

COMMUNITY FOCUS 2017

A REPORT FOR SPRINGFIELD & GREENE COUNTY

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Dr. Jonathan Groves, Facilitator,
Community Focus Report
Drury University

Jean Twitty, Chair, Community Focus
Report Steering Committee
Community Foundation of the Ozarks
Board Member

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

Aaron J. Scott, Design and Production

The 2017 Community Focus report is a summary of information compiled and evaluated by many individuals and subcommittees. Additional information, data and resources are available on a website dedicated to this report.

Please visit:

www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org
[facebook.com/SGFCFR](https://www.facebook.com/SGFCFR)
#SGFCFR

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

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SPRINGFIELD

SPRINGFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT

UNITED WAY OF THE OZARKS

Introduction

In late 2016, community stakeholders gathered again to review the state of Springfield and Greene County. As we considered the latest blue ribbons and red flags facing our community, we had much reason for optimism.



JEAN TWITTY



DR. JONATHAN GROVES

Our strength remains the commitment among the region's public and private entities to collaborate and combat the area's persistent problems. Several key areas have improved since our last report: educational outcomes, health benchmarks, and business growth.

But not everyone has felt that success. Poverty remains a persistent problem, as many household incomes remain well below the national median. Some residents struggle to keep a home. Drug addiction and crime have hit some neighborhoods hard.

The 11 committees gathered by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks for this report have spent the past year compiling a picture for area citizens and organizations wanting to boost the blue ribbons and take on the red flags. This work would not have been possible without the support of our other key partners: Junior League of Springfield, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, the Springfield-Greene County Library District, and United Way of the Ozarks.

A group of Missouri State University students, led by instructor Didem Koroglu, also helped us collect thoughts and impressions about community issues from citizens online as well. We have included a selection of comments with the committees' findings.

The result reveals a mosaic of highs and lows.

The Springfield area is often recognized as an economic engine of growth for Missouri. Unemployment remains low, and businesses small and large continue to thrive in the region. Amenities such as a robust park/trail network and outdoor attractions, a vibrant arts and music community, and a premier library system help improve the quality of life in the area.

Our workforce has many desirable qualities for national employers, and the educational offerings — nationally ranked secondary schools and universities, as well as vibrant business/education training partnerships — help drive economic development here.

But low unemployment can make it difficult for some employers — especially more technology-oriented businesses — to find employees. People working multiple jobs to make ends meet and a volatile political environment can affect civic engagement. And though the area's cost of living is lower than the national average, so, too, are its wages.

Though dropout rates are improving, some still leave high school before graduation, and the lack of education can contribute to difficulty finding well-paying jobs and stable employment. Those with wages below the national median can face challenges securing adequate housing and transportation, which can lead to unyielding debt to meet basic needs. Experts correlate poverty with a cycle of other community challenges: drug and alcohol addiction, domestic abuse, crime, homelessness.

Some issues can be solved by more money. Some require more efficient deployment of existing resources. Some demand a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the problem.

Only together, as a collective community, can we tackle the intractable problems facing Springfield and Greene County. We cannot allow differences of opinion or increased competition for declining resources to divide us. We hope this report will keep the conversation and collaboration vibrant and productive in the years ahead, as it has for the past decade.

Themes

Each chapter of the 2017 Community Focus Report has its own distinctive **blue ribbons** and **red flags** to identify the community's strengths and issues.

As committee leaders worked through this months-long process and shared findings, the group kept returning to common community themes: a strong economy and business community working to combat persistent poverty, creative problem-solving among government agencies and nonprofits managing limited resources, and collaborative leaders willing to confront persistent challenges together.

Overall, committee leaders felt optimistic about this year's Community Focus Report, despite an era of lean resources. Several benchmarks showed improvement, but the community still has much work ahead to confront the interwoven spiral of unshakable issues.

COMMUNITY THEMES



Mental-health assessment

For years, the Springfield/Greene County community has kept close tabs on major health issues facing the region. But agencies have yet to do a comprehensive assessment of the state of mental health in the region. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department has secured the funding for such a comprehensive needs assessment, which will occur in the near future.

Unidentified or untreated mental-health issues can contribute many red flags identified in this report: reduced physical-health outcomes; the rise in drug abuse and addiction; the consistent problem of child neglect and abuse tied to addiction; the difficulty for some community members to be able to maintain a job and pay for adequate housing. Such issues can also be precursors to crime.

Poverty

Poverty lingers stubbornly as a community issue. Income levels in the region are not keeping up with the cost of living, and the issues surrounding those in persistent poverty remain a challenge. But area agencies are working together to address the problem on all fronts.

Continued collaboration

For the past decade, these reports have highlighted the ability of the community's nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government agencies to collaborate to tackle issues facing the Springfield/Greene County area. As these efforts continue, those working together must make difficult decisions about where to focus declining resources most efficiently.

Sustainable funding for community needs

A tighter state budget means fewer resources available for nonprofit initiatives tackling complex community issues, especially since those organizations are often competing in an increasingly crowded landscape for foundation support as well. Schools are also facing leaner times, which can threaten workforce training programs.

Sustainable funding is a consistent issue for initiatives to tackle challenges and benefit the community. What are the best sources of consistent funding? Where will the donor base focus its resources in the years ahead?

Infrastructure investment

The Springfield area continues to be an appealing market for prospective employers. In the coming years, though, the community will face some decisions about significant investment for utility, environmental, and wastewater programs. Continued support of infrastructure will be a requirement for businesses looking to locate in the area.

Area taxpayers have repeatedly agreed to invest in the community, but over the next few years, the Springfield/Greene County region will have to set infrastructure priorities as government agencies and nonprofit organizations ask for support from a public reluctant to increase its tax base much further.

Civic engagement

Interest in running for office has been declining, and voter participation in non-presidential elections continues to dip. The number of agencies tackling a host of issues also slices the donation base into smaller pieces. Though area residents have proved their generosity over and over, organizations must find new ways to engage the public in tackling community issues.

