The background of the cover features a blue-tinted photograph of a multi-story brick building with many windows. In the foreground, a fountain is spraying water upwards. The overall image has a blue gradient overlay.

**COMMUNITY**  
**FOCUS**  
**2019**

***A REPORT FOR  
SPRINGFIELD &  
GREENE COUNTY***

# PRODUCTION & SUPPORT

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  
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**Erin Hotchkiss**, Communications coordinator

The 2019 Community Focus Report is a summary of information compiled and evaluated by many individuals and subcommittees. Additional information, data and resources are available on the website dedicated to this report.

**Please visit:**

[www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org](http://www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org)  
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# COMMUNITY FOCUS 2019

## A REPORT FOR SPRINGFIELD & GREENE COUNTY

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2002, a diverse group of Springfield and Greene County leaders from the business, education, nonprofit, health care, environment and volunteer sectors came together to assess the community’s assets, gaps, opportunities and challenges. During that process, the leaders learned of a model of community reflection from Lexington, Ky., that led to the first Community Focus Report to analyze the area’s strengths (Blue Ribbons) and challenges (Red Flags).

Today, that work continues, with the ongoing support of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, United Way of the Ozarks, Springfield-Greene County Library District, Junior League of Springfield and Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. For this ninth report on the region’s progress, new leaders joined longtime participants to analyze key benchmarks and indicators.

In the original report, then CFO President Dr. Gary Funk noted the difficulty of this endeavor: “This is a work in progress. And that ongoing reflection is the essence of the Community Focus—the understanding that a community willing to honestly examine itself is a community committed to a better future.”

By design, the report’s 11 committees focus on identifying Blue Ribbons and Red Flags in each chapter to prioritize conversation points for the next two years. Previous reports have helped target areas including poverty, homelessness and early childhood education. Raising awareness of these Red Flags inspired collaborative efforts such as Every Child Promise to improve early childhood preparation and education, the Northwest Project and Prosper Springfield to tackle poverty, and the GO CAPS program to inspire high-school students to pursue careers in needed fields.

This year’s edition highlights continued strength in the economy and the area’s ability to collaborate to tackle community issues, but, as with previous reports, some Red Flags—especially those tied to poverty and mental health—stubbornly persist. We must not ignore these issues because of their complexity, but instead look for solutions. A quote attributed to Steve Jobs, the legendary innovator, reminds us: “If you define the problem correctly, you almost have the solution.”

We want to thank the five primary sponsors and dozens of participants from throughout Springfield and Greene County who contributed to this yearlong process. Our hope is that this report, much like its predecessors, will shape community action into 2021 to ensure our finite resources are used in the most effective and impactful ways in the months ahead.

—Dr. Jonathan Groves, Facilitator  
Morey Mechlin, Steering Committee Chair



# REPORT THEMES

Since 2004, the Community Focus Report has provided a snapshot of key strengths and weaknesses across community sectors. Like its predecessors, this ninth report focuses on the elements most prevalent today; it does not list every problem or strength in the Springfield and Greene County area. We identify timely Blue Ribbons and Red Flags in each chapter, and those lead us common points and connections to guide effective action for the next two years.

Since this effort began, the community has leveraged its strengths against numerous challenges. The first report identified childhood poverty and the dangers facing at-risk children as overall issues, while weaknesses in educational funding put public schools in Springfield and Greene County at a disadvantage. Since that time, the community as a whole has concentrated resources to make significant progress confronting these problems.

Though poverty has persisted as an issue, major collaborations such as the Northwest Project and Prosper Springfield have directed millions of dollars in resources toward helping those at the lower end of the income scale. Economic development, too, helps keep unemployment below state and national averages to provide job opportunities.

Mental health was first identified as a Red Flag in the 2007 report, and in 2017, the need to assess mental-health resources and outcomes was a major theme. Since that time, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department has completed the area's first comprehensive mental-health assessment, and addressing mental illness has become a more frequent part of the conversation.

The Community Focus Report often sparks more immediate improvements as well. Over the past two years, the community also has concentrated on making Springfield a more desirable area to plant roots as a way to recruit and keep the next generation of local innovators. Springfield's city core continues to develop, as the arts and music communities grow and thrive. The efactory, an incubator for business startups,

is filled with promising companies that may become the next O'Reilly Auto Parts or Bass Pro Shops. Our natural environment and parks remain community jewels, with our trail system continuing to expand for recreation and active transportation.

But a coming struggle for funding looms over Springfield and Greene County. Each committee noted that the community will face more challenging choices in the years ahead over the finite pool of funding from governments, foundations and citizens.

Against this backdrop, the steering community

developed the following themes from the Blue Ribbons and Red Flags for 2019.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

Since the last report, the community has conducted a full assessment of mental-health resources and outcomes. Addressing mental illness remains a necessary community-health tactic as it affects so many areas, such as drug addiction, homelessness and crime. The challenge is reducing the stigma related to diagnoses and encouraging people to seek help.

## COOPERATION

Each Community Focus Report has praised the ability of agencies, nonprofits and citizens to collaborate and develop innovative solutions, especially as needs grow and resources stagnate. Over the past several years, collective upstream efforts—programs and initiatives to improve the root causes before they become serious issues—have gained momentum. For example, many resources have been directed at improving early childhood outcomes at home and in educational/care settings to prevent more difficult issues that may evolve later in life.

Sometimes, however, those collaborative ideas do not always result in cooperation. Strong community ideas and plans may remain on the shelf, identified but unused as individual groups struggle with the day-to-day demands of their own organizations and projects.

Local collaborations can also run into obstacles from higher levels, as solutions developed in Springfield and Greene County may not always mesh with decisions or priorities in Jefferson City and Washington, D.C.

## DIVERSITY

There is a growing recognition of the need to represent diverse perspectives locally across multiple dimensions—race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, those with disabilities. It is not merely having discussions about diversity; it is recognizing the distinctive needs for those groups and including these diverse voices at the table as the community makes decisions about the future.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Springfield has long been a region of economic opportunity, with low unemployment and a vibrant business community. But our historic engine of growth is slowing, and many in the area still struggle to make ends meet, even with the region's low cost of living. In 2018, Missouri voters passed a minimum-wage increase, which will mean higher wages for workers at entry-level jobs, but some in the business and public sectors have raised concerns about the increased payroll costs—a concern that could ultimately affect hiring decisions by employers and threaten the region's historically low unemployment rate.



### BLUE RIBBON & RED FLAG THEMES FOR 2019

- Community mental health
- Cooperation
- Diversity
- Economic opportunity
- Poverty and homelessness
- Social capital





# COMMUNITY TIMELINE

**Water Quality Planning Group** recommendations adopted by Springfield and Greene County.

**Grantmaker's Challenge for Children** begins directing philanthropic support towards Red Flag issues of children in poverty.

Housing element of Vision 20/20 launched with a **five-year strategic plan for providing affordable housing**.

**Mayor's Commission for Children** was formed.

**Early Learning Opportunities Act** grant awarded to Burrell Behavioral Health.

**Hammons Field** opened in center city; Springfield Cardinals arrived a year later.

**First report is published covering nine areas. Key trends identified:**

- Encouraging center city redevelopment.
- Too many children in poverty.
- Funding for public schools below state average
- Needs of many at-risk children not being met.

November ballot **Community Safety Initiative failed**, which included funding for early childhood.

**Dr. Norm Ridder** named Springfield Public Schools superintendent.

**A follow-up report is published, adding sections for early childhood and community health. Key trends identified:**

- The community responds to the first report with collaborative efforts.
- Local economic boom helps drive state economy.
- Too many children still suffering effects of poverty.
- Methamphetamine traffic touches all facets of life.
- Funding for public education shifts to local responsibility.

Two-year **drought** begins.

Greene County voters approve **sales tax to support parks and stormwater improvements**.

**Kindergarten Readiness Study** finds 24% of kindergarteners not ready to learn.

**Dr. Norman Myers** retires as the founding president of Ozarks Technical Community College, passing the reins to **Dr. Hal Higdon**.

**Tom Finnie** retires after 16 years as Springfield's city manager.

**Gillioz Theatre** restored and reopened.

Tens of thousands of trees lost during historic **ice storm**.

**Victor Vieth** visited Springfield with call to "End Child Abuse in 120 Years."

Missouri State University opened its new **Jordan Valley Innovation Center**, a collaborative effort to bring biomedical research and development to the community.

**The report begins publishing biannually. Key trends identified:**

- Children in poverty remains a focus, as the Grantmakers' Challenge for Children begins raising millions for preventive solutions.
- Health-care access sees some success with the Jordan Valley Community Health Center.
- Collaboration among public and private entities remains strong.
- The number of child abuse and neglect cases in Greene County is well above the state average.
- Financial backing for essential services does not match need.

**Isabel's House Crisis Nursery** is opened.

The **Red Wagon Kids Community Plan** is created.

**Springfield Regional Crime Lab** opens in downtown Springfield.

**Greg Burris** selected as Springfield city manager.

New **Springfield-Branson National Airport** terminal opens.

Springfield receives federal **Ready to Learn** grant funding.

**Jordan Valley Community Health Center** expands to downtown Springfield.

**The Health Commission** formed as a community-based collaborative.

Voters approve tax to shore up **Police-Fire Pension Fund**.

First **"diverging diamond"** interchange in North America opens in north Springfield.

**The 2009 edition looked at emerging issues rather than Blue Ribbons and Red Flags.**

- The number of residents without health insurance continues to rise.
- Child abuse and neglect rates in Greene County remain high.
- The Great Recession affects housing and hunger locally.
- Education budgets still a concern.

**One Door** established with Community Partnership of the Ozarks, providing a central point of entry for coordinated intake, assessment and referrals for housing and shelter services throughout our community.

**Field Guide 2030**, a comprehensive process to update the community strategic plan, begins and continues through 2012.

**Kindergarten Readiness Study** finds 20% of kindergarteners not ready.

**Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center** opens.

The start of the **Southwest Missouri HOME (Housing Options Must Expand) Team** to expand awareness and availability of affordable and accessible universally designed housing.

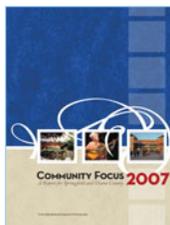
**Watershed Center** at Valley Water Mill Park completed.

Springfield News-Leader begins the **"Every Child" public service journalism project** to highlight concerns of young children and families.

**Clif Smart** becomes MSU president.

**Key trends identified:**

- Innovation emerges as a theme, with the IDEA Commons as a highlight.
- Social capital is integrated into community planning.
- Economic uncertainty from national level has trickled down locally more than in the past.
- Child abuse and neglect cases increase.
- Early Childhood section cites inability to convert public support to action as a Red Flag.



2004

**Feb. 4:** Facebook is created.

**Nov. 2:** George W. Bush re-elected president; Matt Blunt elected governor; Missouri voters approve Amendment 3 to support transportation.

2005

**Aug. 29:** Hurricane Katrina hits Gulf Coast.

2006

**Dec. 11:** Mexico's president initiates war on drug cartels.

**Dec. 30:** Former Iraq President Saddam Hussein executed for crimes against humanity.

2007

**June 29:** The iPhone is released in the United States.

**December:** Great Recession begins.

2008

**Sept. 29:** The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunges 777 points, one of the largest drops in history.

**Oct. 3:** Troubled Asset Relief Program financial rescue plan enacted.

**Nov. 4:** Barack Obama elected president; Jay Nixon elected governor.

2009

**Feb. 17:** American Reinvestment and Recovery Act enacted in response to Great Recession.

**June:** Great Recession ends.

2010

**Jan. 21:** U.S. Supreme Court decides Citizens United case on campaign finance

**March 23:** Affordable Care Act signed into law

**April 20:** Deepwater Horizon oil platform explodes

2011

**May 22:** EF5 tornado strikes Joplin, killing 158 and injuring 1,150.

**Sept. 17:** Occupy Wall Street begins movement.

**Dec. 15:** U.S. declares end to war in Iraq.

## WORLD & STATE EVENTS

Over the past 15 years, our strengths and challenges have evolved as the world changed. This timeline recaps key moments around each report's release.

**Springfield Community Land Trust** established to offer access to land and housing at affordable rates.

The **Springfield Affordable Housing Center** opens a one-stop housing and homelessness prevention service center

**The efactory**, a business incubator managed by Missouri State University and Springfield Innovation Inc., opens as part of IDEA Commons.

**Key trends identified:**

- Higher-education resources committed to improving public issues.
- Concerns arise that poverty may affect economic development.
- Community needs to invest more in preventive efforts.
- Child abuse and neglect as well as youth in poverty remain issues.
- Funding losses for infrastructure and community needs since the Great Recession have not recovered.

City Council adds **sexual orientation and gender identity** to nondiscrimination ordinance.

**Kindergarten Readiness Study** finds 27.4% of kindergarteners not ready; **Kindergarten Prep** begins in Springfield elementary schools; establishment of **Every Child Promise**.

**Dr. John Jungmann** selected as SPS superintendent.

**University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy** partnered with MSU to bring a pharmacy program to Springfield.

**Dr. Robert Spence** retires after 40 years at Evangel University; succeeded by **Dr. Carol Taylor** in 2013.

**Jim Anderson** retires from Springfield Chamber after 26 years; **Matt Morrow** named new president/CEO.

Springfield voters repeal **addition to nondiscrimination ordinance**.

City's **Integrated Planning Approach** accepted by EPA.

