities will be available due to a Lumina Foundation grant that was recently awarded to Springfield. Named as one of 20 cities nationwide to receive a Community Partnership Attainment grant, Springfield's community team will work to ensure that 60 percent or more of our



**Robberson Elementary Principal Kevin Huffman** talks with a student.

## BLUE RIBBONS

### INCREASED GRADUATION RATE

The line of students in caps and gowns at SPS commencement ceremonies is getting longer. Since the 2013 Community Focus Report (CFR), the four-year graduation rate has increased by three percentage points and surpassed the state average by even more. The 2014 rate of 89.4 percent represents a graduating class of 1,655 students with diplomas in hand, ready for the workplace or college. This compares to Missouri's

average rate of 87.3 percent. This was accomplished while meeting the most rigorous graduation rate standards set by the state.

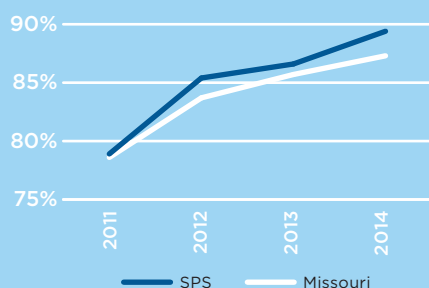
To fully appreciate this blue ribbon, the increased graduation rate should be paired with the dropout rate. Here, SPS shows a trend line that continues to decline. In the 2013 CFR, the SPS rate was 2.6 percent, slightly higher than the state average. In 2014 the rate dropped to 2.3 percent, the lowest in four years and lower than Missouri's average of 2.5 percent.

Taking the long view, this blue ribbon translates to more earning power for graduates and less demand on social services. Because SPS graduates do better, the community does better.

### STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Springfield community has a rich history of robust partnerships created to support the success of students. Innovative partnerships such as the Academy of Exploration (Discovery Center), Health Sciences Academy (Mercy) and Wonders of the Ozarks Learning Facility (WOLF) program (Bass Pro) provide authentic, engaging learning options for students. In the past year, SPS extended the reach of these experiences by leveraging blended learning. Blended learning, as the name implies, allows students to learn from a combination of online and face-to-face experiences. HAWK (Honoring Urban Resources and Acting with Knowledge) provides students with a double block course integrating science and English and connects them with community

### FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015

students receive post-secondary degrees or credentials by 2025. The grant committee affirmed the current partnerships in place to support learning, noting that a focus on collective action would increase the impact on our students.

## RED FLAGS

### ACHIEVEMENT & OPPORTUNITY GAPS

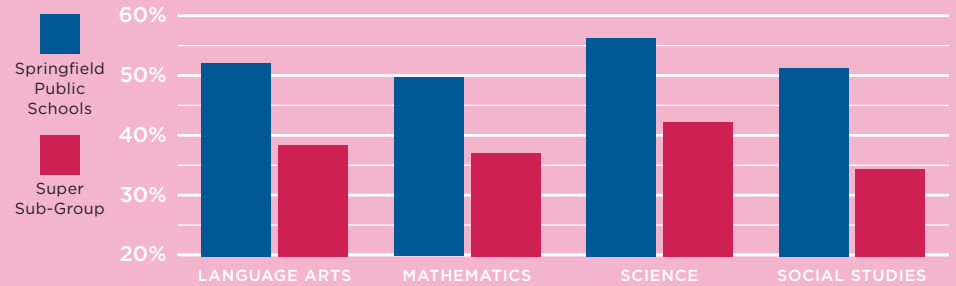
Noted as a red flag in previous CFRs (2011, 2013), the achievement gap between certain groups of students remains a concern. While efforts to personalize student learning to increase individual academic achievement was cited as a blue ribbon, the average achievement of some student groups remains behind their peers. The District also has identified potential opportunity gaps for students living in poorer areas of Springfield, who could have less access to personalized learning initiatives such as technology and choice programming, and thus remain unable to realize the potential academic benefit these options afford.

Several factors contribute to these gaps. While Springfield has long been a community of neighborhood schools (for example, 37 elementary sites) that play an integral role in the neighborhood culture, each school's demographic mirrors the neighborhoods within its boundaries. While the district's overall free and reduced lunch rate is 54.6 percent, the poverty rates of individual school sites vary greatly. Because poverty is a central factor in student academic success, the District and community must focus resources on students living in poverty to address the achievement and opportunity gaps between these students and their well-resourced peers. The District has targeted significant resources—both in additional personnel and Title I supported services—to address the needs of students living in poverty. Still, the reliance on site-based fundraising and/or use of teacher-initiated grants and individual donations to fund supplemental technology, field trips, classroom enhancements, and site-specific physical improvements has expanded the opportunity gaps. The community and District must commit to equity of resources and a firm belief that where children live within the city should not define their academic opportunities.

Race and ethnicity also are barriers to academic success and post-secondary education. Achievement gaps exist for students of color within SPS, and community partnerships offer significant programmatic support for African American students. The Student African American Brotherhood/Brother to Brother (SAAB/B2B) program, a partnership among SPS, OTC, Missouri State, Drury, Evangel, and Southwest Baptist universities, advises and mentors young African American men to excel academically, socially, culturally, spiritually, and in the community. SAAB/B2B also helps prepare these young men to enter

### "SUPER SUBGROUP" ACHIEVEMENT GAP, 2014

The "subgroup" represents five demographics—low-income students; students with disabilities; English-language learners; African Americans; and Hispanics. A gap exists between Subgroup and non-Subgroup students from the 2014 state test results reporting the percent of students rated proficient and higher.



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015

the workforce as professionals and compete with the best. The Drury University Scholars Program, mentioned in previous CFRs, provides year-long mentoring, development of college/career expectations, tutoring and intensive summer academic enrichment to students of color from middle school through graduation.

Recent district initiatives, expanded summer school with provided transportation and Missouri College Advising Corps (MCAC), are intentionally directed to all students but will likely affect the achievement and college readiness of students with identified barriers to academic success. The MCAC is a program developed to provide college advisors who are recent first-generation college graduates to high school students to help them navigate through the complexities of attending college, such as college applications, financial aid, college visits, and admissions. Currently in two of the five high schools, MCAC is expected to expand to at least one more high school in 2015–16 with financial assistance from a matching grant through the CFO.

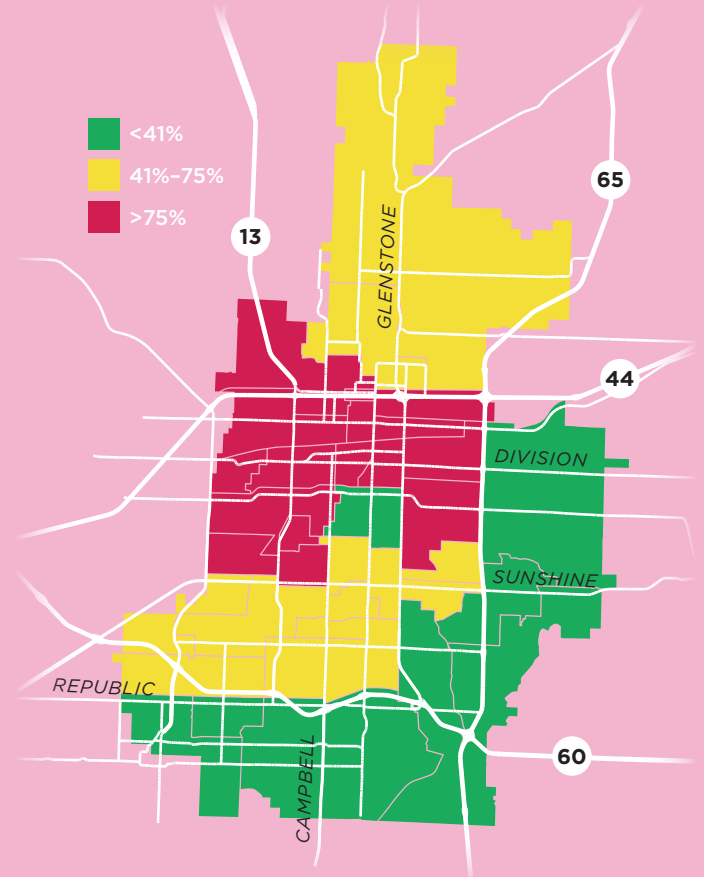
Focused community and District efforts to improve equity of access to early childhood education also should result in a decreased achievement

gap, although evidence of the success of these efforts will be difficult to assess in the short term and will need to be measured throughout the K-12 years of the individual student.