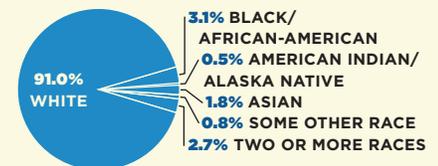
Community at a Glance

POPULATION

Inside Springfield	163,763
Outside Springfield	119,443
Greene County Total	283,206

DEMOGRAPHICS

	SPRINGFIELD	GREENE COUNTY
Median age	33.1	35.6
Median income	\$33,557	\$41,227
Population by Race (Greene County)		



Population by Ethnicity (Greene County)



FAMILIES IN POVERTY

SPRINGFIELD	2013	2015	CHANGE
Individuals	25.6%	25.7%	▲0.1%
All families	19.0%	17.9%	▼1.1%
Households with children under 18	35.0%	31.9%	▼3.1%
GREENE COUNTY	2013	2015	CHANGE
Individuals	18.7%	19.0%	▲0.3%
All families	13.5%	13.0%	▼0.5%
Households with children under 18	24.8%	24.4%	▼0.4%

COST OF LIVING

METRO AREA	INDEX	GROCERY	HOUSING
Springfield	89.3	95.9	71.4
St. Louis	90.4	105.6	70.2
Kansas City	91.0	99.9	81.3

(U.S. average: 100.0 in all categories.)

HOUSING

	SPRINGFIELD	GREENE COUNTY
Persons/household	2.15	2.31
Owner-occupied housing value	\$107,600	\$129,400
Median rent	\$676	\$701

EDUCATION

LEVEL COMPLETED	SPRINGFIELD	GREENE COUNTY
High school	88.3%	90.5%
Bachelor's degree	27.2%	29.5%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011–2015 American Community Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 American Community Survey; Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, Second quarter 2017



INFORMATION HUBS: The Springfield-Greene County Library District's recently remodeled Schweitzer Brentwood Branch is one of 10 system branches serving the public.

Uncovering facts in an age of information overload

Solving community problems requires valid information. But with the proliferation of unverified, misleading content online, where should citizens begin their search?

Defining today's community problems requires high-quality information from valid sources. In an era when some willfully cloud difficult issues with misinformation, it is incumbent upon us as citizens to become adept at fact-finding and verification.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District has compiled some tips and strategies for discovering information from well-researched sources, including government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

BE YOUR OWN FACT-CHECKER

"To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

—THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Social networks allow misinformation to spread like wildfire. The ability to think critically when presented with new information is crucial. How do you check the veracity of the information?

Keep reading.

Don't stop at the headline. Headlines are designed to grab our attention, but they don't tell the whole story. Read the article before jumping to any conclusions.

Find out who created the article.

Anyone can share an article, but to determine whether it is reliable information, you need to determine the source. Often, you can use the article's Web address to see where the article was originally posted. Reputable news outlets have recognizable Web domains. Also, addresses ending in .edu, .gov, or .org are generally more reliable than those ending in .com or other top-level domains.

Learn a little more about the author.

Do an Internet search of the author's name to verify credentials, and find out what else he or she has written. Does the author have the authority to write on the subject? The Internet gives anyone a platform to publish opinions; online publication doesn't guarantee accuracy.

Check the sources.

Just because an article cites official-sounding sources doesn't mean those sources are real. Be sure information is presented in the proper context as well.

Determine when the article was originally published.

Outdated information sometimes enjoys a resurgence through social-networking sites. Check the article's date — is it even still relevant?

Reverse image search.

Fake articles often recycle old photographs. Right-click on the photo in the article, and choose to search Google for the image. If you find the same image in numerous articles on different topics, that's a sign you may be dealing with a questionable article.

Run it through Snopes.com.

Snopes.com is an independent fact-checking Web site. If you stumble across something online that sounds either too good to be true or a little off, run it through the search box at Snopes.com to see whether it has already been debunked.

DIG DEEPER

Intrigued by the data highlighted in the report and ready to learn more? All of this data is at your fingertips. The following sources will help you get started.

Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

In production since 1878, the Statistical Abstracts of the United States is a comprehensive collection of statistics on the social, political, and economic conditions of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau ceased funding the Statistical Abstracts in 2011, the data is now compiled and published by Proquest. The library provides access to this data in both print and database formats.

U.S. Census Bureau

WWW.CENSUS.GOV

The mission of the U.S. Census Bureau is to “serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy.” Data from the U.S. Census, gathered every 10 years, is publicly available on the bureau's site. Between decennial censuses, the American Community Survey gathers demographic data. That information is available through the bureau's American FactFinder portal.

FBI: Uniform Crime Reporting Publications

UCR.FBI.GOV/UCR-PUBLICATIONS

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program includes four annual publications: “Crime in the United States,” “National Incident-Based Reporting System,” “Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted,” and “Hate Crime Statistics.” More than 18,000 city, university/college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies voluntarily participate in the program to supply data for these publications.

Community Commons

WWW.COMMUNITYCOMMONS.ORG

Community Commons is a joint project of Community Initiatives Network, the Institute for People, Place and Possibility, and the Center for Applied Research and Environment Systems at the University of Missouri-Columbia. It provides a centralized hub of hundreds of data sources for individuals, agencies and organizations trying to understand the issues facing their communities. Its site includes mapping and analysis tools for public use.



Data.gov

WWW.DATA.GOV

The U.S. General Services Administration manages and hosts Data.gov. This site, launched in 2009, is a repository for federal government information. While intended for civic researchers, it is made available to everyone. You will find data sets on varied topics, such as consumer trends, education, and public safety.

Missouri Economic Research and Information Center

WWW.MISSOURIECONOMY.ORG

On this site, you will find economic data compiled by the research division of the Missouri Department of Economic Development. Among the data available: average wages by county, cost of living data, unemployment rates, employment projections, and green-jobs reports.

Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services Community Data Profiles

HEALTH.MO.GOV/DATA/

COMMUNITYDATAPROFILES/

This department compiles statistics and reports on alcohol and drug abuse, child health, chronic disease, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and more. The community-health data can be explored by county.

Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education School Data

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

The Pew Research Center, established in 2004 as a nonpartisan “fact tank,” measures public opinion on a variety of topics, including gun ownership, gay marriage, and economic conditions. Along with the reports, the public has access to the data sets used to create them.

Access to Information Professionals & Research Tools

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

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT

10 BRANCHES IN SPRINGFIELD & GREENE COUNTY

Serving the community since 1905, the Springfield-Greene County Library District offers research assistance and public access to reference materials in print and online. Anyone can get assistance in one of the branch libraries. A library card account is required for remote access to online resources.

DUANE G. MEYER LIBRARY

MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY,

850 S. JOHN Q. HAMMONS PARKWAY

Located on Missouri State University's campus, Meyer Library is open to anyone in the community. Those not directly affiliated with MSU cannot check out materials, but they can access research assistance and resources available on site.

VAN K. SMITH COMMUNITY HEALTH LIBRARY

C.H. CHUB O'REILLY CANCER CENTER,

CANCER RESOURCE CENTER,

2055 S. FREMONT AVE.

Open to members of the community in southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas, the Van K. Smith Community Health Library offers services and resources for the health consumer. Register for a free library card to check out books, videos, and audio resources.