**SPS Parents As Teachers** expands to every elementary school in district.

Unique collaboration with **SPS and Boys & Girls Club** locates a center at Sherwood Elementary School.

**Key trends identified:**

- Awareness grows of shifting civic responsibilities in an increasingly urban environment.
- Private and public development resurges as local economy rebounds.
- Community leaders recognize the difficulty of impacting chronic poverty issues sustainably.
- Funding is lacking not only for preventive public efforts, but also maintenance in other areas, including transportation, natural environment and public order and safety.

**Kindergarten Readiness Study** finds 24.7% of kindergarteners not ready; **Early Childhood One Stop** established.

Springfield Public Schools celebrates **150 years**, expands **Explore summer learning program** to serve over 12,000 students.

**Sculpture Walk Springfield** launches, increasing public art downtown.

A **Community Health Improvement Plan** was developed and adopted by community partners through the Healthy Living Alliance.

First collaborative **Community Health Needs Assessment** published by CoxHealth, Mercy & Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

**Dr. Tim Cloyd** named president of Drury University.

**Missouri School Funding Formula** is fully funded and allows for preschool slots.

**Early Learning Leadership Academy** is formed for early childhood directors.

SPS establishes **Launch online learning**, which provides access students in Springfield and across Missouri.

**A guide for valid sources of community information to confront online misinformation is included. Key trends identified:**

- For the first time, the community began a comprehensive assessment of the state of mental health in the region.
- Poverty and sustainable funding for community persist as challenges.
- Concerns arise over civic engagement, especially with the drop in voter participation.
- Recreational, arts and entrepreneurial assets, including re-opened Wonders of Wildlife, contribute to quality of life.
- Unemployment remains low, but wages have not kept up with the rising cost of living.

**Kindergarten Readiness Study** finds 26% of kindergarteners not ready; **Campbell Early Childhood Center** begins serving 200 preschoolers; early childhood education services expand to over 700 4-year-olds.

The first residents move into **Eden Village**, a tiny-home development for chronically disabled homeless people.

**Jason Gage** takes over as Springfield city manager after the retirement of Greg Burris.

Springfield voters approve **Proposition S**, a \$168 million bond proposal to fund improvement projects for Springfield Public Schools, including construction of a new **Early Childhood Center**; voters also approve extending ¼-cent capital improvements sales tax for 20 years.

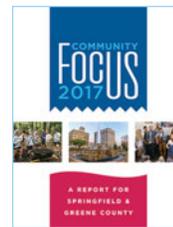
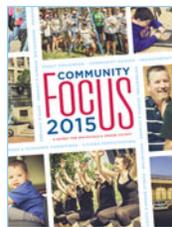
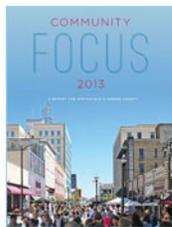
Comprehensive community **mental health & substance abuse assessment** released.

**History Museum on the Square** opens in downtown Springfield after five years of planning and investment of more than \$12 million.

Springfield voters **re-affirm 2011 Smokefree Air Act** for workplaces and public areas.

Springfield **retains the U.S. Postal Service processing facility**, instead of consolidating it in Kansas City.

**Severe drought weathered** due to planning and implementation of additional water resource allocations from Stockton Lake.



2012

- Feb. 29:** Leap Day tornado hits Branson.
- May 7:** Vladimir Putin elected president of Russia.
- Nov. 6:** Barack Obama re-elected president; Jay Nixon re-elected governor.
- Dec. 14:** Sandy Hook school shooting kills 28.

2013

**June 26:** U.S. Supreme Court recognizes same-sex marriage.

2014

- Aug. 9:** Michael Brown shooting occurs in Ferguson, Mo.
- Nov. 2:** Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns of "severe, pervasive and irreversible damage."
- Dec. 17:** U.S. normalizes relations with Cuba.

2015

**Nov. 9:** MU President Tim Wolfe resigns over racial unrest

2016

- July 6:** Pokemon Go is released
- September:** State legislation changes makeup of Missouri Clean Water Commission.
- Nov. 8:** Donald Trump elected president; Eric Greitens elected governor
- Dec. 31:** U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan

2017

- April 28-30:** Historic flooding hits south-central Missouri.
- Aug-Sept:** Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria strike U.S.
- Oct. 1:** Las Vegas mass shooting deadliest in U.S. history.
- Dec. 22:** Tax Cuts and Jobs Act overhauls IRS code; repeals ACA individual mandate.

2018

- March 24:** "March for Our Lives" occurs in 900 cities after Parkland school shootings.
- June 1:** Eric Greitens resigns as governor; Mike Parson sworn in.
- July 19:** Duck boat sinks in Table Rock Lake, killing 17.
- Nov. 6:** Missouri voters approve campaign finance reforms, medical marijuana and minimum wage hike.

2019

- Jan. 25:** Federal government ends 35-day shutdown.
- July:** Month recorded as hottest in history, globally.
- August:** Mass shootings in Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, hit home with scare at Springfield Walmart.

# ARTS & CULTURE

## Growing interest in the arts ripples through area

LARGER CROWDS IMPACT THE LOCAL ECONOMY, BUT ORGANIZATIONS STILL STRUGGLE TO FIND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING



A touring production of “The Lion King” made a 16-performance run at Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts in 2019, grossing an estimated \$2.8 million and delivering a \$9.1 million impact for the local economy.

With record-breaking attendance at decades-old institutions, the arts and culture sector in Springfield continues to drive economic impact to the region through its programming and collaborative efforts. At the same time, this area faces ongoing challenges, including lack of diversity at leadership levels, poor infrastructure support, and a continued struggle for sustainable funding.

### BLUE RIBBONS

In 2015, the Springfield Regional Arts Council, along with 24 other regional arts and culture organizations, participated in Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, a study conducted in partnership with Americans for the Arts. A driving force behind this study stemmed from the 2015 Community Focus Report, in which “timely cultural data” was labeled a Red Flag.

The results, mentioned in the 2017 Community Focus Report, demonstrate that the arts have a **strong economic impact** on the region. Driving in \$26.9 million in revenue, \$20.5 million goes back into household income, and supports 1,065 full-time jobs, both in the arts and non-arts sectors.

Of the \$26.9 million, \$17.1 million came from spending by audiences on dining, lodging, retail and tickets, and \$9.8 million was spent by organizations producing the events. The arts and culture sector factors into where

businesses and their employees plan to locate and expand, a primary component for Springfield’s long-term economic health.

Many organizations that have been around for decades have seen record-breaking attendance because of **high-quality programming**, furthering the economic impact in the region. After the successful run of “Wicked” in 2016, Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts sold more than 33,000 tickets to a 16-performance run of “The Lion King” in 2019, with an estimated gross of \$2.8 million. That show meant an estimated \$9.1 million impact on the local economy, through not only ticket sales, but also travel, lodging, dining, parking, and the spending by the 140-plus people traveling with the production.

The Springfield Art Museum, one of the city’s oldest cultural institutions, had more than 60,000 patrons walk through its doors in 2018, a 3% increase over its previous record-breaking year in 2017. This growth is due in part to traveling exhibits like “Nick Cave’s Soundsuits,” providing local patrons art experiences previously unavailable in the area.

Another cultural mainstay, Artsfest on Historic Walnut Street, had a benchmark year in 2018 with an estimated 20,000-plus attendance and a 25% increase in ticket sales from the previous year.

This two-day outdoor festival has grown to include more than 130 local and national exhibiting artists, live

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR ARTS & CULTURE

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Economic impact of the arts
- High-quality programming
- Sharing and collaboration



#### RED FLAGS

- Lack of diversity at leadership level
- Infrastructure support
- Sustainable funding



performances on multiple stages, an expanded food court and live art, with artists painting throughout the weekend.

New events are emerging as well, such as Rated SGF, a weekend film festival organized by Downtown Springfield Association and the Film and Media Association of Springfield. For its inaugural event in 2018, the festival brought in film director David Lowery to showcase his film “A Ghost Story,” starring Casey Affleck and Rooney Mara.

Were events like these cultural mainstays not available in the area, the economic impact study found that the money spent in Springfield would have likely gone elsewhere. Most nonlocal tourists (83.9%) said they came to Springfield specifically for the event they were attending. Fifty-one percent would have traveled to another community if the event weren’t offered in Springfield.

The strength of Springfield’s and Greene County’s arts and culture community comes from its solid foundation of **sharing and collaboration**. With limited internal resources and infrastructure available, arts and culture organizations rely on each other for support. The Creamery Arts Center, a city-owned building in Jordan Valley Park, has helped offset costs for community arts groups since 2002. It houses the offices for the Springfield Regional Arts Council, Springfield Ballet, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Springfield Regional Opera, Men’s Chorus of the Ozarks, Sculpture Walk Springfield, Any Given Child Springfield and the Film and Media Association of Springfield, as well as the Springfield Little Theatre Costume Shop and Set Design Studio. More than 30 other arts organizations use the building for meeting and rehearsal space.

Sharing resources allows for further collaboration of arts and culture groups. Springfield Little Theatre and Moxie Cinema have both seen a growth in new audience members from collaborating with alternative venues. SLT’s production of “Cabaret,” held at the downtown bar Nathan P. Murphy’s, sold out every show because of its unique intimate setting. The Moxie was able to quadruple seating capacity for cult-classic films by screening them outdoors at Mother’s Brewery.

The Discovery Center’s Executive Director Rob Blevins says that one of the center’s best events to date has been

a collaborative effort based on need: It combined forces with The Diaper Bank of the Ozarks to create a new fundraiser that brought record-breaking numbers.

## RED FLAGS

Arts and culture organizations still require help from the community for diversity at the leadership level, infrastructure support and sustainable funding. These Red Flags remain consistent with previous years’ reports, and affect arts and cultural organizations on multiple levels.

An estimated 2% of all board members surveyed in 2019 reflect a minority population, while the minority community represents 10% of Springfield’s population. Strides are being made to build greater cultural equity, with events such as the Community Concerts & Conversations held in 2018, allowing the arts to serve as a safe space for tough conversations about diversity and race. To fully represent and reflect the city’s current demographics, however, arts and cultural organizations must ensure **diversity at the leadership level** and on their boards.

Organizations are also struggling with **infrastructure support**. With growing audiences and more programs, issues such as parking, staffing and facility maintenance remain a constant hurdle for even well-established organizations. With the hub of the arts and culture groups located downtown, parking is at a premium, where few spaces are guaranteed for both staff and patrons.

SLT, which has seen tremendous growth in a short amount of time, recently purchased a separate building to house its education and outreach needs. The building, along with the organization’s Landers Theatre, are over 100 years old, and a capital campaign for \$5 million is underway. The group received a \$1 million grant from the C.W. Titus Foundation to partially forgive the purchase debt. Despite this grant, **sustainable funding** continues to be a Red Flag for all arts organizations. In 2019, multiple arts organizations including the Springfield Art Museum and the Springfield Symphony Orchestra are leading endowment and capital campaigns with more than \$33 million needed collectively. While some local foundations continue to provide project support, the long-term operating and capital expenditures are often left behind.

## LONG-STANDING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Year Established	Institution/program
1905	Springfield-Greene County Library
1922	Dickerson Park Zoo
1926	Gillioz Theatre
1928	Springfield Art Museum
1934	Springfield Little Theatre
	Springfield Symphony Association
1978	Springfield Regional Arts Council
1980	Artsfest
1991	The Discovery Center
1992	Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts
1999	Springfield Contemporary Theatre
2001	First Friday Art Walk
2005	Moxie Cinema
2008	Moon City Creative District
2009	Any Given Child Springfield



Springfield Little Theatre recently leased the former McDaniel School for its education and outreach services. To address maintenance needs due to the building’s age, the organization is in the midst of a \$5 million capital campaign.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Tracy Kimberlin

PRESIDENT & CEO,  
SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION  
& VISITORS BUREAU



“It’s well documented that cultural tourists spend more when they travel. Not only are the cultural tourists adding to the crowds at the events, but they certainly add to the economy as well.”

# BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Startups, education keep economy strong

AS POPULATION GROWTH SLOWS, RECRUITING DIVERSE TALENT BECOMES KEY



Built in 1911, the 10-story Woodruff building was recognized as Springfield's first skyscraper. In 2015, it reopened as Sky Eleven, an upscale apartment building geared toward college students and young professionals.

A strong economy is at the heart of any thriving community, and Springfield has been in the midst of a period of economic strength for several years. Record-low unemployment, stability and growth in a wide range of business sectors, and a spirit of enthusiasm about the community's future set the stage for continued economic strength in the region.

### BLUE RIBBONS

Springfield's economy has remained strong since the last Community Focus Report. In fact, since the first report in 2004, the region's economy has reported **strength and consistent growth** due to its diverse industry base and strong foundational employers in health care and education. Manufacturing, logistics, information technology and retail businesses also employ large numbers and continue to flourish.

Local unemployment rates are near record-low levels, with the Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area reporting unemployment of around 3% and at times dropping as low as 2%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The total number of workers in the labor force has increased by 5.8% in the last decade, while the number of jobs has increased by nearly 9%. While opportunities for workers are plentiful, some businesses are experiencing difficulties

filling needed positions.

One of the spurs for growth has been the **revitalization of downtown and other redevelopment districts**. Major projects have served as catalysts for vibrant growth, including the Heer's luxury loft project, the creation and growth of Hotel Vandivort, the redevelopment of the Woodruff and McDaniel buildings, and Missouri State University's development of the Brick City complex.