Follow Greene County's progress on education-related issues, including graduation rates and student-to-teacher ratio, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard: [www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_education](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_education)



### ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ON FREE & REDUCED LUNCH



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015



The Springfield-Greene County area has long been touted as a location with a low cost of living and affordable housing plays a large role in that reputation. However, low housing costs only show one aspect of the equation. Housing must also be available, safe and of sufficient quality to provide the best benefit to the community. While significant gains have been made in some areas, our lower-income citizens are having difficulty finding quality affordable housing in convenient locations.

## BLUE RIBBONS

### ADVANCES IN HOMELESS SERVICES

Three new initiatives were implemented since the 2013 Community Focus Report (CFR). These initiatives provide not only housing, but access to various services for our homeless population.

A new model called Housing First is being im-

plemented in Springfield and around the country to focus on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible—and then providing services as needed. Once housed, individuals and families can receive services such as medical care, mental-health treatment, intensive case management and more. This approach has proven to be more successful and less expensive than mainstream homeless service programs.

Locally, The Kitchen, Inc. has adopted this program and is transitioning its program at the Missouri Hotel to the Housing First model. While this will bring an end to its Transitional Housing program, it is an important step to

“

It's not only my house, but the kids' house. No matter where I go in life, that house will always be there. Just to know that house will always be there for (my kids) whenever they need it, it's there. If they need to come home, it's there. If they hit a spot in life that's hard, like I did, that will always be there. They will always be able to call that home.

**MISTY MIDDLETON**

NEW HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOMEOWNER

”

ending the cycle of homelessness for hundreds of chronically homeless individuals in our area.

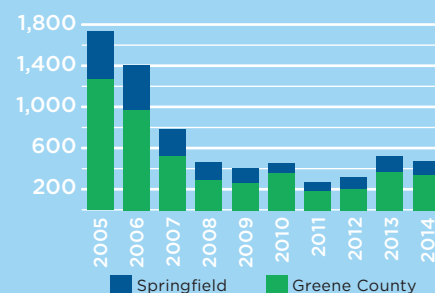
Addressing homelessness for veterans also is a national initiative that our community is implementing. The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (Home at Last) is a five-year initiative to provide permanent, supportive housing to veterans and their families. The Springfield community also has received Veterans Administration (VA) Supportive Housing vouchers, which provide permanent housing to veterans through a public housing voucher and case management support from the VA.

Beacon Village is a new housing development to help meet one of our community's most critical needs—quality affordable housing for under-resourced citizens. The development is a collaboration among several organizations, including The Kitchen, Inc., partnering with Housing Plus,

LLC, and supporting tax credits from the Missouri Housing Development Commission. The opening of Beacon Village is a milestone in this community's progress toward ending homelessness. It provides 44 units of affordable permanent housing for income-qualified individuals and families, including 20 units for formerly homeless families. In addition, The Kitchen, Inc. has received funding to

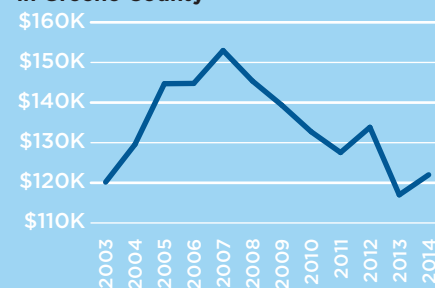
## TRENDS IN HOUSING

### Building permits in Springfield & Greene County



Source: Building & Development offices at the City of Springfield & Greene County, 2015

### Average home sales price in Greene County



Source: Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS, 2015

build another 32 units in Beacon Village Phase II.

The Homeless Camp Protocol created by the City of Springfield has formalized a process for responding to identified homeless camps. This protocol incorporates the direct connection of those living in the camps with local service providers and extends the amount of time the individuals have to vacate the property. When a call comes in to the city or the police notifying them of a camp, the Affordable Housing Center/One Door is contacted and coordinates local providers/advocates to assist with relocation efforts. This results in jail diversion and connects the homeless individual with stabilizing services.

### HABITAT & THE FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK

Habitat for Humanity of Springfield applied for funds with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, Iowa, to assist Springfield homeowners in making critical home repairs. Habitat has been awarded three such grants totaling more than \$750,000. Guaranty Bank stepped up to serve as the partnering organization in order to make the program a reality.

These grants average about \$5,000 each, allowing approximately 150 Greene County homeowners to make improvements. Repairs for this

Beacon Village is located near Chestnut and West Bypass.





program range from replacing sewer lines to upgrading electrical wiring. This partnership of the Federal Home Loan Bank, Habitat and Guaranty Bank has revitalized homes and, in turn, neighborhoods in our community.

### **SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

The Springfield Community Land Trust (SCLT), as mentioned in the 2013 CFR, is a fairly new program available to citizens who would not otherwise be able to afford a home in the private market. The SCLT acquires mainly foreclosed homes and also substantially rehabilitates the homes to meet high energy-efficiency standards and improve overall quality. The homes are then sold to families with limited incomes.

In just five years, SCLT had purchased 22 homes and sold 11. Nine of the remaining homes have been rented to qualified renters and two are available for purchase. The energy-efficient homes cost less for the homebuyer than the average market price because homebuyers purchase only the house and lease the land from SCLT.

## **RED FLAGS**

### **SHRINKING FINANCIAL RESOURCES & FORECLOSURES**

Federal funding reductions were listed in the 2013 CFR as a red flag. While funding has not increased, it has stabilized at lower levels. The demand, however, continues to outpace the available funding for many programs. For example, families applying for low-income housing vouchers face a two- to three-year waiting list to access housing.

Foreclosures, also mentioned in the 2013 CFR, continued their downward trend in 2014. Reaching a high of 1,297 in 2010, foreclosures dropped more than half to 514 in 2014. While the decline is a positive trend, the 2014 number still eclipses 2006 when foreclosure problems started to surface.

### **INCREASING NEED FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE**

The increase in consumer energy prices, together with high unemployment and a lagging local income growth among lower- and middle-income households, exacerbated the need to find ways to reduce the impact of energy costs on families.

In Springfield, more than two-thirds of families spend a disproportionate share of their household income on utility bills. Typically, families earning below \$50,000 per year pay 15 to 18 percent of their income on home energy costs. This compares to 2 to 10 percent for an average household.

While many lower-income consumers qualify

for energy assistance, government programs are hard pressed to keep pace with the escalating energy prices. Programs like Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation's (OACAC) Energy Assistance and Energy Crisis Intervention programs provide assistance to low-income households, but have difficulty keeping up with the demand. Since October 2014, OACAC has assisted 18,880 households with winter energy assistance. The number of households assisted in 2015 trends very closely to statistics from the previous year.

### **CRITICAL NEED FOR EMERGENCY SHELTER**

As noted in the two most recent CFRs, the lack of emergency shelter beds continues to hamper efforts to house the growing homeless population. Recent survey and public engagement efforts reveal a critical need for immediate overnight shelter for families and single adults. Statistics from The One Door program provide further evidence of the increasing number of requests for this type of shelter. This adds to the increasing need for crisis shelters for those fleeing domestic violence, as well as those leaving care institutions into homelessness, and a previous red-flag issue — homeless unaccompanied youth.