OTC HAMRA LIBRARY

OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE,

HAMRA LIBRARY, 1001 E. CHESTNUT EXPRESSWAY

Hamra Library, on the Ozarks Technical Community College campus, can assist the public with research requests on a case-by-case basis. If members of the public would like to use Hamra Library's services, it is advised that they email or call ahead for an appointment.



STRONG PERFORMERS: Groups such as the Springfield Symphony Orchestra contribute to the wealth of arts options, which help strengthen the community.

An economic force, seeking sustainability

The Springfield area’s arts scene is thriving due to a tight-knit cluster of organizations, venues and dedicated patrons, but funding and long-term financial stability continue to be key challenges.

ARTS & CULTURE
BLUE RIBBONS

- Quality of programming
- Community engagement
- Collaboration



RED FLAGS

- Sustainable funding
- Capacity issues
- Limited full-time opportunities
- Diversity

The arts mean business in Springfield. According to the Arts & Economic Prosperity Study 5 (AEP5), conducted by the Springfield Regional Arts Council and Americans for the Arts, the arts and culture sector delivers an annual economic impact of nearly \$27 million, \$17.1 million in audience spending and \$9.8 million in organizational spending. Throughout the 2016 study period, arts and culture generated \$2.3 million in local and state government revenue, and supported 1,065 full-time equivalent jobs.

BLUE RIBBONS



Since the 2015 report, the **quality of programming** has continued to improve. Larger venues with capacities of more than 1,000 seats have brought globally recognized performances and concerts as well as regional premieres to the area.

Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts sold more than 34,000 tickets for “Wicked,” one of the top 10 longest-running shows on Broadway. The musical’s success spurred Hammons Hall to schedule another top Broadway musical, “The Phantom of the Opera,” in May 2018.

Since 2015, JQH Arena — which has more than 11,000 seats — has hosted popular music icons such as Elton John and KISS.

The Gillioz Theatre, downtown Springfield’s 1,015-capacity intimate venue, consistently hosts top-level entertainment, including Grammy Award-winning musicians.

Smaller capacity venues seating 300 or fewer have increased their programming presence since 2015. Springfield Contemporary Theatre offers consistent productions of thought-provoking and edgy material. In 2017, SCT featured “A Raisin in the Sun,” “Hir,” and “The Mountaintop,” among others. Springfield Improv Theatre hosts improvisational comedy and live-action parodies most nights of the week.

Springfield went years without a room dedicated to standup comedy until Blue Room Comedy Club opened in 2016, welcoming some of the country’s top touring comics. Live-music nightclubs bring touring bands across genres to Springfield on a nightly basis to supplement the burgeoning musical talent in the region.

Visual-arts organizations have increased programming as well, hosting nationally and internationally curated exhibits. With exhibits such as Watercolor USA and American Impressionism, the Springfield Art Museum set a record for annual attendance in fiscal 2017 with 58,475 total visitors, an 11 percent increase over the previous year.

Springfield’s arts community relies on strong **community engagement** from dedicated patrons and a legion of volunteers.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NONPROFIT ARTS & CULTURE IN SPRINGFIELD, 2015

EXPENDITURES

By organizations	\$9,778,504
By audiences	\$17,087,113
Total	\$26,865,617

TAX REVENUE GENERATED

Local	\$1,265,000
State	\$1,042,000
Total	\$2,307,000

VOLUNTEERS

Total Number	1,678
Hours Contributed	98,237
Estimated Value	\$2,314,464

Source: Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 Study

Volunteers provide the necessary support in times of dwindling funding and tight staff capacity. The AEP5 found that 1,678 volunteers donated 98,237 hours to arts and culture organizations in Springfield in 2015.

The longevity of many community arts organizations has developed this robust volunteer base. Springfield Little Theatre has been in continuous use since 1909. The Springfield Symphony Orchestra formed in 1930 as the Springfield Symphony Society. Artsfest, in its 37th year, drew 20,000 guests in 2017 with the help of 200 volunteers. As these organizations have evolved, so have their abilities to engage and connect with the community.

Less tenured events are fueled by celebration and access. First Friday Art Walk, which became a regular downtown Springfield event in 2001, attracts 5,000 people at 24 exhibiting venues each month. The recent development of public art campaigns, like Sculpture Walk Springfield and pole painting in North Springfield's Moon City Creative District, provide ongoing arts interactions.

With limited and often shrinking resources, arts organizations depend upon **intensive coordination, collaboration, and sharing** to continue crucial programming. Arts in the Park Summer Workshops introduces underserved children from the Springfield Community Center to arts education over a two-month period each summer. The collaboration includes nine arts organizations, Missouri State University, Springfield Public Schools, and the Community Center.

Private and public entities alike participate in cross collaboration to address a diverse range of challenges and opportunities. Four organizations (the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Sculpture Walk Springfield, Ozark Greenways, and the Springfield Regional Arts Council) collaborated for a Collective Impact grant from Community Foundation of the Ozarks to place four permanent sculptures in Jordan Valley Park in late 2017, an effort to address the 2015 community red flag of obesity.

This focus on collaboration often extends beyond the arts and culture community to build connections to area businesses and other nonprofits, important pieces of the arts ecosystem.

RED FLAGS



Sustainable arts funding—a consistent red flag in each Community Focus Report—continually eludes groups, and the threat of further cuts in funding at the national level has arts organizations bracing for even tighter budgets.

The state's primary arts granting arm, the Missouri Arts Council, received just 20 percent of its scheduled funding from the non-resident athletes and entertainers income tax in the 2016 fiscal year from the Missouri Legislature. Despite the nearly \$20 million shortfall, AEP5 shows Missouri arts organizations turned the \$4.8 million investment into \$192 million of local revenue.

As explored in previous reports, financial limitations have created issues for organizations including a lack of adequate staffing, competitive salaries and benefits, and a constrained ability to update critical administrative systems and maintain facilities. These **capacity issues** also affect the ability for organizations to do outreach and develop programming to connect important audiences. Considering the importance of staffing, this leads to undesirable turnover, further limiting organizations' ability to grow and expand.

Though the arts contribute the equivalent of 1,065 full-time jobs, there are **limited full-time opportunities for artists** in the region. Employment statistics from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics from May 2016 show no full-time practicing visual artists, musicians, and actors among Springfield's population. Photographers, writers, and video producers account for an estimated 230 jobs in the market. The lack of working artists puts our community at risk of losing creative minds to larger cities where perceived greater opportunity lies.