Commercial Street has undergone a rebirth in recent years, with business owners and developers creating an area conducive to community-oriented retail and entrepreneurial spaces. Momentum continues to build for other areas, including Galloway Village in southeast Springfield.

Entrepreneurs have shown up to help create an **environment that is welcoming to startup businesses**, innovators and young professionals. Since 2013, MSU's efactory has helped encourage new business ideas and served as a business incubator. The Network for Young Professionals, a committee of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, works to encourage the area's young professionals to get involved in the community and take their place at the decision-making table.

One way the community is working to keep those professionals in the area is by reaching them early, through a **strong education system at all levels**.

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Economic strength and area revitalization
- Environment favorable to startups
- Strong education system at all levels



#### RED FLAGS

- Shortage of skilled workers
- Slowing population growth
- Lack of development-ready sites



The Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Professional Studies continues to grow, with more than 300 students from 23 school districts in the 2018–19 school year spending half of their school day to learn in fields where there is the most need for skilled workers.

The area’s universities form part of the backbone of the community, with more than 50,000 college students in the region preparing for life after school—and businesses are eager to tap into this large, in-demand labor pool after graduation.

The community has recently demonstrated its continued support for education as well. Passage of the \$168 million bond issue for Springfield Public Schools in April 2019 will provide funding for much-needed upgrades at facilities throughout the district. Ozarks Technical Community College, meanwhile, successfully passed a 20-year renewal and increase of its property tax to create the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Technology, with training focused on skills needed for sought-after high-quality jobs in our region. It also will help the college expand technical and allied health programs at its Richwood Valley and Table Rock campuses, as well as provide additional training for displaced workers.

## RED FLAGS

While the regional economy is strong, there are potential barriers for continued growth. One significant issue is the **shortage of skilled workers**.

The low unemployment rate contributes to this issue. With jobless numbers at historic lows, finding enough employees—particularly those with significant, specialized skill sets—to fill newly created jobs becomes more difficult.

The Springfield region is not alone in this regard. Businesses in metropolitan areas across the nation report similar difficulties in finding the right people to fill the jobs they want to create; nationally, there were more job openings than people to fill them in 2018 for the first time in modern U.S. history, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Because wages correlate with skills, this skills gap not only inhibits growth for employers and higher-paying jobs, it also hinders earnings potential and upward mobility for those who live here, especially those who are underemployed.

This issue is compounded by the

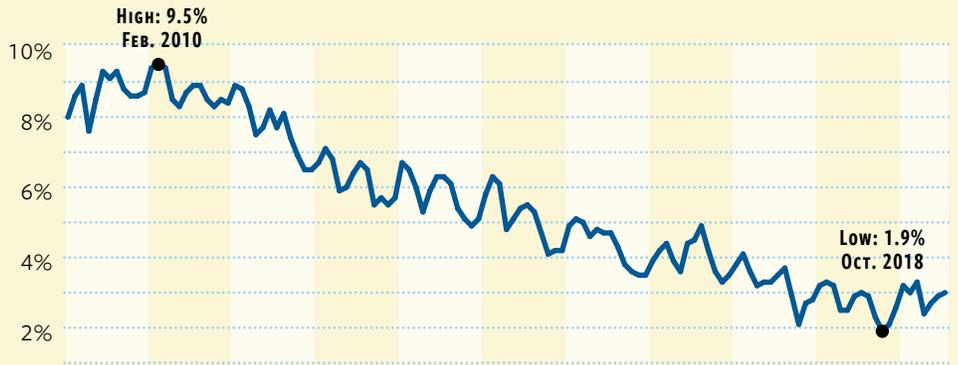
**slowing of population growth in the area.** Springfield’s population is now growing at about 1% a year, only slightly above the national average. To be able to compete with other communities facing the same workforce issues, we will need to be able to grow our population more quickly. The fastest-growing metro areas in the country are growing at rates closer to 3% a year by recruiting talent to their cities.

Population growth could also help address another key issue cited by both citizens and businesses: the area’s continued lack of racial and ethnic diversity. Just over 90% of the Springfield population identified as “white” as of 2017 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Several community and civic organizations efforts are working to address the issue, including Minorities in Business and MSU Multicultural Services, and strides have been made in recent years.

Overall, the lack of available skilled workers makes it more difficult to encourage new businesses to locate in our area and existing businesses to expand here. Another barrier to this process is the **lack of development-ready sites and available commercial real estate**. Vacancy rates for industrial real estate in Greene and Christian counties are hovering at around 3%, and speculative buildings are claimed before they are even available to market to prospects.

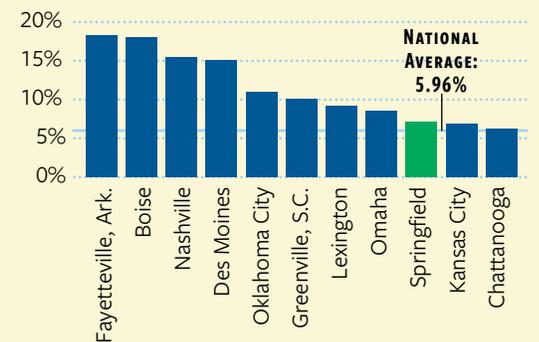
All of these factors make it difficult for businesses to add the high-skills jobs that help increase wages and address the poverty issues that are still a problem in our area. While average wages have increased in Greene County for the last several years, wages are still below state and national averages.

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN THE SPRINGFIELD METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA



SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

## POPULATION GROWTH BY METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA, 2010–2018



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Springfield is growing slightly above the national average. Faster growth would help better meet the need of companies looking to create jobs: a skilled workforce.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Robin Robeson

*EVP/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, GUARANTY BANK AND BOARD CHAIR-ELECT, SPRINGFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE*



“The Springfield region’s economy has continued to thrive for several years, thanks to several factors: a strong educational base, strength in key cornerstone economic sectors like health care, and a vibrant spirit of entrepreneurship. While there are several issues on the horizon that need to be addressed—including the workforce shortage, the need for skills training and the need to boost wages through high-skills jobs—our region’s ability to collaborate and address these issues together gives me confidence in our ability to maintain our economic vitality for years to come.”

# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

## Volunteering, voting habits changing engagement

TECHNOLOGY AND LIFE CHANGES ARE ALTERING THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CIVIC INVOLVEMENT



James Moore, a deputy registrar for Greene County, registers voters during an event on Park Central Square. After completing training provided by the Greene County Clerk's office, deputy registrars have the authority to register voters in person.

Springfield and Greene County continue to engage citizens in meaningful ways through increased volunteerism structure, support for local educational and city infrastructure improvements, and non-profit collaboration. Work in the region is hindered by ongoing fluctuation in the number of registered active voters, difficulties with changes in individual giving methods, and the ongoing challenge of low voter turnout during local elections.

### BLUE RIBBONS

**Volunteer access has gained structure.** Volunteerism established through online channels has increased significantly recently with GivePulse (supported via Drury University and the Drew Lewis Foundation) and Volunteer Ozarks (supported through KY3 and United Way of the Ozarks). Both systems connect individuals with agencies for short- and long-term volunteerism opportunities and have resulted in increased involvement.

Volunteerism has also developed more depth. The Give 5 Program connects Greene County seniors to non-profit organizations through free, cohort-style educational classes. More than 150 graduates have all committed to long-term community volunteer work. Additionally, Leadership Springfield has launched the Access Class, which provides two days of intensive community connection work in cohorts, and the

Junior League of Springfield and Council of Churches of the Ozarks have seen increases in volunteerism in recent years.

The United Way Day of Caring and other United Way volunteer programs saw an increase in volunteers—22,230 in 2017 and 23,048 in 2018—but a decrease in the total number of volunteer hours: 513,422 in 2017 versus 432,158 in 2018.

**Recent support for local infrastructure improvements** shows a willingness to contribute to priority community needs. In April 2019, voters approved a \$168 million Springfield Public Schools bond issue to support 39 priority building projects and the extension of the Springfield ¼-cent sales tax for 20 years, which supports capital improvements. Additionally, communities in and surrounding Greene County supported several school and civic proposals including education-focused approvals for the Logan-Rogersville, Strafford and Pleasant Hope school districts, and civic infrastructure approvals in Battlefield, Bois D'Arc, Walnut Grove and others.

Voters continue to have access to high-quality nonpartisan election information, thanks to the work of the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri. The league's "Voter's Guide" is produced for each federal and midterm election to help citizens in Greene, Christian and Webster counties understand the positions of candidates seeking election and to learn about proposed amendments and propositions.

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Volunteerism structure
- Support for local infrastructure improvements
- Nonprofit collaboration



#### RED FLAGS

- Fluctuating registered-voter numbers
- Low voter turnout
- Giving methods in transition



Nonprofit and grant-funding organizations have grown and developed more **collaborative methods** in recent years. Large-scale collaborative efforts such as the Northwest Project, with more than 70 nonprofit partnerships engaged in the work, and Prosper Springfield, with more than 300 nonprofit partners across six committee groups, have worked to build structure around poverty reduction, a major community goal.

Additionally, local grantmaking efforts have shifted toward collaborative grantmaking with programs like the Darr Family Foundation Education and Literacy grant partnership. This program will provide the Every Child Promise and its partner agencies more than \$1 million to impact early childhood and literacy. Furthermore, grantmaking foundations have increased collaboratively funded grant programs. For example, both the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and the Musgrave Foundation provide funding support for the Education and Literacy effort, and Musgrave and the CFO partnered with the Springfield Regional Arts Council to provide \$40,000 in art-oriented grantmaking.

## RED FLAGS

**Registered voter counts have fluctuated** in recent years. Changes by the Greene County Clerk's office in reporting inactive but registered voters as part of the total number of registered voters at any given election has affected tracking by the office. Inactive voters, defined by their lack of participation via returned mail by the Greene County Clerk's office to their mailing address, are no longer counted in the pool of registered voters. These voters can also be removed from the rolls after two federal election cycles have passed after a failed voter-registration card mailing.

Inactive voters can still vote by updating their addresses through Election Day, but the change in reporting has affected turnout percentages. Elections in which inactive voters are included in the registered voter data show lower voter turnout than those in which the inactive voters are excluded from the total pool of registered voters. Voter turnout—with inactive voters excluded from the total number of registered voters reported—was 71.7% in November 2018 and 37.08% in August 2018. In April 2018, voter turnout was 9.46%, but that calculation included inactive voters.

Most notably, this change has brought the issue of inactive voters to public attention. Between April 2018 and August 2018, 26,509 voters were removed from the count of registered voters, a 14% decrease in registered voters in Greene County, mostly due to the issue of inactive voters' nonupdated addresses. Efforts to connect with and educate voters on the importance of updated voter registration address information upon moving is needed. Many of these nonupdated addresses may be linked to college students and residents with high mobility rates due to personal and financial circumstances.

Additionally, about one quarter of Greene County adults are not registered as active voters. Currently, Greene County's population includes more than 230,000 adults, yet the number of active voters was 174,491 as of April 2019.

**Local elections also continue to show poor turnout.** The April 2019 election, which included important decisions related to education and infrastructure, had a voter turnout of only 17.28% of total eligible active voters (inactive voters were not included in the calculation). Local issues significantly impact community needs and require community input, yet a very small margin of eligible adults are participating in these important elections. More work in educating eligible adults in Greene County must be undertaken to increase civic engagement in the local election process, including a larger volume of actively engaged deputy registrars who help register others to vote and larger public-awareness campaigns reminding individuals to update their addresses in voter records after moving.

**Individual giving methods are changing,** and agencies must alter fundraising and donor development methods to accommodate this change. For example, United Way of the Ozarks has seen a decline in its workplace-based annual campaign model. Total dollars raised in the annual campaign in 2018 were \$2.5 million, with consistent decline each year since a peak of approximately \$3 million in 2015. As national trends indicate ongoing reductions in institutional trust combined with changing donor-engagement needs, organizations must find new solutions and new ways to engage the community, particularly given individual donors still make up over 68% of charitable giving nationally.

## FLUCTUATING REGISTERED VOTER COUNTS

Election date	Registered voters	Change from previous	Voter turnout
April 2017	185,437	—	18.62%
Nov. 2017	176,076	▼9,361	14.19%
April 2018	187,212	▲11,136	9.46%
Aug. 2018	160,703	▼26,509	37.08%
Nov. 2018	163,441	▲2,738	71.70%
April 2019	174,491	▲11,050	17.28%

SOURCE: GREENE COUNTY CLERK

Due to the way registered voters are counted by the Greene County Clerk's office, the number of registered voters has fluctuated over the last several elections. Beginning with the August 2018 election, the number of inactive but registered voters were not counted in the total number of registered voters at the time of the election, affecting turnout percentages.



Employees from JPMorgan Chase volunteer at Ozarks Food Harvest during United Way of the Ozarks' Day of Caring in 2018.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Dr. Gloria Galanes

FORMER DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS AT MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

"One of the things that makes Springfield unique is the level of citizen and institutional collaboration throughout the city. This report is a perfect example of what can happen when citizens work together for the benefit of all."



# COMMUNITY HEALTH

## Despite strides, many struggle to access care

TOO MANY RESIDENTS REMAIN WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE, AND MORE DOCTORS ARE NEEDED

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Public health focus
- Health-care resources
- Recruiting and training



#### RED FLAGS

- Access to medical care
- Access to dental care
- Mental health and substance abuse



Katie Towns, assistant director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, shared the results of the area's first mental-health needs assessment earlier this year at the Springfield Art Museum.