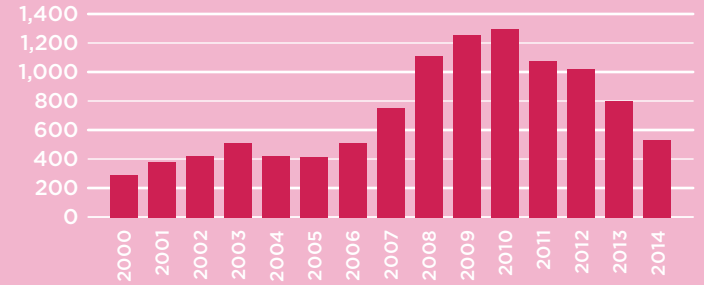
### **ACCESS TO HOUSING/PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Access to high-quality, affordable housing continues to be a challenge across the area. Occupancy rates in affordable housing developments remain high in Springfield with fully accessible affordable units also in strong demand. An August 2014 housing market study covering eastern Springfield and Greene County found that "all the affordable housing properties in the PMA (primary market area) reported an average occupancy rate of 97%." There also is a significant unmet need for fully accessible affordable units, particularly with roll-in showers, to serve those who use wheelchairs.

An often-overlooked aspect of the affordable housing issue is the need for affordable housing in close proximity to public transportation. Many individuals and families in the lower income levels can't afford to own a car and need access to public transportation to go to and from work, to medical appointments or simply to buy necessities such as food and clothing. The recent closing of the Price Cutter on Commercial Street was the subject of a February 2015 Springfield News-Leader article highlighting the hardship of grocery shopping for families without cars. According to the article, a cashier working at the

## **HOUSING FORECLOSURES**

### **Annual foreclosures in Greene County**



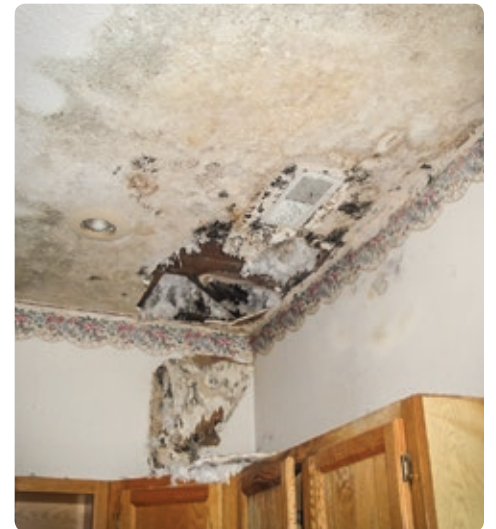
Source: Greene County Recorder of Deeds, 2015

store estimated that half to three quarters of the people who shop there carry their groceries home. Unfortunately, Springfield does not have an extensive public transportation system to address this problem and many affordable housing developments are not located on a bus line.

### **SAFE, DECENT & SANITARY HOUSING**

Years of disinvestment, due largely to the housing market collapse and the Great Recession, have left the area's housing stock in a deteriorating condition. A recent housing survey conducted by the City shows the number of substandard units increasing and those units considered "standard" are decreasing. This issue has a greater impact on the county's lower income citizens as they typically live in older housing inventory where a larger percentage of these problems are found. Additionally, deferred maintenance in area housing has led to an increase in requests for emergency home repairs. Some of the top requests include roofs, doors, windows and plumbing issues.

Follow Greene County's progress on housing-related issues, including ownership rates and rental affordability, at the SWMO Counts! Community Health Dashboard: [www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_housing](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_housing)



Roof leaks can lead to structural damage and mold issues.

Springfield continues to be recognized for its clean, accessible natural environment—rivers, lakes and streams accommodate boating, fishing and swimming. An abundance of close-in hiking and biking areas welcomes residents and visitors. Citizens have long recognized the economic, human health and recreational benefits of a healthy natural environment. Faced with the potentially very expensive “perfect storm” of costs associated with aging infrastructure, increasing environmental regulations and unmet infrastructure needs, the community faces its single most expensive challenge—an estimated \$1.6 billion price tag, which must be balanced with other staggering needs of our community.



## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATED PLANNING

Inherent in our community's commitment to protect the health of our natural environment is valuing and recognizing the necessity of a strong local regulatory authority. We continue to work closely with and support the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). In cooperation with MDNR and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the City of Springfield, Greene County and City Utilities of Springfield continue to make important progress in exploring an integrated approach to environmental compliance responsibilities—perhaps the first community in the country to use this approach to air quality, water quality (stormwater, wastewater and drinking water) and land components.

A Citizens Environmental Priorities Task Force completed its work at the end of 2014, identifying issues that our citizens find to be priorities and articulating the values held.

## LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

Following the work of the Ozarks Regional Food Council, as well as the completion of the multi-million dollar Farmers Market of the Ozarks development, an upsurge in awareness of and demand for locally produced food is being seen. A proposed Food Hub, providing product consolidation, marketing and distribution will complement the local growing efforts.

## WATER QUALITY

Cooperative projects and collaboration among government, nonprofits and citizen volunteer organizations speak to the value placed on protection of the water quality of our region's lakes, streams and rivers for drinking water, recreational use and to support the very lucrative

regional fishing industry. This has been recognized as a blue ribbon since the 2009 Community Focus Report (CFR). Progress continued on the Springfield-Greene County Urban Watershed Stewardship Project (Big Urbie), a three-year, \$1.1 million project funded by an MDNR grant, leveraging \$730,000 in local match to accomplish more than 20 projects as well as education and water-quality monitoring. The largest project, reconstructed parking lots at the City Government Plaza, serves as a highly visible demonstration of various best management practices, including stormwater.

## AIR QUALITY — COMMUNITY AWARENESS & RESPONSE

Springfield remains in attainment of the Ground-Level Ozone and Particulate Matter 2.5 Design Values (standards). The Ozarks Clean Air Alliance (OCAA)—stakeholders in a 15-county area in southwest Missouri—along with local community leaders and media continue efforts to raise awareness of air-quality concerns, and promote activities and practices that reduce air pollution via proactive practices. OCAA has been instrumental in assisting the Joplin area in the establishment of a similar organization. Youth education programs and teacher resources are now available to assist both formal and non-formal educators. Commuting programs are available through OzarksCommute.com as a part of ongoing regional efforts.

Through an exclusive Purchased Power Agreement with Strata Solar to provide 4.95 MW gross electrical energy to the grid, installation of City Utilities of Springfield Solar Farm was the largest in the state of Missouri when completed in June 2014. The solar farm can produce approximately 9.6 million kilowatt hours of renewable energy each year. CU continues proactive efforts to meet or exceed environmental requirements with ongoing upgrades and improvements.

## WASTEWATER (SEWAGE) FUNDING

Innovation and willingness to work with regulatory agencies, supported by an excellent track record, has earned Springfield the opportunity to address wastewater collection system improvement requirements via an extension of the successful \$50 million “Early Action Plan.” Investments made in keeping stormwater out of the sewage collection system, instead of merely investing heavily to accommodate higher volumes at the treatment plant, has resulted in a 12-to-1 return on the City's investment in the collection system upgrades. MDNR have approved a second-phase plan—\$200 million over 10 years—potentially saving the ratepayers millions of dollars over the period of the complete improvement projects, compared to a traditional Overflow Control Plan.



CU's Springfield Solar Farm can produce about 9.6 million kilowatt hours of energy a year.

## THE LINK/TRAILS

As mentioned in the 2013 CFR, walking/biking routes continue to be added. The LINK, an accessible route for walking/bicycling on streets with low traffic volumes and slow speed, connecting greenway trails and activity centers, was expanded and is now marked from Doling Park to Missouri State University (see *Transportation section*, p. 26). Talmage Trail was constructed from Doling Park to Summit Avenue. New and existing sidewalks were repaired or reconstructed to provide an accessible walking route on at least one side of each street along the LINK. Two Cycle Aid Stations have been installed. Sidewalks have been added or improved to provide a continuous route between MSU and South Creek Trail. A path under Chestnut Expressway at Ozarks Technical Community College and a signalized crosswalk on Sunset Street are under construction. Fasnigh Trail and Ward Branch Trail each saw expansions and underpasses were added for safety and convenience.