Local arts organizations must ensure diversity in their boards of directors, employees, and volunteers. **A diverse representation is critical** to building greater cultural equity in the community. The arts can lead the way in this conversation by cultivating groups that are fully representative of the community. According to 2016 census reports, Springfield is 88.7 percent Caucasian. An unofficial survey of area arts organizations reported 102 of their total 106 board of directors as Caucasian (96 percent), with three Hispanic/Latino leaders, one African American, and three persons reporting from the LGBTQ community. Recruiting diverse leaders, reaching new audiences, and supporting broad participation are important steps in efforts to better serve our community.

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents complimented the host of offerings locally, including public arts displays and events, and theater/music performances.

First Friday Art Walk is “a good excuse to be outside, in our beautiful downtown, and be around other community members. The new sculptures up downtown are so neat!!”

“If I get free time, I like to go to the plays that are offered, either through Little Theatre, MSU, OTC, etc. There is a very vibrant fine arts culture happening here. We should do all we can to support that.”



*“We’ve always known anecdotally **arts and culture impact lives and support local businesses**, but we’ve never had the capacity to confirm this with hard data until now.”*

—LESLIE FORRESTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPRINGFIELD
REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL



For current information on arts and culture indicators, including volume of nonprofits in this area, visit **www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org** and click the Community Commons link.



FOUR-DIAMOND SUCCESS: The new Hotel Vandivort continues the surge of investment in downtown Springfield.

Economic growth steady while wages stagnate

Spurred by low costs, Springfield’s unemployment rate continues to be lower than the national average, while higher education opportunities remain catalysts for local business.

The foundation of any healthy community is a strong economy, and Springfield is experiencing a resilient post-recession economy. Development in all corners of the community, diverse business sectors, and an affordable cost of living are framing Springfield’s economy.

BLUE RIBBONS



Springfield’s economy, often heralded as the state’s economic engine by legislators and decision-makers, has shown **continued strength and steady growth** since the last report. It has maintained its strength for nearly a decade, built on a diverse set of industry sectors. Health care and education are the largest employers, followed by manufacturing, logistics, information technology, retail and other businesses of all sizes that continue to flourish in the area.

The unemployment rate for the Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has hovered between 4 percent and 5 percent for more than a year, consistently lower than the state and national rates. Both employment and labor force numbers are up by roughly 6 percent over the last decade.

Growth also continues throughout the region. Redevelopment along both ends of Sunshine Street have revitalized that important corridor of the city, while the development of the new Veterans Administration clinic will be an anchor in southwest Springfield. Downtown redevelopment remains strong, with projects such as the five-star Hotel Vandivort and continued student-housing development.

Business owners and developers are also investing in north Springfield, with continued revitalization of Commercial Street and the opening of a job center to meet a critical community need. Industrial development also continues apace, with the first new Partnership Industrial Center West developments in several years bringing 113 jobs to the area. Expansions at the Kraft Heinz and 3M facilities contributed to the addition of more than 200 manufacturing jobs since January 2017.

The spirit of innovation starts with a **strong education system**. Programs such as the Greater Ozarks Centers for Advanced Professional Studies (GO CAPS) expose high-school juniors and seniors to potential professional opportunities, while the GO CAPS Teacher Externship Program lets area teachers shadow workers and take the business experiences back to their own classrooms.

Higher education institutions form the foundation of the area’s economy. Besides serving as major employers for the community, Springfield’s colleges and universities are training nearly 50,000 university and college students in the area, and businesses are ready to tap into this large, in-demand labor pool.

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

BLUE RIBBONS

- Continued economic strength
- Steady economic growth
- Education, entrepreneurship and innovation
- Affordable cost for businesses



RED FLAGS

- Funding for education and talent development
- Impact of poverty and low wages

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents focused on declining wages and residents' decreased potential for earnings.

"I enjoy spending time downtown, we have some great local restaurants and bars."

"We had good-paying jobs once, but with the loss of many Frisco jobs and major employers at some of the manufacturing plants that closed, wages have gone down for many of the jobs available now."



"It is an exciting time to be part of the Springfield community. We have so much to celebrate — new growth and development throughout the region, national rankings and recognitions, top-notch education institutions and, running through it all, a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Equally as important, **we are working together to identify and solve our community's challenges.**"

—JOHN WANAMAKER,
BOARD CHAIRMAN, SPRINGFIELD AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

For current information on business and economic indicators, including household poverty and unemployment rates in our area, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.



EMPLOYMENT

SPRINGFIELD AREA EMPLOYMENT SECTORS, JULY 2017	JOBS	CHANGE SINCE 2016
Trade, transportation and utilities	48,400	▲2.1%
Education and health services	38,900	▲4.6%
Government	28,100	▲2.9%
Professional and business services	24,900	▼2.0%
Leisure and hospitality	22,300	▲3.7%
Manufacturing	15,000	▲2.0%
Financial activities	12,100	▲1.7%
Mining, logging, and construction	9,500	▲5.6%
Information	3,600	▲0.0%
Other services	9,200	▲2.2%
Total	212,000	▲2.4%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

City of Springfield	3.3%
U.S.	4.6%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2017

AVERAGE WAGES

	ANNUAL	HOURLY
Greene County	\$40,550	\$19.50
Jackson County	\$53,419	\$25.68
St. Louis County	\$55,974	\$26.91
Missouri	\$46,125	\$22.18
U.S.	\$49,630	\$23.86

Source: Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, Quarterly Census of Employment, 2016; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

City of Springfield	\$33,557
Greene County	\$41,227
Jackson County	\$46,869
St. Louis County	\$59,755
Missouri	\$48,173
U.S.	\$53,889

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

Entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives such as the Missouri State University's eFactory and the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups encourage new business ideas, while Ozarks Technical Community College works to train and develop the workforce. That combination has led publications such as Forbes to name Springfield one of the top U.S. cities to start and grow a business.

Another reason for Springfield to be a good place to grow a business is the **affordable cost of doing business**. Previous reports have noted the low cost of living, and that remains the case—10 percent lower than the national average, according to Kiplinger. But low costs extend to business as well.

Wages are well below the national average, land costs are reasonable for a Midwestern metro area of similar size, and both land and facilities are available within reasonable distance to the city's core. In addition, electricity, water and natural gas rates are some of the most affordable in the nation.

RED FLAGS

Springfield's potential growth could be negatively impacted by several factors, many of which are related to **lack of available funding for necessary programs**.

Many area companies have indicated to Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce that their top impediment to growth is the need for more skilled workers to meet demand. While the education system and efforts like

the Chamber's Talent Attraction Initiative are designed to help address those issues, they are likely not enough to meet the need.