Our community has seen the value of coming together to make an impact in community health. Throughout the past 15 years, collaborations and partnerships have grown among the health-care sector and community organizations. These relationships are key to addressing Red Flags and for continuing success with Blue Ribbons.

### BLUE RIBBONS

A common theme is the **focus on public health**. Public health, once focused on preventing illness through activities such as immunizations and disease surveillance, is more robustly thought of today as partners working together to ensure the conditions in which everyone can be healthy. In 2016, an innovative collaboration between health-care partners and public health led to the first Community Health Needs Assessment, the most coordinated and comprehensive health assessment that the Springfield community had conducted.

The second CHNA, published in 2019, built upon the successes of the first, analyzing and identifying priority areas and common threads of our area's health concerns. Three priority areas were identified: lung disease, cardiovascular disease and mental health. Five common threads were also identified this time: access to appropriate care, mental health, physical activity and nutrition, social determinants of health and tobacco use.

The CHNA was used to develop the Community Health Improvement Plan to address the needs. The first CHIP was deployed in late 2016 with multiple community partners through the Health Living Alliance. The new CHIP will again be deployed to focus on policy and system changes to affect community health.

Springfield's **health-care infrastructure and resources** have consistently been identified as a Blue Ribbon since the first Community Focus Report in 2004, with two top 100 hospitals in Springfield. Our two major integrated health system providers, CoxHealth and Mercy, contribute to the area's overall economic stability by being the top two employers in the area, employing more than 20,000 in the health-care field. The area's number of physicians has remained relatively flat with just over 950 physicians, but our community has physician representation in all specialty areas. The continued growth of Jordan Valley Community Health Center means increasing services and resources are offered to meet the needs of the underserved.

Our community knows that partnership is pivotal in the success of growing our reach and **recruiting and training health-care professionals**. In 2007, Missouri State University opened the Jordan Valley Innovation Center to bring biomedical research and development to our community. In 2013, Ozarks Technical Community College was awarded funding to train 500 unemployed workers for health-care careers. In 2014, MSU

partnered with the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy to expand its program to Springfield. In 2015, we saw partnerships expand across business sectors, including health care, to launch the GO CAPS program. In this effort, high school students explore multiple career paths and learn additional skills for their next career steps. This growing program has continued to attract possible new health-care professionals. In 2017, OTC enrolled its first class into the Behavioral Health Support Program to prepare students to work in behavioral health and substance abuse facilities.

In looking toward the future, educational opportunities should continue to grow. In mid-2019, through a partnership with University of Missouri-School of Medicine, CoxHealth and Mercy, 32 new physicians are expected to be in training at the Springfield clinical campus. Through MU's expanded program, at least 128 students should be in the pipeline to deliver care in our community in the coming future.

## RED FLAGS

**Access to medical care** has been an ongoing Red Flag, one affected by the higher rates of uninsured individuals. In Springfield, 15.22% of adults are uninsured, compared with 13.21% nationally.

The area is designated as a health professional shortage area with the rate of medical primary-care providers at 86.9 providers per 100,000 in Springfield and 108.4 in Greene County, both higher than the state rate of 83.6. The region also has shortages in dental and mental-health providers.

A lack of **access to dental services** in Springfield continues to be a Red Flag, driven by the level of uninsured individuals as well as a shortage of dental providers who accept state Medicaid plans. Jordan Valley Community Health Center has worked to change the lack-of-access issue through several initiatives. It provides comprehensive dental services to school-aged children through two mobile units and access to a dental surgery center. The Jordan Valley Dental Express Care provides same-day access for acute dental needs.

From 2015 to 2018, Jordan Valley partnered with CoxHealth and Mercy on a project aimed at reducing emergency visits related to dental pain by routing these patients back to Jordan Valley for

care. During this time frame, emergency rooms saw a 50% reduction in patients seeking dental care.

A continued need for access to dental services in the Springfield community is evidenced by the number of patients (averaging 20-plus per day) still seeking acute dental care resulting in extractions. This need is also evidenced by the number of children needing full-mouth rehabilitation due to cavities. In Springfield, 20.2% of the population has poor dental health, compared with the national rate of 15.7%.

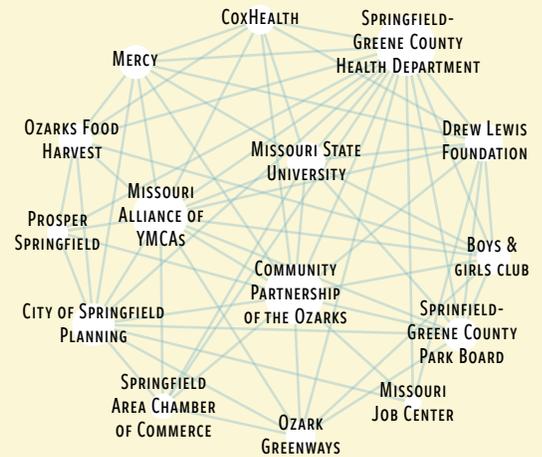
In 2007, **mental health and substance abuse** were first identified as a community Red Flag. Since 2013, the two have appeared as a common thread in the Community Focus Report, and in 2016, community partners came together to investigate mental health and substance abuse needs in our community. This assessment culminated in the release of the Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Assessment Report in spring 2019.

Three domains were identified through the assessment: Awareness and early intervention, crisis services, and access to appropriate care. Throughout the assessment, it was recognized that stigma affected all domains and sectors in the community, such as education, health, criminal justice, workforce and many others.

Springfield and Greene County have seen an increase in suicide rates and depression in the past decade. Nationally, the rates for suicide in 2016 were 13.4/100,000, compared with 18.8/100,000 for Greene County and 23.3/100,000 for Springfield. Across the country, opioid dependence and illicit drug use have become a national concern. The age-adjusted rate of mortality due to drug poisoning in Springfield is 21.5/100,000—greater than the state and national levels (18.67 and 15.60, respectively). The increased rates of mental illness and drug-related deaths could be linked to an individual's access to appropriate levels of care.

Access to mental-health providers is greater at the city and county level than it is at the state level, but a higher saturation of providers does not necessarily equate to improved health due to the area's higher uninsured rates. Additionally, social stigma related to mental-health treatment could be a barrier for patients seeking care.

## NETWORK OF COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



## SUICIDE RATES IN 2016

	Per 100,000 people
United States	13.4
Greene County	18.8
Springfield	23.3

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

## PERSPECTIVES

### Harold Bengsch

COUNTY COMMISSIONER, RETIRED  
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY  
HEALTH DIRECTOR



“Our community has seen much change in community health over the years. The more recent changes are due to our Health Department’s leadership in the community. They have brought forth a vision of what needs to be done and what can be done and translated this into our community’s fabric. This has been demonstrated through collaboratives stepping forward to work hand in hand to address our Red Flag issues. We need to remember that these issues are not easy to solve; they are social issues that are generational and take time to address. However, we have made much progress by analyzing the community needs and focusing our efforts to address the issues in the long term. By building sustainable relationships that promote health in our community we can continue to make big impacts on Red Flag issues.”

# EARLY CHILDHOOD

## Education, awareness improving, but abuse persists

YOUNG CHILDREN STILL FACE TRAUMA DESPITE PROGRAMS AND INVESTMENT



Maintaining a focus on high-quality early childhood experiences provides the necessary foundation for school success.

When the second edition of the Community Focus Report was published in 2005, the issues surrounding early childhood merited their own chapter. Since that time, the subject has gained priority and awareness in our conversations, political discussions, and community commitment. We have woven young children's issues into city and chamber legislative priorities, brought renowned national speakers to advocate for increased awareness and focus, and have benefitted from local commitments by foundations and philanthropic contributors to issues critical to young children's health and future success.

### BLUE RIBBONS

Community leaders **recognize the importance of early childhood education**. In the most recent City Council election, candidates who were elected spoke of the importance of addressing early childhood needs to make our community stronger. The connection was made between high-quality early childhood education and workforce development. In January 2018, the Darr Family Foundation, along with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and the Musgrave Foundation, awarded a \$1.01 million grant to Community Partnership of the Ozarks. This shift in priority funding was granted to support collaborative efforts to increase the professional development of programs serving

young children from birth to age 8, as well as building early literacy and social emotional skills of preschool children through second grade.

Moreover, the ability of Springfield's school district to include preschool-aged children in the average daily attendance count in the school funding formula has been instrumental in bringing an additional 600 children to school beginning at age 4. Many districts within the state have not taken advantage of this shift in funding; however, Springfield had a plan in place and enrolled the first 200 preschoolers in fall 2018, with the conversion of Campbell Elementary to an Early Childhood Center. The passage of Springfield Public Schools' Proposition S in April 2019 solidifies our community's commitment to children, including under-resourced preschool children, within the district.

In 2018, the Mayor's Commission for Children, in conjunction with Missouri State University, produced a report that found 26% of kindergarten students were not prepared with the foundational skills to be successful in kindergarten, a percentage that has remained steady since 2010. To improve access to high-quality early childhood education, Springfield Public Schools maximized state funding to increase preschool access for students and families with the creation of the Campbell Early Childhood Center. The new center provided access to 200 additional 4-year-olds, bringing the district's total number of

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Awareness of the importance of early childhood education
- Trauma awareness
- Childhood safety efforts



#### RED FLAGS

- Child abuse and neglect
- Economic disparities of access
- Suspension/expulsion in programs



high-quality early childhood classrooms to 32. In comparison, in 2004, Springfield Public Schools had five preschool classrooms.

In the 2017 Community Focus Report, childhood trauma was indicated as a Red Flag, an issue that remains in this report. Although the issue continues to have a life-altering impact on young children, our community has taken a large step forward in addressing the impact. Comprehensive **trauma awareness** training has been offered to more than 5,000 individuals in our community, with a continued focus to spread the word on what trauma is, how it impacts children and families and how to support children who have experienced trauma. As agencies and businesses become more aware and work toward becoming trauma-responsive, our community will shift the paradigm toward greater knowledge and skills to help individuals heal.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Safe Kids in Springfield, a comprehensive **childhood safety effort** to train and educate the community. More than 454,145 families have been reached, and 10,339 bike helmets have been provided. Car-seat use in the 10 southwest Missouri counties served has increased from 65% to 94%. Accidental injury is the No. 1 cause of death among children ages 15 and under in the United States and is preventable. In addition to car seats and bike safety, Safe Kids helps families with safe sleep practices, poison and fire prevention, water/toy/sports safety, and ways to prevent heat deaths in cars.

## RED FLAGS

Childhood trauma affects not only the social and emotional well-being of victims, but long-term health outcomes, employment opportunities and the future success of many who are victims. Though the community has made strides in awareness, **child abuse and neglect** remain major issues. The rate for Greene County remains above the state average, and in the county, more than 7,710 calls were made to the Child Abuse and Neglect hotline in 2018. Of these calls, 345 children were determined to be in immediate danger and entered the foster care system. As of March 2019, there were 671 children in foster care. These reflect the highest numbers for abuse and neglect in our community since 2014.

**Economic disparities of access** affect those who can take advantage of

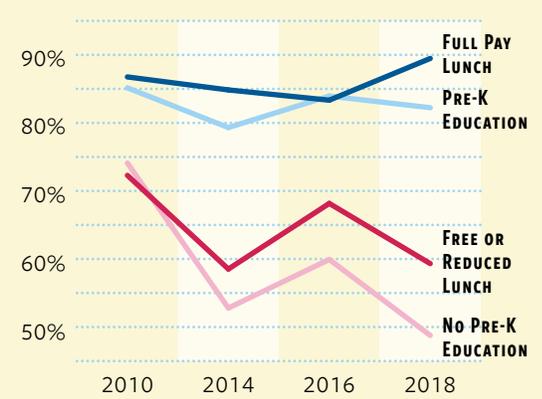
high-quality early childhood care and education. Costs are rising for child care providers, which, in turn, can lead to **higher costs of care**. With the impending minimum wage hike to \$12 an hour and the additional costly requirements imposed on child care providers who accept state subsidies, providers are struggling with their budgets. Accepting subsidies means increased expenses related to additional training requirements and fingerprint background checks. Child care providers who choose to accept children in foster care are also choosing to accept a financial loss because the state does not pay the provider's full rate/cost of care for those children, and providers are not allowed to charge foster families the difference. These issues are severely limiting the availability of child care.

The last four Kindergarten Readiness studies found that a higher portion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch were described by their teachers as not prepared for kindergarten. Conversely, a higher proportion of students paying regular lunch prices were described as well prepared for kindergarten. Additionally, those children who were able to attend a high-quality preschool were two to three times more likely to be ready for kindergarten, but affordability affects which families can send their children to such preschools.

There is an epidemic of **child care suspensions and expulsions** of our most at-risk children. Child care licensing regulations are forcing providers to expel young children in order to remain in compliance. Early childhood mental-health consultation is one of the few strategies that research has proven to have an impact on expulsion and suspension rates; however, few child care providers have access to this critical service. Preschool expulsions are associated with expulsions in later school grades, as well as negative educational and life outcomes.

One survey of directors and administrators showed preschool suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood programs in Springfield were twice the national rate. Fifty-eight children were expelled from the 40 responding programs in the previous 12-month period, a rate of 1.2%. There were 85 total suspensions reported by the responding programs in the previous 12-month period, a suspension rate of 1.8%.