## COOPERATIVE YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL/ CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Based on the input of a community-wide strategic planning process during the 2006–2007 school year, Springfield Public Schools (SPS) introduced the Wonders of the Ozarks Learning Facility (WOLF)—an innovative school accommodating two classes of fifth-grade students—with instruction that includes the same core curriculum as other SPS fifth graders. While their physical classroom is at America's Wildlife



As a place to conduct business, compared to other communities in which we have a business presence, there is a lower cost associated with our environmental responsibilities in Springfield, by a wide measure. I think a great deal of that has to do with the proactive nature of the community, going back many years. This integrated planning effort is the perfect complement and the logical evolution from where we have come—balancing cost and efficiency with our ongoing commitment to protect our natural environment, which is so critical to both the health of our citizens and our economy.

DAN HOY

BASS PRO SHOPS,  
DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES



Museum & Aquarium on the Bass Pro Shop campus, students spend a substantial amount of time engaged in hands-on inquiry “in the field” with the difference being that all subjects are taught in the context of nature and conservation education. Two new programs have been added: A middle-school program—“Careers in Conservation” for eighth grade and HAWK (Honoring Urban Resources and Acting With Knowledge) courses integrating traditional biology and English through the lens of conserving urban resources (see *Education section*, p. 16). Partners for the three very successful programs include MDNR, SPS, Missouri Department of Conservation, the City of Springfield, and the Museum.

## URBAN FOREST PROTECTION

Building upon the continued commitment of the Urban Tree Canopy Policy, combined with strong citizen volunteer support from the Tree City USA Citizens Advisory Committee and Ozark Greenways, Inc., the City celebrated 29 years of being designated a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. City Utilities of Springfield was recognized for its 20th year as a Tree Line USA Utility and Missouri State University was recognized for its second year as a Tree Campus. The three combined awards earned Springfield the prestigious Triple Crown Community designation for the second year.

## RED FLAGS

## FISCAL IMPACT

The estimated total cost to the community and the associated costs per household have been revealed in the findings of the Citizens Affordability Task Force. This, along with Springfield's concerted efforts to come to terms with its increasing

poverty level and erosion of the middle class, make the issue of funding environmental infrastructure needs and regulatory requirements even more daunting.

As a “utility,” costs associated with water, land and air regulatory compliance are often charged based on resource usage—not income level. This fiscal challenge pervades the community—found in continued reductions or flat funding for local nonprofit organizations, noncompetitive salaries for government staff, deferred capital and maintenance expenditures, and alarming projections of future fiscal instability.

## AIR QUALITY POLLUTION LEVELS & THE UNCERTAINTY OF FUTURE REGULATION

Once again, at the time this report was being prepared, significant changes to federal air quality regulations that may impact Springfield are anticipated, but unknown. While some regulatory revisions have been made since the 2011 CFR, others are still pending. If Springfield fails to comply with new air quality standards, significant effort and expense may be required to address the issues of nonattainment of these standards. These may include more strict regulations on local businesses and restrictions on the types of new businesses that can locate in Springfield. This concern has been recognized as a red-flag issue since the 2009 CFR.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT FUNDING

The lack of an adequate, long-term funding source for stormwater management in Springfield and Greene County has been classified as a red-flag issue since the 2005 CFR. In addition to the funding needed to address aging stormwater infrastructure and improve community flood protection, a dedicated source of funding is required to maintain compliance with the city and county Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits for water quality protection. The Joint City-County Planning Task Force identified the critical need for this funding as one of our community's top three immediate needs.

## DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

Water quantity issues were first recognized as a concern in the 2009 CFR. While short-term water concerns have eased with the end of a long drought period, concerns for long-term future regional water shortages remain. The Tri-State Water Coalition, which includes the City of Springfield, Greene County and City Utilities, continues to monitor water usage and perform long-range planning of water sources for our region.

Follow Greene County's progress on many natural resource-related issues,

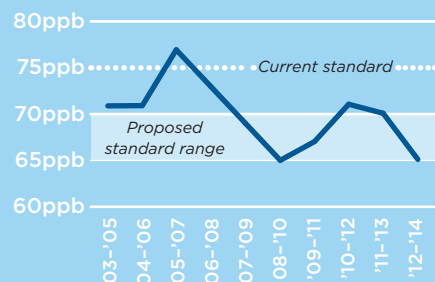
including pollution levels and drinking water quality, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard:

[www.swmcounts.org/cfr\\_naturalenvironment](http://www.swmcounts.org/cfr_naturalenvironment)

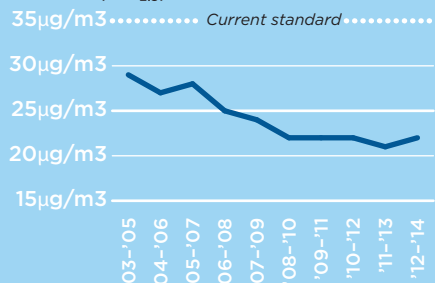


## AIR POLLUTION TRENDING LOWER

### Ozone concentrations



### Particle (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentrations



Source: Missouri Department of Natural Resources Air Pollution Control Program, 2015



Public safety is the protection of a community from dangers emanating from crime and disasters. Typically expressed as the responsibility of government, public safety is a collective of public and private organizations that operate in concert to provide for the safety and welfare of the citizenry. These include law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, and emergency management.

## BLUE RIBBONS

### VOTER SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

One of the hallmarks of Springfield-Greene County is the support citizens have given to public safety agencies. In recent years, citizens have supported major renewable tax initiatives:

- In 2014, Springfield voters renewed a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -cent sales tax first passed in 2009 to address the police/fire pension fund shortfall.
- Republic voters passed a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -cent capital improvement sales tax dedicated to replacing Republic Fire Department equipment in 2013.
- Law Enforcement Sales Tax II is a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -cent sales tax passed by Greene County voters in April 2012 to fund additional staff for the Sheriff, Prosecutor, Juvenile Office, and Pretrial Supervision. In addition, 10 percent of the funds are dedicated for renovations to the jail, a juvenile courtroom and the Juvenile Office.
- The City of Battlefield approved a tax in 2012 to hire an additional police officer each year for three years with the possibility of one additional officer depending on future revenue.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Greene County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) received re-certification with the National Weather Service as a "Storm Ready Community" in 2015.

In the past three years, the Springfield Fire Department (SFD) has hung more than 10,000 door hangers that include fire-prevention tips at apartments. During this period, the City has not experienced a significant apartment fire caused by accidental or careless acts.

Due to the efforts of the SFD, 12 Springfield employers were designated Springfield LifeSave organizations in 2014, meaning either 50 percent of their workforce or 50 employees are certified in compression-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automatic external defibrillator use.

The average age for first use of alcohol has increased from 12.55 in 2010 to 13.12 in 2014 through education, alcohol compliance checks by law enforcement and the Responsible Beverage Service Support Program offered through Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) and Missouri Safe & Sober (which has reached 291 schools and more than 127,000 students statewide).

Overall, Springfield Police Department (SPD)

and Greene County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) Uniform Crime Report Part I crimes—homicide, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, burglaries, theft, and auto theft—sharply decreased in 2014, reversing a decade-long trend of gradual increases. At the same time, the number of cases solved has steadily increased.

Enhanced and new SPD crime-prevention programs include Neighborhood Watch, Apartment Watch, Business Watch, and Citizens Alert Patrol.

Southeast Rotary's "Don't Meth with Us" anti-drug program expanded from Springfield Public Schools to several surrounding school districts, as well as growing to include ninth graders along with fifth and seventh graders.

### ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE ISSUES

The SPD spearheaded the Family Violence Task Force in 2012 upon discovering an upward trend in violent domestic assaults. Since then, the task force became a subcommittee of the Violence Free Families Coalition under CPO. A Verizon Hope Line grant of \$15,000 funded the second annual "Stop the Violence" conference, allowing the task force to bring in national experts to share insights

and effective strategies. The number of attendees increased by 78 percent compared to 2013. Additional strides to address this issue include:

- Missouri State University, Drury University, Ozarks Technical Community College, and Evangel University are implementing programs to decrease sexual assaults among college students.
- CPO collaborated with the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Children's Division and Child Advocacy Center to create on-line mandated reporter training.
- SPD began using a lethality assessment in 2014. The assessment allows victims to realize the potential lethality of the situation they are in, has aided in investigations and prosecution and has led more victims to seek assistance at Harmony House and The Victim Center.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

All public safety agencies are encouraged to strive for accreditation. It is achieved by a small percentage of public safety agencies nationwide and exemplifies that the agency establishes and maintains high standards. Our community is one of only two in the country that can boast of accreditation in each of these areas:

- The SPD has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) since 1998.
- The SFD has been accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence Accreditation Program administered by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International since 2008.
- OEM was accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program in 2012.

### PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY COOPERATION/COLLABORATION

To increase information sharing, in 2013 the GCSO and the Republic Police Department joined the SPD in using the NICHE records-management system. This lets more effectively communicate and collaborate with each other.

In October 2013, the Republic 911 Center merged with the Springfield-Greene County 911 Emergency Communications Department (ECD). This created a true county-wide public safety communications center for all 23 public safety agencies, resulting in improved efficiency and more



The Springfield Regional Police and Fire Training Center opened in 2012.



effective dispatching. In 2014, an upgrade to the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system modernized the technology in use. A new 911 backup location was identified, fully equipped, and is now operational in the Springfield Regional Police and Fire Training Center.

Over the past two years, the SFD has reduced duplication and increased on-scene staffing by entering into mutual and automatic aid with 15 fire agencies in the area.

## RED FLAGS

### INCREASED DEMAND FOR SERVICE

The Springfield-Greene County 911 ECD is the "first" first responder. Most calls for a police or fire response begin with a 911 call. The ECD serves nine law enforcement and 14 fire agencies, and the workload for telecommunicators has increased every year.

The entire criminal justice system faces many challenges. The Greene County Justice Center, where 80 percent of detainees in 2014 were repeat offenders, is increasingly overcrowded. Felony cases referred to and filed by the Greene County Prosecutor have both steadily increased.

### INCREASING RATE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As noted in the 2013 Community Focus Report (CFR), domestic assaults continue to be a serious issue. The most serious domestic assaults, when one purposely attempts to cause severe bodily injury, many times using a weapon, are classified as "aggravated assaults." The total number of aggravated domestic assaults reported in 2014 increased by nearly 20 percent from 2013. Although increased enforcement efforts and increased public awareness of domestic violence issues, both locally and nationally, may have had an impact, it remains clear that officials must continue to work in partnership with citizens to address this issue in the future.

### ILLEGAL DRUG USE

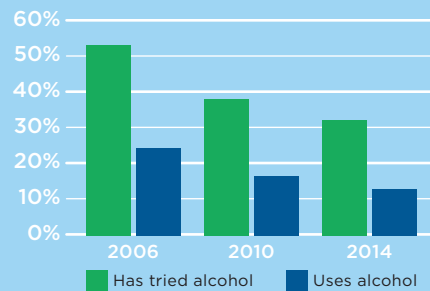
Illegal drug use has been a red flag in every CFR since 2004 and continues to be a major problem in the community. Seizures of meth labs plummeted in 2014; however, the amount being imported is at an all-time high, causing the use of methamphetamine, and the amount being seized by SPD, to multiply each year.

Heroin use dramatically increased from 2013 to 2014, driven by people using heroin in "button" or pill form (which appears to be less dangerous to youth) rather than the traditional intravenous use.

The diversion and abuse of prescription drugs is a growing problem. Seven percent of Greene County 12th graders report current use of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes, and 18 percent report having tried prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. Prescription drug abuse

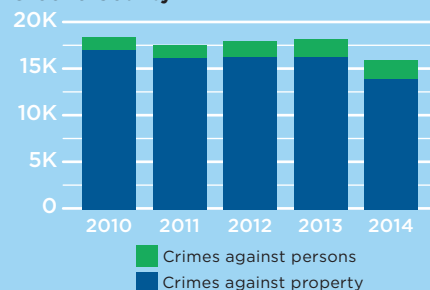
## POSITIVE TRENDS IN PUBLIC SAFETY

### Alcohol Use among Greene County Adolescents (Grades 6-12)



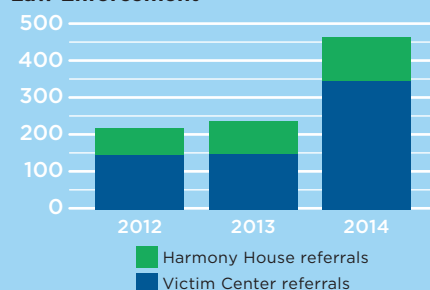
Source: Community Partnership of the Ozarks, 2014

### Overall Crime in Springfield & Greene County



Sources: Springfield Police Department and Greene County Sheriff's Office, 2014

### Referrals to Advocates from Law Enforcement



Sources: The Victim Center and Harmony House, 2014

by students at school has exceeded alcohol use by those same students. In contrast, 26 percent of Greene County students report synthetic drugs are harder to obtain, and less than 1 percent of Greene County youth are using synthetic drugs compared to all Missouri students grade 6-12.

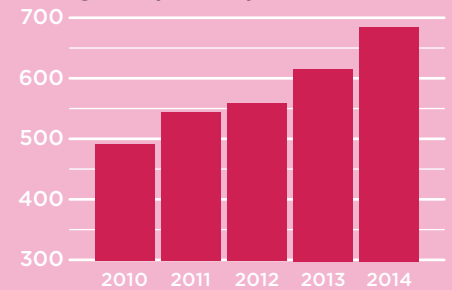
### PREVENTABLE FATALITIES

Springfield and Greene County have experienced an increase in tragic deaths. Significant work needs to be done in each of the following areas to reduce the number of preventable fatalities in our community:

- Fire deaths—Over the past five years, we have experienced an average of 6.4 deaths per year. This is very high compared to other communities: Springfield-Greene County averages 22.5 deaths per million, compared to the

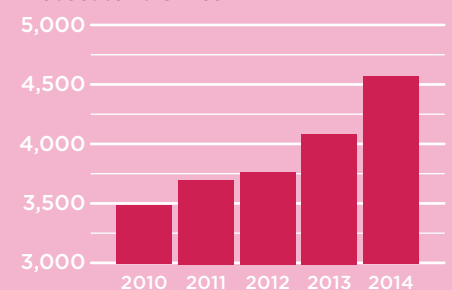
## NEGATIVE TRENDS IN PUBLIC SAFETY

### Average Daily Jail Population



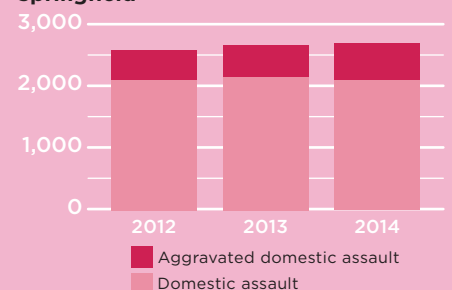
Source: Greene County Jail, 2014

### Felony Cases Referred by Law Enforcement to the Greene County Prosecutor's Office



Source: Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, 2014

### Domestic Assault Reports in Springfield



Source: Springfield Police Department, 2014

national average of 13.3 per million.

- Traffic fatalities—The number of people killed in traffic crashes peaked in 2012 with a total of 58 fatalities. Primary causes include impairment by drugs or alcohol, distracted driving, medical conditions, and those involving pedestrians.
- Homicides—Murders in Springfield and Greene County spiked in 2012 and 2014. Approximately 90 percent of the victims knew their attackers and 25-30 percent each year can be attributed to domestic violence.

Follow Greene County's progress on public safety issues, including violent crime rate and accident

rates, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard: [www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_publicorderandsafety](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_publicorderandsafety)



# RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE

Springfield and Greene County have an abundance of recreation, sports and leisure options, including public libraries, playgrounds, trails, natural areas, sports leagues and facilities, golf courses, and recreation centers. The Springfield-Greene County Library District and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board strive to make services accessible to a broad population of residents. Libraries and parks consistently earn top ratings in citizen surveys. Program participation remained strong through the recession and continues to grow.

complexes and Mediacom Ice Park.