Additional funding for state and federal workforce development programs is crucial to allow companies to develop both the technical and soft skills they need for their existing employees and potential new hires. Enhancing these programs also could lure students from other parts of the region to the Ozarks, helping to further enhance the talent pipeline for the future.

Educational opportunities combined with creating a community that is attractive to young professionals will be key to the success of Springfield's future growth.

Poverty and low wages in some sectors remain significant issues for area citizens. They contribute to myriad societal issues, many of which can hamper economic growth. This in turn makes it more difficult to add jobs and increase wages, the very tools necessary to break the overall cycle of poverty. And although the region's cost of living is low, the Springfield's median household income is 60 percent of the average U.S. median income.

In addition, the continued low unemployment rate means many businesses have difficulty finding adequate numbers of workers to meet the demand created by growth. Without access to additional training or opportunities, many unemployed or underemployed workers lack the access to career advancement that could allow them to work their way out of poverty.



WORKING TOGETHER: Civic engagement in the region often takes the form of volunteerism — like this group during the 25th annual Day of Caring — rather than participation in elections.

Engagement up, but voter turnout weakening

An increase in civic participation, interest in volunteerism bodes well even as registered voters, turnout for non-national elections and diversity of representatives wane.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

BLUE RIBBONS

- Citizen action and volunteerism indicate vibrancy
- Improvements in contested race ratio



RED FLAGS

- Registered voter gap widens with population growth
- Underrepresentation in elected roles
- Local election voter turnout
- Poverty impacts charitable capacity and civic education

The tracking of citizen participation can be a deep dive into the data that is driven by the behaviors of a community. In this iteration, we focus on key points of civic health: voter registration and turnout, competitive races in the political sphere, and charitable involvement. While some aspects of Springfield’s citizen participation are signs of hope, other components suggest declining involvement. What we know for sure: citizen participation is vital to Springfield’s future. It must be nurtured, and it must be a true representation of our community as a whole.

BLUE RIBBONS



Citizen participation in Greene County can be measured in charitable involvement and at the ballot box. Each indicates a different component of the civic health of a group of citizens. While **citizen action and volunteerism indicate vibrancy** among Springfield-Greene County residents, others suggest a waning sense of connectedness due to the stressors of poverty and other factors.

According to “Volunteerism: A Study of the Springfield, MO Area” (2016), there are nearly 55,000 formal documented nonprofit volunteers in the Springfield area performing more than 155,000 hours of service every month. The annual economic value of these hours is over \$43.5 million and saves Springfield’s 235 nonprofit organizations represented in the report an average of more than \$185,000 per organization annually.

Additionally, community-wide volunteerism events like the United Way of the Ozarks’ Day of Caring continue to make strides in involving more citizens. On the 25th annual Day of Caring on June 22, 2017, more than 2,300 volunteers spent 13,800 hours assisting nonprofits. While the Community Partnership of the Ozarks indicated fewer individuals volunteering in 2016 compared with two years ago, the hours spent volunteering (41,596 in 2014 compared with 59,344) indicate a greater commitment from each volunteer. Efforts to reduce poverty through the Northwest Project, a collaborative effort funded by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and other funding partners, and implemented by the Drew Lewis Foundation, Missouri State University, and Drury University, have provided relevant data that suggest individuals, when given a clear opportunity to get involved, are interested in supporting philanthropic work in Springfield and will make long-term commitments to issues that inspire action.

Multiple national events also had a local presence in 2016 and 2017. In 2016, 62 events were permitted to be held on the square, nearly double the total in 2015. And in just the first six months of 2017, over 42 permits were approved. Citizens participated in a

55K

Number of formal documented nonprofit volunteers

155K

Hours of volunteer service performed each month

\$43.5M

Annual economic value of those volunteering hours

Source: "Volunteerism: A Study of the Springfield, MO Area" (2016)

groundswell of public protests and involvement at events in downtown Springfield as well as at local legislator offices. Increased participation in the civic process can also be more specifically measured and acknowledged by the large volume in phone calls and emails made by constituents to the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives.

The slate of **contested races for state representative seats** in Greene County significantly improved since the 2014 (state) and 2015 (local) elections. In November 2016, seven of eight races were contested in the November general election, and in April 2017, all Springfield City Council races had more than one candidate. While nearly all Greene County office races (assessor, treasurer, public administrator, and one of two county commissioner seats) were uncontested, the trend for city and state elections indicate a greater awareness about the process, purpose and interest in running for office. Continued improvement in these numbers of contested races is needed, with closer races (less than 10 percentage points between candidates) as a key determinant of an improved civic involvement indicator.

RED FLAGS



Greene County's **registered voter numbers are decreasing as its overall population increases**. Between the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, the population of Greene County has increased by 2.8 percent (from 280,686 residents to 288,690), while the number of registered voters decreased by 4.0 percent (from 197,752 to 189,827).

These numbers are indicative of a national downward trend of registered eligible voters. Although the November 2016 Greene County turnout of 69.27 percent of registered voters was nine percentage points higher than the national average (60.2 percent), turnout is decreasing. As the percentage of individuals who are eligible to vote but do not register to

vote increases nationally (146.3 million individuals are registered to vote, out of a pool of 218.9 million who could be voting), local trends are put in perspective.

Several groups are underrepresented in elected official roles in Greene County. None of Greene County's state senators are female (0/2). Only 25 percent of the county's state representatives are female (2/8), and 16 percent of elected Greene County officials are women (2/12). There are zero (0/10) non-white state representatives or senators representing Greene County. Representation by all sectors of the population is a strong indicator of healthy community engagement.

The 2016 presidential election — like other presidential contests — **drew far more voters than local or state contests**; it was the highest turnout recorded in Greene County in four years. But that has not translated into gains for local ballot/candidate decisions that often have a greater effect on the day-to-day lives of Springfield-Greene County. The April 2017 election, which included a major school-bond issue as well as city-government elections, produced an 18.62 percent voter turnout, or 34,526 individuals.

Additionally, voter turnout is disproportionately older and of higher income, as neighborhoods with higher-income families produced the highest voter turnout. For example, the University Heights area (precinct 3-A) had the highest turnout in Greene County in April 2017; average home prices in this neighborhood are more than double the citywide average (\$267,542 to \$114,400). Additionally, research completed by the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce recently found that the average age of a likely April voter is 68, while the average citizen in Greene County is 35.4.

The poverty rate continues to stretch the nonprofit community in Springfield and Greene County. This impact is felt doubly, given more individuals are in need of assistance while the overall population has less to provide in charitable giving. Springfield's charitable giving rate is higher than the national average. However, Springfield's median household income is significantly lower than the national average (\$33,557 compared with the national median income of \$53,889), which reduces the overall number of dollars spent charitably as a community.