## DISPARITIES IN KINDERGARTEN READINESS



SOURCE: MAYOR'S COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, 2019



Partnerships are the backbone of early childhood successes in the community, like this collaboration between Capable Kids and Families and Drury University's Music Therapy Department.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Missy Riley

DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PARENTS AS TEACHERS, SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



"I'm so incredibly proud of our community for embracing early childhood care and education as a priority. Looking back over the past 15 years, I recognize that our community now understands that high-quality experiences for our youngest citizens are necessary, not just nice. By expanding access to opportunities for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, Springfield has changed the trajectory of our future workforce."

# EDUCATION

## Voters support major investment

PROPOSITION S MEANS  
\$168 MILLION FOR PRIORITY  
PROJECTS AS SPRINGFIELD  
TACKLES ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR EDUCATION

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Community support
- Innovative student support services
- Mental-health services



#### RED FLAGS

- Achievement gaps
- Graduation rate disparity



*In 2019, Springfield Public Schools established the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council with more than 40 community members to improve college preparedness and graduation rates for students in historically under-represented or under-resourced groups.*

The Springfield community values public education by sharing its time, talent, and treasure. With the community's financial and volunteer support, the 24,599-student district is looking forward to continued success and improvement in the years ahead.

Springfield faces increasingly complex issues that impact students, including those with special needs and mental illness, as well as a growing number of children who face residential instability and other stressors in their family lives. The district's work in support of its strategic plan is focused on engaging, relevant and personal learning experiences for every learner.

### BLUE RIBBONS

Since 2000, Springfield voters have approved seven of nine ballot initiatives to support capital projects and increase operating funds for the school district. On April 2, 2019, Springfield voters passed Proposition S, which will provide \$168 million to address 39 high-priority projects to increase safety and security for 31 sites, expand early childhood programming, renovate Williams, Hillcrest and Sunshine, and newly construct Boyd, Delaware and Jarrett.

The success of Proposition S was rooted in a grassroots effort that began with the appointment of a 30-member

community task force, which spent five months studying the district's facility needs.

In addition to **voter support**, Springfield Public Schools has more than 200 active partners who provide resources, support strategic-plan initiatives, and assist classroom teachers. During the 2018-19 academic year, 4,200 volunteers logged more than 35,000 service hours by mentoring students, assisting with landscaping projects, tutoring and purchasing school supplies for under-represented and under-resourced students. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of dollars come through generous partners that include The Foundation for Springfield Public Schools, Care to Learn, Springfield-Greene County Library District, Ozarks Food Harvest, local businesses and faith-based groups.

Springfield Public Schools continues to analyze, research and prioritize best practices to address the equity issues facing under-represented and under-resourced students. These best practices concentrate on closing the student achievement gap and **expanding student support services**. Since 2016, the district's Explore summer learning program has focused on supporting under-resourced learners.

Explore enrollment grew from 10,607 students in 2016 to 11,596 in 2018. During Explore 2018, students qualifying for

free/reduced lunch made up 54.4% of all enrollment.

Partnerships and experiences have continued to grow in numbers each year. In 2016, Explore started with 20 business partners. That number grew to 68 business partners in 2018.

Launch virtual courses began as SPS Online in 2012 with a strategic decision to build online course content in-house and move away from for-profit providers. In 2017, Launch began offering 48 courses to member districts statewide. At the conclusion of the 2018 school year, 88 school districts from across the state had joined Launch and began offering virtual courses to their students.

The district is also expanding **mental-health services** to help students deal with adverse childhood experiences, which can impede a child's social, emotional and cognitive development. The results of the 2018 Missouri Student Survey indicate that 18.8% of students in grades 6–12 have seriously considered suicide during the past 30 days—an increase of 6.9% since 2010. In addition, the survey shows that 34.5% of students reported they had been bullied on school property. In 2010, 26.6% of students reported they had been bullied. The district has responded with the adoption of Signs of Suicide, a best practice program provided in all ninth-grade health classes.

In 2019, Springfield Public Schools entered into an agreement with Burrell Behavioral Health to provide mental-health support as a pilot initiative within the Hillcrest feeder pattern, which serves 4,000 students. Recent changes in Medicaid-eligible services opened the door for providers to assist students with mental-health issues and receive services in schools.

### RED FLAGS

Students who are academically successful are more likely to graduate from school and have stable employment later in life. When analyzing state testing results, college and career preparation, and graduation rates, the district has **significant achievement gaps** in each between students who qualify for free and reduced lunch and those who are on full-pay lunch status. Furthermore, the district also shows major gaps between white student achievement and students of color.

Among the results:

- College and career readiness—ACT, SAT, ASVAB: In sum, 67% of graduated students scored at or above the state standard in 2018 compared to the state target of 71.5%. Students on full-pay lunch status scored the highest (77%), and students who qualified for free or reduced lunch scored the lowest (51%)—a difference of 26 percentage points. When data are disaggregated by ethnicity, white students performed the highest (70%), Hispanic students were next (61%), and black students performed the lowest (37%).

- **Graduation rates:** Overall, the four-year graduation rate for the class of 2018 was 86% as compared to the state four-year graduation rate of 89%. When data are disaggregated by lunch status, free students were the lowest (77%). When graduation data are disaggregated by ethnicity, white students are 87%, Hispanic students are 78%, and black students have the lowest graduation rates at 76%.

When analyzing the data, it's clear that students from historically under-represented backgrounds and students of poverty struggle to perform as compared with other peer groups. This past year, the district developed priority metrics as a quick reference for district and school leaders to assess the performance of grade spans, lunch status, and ethnicity groups. This new level of data transparency guides teachers, leaders and community partners to re-evaluate how the district is serving our most at-risk students. Increased awareness has led to the development of new district-level strategies aimed at underperforming student populations. This work addresses student engagement, student attendance, support programming, graduation rates and diversifying the district's workforce.

In 2019, the district convened the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council with more than 40 members from the community. The council is assessing what actions the district should deploy to ensure that all students excel through purposeful engagement, rigorous instruction, cultural awareness and relevant education experiences with an intentional focus on historically under-represented and under-resourced groups. Council members will develop a specific list of recommendations and action steps to help positively impact the district's strategic work.

## SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

# 24,599

Total student population

4.45%

English language learners

11.95%

Special education students

75.25%

White

24.75%

Other race/ethnicities

46.43%

Full pay lunch

53.57%

Free or reduced lunch

SOURCE: SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### PERSPECTIVES

## Dr. Denise Fredrick

RETIRED EDUCATOR AND FORMER  
SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD PRESIDENT



"The past 15 years have brought significant, positive change for Springfield Public Schools. The alignment of all district priorities around a comprehensive strategic plan helps ensure our focus remains on serving the ongoing and emerging academic and social needs of our students. The district's strategic work to provide access to technology, expand early childhood education services, strengthen safety and security, improve the quality of learning environments, and close performance gaps for historically under-represented and under-resourced students is complex and critically important. This intentional focus demonstrates a deep commitment to preparing tomorrow's workforce for a wide variety of college and career opportunities. I am proud of SPS and our community for the progress we're making together and I look forward to all the future holds."

# HOUSING

## Renters still struggling to make ends meet

AVAILABLE HOUSING HAS IMPROVED IN QUALITY, BUT RISING COSTS HIT BUDGETS HARD

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR HOUSING

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Improved home safety
- Streamlined homeless services
- Innovative collaborative approaches to housing



#### RED FLAGS

- Lack of flexible support
- Costs outpace funding
- Affordability



The Springfield HOME Team advocates for high-quality, affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities.

Over the years, collaborative spirit drove the Springfield housing community to identify critical gaps and barriers to high-quality, affordable, safe and accessible housing. Since 2005, the community has come so far, but issues remain. Tracking the successes will help chart the course to better housing options that serve all citizens.

### BLUE RIBBONS

Unsanitary conditions, hoarding, poor maintenance of aging housing stock and lack of physical accessibility have left many families in inadequate housing. Coalition efforts such as Safe and Sanitary Homes and modification and repair collaborations have **improved overall quality**. While improvements make this a Blue Ribbon, the organizations involved in these efforts are concerned about the limited financial resources available. Labor and time have not allowed consistent and stable progress, and with an aging population and housing stock, it is becoming more difficult to meet the demand.

Initially, access to homeless services was a Red Flag because of little systemwide coordination, but several community initiatives including the **streamlining of services** that connect homeless individuals to supports and resources have transformed this area into a Blue Ribbon. While this improvement doesn't bring more beds or financial assistance into our community, it

ensures that we have a systemwide response to homelessness that is person-focused and uses available funding in the most efficient way possible. It also focuses resources toward the most vulnerable individuals and families experiencing homelessness. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, Community Partnership of the Ozarks' One Door completed an average of 220 assessments for housing assistance each month, up from 170 per month the previous fiscal year.

The community saw these improvements to high-quality service and efficiency, which are essential to sustainability:

- **Coordination of services:** The Springfield Affordable Housing Center was the realization of a longtime community dream. This year the SAHC will move and re-open as the O'Reilly Center for Hope, which will offer expanded services and on-site partners—making it easier for those experiencing a housing crisis to access resources.
- **Serving youth and families:** In 2017, Springfield Public Schools launched Wednesday Connection. This program attempts to reduce and minimize barriers to accessing essential services and provides case management to qualifying homeless SPS youth and families in a centralized location every other week.
- **Serving unsheltered homeless:** Thanks to extensive support from the faith community, a crisis cold-weather shelter for women was opened, which was

a gap in our community for several years. Community awareness and engagement are essential to decreasing the homeless population.

Springfield is growing in awareness and use of universally designed principles. UD homes allow the widest possible range of people to access and use every part of their home, no matter their age or ability level. The Affordable Housing Action Board and the Springfield Community Land Trust are examples of agencies that incorporate UD features in their affordable home developments. In 2017, Missouri Housing Development Commission began requiring all new construction include UD principles.

**Innovations in funding resources** have increasingly become a necessity. Eden Village stands out with an innovative approach to homelessness by using public and private partners to build a community of tiny homes for those who are chronically homeless or have disabilities while providing access to needed services. Not only is Eden Village an innovator in funding resources, but, through its partnership with Drury University, it has also incorporated UD features to increase access for residents. The Eden Village model has been so successful that it is now working on a second tiny-home project.

## RED FLAGS

Historically, the need for emergency shelter and the number of youth and children experiencing homelessness have been identified as Red Flags in our community. Both, combined with the lack of flexible support available to immediately serve people experiencing homelessness, continue to be concerns. Intentional actions toward reducing the impact and severity of homelessness among the unsheltered and children must be a priority for this community.

Our community **lacks flexible funding** and low-barrier housing necessary to meet the needs of individuals and families. On any given night, approximately 200 individuals are sleeping outside. According to the most recent Unsheltered Report, over 50% of unsheltered homeless are categorized as chronically homeless, meaning they have experienced homelessness for an extended period and have at least one disabling condition.

Emergency shelters in our community are often at capacity and continue

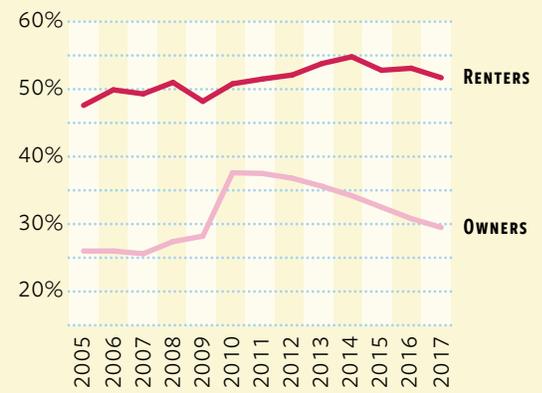
to need more volunteer support. The number of children and youth experiencing homelessness within Springfield Public Schools has increased by 31% since the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years.

Affordable housing and homeless grant funding trends for the past nine years show moderate fluctuations. Tax-credit funding varies in three- to four-year cycles and is unreliable as a stabilized source. Federal Home Loan Bank grants offer area nonprofits some relief for housing and homeless projects, but over time, the **cost for housing rehabilitation and new construction has outpaced the static funding levels**. Cost drivers include a shortage of skilled trade workers, combined with increased homeless service costs, specialized care needs, and additional service methods derived through collaboratives. Sustaining the existing homeless services in addition to future housing projects will require diversity and innovation in nonfederal funding development and approaches. Shared information for homeless services maximizes the dollars to serve more families.

The availability of safe, high-quality and **affordable housing** remains a concern. The number of cost-burdened households, where more than 30% of household income is used for housing costs, has trended upward for renters and homeowners. From 2015 to 2017, the number of Springfield household renters decreased from 38.57% to 36.52% while home ownership increased from 61.43% to 63.48%. Rising utility costs, low household income, and availability of affordable homes contribute to this issue. Rising construction costs have also played a role. Affordability is what keeps housing out of reach for low-income families. As a community, we must keep vigilant to close this gap through continued collaboration.

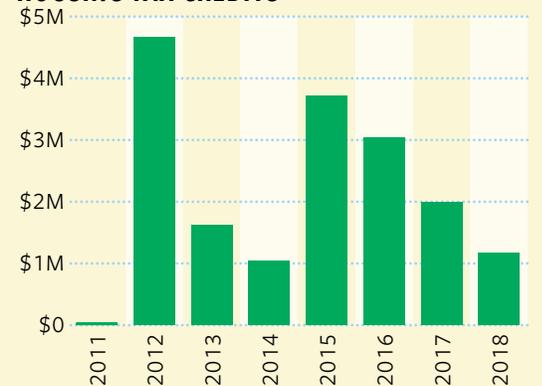
Local programs such as Ozarks Area Community Action Corp. weatherization; the city's emergency loan, downpayment and rental assistance programs; and rehabilitation efforts by Habitat for Humanity and Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri are helping to stabilize and reduce household living expenses. Additionally, Springfield area developers contribute to the affordable housing inventory using state and federal tax credits and private funds.

## COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS IN SPRINGFIELD



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

## DECLINE IN LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS



SOURCE: MISSOURI HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Missouri Housing Development Commission selects rental housing development projects to receive federal and/or state tax credits. These credits are used to fund the development of affordable rental housing so the developers can provide lower rents and energy efficient rental units for a 15-year period. Many of the projects will target all or part of their housing units for special-needs persons such as seniors, youth aging out of foster care, persons with disabilities, or very-low income residents.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Dana Elwell

RETIRED SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/  
COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP  
MANAGER, GUARANTY BANK



“A decent place to live makes a difference in a person’s life. One by one, brick by brick, the community is made stronger when housing is a priority.”

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

## Natural resources stand as strength

PUBLIC, PRIVATE SECTORS STRIVE TO PROTECT AREA'S ENVIRONMENT



The area's natural environment provides a variety of opportunities for hands-on outdoor learning experiences such as the Missouri Department of Conservation's annual Vulture Venture program. PHOTO BY MDC

Spectacular views of clear streams, lakes and rivers invite residents and visitors alike to enjoy the natural resources of our Ozarks environment, offering record-breaking catches of several species of game fish and all varieties of water activities. Prairies, glades and wetlands morphing into healthy forests provide biking, hiking and walking trails—all features of the unique natural environment in and around Springfield.

The health of our natural environment is an economic resource that contributes to quality of life. Attractive natural features remain one of the most frequently mentioned reasons people choose to live here. But protecting and preserving the health of our natural environment comes with a price tag, one that competes for finite resources with other critical community challenges such as generational poverty.

### BLUE RIBBONS

First reported in the 2015 Community Focus Report, Springfield was one of the first communities in the United States to utilize an **integrated approach** to the overwhelming total cost (estimated at \$1.6 billion) of meeting environmental compliance responsibilities, repairing/replacing aging infrastructure and meeting the needs for currently non-existent infrastructure. Progress continues on this groundbreaking approach to

determining how best to spend each limited dollar to meet these needs.

As a result of the **commitments and continuing collaborative work** of our active and dedicated not-for-profit citizen groups, such as the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, Ozark Greenways and the James River Basin Partnership, as well as our local governments and state agencies, we continue to enjoy high-quality water resources. Millions of dollars come to our region as a direct result of our ability to maintain high-quality water in surrounding rivers, lakes and streams. And public-sector support combined with the volunteer efforts of Ozark Greenways have resulted in the continuing expansion of Springfield's trail system.

Springfield also continues to meet federal air quality standards. The Ozarks Clean Air Alliance—stakeholders in a 13-county area in southwest Missouri—along with local media and community leaders continue to work to raise citizen awareness of the value of clean outdoor air and how to protect it. City Utilities of Springfield, a municipally owned utility, continues to take a leadership role in air-quality improvement through infrastructure improvements and alternative (noncoal) fuel choices. Its renewables portfolio of solar, wind and recovered methane gas is estimated to reach 40% by 2020.

Building upon the continued commitment of the City's Tree Canopy

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Integrated approach
- Commitments and continuing collaborative work
- Investments in infrastructure



#### RED FLAGS

- Competition for community resources
- Erosion of environmental protections and local control
- Long-term regional water supplies



Preservation and Restoration Policy, combined with strong citizen volunteer support from the Tree City USA Citizens Advisory Committee and Ozark Greenways, recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation included: City—a Tree City USA, 34 years; CU—a Tree Line USA Utility, 25 years; Missouri State University and Drury University—Tree Campuses, six years and five years, respectively. The city’s Arboretum at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Gardens has received international accreditation, and Springfield has joined the Mayors’ Monarch Pledge as a monarch butterfly and pollinator-friendly community.

Springfield and Greene County recognize the importance of environmental education, which is provided by public and private entities. Students in public, private and home schools benefit from the efforts of informal education partners providing hands-on, inquiry learning experiences to students and teachers at places such as the Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill Park and the city’s landfill, wastewater treatment plant and other related facilities.

Continuing long-range improvement and maintenance plans, Springfield’s **investments in infrastructure** and innovative measures have resulted not only in returns on ratepayers’ dollars invested, but have earned the trust of the community. This has resulted in support for necessary funding for environmental infrastructure for stormwater and wastewater services.

Through the renewal of a contract with our two largest trash haulers and approval of an expansion of landfill space within the current geographic area, we are well-positioned to provide solid waste recycling and disposal services for the next several decades.

## RED FLAGS

As Springfield comes to terms with and addresses the long-term and chronic effects of poverty and the associated effects (domestic violence, alcohol/substance abuse, suicide, child abuse/neglect, etc.), the **competition for community resources** continues. Likewise, the funding required to meet the environmental responsibilities and requirements (\$1.6 billion) adds to the total of the community’s overall financial needs. There is no dedicated funding to meet government requirements for

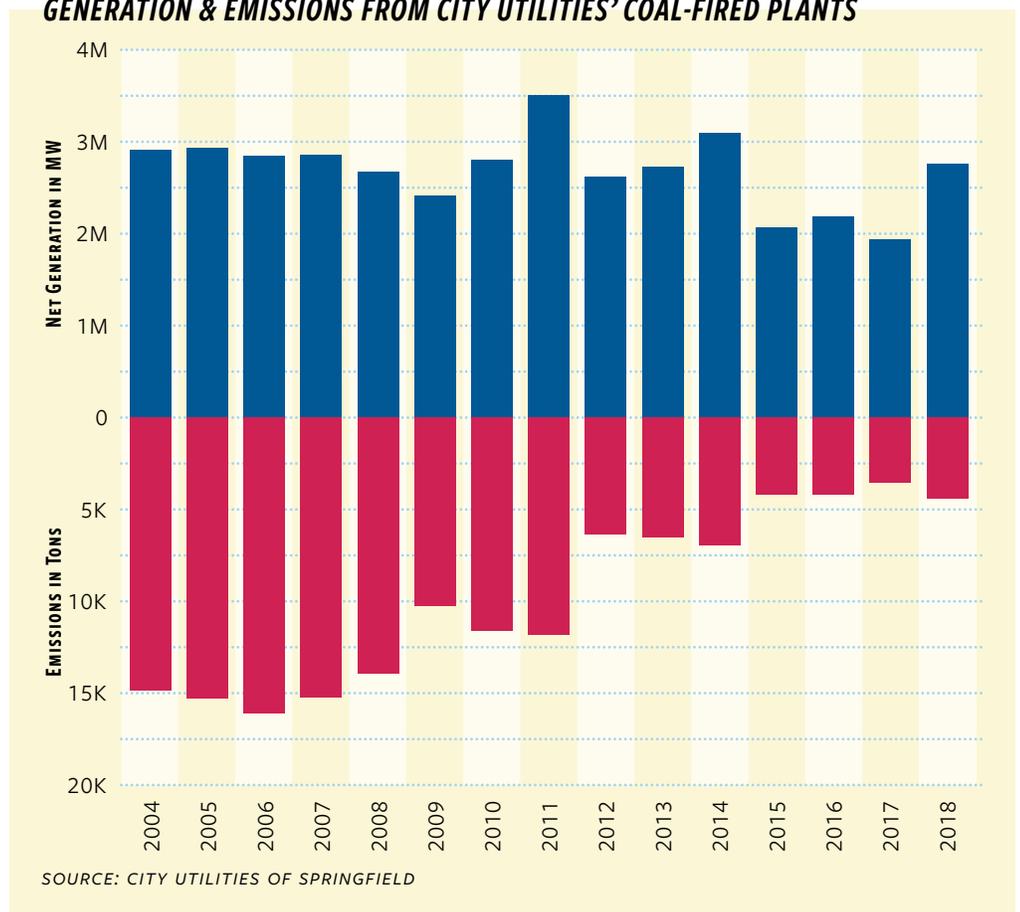
stormwater infrastructure or air quality.

The political climate has become unfavorable for environmental concerns. Some areas have stalled, while others are actively being deregulated, with enforcement budgets cut, and staffs reduced. This is particularly evident on the national and state level; however, this **erosion of environmental protection** will eventually have an impact on our local efforts because **local control**—the ability of local governments to enact stricter regulations specific to their local communities—is under attack.

First mentioned in the 2009 Community Focus Report, concerns regarding **long-term regional water supplies** remain. After further study, it appears Springfield is in the same position as several other regional communities: Our current water supply is projected to need supplemental supply to meet future growth and drought demands.

Local officials are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to gain access to water from Stockton Lake to meet that supplemental water supply need and remains the continuing focus of the Southwest Missouri Regional Water Coalition.

## GENERATION & EMISSIONS FROM CITY UTILITIES’ COAL-FIRED PLANTS



## PERSPECTIVES

### Todd Parnell

AUTHOR, FORMER PRESIDENT OF DRURY UNIVERSITY AND FORMER CHAIR OF THE CLEAN WATER COMMISSION



“The Ozarks. This vague notion of land, water and culture in southern Missouri, northern Arkansas and even eastern Oklahoma, some say. Ask a native where the Ozarks begins and ends and you will get as many answers as questions asked. The Ozarks. Where I am blessed to have been born, to grow through childhood, and to return to for my most productive years. I hope to die and be buried here, my ashes mingling with those of my family’s generations before me.”

# PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY

## Partnerships, preparedness bolster public safety

BUT INCREASING AMOUNT OF ILLEGAL DRUGS CREATE MOUNTING PROBLEMS

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Collaboration among partner agencies
- Increased disaster preparedness
- Mental Health First Aid program



#### RED FLAGS

- Stagnant federal funding for disaster preparation/relief
- Increasing drug-related problems
- Increase in fires in abandoned structures



Oct. 1, 2018, was the official opening of the Greene County Family Justice Center, which serves victims of violence all in one location. The FJC houses representatives from the Springfield Police Department, Greene County Sheriff's Office, Harmony House, The Victim Center, Legal Services of Southern Missouri, Greene County Children's Division, Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and Child Support Division.

In the area of public safety, prevention efforts and disaster preparedness have improved in Springfield and Greene County. But funding challenges remain, and the increasing flow of drugs into the areas is leading to drug-related issues, including overdoses and crime.

### BLUE RIBBONS

The past few years have seen many changes and growth in the public safety professions, including the collaboration among the city, county and community to consolidate resources and create the Springfield-Greene County 911 Emergency Communications Department in 2002, which also included the merging of the Republic 911 dispatch in 2013. A new **collaboration of partner agencies**, which includes the Springfield Fire Department, the City of Springfield, Mercy, CoxHealth, Springfield-Greene County Health Department, City Utilities, Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical Community College, Evangel University and Drury University, launched the PulsePoint Respond CPR notification app, which notifies trained citizen responders that someone within a half mile of their location is experiencing cardiac distress. Nearly 2,000 users have downloaded the PulsePoint app since its September 2018 launch.

In 2007, an ice storm paralyzed the area for several days, revealing a need for **increased disaster preparedness**. This need was addressed through the construction of the Greene County Public Safety Center and the implementation of the Emergency Management

Accreditation Program. The center allows for direct collaboration of more than 70 local, state and federal agencies during emergency response and recovery operations.

Cited as a Red Flag in the 2011 Community Focus Report, community and individual disaster preparedness has now significantly improved through the adoption of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, which uses nationally recognized standards and a peer review process. In 2012, the Office of Emergency Management was the 13th local jurisdiction in the nation to receive accreditation. In 2017, the OEM was reaccredited through 2021.

Collaborative efforts have allowed the Community Partnership of the Ozarks to implement the **Mental Health First Aid program**, which teaches adults a five-step action plan to identify and work with someone experiencing a mental-health challenge or crisis. In Greene County, CPO and its collaborative partners trained more than 1,700 Greene County adults in Youth Mental Health First Aid to support teens who may be experiencing similar challenges. During a three-year period, those adults referred more than 18,000 youths to professional, self-help or other support strategies.

Voter-approved funding has provided more resources for public safety and order. In 2007, Greene County voters passed the 1/8-cent sales tax for 911 services, which helped to equip the Public Safety Center with state-of-the-art technology and begin the process to achieve the 911 accreditation component by the

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

In 2017, Greene County citizens voted to approve a ½-cent general revenue sales tax, allowing \$500,000 to fund partnerships among the prosecutor's office, sheriff's office and Springfield Police Department. For the full tax, 56% was allotted toward criminal justice, 6% for environmental mandates, 25% for capital projects, and 11% for community initiatives, including \$2 million to address issues surrounding mental health. This tax funded several projects, including an expansion of the Greene County Jail and the creation of the Greene County Family Justice Center, a "one-stop shop" for victims of domestic violence where they can access services of 22 partners.

In 2018 and 2019, the Springfield Police Department began implementing changes made possible by the renewal of the Level Property Tax by the City Council and voters. The funding provided life-cycle replacement of vehicles and additional sworn and civilian personnel.