"Friends" groups provide invaluable volunteer and financial support for libraries and parks. Friends of the Library promotes a positive relationship between the Library and the community. Friends of the Zoo assists with operations, park development, education programs and field conservation support at Dickerson Park Zoo. Friends of the Garden helps build, maintain and advocate for the Springfield Botanical Gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park.

The Park Board partners with the Springfield Sister Cities Association for the Cherry Blossom Kite Festival and Japanese Fall Festival, the Developmental Center of the Ozarks and Ozarks Food Harvest for the Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot, Springfield Regional Arts Council for Artsfest, the Downtown Springfield Association for Concerts at Founders Park, and Community Partnership of the Ozarks for National Night Out.

Donors and sponsors play a key role. Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast continues to support Jordan Valley Park. Donations from Bobby and Betty Allison have funded improvements at Miracle League Field, Rivercut Golf Course, Westport School-Park, and Hailey's Playground.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the backbone of many programs and events (*see Citizen Participation section, p. 10*). In 2014, the Park Board screened 1,049 volunteers, including youth sports coaches, zoo volunteers, senior program providers, and gardeners. Combined, these volunteers reported more than 73,000 hours of service. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer service is worth \$21.17/hour in Missouri, which makes parks' 2014 volunteers worth more than \$1.5 million.

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Park Board operates 102 sites, ranging from neighborhood playgrounds to multi-use recreational facilities. The system includes four golf courses, three family centers, an accredited zoo, a farm park, a botanical center, several

## BLUE RIBBONS

### LIBRARIES

The Springfield-Greene County Library District, a Community Focus Report (CFR) blue ribbon since 2011, includes 10 branches and the Mobile Library. Daily preschool storytimes focus on early-childhood literacy at the branches. Tween and teen activities encourage creative expression. Online research sites provide foreign language instruction, homework help, continuing education, and research. All ages are welcome in the Summer Reading Program, live concerts, book discussions, and art exhibits. The branches are a comfortable place for study and exploration, complete with free Wi-Fi and public computers.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Springfield's spirit of collaboration is at the core of the community's recreation, sports and leisure opportunities. The Park Board alone has an ongoing partnership with some 300 local nonprofit groups, businesses and institutions, providing



The Killian Sports Complex hosts a MSHSAA softball game.

important community connections. Without these collaborative relationships, many programs, events and facilities would simply not be possible.

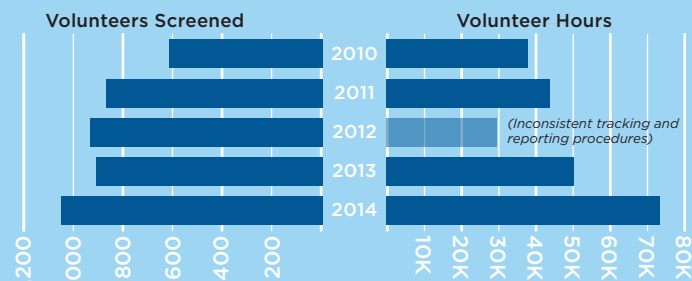
Schools and universities are important parks partners. The SPARC School-Park program serves hundreds of school-age children with safe, affordable and fun before/after-school programs, sports leagues and summer day camps, staffed by the Park Board and held at Springfield Public School (SPS) sites. SPS sports teams, as well as teams from Missouri State University, Drury University and Evangel University, regularly practice and play at Killian, Meador and Cooper sports

## SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY ACTIVITY

	Circulation	Attendance	Programs	Attendance
2006	3,232,679	1,632,927	1,979	47,043
2007	3,373,550	1,635,204	2,013	46,190
2008	3,626,792	1,678,868	4,640	52,473
2009	<b>3,964,937</b>	1,989,866	3,022	52,663
2010	3,839,899	1,902,733	6,065	128,383
2011	3,758,274	1,999,595	2,805	64,553
2012	3,649,733	<b>2,006,401</b>	6,478	<b>151,826</b>
2013	3,631,398	1,877,265	<b>6,639</b>	140,150

Source: Springfield-Greene County Library District, 2015

## SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD VOLUNTEERS



Source: Springfield-Greene County Park Board, 2015

Recent parks improvement sites include Doling Lake.



sports and athletic complexes, two indoor aquatic centers, six outdoor pools, an ice park, an equestrian center, multiple School-Park sites, and more than 100 miles of recreational trails (including 68 miles of greenways).

The Park Board celebrated its centennial in 2013, marking 100 years since Springfield voters first committed to funding parks. Community support and active use of parks facilities, combined with dedicated stewardship and expansion, have created one of the best public parks systems in the country.

Parks received high marks in the 2014 City of Springfield Community Survey. Citizens responded particularly favorably when rating maintenance, cleanliness and location of parks, as well as walking and biking trails.

## PARKS IMPROVEMENTS

Revenue from two county-wide parks sales taxes funded a decade of rapid capital expansion, tapering off in 2012, after these taxes sunset. Since 2013, the Park Board has celebrated the completion of David C. Murray Trailhead, Doling Lake restoration, Lake Drummond Spillway reconstruction, Fasnicht Creek and Ward Branch Greenway expansions, Davis House and Indoor Archery Center, Talmage Trail, Westport School Park, and Hailey's Playground. The Park Board also is committed to historic neighborhood revitalization, including recent improvements at Watkins and Washington parks.

Improvements at Miracle League Field, Lake Country Soccer, Ward Branch Greenway, and Dickerson Park Zoo are planned in 2015–16.

Historic Timmons Temple recently relocated to Silver Springs Park. The nonprofit group Save Timmons Temple raised funds to move the church, and continues fundraising for remodeling. When complete, the Park Board will operate Timmons Temple as an event center.

## TRAILS AND WATERWAYS

Ozark Greenways trails are busy with walkers, runners and cyclists. The nonprofit Ozark Greenways has now developed 68 of the 120 miles originally identified for the community's trail system, including recent expansions at the South Dry Sac Greenway, Fasnicht Creek Greenway, Ward



Here in the Show-Me State, we're fortunate to have a wealth of opportunities for outdoor recreation that we value deeply ... not only for what they do to improve our economy and quality of life, but for their role in preserving an outdoor heritage that is a fundamental part of our identity as Missourians.

**MISSOURI GOV. JAY NIXON**  
ADDRESSING THE MISSOURI PARK  
AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION  
IN SPRINGFIELD, FEB. 25, 2015



Branch Greenway, and sections of the Cherokee Trail of Tears.

Greenway trails were further enhanced with development of The LINK (*see Transportation section, p. 26*), a north-south on-street route for walking and bicycling, linking greenways, neighborhoods and activity centers. Development of Two Rivers Bike Park near Nixa has also buoyed cycling and bike tourism in the area.

Ozark Greenways was instrumental in Missouri's designation as "Best Trails State" in 2013 by national nonprofit American Trails.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Sports tourism brings thousands of visitors to Springfield every year. The Park Board, in partnership with the Springfield Sports Commission, hosts more than 50 national, regional and state tournaments a year, including softball, baseball, soccer, hockey, tennis, volleyball, basketball, cross-country, golf and more. Tournaments bring youth, college and adult athletes—as well as coaches and families—to Springfield hotels, restaurants, stores, and attractions, generating more than \$15 million a year.

Professional sports also attract visitors. Home teams include Springfield Cardinals AA major league baseball, Springfield Lasers World Team Tennis and Springfield Express Junior-A hockey. Combined with three universities and the Greater Springfield Community Olympic Development Program, Springfield residents and visitors enjoy year-round sports while contributing to the local economy.

# RED FLAGS

## OBESITY

Springfield's obesity rate has been a red flag since the 2007 CFR (*see Community Health section, p. 13*). Obesity is a complex community problem, involving education and outreach, health care, access to fresh and healthy foods, and increased physical activity.

The Healthy Living Alliance (HLA), founded in 2011 and involving more than 30 agencies, made inroads in addressing obesity, including the Local Sprouts farm-to-childcare food collaborative and the Walkable Neighborhood Project. Initial federal funding for HLA has now expired, but the Community Partnership of the Ozarks has absorbed some HLA programs.

The American Heart Association continues to promote Walk Springfield, a user-generated list of mapped walking routes. Walkers may select routes online, track mileage and add new routes. The program is highlighted every April on National Walking Day.