Solutions are challenging because real change in civic participation is deep in individual contact. Significant effort must be made to turn around concerning statistics involving eligible but unregistered voters and the inclination for those in poverty to feel disconnected from community-wide decision making. We must connect with our fellow citizenry, engage everyone, and provide opportunities to serve and commit. This is the core of true growth in citizen participation.

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents affirmed their commitment to volunteering and noted the need to emphasize the importance of voting.

"I volunteer in my new community of Springfield because I wanted to feel more at home when I moved here to attend MSU. Springfield has many opportunities to get involved and volunteer."

"Bringing awareness to the importance of this (voting) right and the implications that elections have on the local community is a great place to start."



"We are in the midst of a groundswell of public activism, inspired by national, state, and local legislation. This is an incredibly important part of our democracy; **we must now turn public outcry into consistent involvement** and enthusiasm for local and national issues into regular visits to the polls."

—CRYSTAL QUADE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 132ND DISTRICT

For current information on citizen participation, including voter turnout and social support indicators, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org, and click the Community Commons link.





COVERING THE COMMUNITY: Providers such as Jordan Valley Community Health Center help fill the gaps in medical options for everyone in Springfield.

Leaders tackle mental health, access issues

Collaborative studies and surveys highlight an increasingly united regional health care community, which is engaging key problems for underserved populations.

The Springfield-Greene County area is tackling health issues with an innovative and collaborative spirit with unprecedented partnership and alignment.

Our community serves as a regional hub for health care services with two world-class health systems, CoxHealth and Mercy, anchoring the delivery of health care in our community. These systems take a collaborative approach when pursuing opportunities to combat health issues, as evidenced by the Community Health Needs Assessment and the Community Health Improvement Plan that was produced in 2016 in conjunction with the Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

Throughout this process, it became clear that mental health issues, including substance abuse, are among the greatest health challenges for our community to understand and treat. Mental health issues are closely connected to so many other health conditions and are exacerbated by coexisting conditions, including tobacco use, and are further complicated by access and availability of treatment. A concerted effort to better understand and develop a plan to improve mental health in our community was identified as a priority for attention over the next three years.

BLUE RIBBONS



In July 2016, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, CoxHealth and Mercy health systems **published a collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)**, the most coordinated and comprehensive health assessment for the Springfield community conducted to date. The assessment evaluated primary and secondary data to identify top health concerns for the community. It also compared local data with state and national indicators, and included community readiness and feasibility for change.

Through this process, the following three priority health issues for the Springfield area were identified:

- Lung disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Mental health

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) was developed and adopted by community partners through the Healthy Living Alliance (HLA) in August 2016 to improve factors influencing the identified priority areas. The CHIP, which is divided into five domains (access to appropriate care, social determinants of health, mental health, tobacco use, and healthy eating and active living) and consists of 22 objectives focused on policy and system change, is the action plan for next three years to improve lung disease, cardiovascular disease and mental health.

COMMUNITY HEALTH BLUE RIBBONS

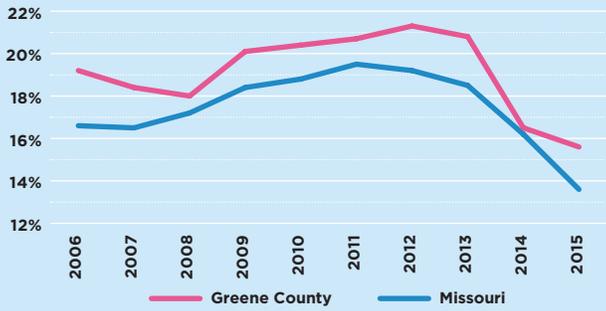
- Community Health Needs Assessment published
- Community Health Improvement Plan adopted

RED FLAGS

- Tobacco use
- Mental health issues
- Access to health care



RESIDENTS WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE AGES 18-64



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, 2015

RED FLAGS



The data analysis identified several common areas to target:

The Institute of Medicine describes social determinants as “conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”

In general, these determinants — which include unemployment, poverty, and education level — affect the decisions people make because of the policies in place that guide their actions and people’s access to resources and opportunities that contribute to a long, healthy life. As these red flags are reviewed, it is important to consider the environmental conditions in which people live so that sustainable, long-lasting interventions can reduce and prevent chronic health issues.

According to the most recent U.S. Surgeon General’s report published in 2014, smoking causes 87 percent of all lung cancer deaths, 32 percent of deaths due to coronary heart disease, and is responsible for 79 percent of all cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In Missouri, 23 percent of adults use tobacco, compared with 18 percent nationally. Within the Springfield community, **tobacco use** has gradually decreased from 24 percent in 2011 but has hovered around 21 percent the past three years.

To reduce the threat of death and poor quality of life among residents in the Springfield area, it is imperative that efforts are taken to reduce tobacco use. Policy initiatives should be taken at both the state and local levels. Missouri has the lowest tobacco tax rate in the nation at 17 cents per pack. At least a \$1 tax increase is needed to reduce smoking rates. At the local level, increasing the minimum age of legal sale from 18 to 21 years old would reduce tobacco rates by preventing initiation at a young age. Additionally, implementing smoke-free housing policies would protect families from

secondhand smoke. A grave concern validated through the Community Health Needs Assessment is the need to seek alternatives to providing treatment for **mental health issues** through our emergency departments and our criminal justice system. In the Springfield area, which includes Greene, Christian and Webster counties in this analysis, 20.5 percent of Medicare beneficiaries suffer from depression and 12.8 percent of adults drink excessively. There are also 14.14 deaths per 100,000 people. Additionally, out of the top six health priorities studied in the health assessment, mental illness (nearly 20 percent of visits) in the amount of emergency department visits. Throughout the Community Health Needs Assessment, it became clear that more information is needed to fully understand the scope of the issue and factors causing mental illness. Therefore, a thorough community mental health needs assessment should be conducted.

Despite numerous efforts, **access to appropriate health care** remains a concern for many. Nearly 21 percent — an estimated 50,491 people — remain without health insurance in the Springfield area. Efforts to improve access to care should focus on improving the systems around the individual to improve health and access to appropriate care, and work to modify the way that individuals consume health services to ensure care is effective and efficient. One initiative that should be considered is a comprehensive referral system that directs people to appropriate care.