The police department will be able to add 19 investigators and three support staff over the next three years. The officers will be used to fully staff a Family Violence Unit, add property crimes detectives and create a new Vice Unit to investigate human trafficking/sex trafficking, prostitution, gambling and alcohol-related crimes. The fire department will have funding for two new fire stations in the central and western areas of the city. The fire department's community outreach efforts through Project RED (Reduce, Educate and Deliver) Zone, a community risk-reduction program aiming to reduce home fires, fire-related injuries and deaths, has placed firefighters throughout the city providing fire safety information and free smoke alarms to those in need. Since the program began in April 2017, the department has installed 2,449 smoke alarms and 692 batteries, tested 4,511 smoke alarms, and visited more than 15,300 homes.

## RED FLAGS

The effects of natural and human-caused disasters have become more frequent and widespread. As a result, preserving the public's safety and security has become more challenging. **Federal funds that assist state and local governments in preparing for**

**all-hazards disaster situations** have remained at the same level for many years, even though the costs involved with preparing disaster-resilient communities continue to rise.

The Springfield-Greene County 911 Emergency Communications Department serves 13 fire agencies and nine law enforcement agencies, and transfers medical calls to local hospital-based emergency medical service providers. In 2016, a staffing study from an outside consultant identified the need for 16 additional telecommunicators, based on the workload at that time of Springfield-Greene County 911. This need continues to be an issue as the workload increases annually and the current sole funding is the ⅛-cent sales tax passed by the voters in 2007. With an estimated sales-tax revenue increase in 2019, six additional full-time employees were approved by the Greene County Commission and the City Council, which will help in reaching the staffing study recommendation.

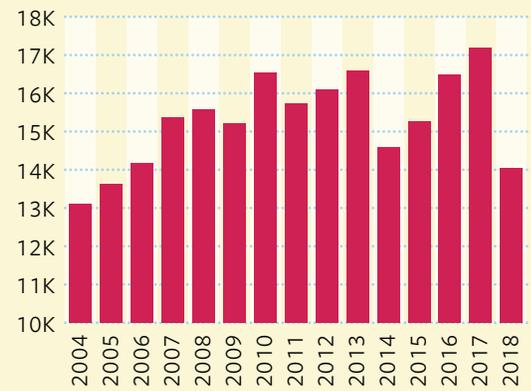
The Springfield Police Department continues to wrestle with **drug-related problems** in the community. The department has seized increasing amounts of illegal drugs and responded to an increase in overdose calls related to opioids/heroin. In 2011, officers seized 4.3 pounds of methamphetamine and 0.057 pounds (26.3 grams) of heroin. Those totals surged to 32 pounds of methamphetamine and 2.06 pounds of heroin in 2018. This increase has come at a time when the department has seen a significant decrease in methamphetamine lab busts, from a high of 120 labs in 2012, to an average of three a year today. The methamphetamine seized comes from south of the border and has ties to Mexican drug cartels. It is cheaper, but higher in overall purity.

In 2018, officers responded to 187 overdose calls with 19 of those being fatalities, compared with 2017 when officers responded to 179 overdose calls, 10 of which were fatalities.

From 2015 to 2018, the number of **unsecured vacant structures have steadily increased**, as have the number of fires in vacant structures. In many cases, residents in the area where fires are occurring report transient activity immediately prior to the fire. Unsecured vacant structures provide access as a means of temporary shelter, an opportunity for destruction of property, criminal behavior and the increased likelihood of a fire.

## UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS, 2004–2018

Part 1 offenses include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and stolen vehicles.



SOURCE: SPRINGFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

## PERSPECTIVES

### David Hall

DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY SAFETY AT MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY AND RETIRED SPRINGFIELD FIRE CHIEF



"I consider myself blessed to have had the opportunity to serve on the Springfield Fire Department. Working in the fire service provides the opportunity to directly impact daily lives within our community.

Frequently, when things have gone terribly wrong in someone's life, we were called upon to help make it a little better. I feel this is why the public holds firefighters in such high esteem. However, there is much more that makes the fire service such a special calling. Beyond being co-workers, there is a family-like bond. Like every family, there are family squabbles and some that you enjoy being around, but others not so much. Similarly, like our 'real' families, we always pull together in the time of need. We put aside our differences to make the family successful. This is why the fire service is so successful. We have a common bond where we pull together in tough times to accomplish the mission. We rely on each other. I will always look back with fond memories of my years in the fire service—the good times, the bad times, the lifelong friendships and, most of all, the people where you made a difference in their life."

# RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE

## Parks, trails enhance quality of life

AMENITIES ALSO CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE AREA'S ECONOMY  
AND APPEAL



The Springfield Lasers celebrate their back-to-back championship win of the World Team Tennis King Trophy, lifted by trophy namesake Billie Jean King, Aug. 3, 2019. The Lasers won the championship in 2018 and again in 2019. PHOTO BY CAMERAWORKUSA

With 104 locations and 300-plus community partner groups, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board is the heart of community recreation, sports and leisure.

Through sports tournaments and attractions like Dickerson Park Zoo and Springfield Botanical Gardens, parks help bring thousands of overnight visitors to Springfield. In an employee-driven job market, parks and outdoor experiences are also factors in attracting and retaining talent.

A well-loved park system needs constant maintenance and reinvestment, though, and to remain a hub for tournaments, Springfield needs to redevelop and expand its sports infrastructure.

### BLUE RIBBONS

As with other areas of the community, **collaboration** is a driving principle for the Park Board, which actively partners with more than 300 local organizations and more than 900 volunteers to provide programs, events and facilities.

A key partner is Springfield Public Schools, which has provided facilities for before- and after-school programs, sports leagues, clubs and summer camp for 20 years.

Other partners include City Utilities of Springfield, providing low-cost long-term leases for property at Lake Springfield, Valley Water Mill and Dan Kinney parks; the Developmental Center of the Ozarks, partnering to present the Turkey Trot 5K for 25 years; Ozarks Food Harvest,

collecting food donations at outdoor pools, the skate park and Turkey Trot; and all four Springfield Boys and Girls Club facilities, located in or adjacent to parks.

“Friends” groups provide financial, advocacy and volunteer support, especially Friends of the Zoo at Dickerson Park Zoo and Friends of the Garden at Springfield Botanical Gardens. Friends of Timmons Temple has completed four years of renovations at historic Timmons Hall, which opened in 2019 as an event space with cultural, historical and educational opportunities.

The Park Board also partners with the Springfield Sister Cities Association and the Springfield Regional Arts Council to present arts and cultural events throughout the year.

The City of Springfield allocated \$1.9 million in 2017–18 Community Block Development Grants to fund new major playground installations at Tom Watkins, Nichols, Meador and Cooper parks, as well as trail development—the largest funding source for parks capital improvements in seven years. The city’s Neighborhood Works grant program also emerged as a key funding source for park upgrades.

Another partner is Ozark Greenways, which builds and maintains 70-plus miles of trails and connections ranked among of the community’s favorite assets. In 2018, Ozark Greenways dedicated a new segment of the Fulbright Spring Greenway including a bridge over South Dry Sac River, and Wilson’s Creek Greenway was designated as the system’s

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Community collaboration
- Trails and connections
- Sports tourism



#### RED FLAGS

- Greenspace preservation
- Obesity
- Parks and trails funding



third National Recreation Trail in 2018.

This year will see the launch of Springfield Bike Share, a public-private partnership to provide bicycle rentals as a healthy, cost-effective complement to existing transit services in and around downtown.

**Sports tourism** is a revenue powerhouse for Springfield. In 2003, the city earned the designation of Sports Illustrated Sportstown USA. Park Board facilities host 50 national, regional and state tournaments each year, partnering with the Springfield Sports Commission, the Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau, national sports governing bodies and area universities to attract these events. The Park Board's six largest tournaments generate an estimated \$15 million in visitor spending annually.

Universities attract additional tournaments. The state basketball championships moved to Missouri State University's JQH Arena in 2018, bringing an estimated 40,000 attendees and \$4.4 million in visitor spending its first year. Evangel University helped bring the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Softball World Series to Killian Sports Complex in 2019 and 2020, and the 2018 NCAA Missouri Valley Tennis championships took place at Cooper Tennis Complex.

Springfield Cardinals AA minor league baseball has an average annual attendance between 320,000 and 350,000. The Springfield Lasers professional tennis team, back-to-back champions of the World TeamTennis league in 2018 and 2019, have brought internationally-ranked tennis stars to play at Cooper Tennis Complex every July since 1996.

But sports facilities need reinvestment to compete for tournament bids. Lake Country Soccer, which provides leagues and tournaments at Cooper Park, has an immediate need to renovate two soccer fields, which will cost \$2 million. Overall, it needs \$10 million to upgrade nine fields, lights and stands, and add locker rooms. A 2019 study commissioned through the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau and other stakeholders identifies a need for a new convention center, which could also accommodate sports events.

## RED FLAGS

**Preserving green space** for the future is a long-term concern, a Red Flag since 2011. Specific recommendations for expanding public parkland

are included in Field Guide 2030. Since a 2010 survey, Springfield has lagged behind industry benchmarks in number of parks managed, and developed/undeveloped acres per resident. New park acquisition and development was dramatic from 2001 to 2012, when the 2001 and 2006 parks sales taxes provided capital funding. With the expiration of that funding stream, however, parks development slowed significantly.

**Obesity** has been a Red Flag noted in numerous previous reports, with statewide obesity rates growing from 23.9% in 2004 to a 32.5% in 2017. Greene County rates for adult obesity are higher and rising, at 36% in 2019. Obesity and related health concerns are a primary motivator for parks and recreation development.

As noted in previous reports since 2009, the limited pool for **parks and trails funding** remains the primary impediment to numerous projects. This trend is evident across the parks and recreation community, as major groups compete to raise funds for capital campaigns.

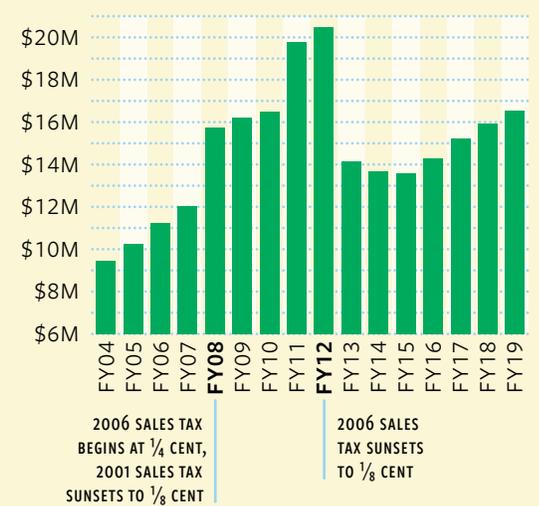
The Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, part of the National Park Service, has announced a visitor center expansion, raising more than \$1 million in private donations locally.

Springfield's park system is self-funded through dedicated parks tax revenue and user fees, receiving virtually no revenue from the City of Springfield, Greene County or the state of Missouri. A proposed 2011 renewal to the park sales tax was placed on hold as law enforcement, police/fire pension, education and county funding proposals took turns on the ballot.

The list of unfunded parks projects now totals \$47 million, including greenspace acquisition, facility upgrades, deferred maintenance and equipment replacement.

An acute concern is the new Missouri minimum wage, approved by voters in November 2018. It will affect all nearby agencies relying on seasonal labor. Seasonal workers mow grass, prepare ball fields, drive buses and officiate sports in about 400 positions. By law, minimum wage increases from \$7.85/hour in 2018 to \$12/hour in 2024, meaning the Park Board will spend an additional \$1.3 million a year by 2024 to cover these same 400 seasonal positions. As of 2019, sources for this funding have not yet been identified.

## SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD SALES TAX REVENUE, 2004-2019



**SOURCE: SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD**  
A decade of growth and capital improvements at the Springfield-Greene County Park Board were funded by revenue from the 2001 and 2006 initiatives. Each voter-approved tax collected 1/4 cent from every taxable dollar spent in Greene County. After five years, each sales tax sunset to 1/8 cent, with funding transitioned from growth capital improvements to maintenance and staffing at the facilities built with the tax. Annual revenues fluctuate based on local customer spending.

## PERSPECTIVES

### Bob Belote

DIRECTOR, SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD



"The community is engaged in parks here. Any kind of honor we get is obviously one we share with the community."

# TRANSPORTATION

## Needs outweigh funding gains

MILES OF ROADS, SIDEWALKS AMONG THE MANY PROJECTS NEEDED TO COMBAT CONGESTION



For years, the area has been expanding multimodal options such as the Galloway Creek Greenway near the U.S. 60/65 interchange.

In 2004, the focus of transportation improvements was primarily on roads. Today, investment is increasing for other transportation options. In 2004, there were 60 miles of trail in the region. By 2018 the system had expanded to 75 miles of trail, and another 1.5 miles are planned in 2019. But that investment in trails and sidewalks has been spread throughout the region, resulting in fragmented improvements. We now need to increase connectivity for a robust and safe system that provides for transportation options for everyone.

### MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION IN SPRINGFIELD

Improvements	Miles
Trails	75
Sidewalks	640
Bicycle lanes	29.44
Shared bicycle lanes	29.58
The LINK	7
Roads with sidewalks	32%

### BLUE RIBBONS

In April 2019, voters within the Springfield city limits **continued to invest** in transportation with the reauthorization of the ¼-cent Capital Improvement Sales Tax. A portion of this tax funds transportation projects including street and sidewalk construction, and sidewalk maintenance.

The city, county and Missouri Department of Transportation continue to partner to leverage resources. The ⅛-cent Transportation Sales Tax will be brought to the citizens for renewal in 2020. This joint initiative is essential for the construction of additional transportation projects to meet the growing demand resulting from population and employment growth.