Combating obesity is a driving force for the Park Board, particularly through family centers, sports leagues, children's activities, and Greenway trails.

## PRESERVING GREEN SPACE

Preserving land for future parks and wildlife is a long-term concern, a red flag since the 2011 CFR. Specific recommendations are included in Field Guide 2030, in both its Recreation & Leisure and Growth Management & Land Use sections. It is essential to set aside land in new neighborhoods and retail centers for future parks and stormwater management needs.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Park Board is entirely self-funded through dedicated parks tax revenue and user fees. Parks receives no funding from the City of Springfield, Greene County or the State of Missouri.

Continuity of parks funding has been a red flag since the 2009 CFR—three years before the sunset of the 2006 Parks Sales Tax, which funded significant parks and stormwater capital improvements. Since the sunset, parks growth has slowed considerably.

Until new funding becomes available, the second half of the 20-year Parks Master Plan and Field Guide 2030 recommendations remain on hold. Lack of funding also leaves parks without matching funds for grant opportunities.

Follow Greene County's progress on many of the categories mentioned on this

page, including obesity and fitness center rates, at the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard:

[www.swmocounts.org/cfr\\_recreationsportsandleisure](http://www.swmocounts.org/cfr_recreationsportsandleisure)





# TRANSPORTATION

Springfield and Greene County have a robust transportation network. Over the past decade we have seen tremendous investment through collaboration in the roadways, trails, sidewalks, transit system, and airport. This investment has paid off with reduced congestion, improved safety and an increasingly sustainable transportation system. A new trend is starting to emerge, however, after the economic recovery with traffic volumes increasing, but transportation investment lagging behind.

## BLUE RIBBONS

### COLLABORATION

Collaboration continues to be essential to transportation advancement in the region. Springfield and Greene County have partnered with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to make needed roadway improvements in the Springfield area for the past 18 years. This has resulted in the construction of five diverging diamond interchanges, two major flyover interchanges, six lanes on U.S. 65 and Glenstone and South Campbell avenues, as well as numerous other major projects.

MoDOT, however, has cancelled all partnering opportunities, which means local tax initiatives are more important than ever. Local funds, coupled with the small amount of remaining federal funding, will be the only source to make capacity and safety improvements to the transportation network. The City of Springfield's  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cent capital improvement sales tax and the  $\frac{1}{8}$ -cent transportation sales tax have been used to partner locally to fund essential transportation improvements such as widening Republic Road from Scenic to Golden avenues. Both taxes will appear on the ballot in 2016. These taxes, if approved, will continue to allow for local partnering opportunities.

Additional collaboration has occurred through the Joint City-County Planning Task Force, which developed a transportation report to identify projects, funding challenges and possible

solutions. Funding with local taxes will be necessary to make these local partnerships possible.

In addition, Greene County, MoDOT, City of Springfield, City Utilities, and Springfield Public Schools (SPS) have been working together to fill the gaps in the sidewalk system by building sidewalks near school and transit bus stops.

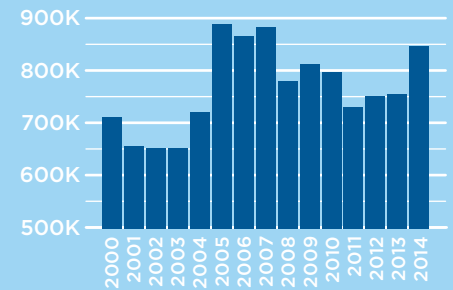
### SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Advances continue to be made in furthering the sustainable transportation network. Progress toward a more sustainable transportation network was first identified in the 2007 Community Focus Report (CFR). A new performance measure is tracking the completion of the planned bicycle and pedestrian network. This network, as outlined in the Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) Long Range Plan, has more than 30 percent of the identified sidewalk improvements completed with just over 56 percent of the miles of greenway network completed. There are currently 86 miles of Ozark Greenways trails completed in Greene County, including trails in Willard, Republic and Battlefield. The LINK, a north-south bicycle and pedestrian network, now connects Doling Park, Downtown Springfield and the South Creek Greenway Trail at Sunset Street (see *Natural Environment* section, p. 20). Springfield continues to be a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community. In 2014, the City of Springfield passed the first complete streets policy showing a commitment to provide infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Springfield offers a comprehensive fixed-route transit service that serves more than 1.5 million passengers within the City limits. This service runs from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. New technologies have been implemented that use Google maps and a smartphone app to help plan transit trips and notify passengers of bus locations. A new state-of-the-art

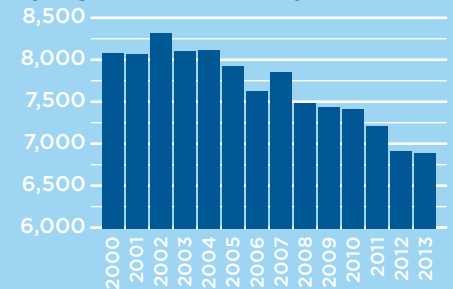
## POSITIVE TRENDS IN TRANSPORTATION

### Airport Passengers



Source: Springfield-Branson National Airport, 2014

### Springfield's Crash History



Source: City of Springfield Traffic Data Book, 2013

bus transfer station will be constructed in 2015 and open in 2016. This new transfer station will result in better access for bus transfers, improved ticketing stations and the ability to accommodate larger buses.

### AIRPORT

Springfield-Branson National Airport has been identified as a blue ribbon in the previous six CFRs. Airport facilities have gone through several major upgrades in the last six years, including a new airline terminal and fire station, rehabilitation of the primary runway and remodeling/expansion of general aviation facilities serving private and corporate aviation. A recent State of Missouri study estimated the airport has a \$400 million positive annual economic impact to the region. Four airlines serve the airport (American, Delta, United, and Allegiant) providing service to 11 direct destinations, including the major hubs of Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, and Denver. This gives excellent access and flexibility to the national air transportation system. With an average of 25 daily flights, airlines have seen passenger numbers grow each of the last four years, but took a significant 12 percent jump in 2014 to 846,324 passengers. The airport passed the annual Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety inspection without a discrepancy in January 2015, which marks 11 straight years. The airport was the recipient of a Safety Excellence Award from the FAA.



Widening of Republic Road eased traffic flow in south Springfield.



A rendering of City Utilities new Transit Transfer Station, scheduled to open in 2016.

## DECLINE IN ACCIDENTS

Traffic-related accidents have been declining since 2005 as documented in three previous CFRs. In 2007, a significant ice storm resulted in increased accidents. Accidents have declined, however, in every other year. This can be attributed to improvements that target high-crash locations as well as increased enforcement. The City of Springfield, Greene County, MoDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration developed, and are now implementing, a local Strategic Highway Safety Plan to identify strategies to further reduce accidents.

## RED FLAGS

### HIGHWAY FUNDING

For the first time in history, Missouri appears poised in 2017 to return unspent federal transportation funds to the U.S. Department of Transportation. MoDOT announced the 325 plan, which reduces maintenance on the MoDOT-owned system and no additional lanes, intersection or interchange improvements. The OTO has identified 204 miles of roadways that are monitored for congestion. Under the 325 plan, 36 percent of these roadways will no longer be maintained. Additional funding is needed in order to maintain the existing roadway network in its current condition.

The City of Springfield and Greene County have partnered with MoDOT to make essential improvements such as adding lanes on U.S. 65 and the construction of five diverging diamond interchanges along U.S. 65 and I-44. Improvements like these will no longer be possible, unless Missouri can find a way to increase revenues for transportation.

### TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

The Missouri public school funding formula continues to be disparate and inadequate for SPS. This has resulted in even less state reimbursement for school bus transportation. While the

SPS system continues to provide transportation for more than 7,500 students daily, funding for transportation continues to decline.