22.8%

Portion of Medicare beneficiaries in Greene County with depression

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2014

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that obesity rates in America have increased from 35 percent in 2011–2012 to 38 percent in 2013–2014. Within the Springfield area, 29 percent of adults are obese, which has increased from 28 percent in 2006. According to the CDC, chronic diseases are responsible for seven out of 10 deaths each year and account for 86 percent of our nation’s health care costs. Policy and system level interventions have the greatest impact in reductions of the prevalence of obesity rates. Policy changes at the local level should include active transportation planning, incorporate health considerations in land use and growth management plans, create healthier workplaces through wellness initiatives, and improve access to healthy food.

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents raised issues with regard to uninsured residents and overloaded medical professionals.

“As there seems to be an abundance of urgent and emergency care clinics, I believe there is an option for everyone to receive the care they need. However, there are also a number of citizens who do not have insurance to see a physician.”

“People in health care are generally very good and care about people. But they are overloaded.”



“We have struggled to put our arms around what the impact of mental illness is on our community. ... The mental health assessment will **provide us the best strategy to pull in all the tiles of the mosaic** so we can get a clear picture and establish a path forward.”

—CLAY GODDARD
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

For current information on community health indicators, including mental health care services and insurance access, visit **www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org** and click the Community Commons link.





STARTING EARLY: Early childhood programs such as the Springfield-Greene County Library District's Racing to Read program help prepare young kids for success in school.

Partnerships enhance preschool efforts

Public/private initiatives are boosting the school readiness of young children. But funding challenges threaten programs, and social problems linger over some preschoolers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD BLUE RIBBONS

- Parents As Teachers expansion
- Collaboration
- Early Childhood One-Stop
- Early Learning Leadership Academy (ELLA)
- Passport to Readiness app for families



RED FLAGS

- Childhood trauma
- Cost of child care
- Instability of funding

Our community is committed to addressing school readiness and workforce development by improving outcomes for our youngest citizens. The goal is to reduce the number of children not ready for school to 10 percent by the year 2023.

After two years of concentrated efforts, pilot projects, and local, private funding, we are seeing positive results. The K-readiness continuation study conducted by the Mayor's Commission for Children shows readiness is trending up, and fewer children are coming to Springfield Public Schools unprepared for kindergarten.

The results went from 27.4 percent of children unprepared in 2014 to 24.7 percent unprepared in 2016.

BLUE RIBBONS



With the addition of 14 parent educators, the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) **Parents As Teachers program** has expanded to every elementary school. This expansion was due to intentional focus and support from the local school board. In 2015-16, SPS Parents As Teachers provided more than 700 community events for families, including story times, toddler/preschool yoga, and kindergarten preps in Springfield. The local program was chosen to participate in a five-year national grant initiative to build connections between local health providers and the Parents As Teachers program.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District's early literacy program, Racing to Read, was adopted by the Missouri State Library as the state model and served as the foundation for its grant program developed through the federal Library Services and Technology Act. Racing to Read supports families by providing them with information, resources and play-based experiences that will help their children develop the skills critical for learning to read.

A 2015 survey indicated the program is an effective tool that helps parents prepare their children to learn and succeed. Ninety-four percent said they learned something at story times they can share with their children, and 90 percent of parents surveyed said they were more confident helping their children learn because of attending story times. The library conducts approximately 950 story times in its 10 branches each year, reaching more than 23,000 people.

Collaboration has been recognized as a strength in each of the past several Community Focus Reports within the Early Childhood section and remains central to continued improvements.

A prime example is **Early Childhood One-Stop**. What began as an idea created by Child Care Aware of Southern Missouri,

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents praised the efforts of community initiatives that help young children but worried about rising education costs.

“I’m worried how I’ll be able to afford higher education once my children are grown.”

“Big Brothers/Big Sisters is an amazing organization that works toward helping the children who need it the most.”



“It tells me that when you focus and you target your resources to specific programs, whether it’s Parents As Teachers or Wonder Years, **you’re going to get results.**”

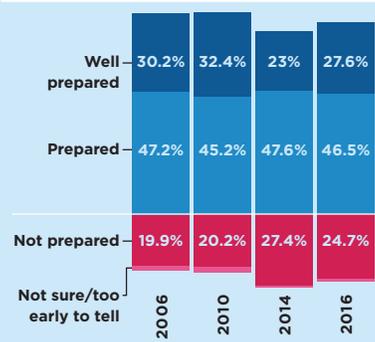
—GERRY LEE

PRESIDENT, SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION AND MEMBER OF THE MAYOR’S COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN

For current information on early childhood successes and challenges, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.



SGF KINDERGARTEN READINESS



Source: Mayor’s Commission for Children

Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Council of Churches of the Ozarks, and Springfield Public Schools has grown to a collaboration that includes more than 15 organizations. This central referral hub simplifies service information and connects families with young children to resources supporting basic needs, family-friendly activities, child care, health resources, and support groups.

To harness the interest of early childhood professionals in raising the quality of care in our community, SPS, Ozarks Technical Community College and Every Child Promise have partnered to bring local professionals together to study and improve their programs serving young children in the **Early Learning Leadership Academy**.

With funding from Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Springfield early childhood professionals have created the **Passport to Readiness app** for smartphones that connects families to activities that help prepare children for school and life. The free app targets developmental milestones and local activities that will ensure healthy starts, reinforce learning, and encourage families to seek out activities within the community.

The app allows families to accumulate points that can be redeemed for children’s books, toys or event passes that further encourage learning. Although funding was managed by SPS, members from more than 12 organizations participated in the design and implementation of the program.

RED FLAGS

Children who have experienced trauma in their young lives are unable to manage the strong and often chaotic emotions they are left with. They bring all the hurt and stress to child care and school, which can lead to outbursts and disruptions.

Children experiencing trauma are more likely than their peers to be expelled from

child care, as well as fall behind in school. Addressing challenging behaviors was a red flag in the 2015 report and continues to be an area of concern. A recent study conducted by local early childhood professionals revealed that preschool suspensions and expulsions in Springfield are twice the Missouri rate and 17 times higher than national K-12 rates. Preschool expulsions are associated with expulsions in later school grades as well as negative educational and life outcomes.

Although the child abuse and neglect rates in Greene County have improved slightly, it continues to be a devastating issue for the children and families impacted. Hotline calls have risen in the past year; however, substantiated rates are down slightly from previous years. Rates went from 405 children who were substantiated victims of abuse and neglect to 384 children. Although this reflects a 5 percent decline, the rate for Greene County is still above the state average.