The Ozarks Transportation Organization developed a regional trail plan in

2017 that detailed over 88 miles and \$125 million in identified trail needs. The goal of the plan is to connect communities with trails. The OTO Board of Directors is electing to allocate an additional \$1.6 million to fund trail improvements.

Another area strength: the **multimodal focus** of transportation improvements. The SGF Yields program was developed by the City of Springfield to initiate a cultural change to make Springfield more pedestrian friendly. The campaign uses education and awareness to encourage this change. Mr. Walker, a life-size statue, was developed to serve as a visible reminder to both drivers and pedestrians to use and respect crosswalks.

The City of Springfield has undertaken extensive effort to improve sidewalks throughout the community resulting in increasing miles of trails,

### CURRENT TRENDS FOR TRANSPORTATION

#### BLUE RIBBONS

- Continued investment
- Multimodal focus
- Regional excellence



#### RED FLAGS

- Insufficient funding
- Decline in bus ridership
- Safety and congestion



sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

The LINK, a route along streets with low traffic volume and slow speed through Springfield's core, links existing and planned greenway trails and activity centers. The ultimate goal is to create a network of routes for people that walk, bicycle and drive that creates an experience of comfort and safety. Another 1.6 miles of improvements are planned in 2019 along The LINK.

City Utilities operates a bus transit system in Springfield that has half-hour service on six routes and one-hour service on six routes during the weekday peak hours with more limited weekend service. A peer study that benchmarked CU with other transit agencies concluded that CU balances a sizable service territory with low population density on moderate operating expenses.

Springfield and Greene County continue to grow as a hub of **regional excellence**. The Springfield-Branson National Airport broke a milestone in 2018 exceeding 1 million annual passengers for the first time and has grown more than 40% over the past five years. Today, more than 30 daily flights connect six major airline hubs to Springfield, and less-than-daily service is available to seven leisure destinations. The options provide excellent access and flexibility to the national air transportation system.

More than 30 million pounds of air cargo were transported in 2018 through nightly UPS and FedEx operations based at the airport. General aviation activity continues to grow with four new corporate hangars being developed and Ozarks Technical Community College establishing an academic flight training program. Major expansions to car rental and auto parking facilities will be completed in 2019 to keep up with growing demand.

The Wilson's Creek Greenway achieved National Recreation Trail status in 2018. Wilson's Creek Greenway is the fourth trail in the Ozark Greenways system to earn the National Recreation Trail designation. Galloway Creek Greenway, in east Springfield, became Missouri's first National Recreation Trail in 2003.

## RED FLAGS

**Insufficient funding** for transportation has been an ongoing issue for the state and for the nation. Both national

and state funding are dependent upon a per-gallon fuel tax. As vehicles become more fuel efficient, fewer gallons are purchased resulting in declining revenue.

In addition, inflation has resulted in erosion of the purchasing power of the per-gallon tax. Congress has been willing to supplement the fuel tax with general income tax revenue in the short term, but a long-term solution is needed. In Missouri, the legislature continues to seek a funding source to ensure that the state can match federal grants, maintain the current system and add lanes as the population increases.

Multimodal improvements continue to appear on the wish list of many local citizens. While sidewalk and trails continue to be constructed, gaps in the network continue to limit mobility options for those without access to a car.

The City of Springfield recently completed an Americans with Disabilities Act transition plan that identified \$30 million in needed sidewalk improvements. Funding for these required improvements has yet to be identified. In order to complete the ADA-required improvements, funding will likely be diverted from the construction of new facilities.

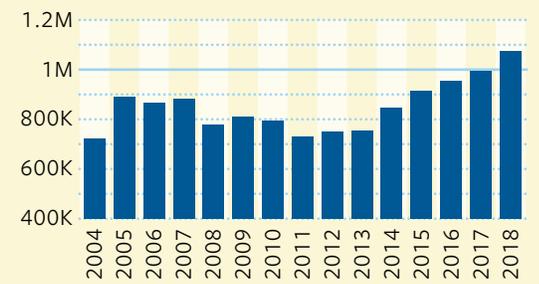
Transit service is still essential to many in the community. OATS, which provides transit service to the elderly and disabled, has cut services to some disabled customers in 2019 because of funding issues. City Utilities is continuing to provide fixed-route service at 30-minute and one-hour intervals. Funding limits the expansion of service beyond current levels which is desired by riders.

City Utilities transit has continued to see a **decline in bus ridership**. This shift might be due to improving economic conditions and continued low fuel prices.

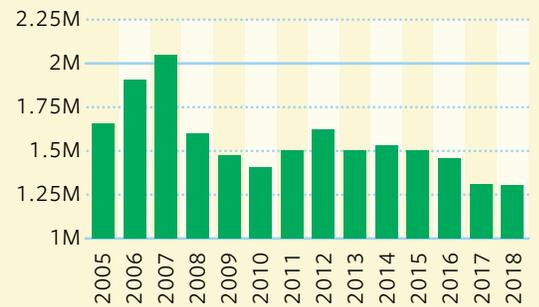
Transit usage is beneficial, however, to reduce congestion and contributes to community health in terms of reduced emissions and walking to destinations from transit stops.

The afternoon **congestion levels** continue to rise, and crowded roads can lead to **traffic safety issues**. The region continues to add population and jobs and is unable to provide adequate infrastructure to support the growing demand. There were 6,412 accidents in Springfield in 2017 and 5,885 accidents in 2018.

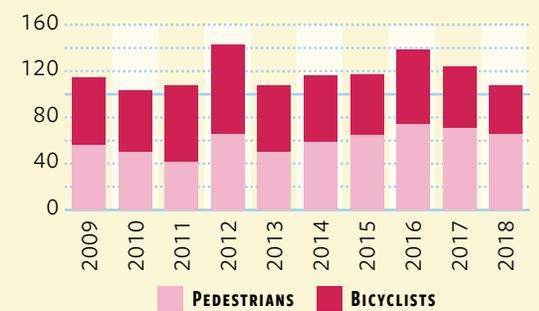
## TOTAL PASSENGERS AT SPRINGFIELD-BRANSON NATIONAL AIRPORT



## CITY UTILITIES TRANSIT RIDERSHIP



## BIKE & PEDESTRIAN ACCIDENTS



## PERSPECTIVES

### Terry Whaley

OZARK GREENWAYS, RETIRED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



"Trails are not just for parks anymore. Fifteen years ago, trails were thought of as a nice amenity for runners and cyclists. Today, Springfield has begun the process of institutionalizing trail networks into the fabric of our community. Trails are part of the conversations in transportation, economic development, local planning, safety, health, job retention and all factors related to the overall quality of life for Springfield residents."

# INFORMATION RESOURCES

A 2018 Pew Research Center report found that one in five U.S. adults get news through social media, and people between age 18 and 29 are more likely to get their news from social media sites than from any other source. Social networks allow misinformation to spread unchecked. The ability to think critically when presented with new information is crucial.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District provides some strategies for finding reliable information from well-researched sources.

Traditional media such as newspapers and cable news channels are one-way conversations from the news provider to the consumer. With social media, the news providers create the content, the user engages with that content through likes, dislikes, comments, and shares, and the social media platform curates what the user sees in the future based on that engagement.

Personalizing what you see is a perk of social media, but it's also a major flaw. Rather than reading well-rounded news stories, you end up in a "filter bubble." Once in this bubble, you'll see only content that you already agree with, becoming isolated from multiple viewpoints and ideas.

Then comes disreputable news sources—fake news sites that intentionally publish hoaxes and false news. These fake news stories often have intentionally inflammatory headlines and, as a result, are noticed by readers and shared widely.

Keeping up with news through Facebook or Twitter seems easy enough, but know what you're signing up for, and be ready to dig deeper. Here are some ways to check the veracity of information.

## GO BEYOND THE HEADLINE

- **Keep reading:** Read the entire article before jumping to any conclusions. Be critical of what you read, ask questions, and verify the information.
- **Find out who created the article:** Take time to search out the accounts of known and trusted news sources. Addresses ending in .edu, .gov or .org are generally more reliable than those ending in .com or other top-level domains.
- **Learn more about the author:** Do a search of the author's name to verify credentials. Does the author have the authority to write on the subject?
- **Check the sources:** If you see an article from a source you don't recognize, don't take it at face value. Check the source and corroborate the story.
- **Determine when the article was originally published:** Outdated information sometimes enjoys a resurgence through social-networking sites.
- **Reverse image search:** Fake articles often recycle old photographs. Right-click on the photo in the article and search Google for the image. If you find the same image in numerous articles on different topics, you may be dealing with a questionable article.
- **Run it through Snopes.com:** Snopes is an independent fact-checking website. Run it through the search box at Snopes.com to see whether it has been debunked.

## DIG DEEPER

All of this data is free. The following sources will help you get started.

### STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE U.S.

[WWW.THELIBRARY.ORG/RESEARCH/](http://WWW.THELIBRARY.ORG/RESEARCH/)

Comprehensive statistics on U.S. social, political and economic conditions. The data is compiled and published by ProQuest. The Library provides access to this data in print and database formats.

### U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

[WWW.CENSUS.GOV/](http://WWW.CENSUS.GOV/); [FACTFINDER.CENSUS.GOV](http://FACTFINDER.CENSUS.GOV)

Data from the U.S. Census, gathered every 10 years, is publicly available. The American Community Survey gathers demographic data and is available through the American FactFinder portal.

### FBI: UNIFORM CRIME

#### REPORTING PUBLICATIONS

[UCR.FBI.GOV/UCR-PUBLICATIONS](http://UCR.FBI.GOV/UCR-PUBLICATIONS)

This includes four annual publications: "Crime in the United States," "National Incident-Based Reporting System," "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" and "Hate Crime Statistics."

### DATA.GOV

[WWW.DATA.GOV](http://WWW.DATA.GOV)

The U.S. General Services Administration manages and hosts Data.gov, a repository for federal government information. It provides data sets on topics such

as consumer trends, education and public safety.

### MISSOURI ECONOMIC RESEARCH & INFORMATION CENTER

[WWW.MISSOURIECONOMY.ORG](http://WWW.MISSOURIECONOMY.ORG)

The research division of the Missouri Department of Economic Development provides data such as average wages by county, cost of living data, unemployment rates, employment projections and more.

### MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES COMMUNITY DATA PROFILES

[HEALTHAPPS.DHSS.MO.GOV/MOPHIMS/PROFILEHOME](http://HEALTHAPPS.DHSS.MO.GOV/MOPHIMS/PROFILEHOME)

This site includes statistics and reports on alcohol and drug abuse, child health, chronic disease, emergency room visits, hospitalizations and more.

### MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOL DATA

[DESE.MO.GOV/SCHOOL-DATA](http://DESE.MO.GOV/SCHOOL-DATA)

Find data related to college and career readiness, Missouri school districts, early childhood education, educators and special education.

### PEW RESEARCH CENTER

[WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG](http://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG)

This nonpartisan "fact tank" measures public opinion on topics including gun ownership, gay marriage and economic conditions. The public also has access to the data sets used to create them.

## NEXT-LEVEL INFO

Need to talk to a research professional? These organizations provide research assistance to the general public for free.

### SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT

[WWW.THELIBRARY.ORG/](http://WWW.THELIBRARY.ORG/); 10 BRANCHES IN SPRINGFIELD AND GREENE COUNTY

The Library offers free research help and public access to print and online reference materials at each branch. A library card account is required for offsite access to online resources.

### DUANE G. MEYER LIBRARY

MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY,  
850 S. JOHN Q. HAMMONS PARKWAY

Meyer Library is open to the public. Those not directly affiliated with MSU may not check out materials, but they can access research assistance and resources on site.

### OTC HAMRA LIBRARY

OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE,  
1001 E. CHESTNUT EXPRESSWAY

The library can assist the public with research requests on a case-by-case basis. Members of the public are advised to email or call ahead for an appointment.

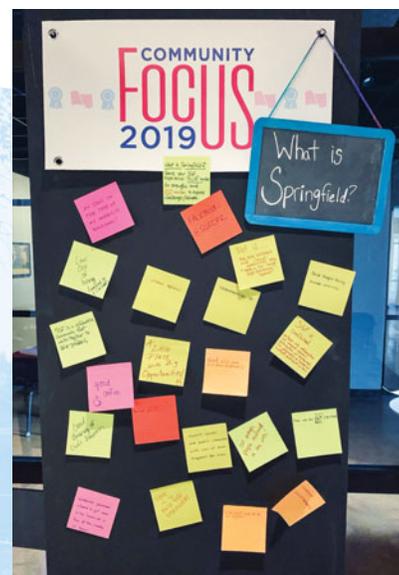
# COMMUNITY INPUT



From April through June 2019, the Community Focus Report's steering committee posted comment boards in nine locations throughout the Springfield area asking the public, "What is Springfield?" More than 200 answers were collected and coded for summary. The vast majority of comments highlighted strengths and were included in this word cloud.

The few challenges mentioned—including unequal access to resources, diversity issues and drugs—were brought to the committee to inform the discussion of community themes.

Continue the discussion at [facebook.com/SGFCFR](https://facebook.com/SGFCFR).





***ARTS & CULTURE***

***BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

***CITIZEN PARTICIPATION***

***COMMUNITY HEALTH***

***EARLY CHILDHOOD***

***EDUCATION***

***HOUSING***

***NATURAL ENVIRONMENT***

***PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY***

***RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE***

***TRANSPORTATION***

***SPRINGFIELDCOMMUNITYFOCUS.ORG***