While great strides have been made in building a sustainable transportation network, a great need still exists to build sidewalks near schools. The shortage of adequate sidewalks creates an unsafe situation for many children in Springfield. The Healthy Living Alliance, which conducted walkability audits, provided signs and bicycle repair stations along The LINK, and provided education on bicycle and pedestrian safety, has exhausted a CDC grant that helped Springfield make great strides in sustainable transportation (see *Recreation, Sports and Leisure* section, p. 24). Additional funding has yet to be identified to continue these efforts. Meanwhile, there is an increasing need for bicycle education and safety instruction for all ages and ability levels as additional bicycling facilities are being provided.

Funding for public transit has continued to decline. This steady decline in both federal and state



For the first time in history we are faced with returning unspent federal transportation funding for the simple fact that the revenue shortage in Missouri will not provide enough matching funds to qualify for all the federal funds available.

**JERRY COMPTON**

FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE OZARKS  
TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION AND  
FORMER SPRINGFIELD CITY COUNCILMAN

funding, coupled with rising fuel and bus replacement costs, increased wages, and increasing maintenance costs, has resulted in an inability to make needed improvements to transit. Buses continue to be in service that are beyond their useful life with many buses more than 15 years old. Without federal funds for new buses, City Utilities has purchased refurbished buses in an effort to continue to provide the current transit service. Eight of the 25 buses in service have not been refurbished or replaced since 1997 and 2000.

## NEGATIVE TRENDS IN TRANSPORTATION

### Roadway Congestion:

#### Percent Significantly Delayed

	2005	2008	2012
AM Peak	5%	10%	7%
PM Peak	7%	13%	14%

Source: OTO Performance Measures Report, 2013

While City Utilities offers both a fixed route and an on-demand paratransit service for riders with disabilities, a great need still exists for elderly customers. OATS is able to provide service for both elderly and disabled riders in the Springfield area. They are not able, however, to meet the increasing demand for door-to-door transportation service. There were more than 2,304 requests for rides that were not able to be granted in 2014. In addition, no service exists for urgent care or emergency room trips for those who cannot afford a taxi service.

### CONGESTION

In 2005, the OTO began tracking congestion in Greene and Christian counties. The morning congestion of all roadways was down in 2012, though the evening congestion has slightly increased.

There was a decline in commute time noted in the 2013 CFR. The 2013 American Community Survey, however, has identified a slight increase in commute times for Springfield and Greene County. Both Springfield and Greene County have partnered with MoDOT to construct capacity-increasing improvements. But declining state revenue will severely hinder future partnership efforts. Traffic is likely to increase due to the rebounding economy resulting in lower unemployment and more retail activity. Transportation investment will not be able to keep up with traffic demand, resulting in increasing traffic congestion for the region.

### AIR QUALITY

Further hindrances to needed transportation improvements are expected in 2016, when the Environmental Protection Agency is expected to announce new air-quality standards. Springfield has continued to make improvements in ozone emissions, but these improvements are not likely to be enough to avoid non-attainment status in the future (see *Natural Environment* section, p. 21). Therefore, it is likely that proposed transportation projects will have to prove they will not negatively impact air quality before going forward, making it very difficult to build any new roads or add capacity to the existing roadway network.

Follow Greene County's progress on transportation-related issues, including commute time, at

the *SWMO Counts!* Community Health Dashboard:

[www.swmocoounts.org/cfr\\_transportation](http://www.swmocoounts.org/cfr_transportation)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMMUNITY  
**FOCUS**  
2015

## STEERING COMMITTEE

Carmen Parker Bradshaw  
Kris Callen  
Dana Carroll  
Emily Denniston  
Bridget Dierks

Grant Dorrell  
Jenny Fillmer Edwards  
Sara Fields  
Brian Fogle  
Leslie Forrester

Ashley French  
Cristina Gilstrap  
Brendan Griesemer  
Leah Hamilton  
Louise Knauer

Matt Lemmon  
Barbara Lucks  
Jill Reynolds  
Katie Towns-Jeter  
Paul Williams

Thank you to the following individuals who provided information for this report:

Jim Abramovitz  
Brian Adams  
Kat Allie  
Melinda Arnold  
Jim Arnott  
Kate Baird  
Kevin Barnes  
Bob Belote  
Janice Bennett  
Cameron Black  
Vanessa Brandon  
Denise Bredfeldt  
Alexis Brown  
Kimberly Shinn Brown  
Marie Carmichael  
Roxie Castro  
Chris Coulter  
Lisa Cox  
Jennifer Crouch  
Chris Davis  
Beth Domann  
Sabrina Drackert  
Laurie Edmondson

Ann Elwell  
Dana Elwell  
Rick Emling  
Ashley Fears  
Dave Fraley  
Michelle Garand  
Caitlin Golike  
David Hall  
Erica Harris  
Daniel Hedrick  
Vance Holland  
Cindy Howell  
Chet Hunter  
Rachel Hutchinson  
David Hutchison  
Rachel Jamieson  
Ben Jones  
Joel Keller  
Errin Kemper  
Lance Kettering  
Maggie Kost  
Mike Kromrey  
Allen Kunkel

Carrie Lamb  
Lisa Langley  
Natasha Longpine  
Kevin Lowe  
Norma McClellan  
Anne-Mary McGrath  
Steve Meyer  
Ryan Mooney  
Marty Moore  
Kathleen O'Dell  
Meganne Rosen O'Neal  
Paige Oxendine  
Jill Palmer  
Dan Patterson  
Danny Perches  
Joe Pitts  
Tana Pulles  
Crystal Quade  
Ashley Reynolds  
Missy Riley  
Erick Roberts  
Jack Robinette  
Lindsey Robison

Jeff Robinson  
Pam RuBert  
Randy Russell  
Alexandra Saner  
Lou Schaeffer  
Zim Schwartz  
Cora Scott  
Dan Smith  
Mary Lilly Smith  
Tim Smith  
Michael Stout  
Brad Stulce  
Lori Tack  
Diana Tyndall  
Cathy Ussery  
Todd Wagner  
Ann Wallenmeyer  
Brian Weiler  
Terry Whaley  
Kimberly White  
Rusty Worley



# 8

S IN SPRINGFIELD  
COUNTY IN 2014,  
OM 13 IN 2013

# 9.58

OUNCES OF HEROIN SEIZED  
BY SPRINGFIELD POLICE  
AND THE COMBINED OZARKS  
MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL  
TASK FORCE IN 2014

# 2,701

COMBINED REPORTS OF  
AGGRAVATED AND REGULAR  
DOMESTIC ASSAULT TO  
SPRINGFIELD POLICE IN 2014

# 200 LION

F DEVELOPMENT  
OWN SPRINGFIELD  
NCE 2013

# 3,631,398

CIRCULATION AT  
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE  
COUNTY LIBRARY, 2013

# 472

NEW HOUSING BUILDINGS  
PERMITS FILED IN SPRINGFIELD  
& GREENE COUNTY IN 2014

# 2%

ELIGIBLE GREENE  
RESIDENTS THAT  
STERED TO VOTE

# 4,566

FELONY CASES REFERRED  
TO THE GREENE COUNTY  
PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE IN 2014

# \$37,208

AVERAGE WAGE IN  
SPRINGFIELD IN 2013,  
COMPARED TO \$50,383  
NATIONALLY

# 3%

UT RATE FOR  
D PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
OOL STUDENTS,  
OM 2.6% IN 2013

# 846,324

SPRINGFIELD-BRANSON NATIONAL AIRPORT PASSENGERS, 2014

# 246,596

911 CALLS MADE IN 2014;  
79.32% MADE ON  
WIRELESS PHONES

# 6.4

AVERAGE NUMBER OF FIRE  
DEATHS OVER THE LAST  
5 YEARS IN SPRINGFIELD  
& GREENE COUNTY

# 9%

ADULT OBESITY  
E COUNTY, 2015

# \$1.02M

FUNDS RAISED FOR LOCAL  
AND REGIONAL NONPROFITS  
DURING THE INAUGURAL GIVE  
OZARKS DAY ON MAY 5, 2014

# 2.16

MILES OF NEW GREENWAY  
TRAIL ADDED IN 2013-14

*Statistics were provided by  
committees and are highlighted  
throughout this report. For space  
considerations, some figures may  
not appear in the printed report.*





COMMUNITY HEALTH · NATURAL ENVIRONMENT · PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY · BUS