While parents who live at or below the poverty level are struggling to find affordable care, child care programs are struggling to stay solvent. Current rates do not adequately support improving quality; however, parents can’t afford to pay more tuition. In Springfield, the average **cost of child care** for a two-parent household with two children (one infant and one 4-year-old) is \$14,560. With both parents earning \$9 per hour, working 40 hours per week, the family will pay more than half of their take-home pay in child care costs. Research suggests that, on average, families need an income equal to about two times the federal poverty threshold (or \$48,072) to meet their most basic needs.

Blue-ribbon initiatives have fallen victim to funding cuts. For almost four years, community partners working closely with United Way of the Ozarks made the Dolly Parton Imagination Library available to more than 3,000 children in Springfield. These children received a combined total of more than 68,000 books. But **lack of continued funding** resulted in the program being deactivated in 2017.

It is hard to build strong partnerships and sustainable programs when there is uncertainty of when and where funding will be available. There have been many recent valiant attempts to fund early childhood services locally and statewide, and each time, hopes are dashed.

Fortunately, the state government approved fully funding the school formula in 2017. In the coming year, it has the potential to serve approximately 600 more preschool children in Springfield.

\$14,560

Average annual cost of child care in Springfield for a two-parent, two-child household

Source: Child Care Aware of Missouri



PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: Collaborative programs in Springfield Public Schools such as GO CAPS connect students with businesses for real-world experiences.

Collaboration critical to educational successes

Springfield Public Schools has connected with businesses and community partners to expand options for the district’s 25,000 students, but funding challenges remain.

Springfield Public Schools’ strategic plan 2015–2020 set forth a collective vision for the community and the district’s 25,000 students. SPS seeks to engage students, staff and the community to expand our thinking of a high-quality SPS graduate and ensure all students — regardless of background — succeed academically.

BLUE RIBBONS



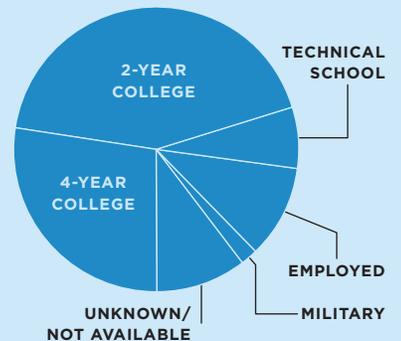
Organizations, businesses, faith-based agencies, and nonprofits provide human capital, financial resources, and space as **collaborators who support** the district’s “Every Learner – Every Day” philosophy.

Multiple organizations work to respond to the needs of under-resourced students, providing for unmet needs of food, transportation, mental and physical health, consistent shelter, and access to early childhood education.

And while SPS works to link with additional partners, it nurtures established relationships, including:

- A new partnership between Ozarks Technical Community College, 3M, and SPS will assist middle-school students in considering manufacturing as a career option as they learn how to program, operate, and maintain electromechanical and automated equipment.
- Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Professional Studies (GO CAPS) has engaged over 250 partners to allow students to shadow and work with professionals.
- SPS hosts LAUNCH, a program to develop high-quality online learning options. This regional collaborative will offer partner districts 1,000 virtual learning seats during the 2017–2018 academic school year.
- The Kennedy Center Any Given Child Springfield grant provides a robust program of arts experiences for every child in SPS in grades K–8.

CLASS OF 2016 — GRADUATE FOLLOWUP STATUS



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

EDUCATION BLUE RIBBONS

- Community collaboration and support
- Ensure equity of opportunity
- Stable results measures



RED FLAGS

- The achievement gap
- Instability of funding

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents voiced concerns about secure financial support for public schools.

“The expectations and characteristics of a learner are changing (becoming more technology savvy), and the classroom needs the funding to meet these needs. We can’t solely rely on taxes to succeed.”

“Budget cuts have had a crippling effect on our public schools. ... If we do not support our schools through adequate funding, we will damage our children in ways that could not be repaired.”



Preparing students for success demands that we have the courage to change. **We cannot rely on what has worked in the past because the needs of students and employers are constantly evolving.**

—DR. JOHN JUNGSMANN
SUPERINTENDENT,
SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



For current information on education in the area, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.

www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.

CLASS OF 2016 — ACT COMPOSITE RESULTS

RACE/ETHNICITY	SPRINGFIELD	MISSOURI
White	21.2	21.1
Black/African American	17.7	16.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	20.5	17.1
Hispanic	18.6	18.7
Asian	23.9	23.3
Multi-race	19.9	20.1
American Indian	20.2	17.7
Overall	20.8	20.2

Source: ACT Yearly Summary reports, American Arbitration Association

strides have been made to address economic disparities, achievement gaps still exist for students of color.

Participation in the Lumina Foundation Community Partnership Attainment Grant created

awareness of a “program rich, systems poor” approach. Newly aligned partnerships with Springfield’s NAACP and Alliance for Leadership, Advancement, and Success (ALAS), along with targeted programming through Ujima and Si Se Puede, demonstrate a renewed commitment and a shift in approach.

Research has shown that mentoring provides positive role models who can impart critical social skills and positive academic attitudes that assist under-resourced students in overcoming race-based and socioeconomic obstacles. Groups such as Elevate Lives and Mentoring Matters have plans to grow their mentoring programs to help in this area.

For over a decade, **insufficient funding** has been cited as a concern in this report. The board and administration of Springfield Public Schools reached a major milestone at the end of 2016 in confronting this issue by ratifying a comprehensive facility master plan.

The next step is acquiring the necessary funding to deliver that plan. In April 2017, the district garnered over 14,000 yes votes for a 24-cent debt service levy increase to fund a \$189 million bond issue that would have allowed phase one of the plan to be delivered. The vote count represented a majority of support from the community (51%) but fell short of the statutorily required 57.14 percent for passage. The district is now back in a research and development phase that includes focus groups and data collection from the community to determine what adjustments are necessary to increase support.

The state of Missouri did pass a budget that included full funding of the foundation formula for the first time in many years. These funds can be used for many district identified needs and may also allow for a massive expansion of early childhood education classrooms as early as 2018–19.

Success will require intentional, aligned focus on all players in a student’s education — students, parents, staff, and community. It will require the will to do what we know works, and, equally as important, to stop doing what doesn’t. It will require us to define measures and hold each other collectively responsible for their attainment.

The district has responded to the red flag noted in 2015 to “commit to equity of resources and a firm belief that where students live within the city should not define their academic opportunities.” The district has taken deliberate steps to **ensure equity of opportunity** and remove barriers to learning, including a re-visioning of summer learning via Explore. The program, now entering its second year, has expanded from 3,000 students impacted to 11,000, providing project-based learning, integrated technology and hands-on experiences including 618 embedded field experiences with 50 community partners.

IGNiTE, the district’s three-year technology rollout, has provided modern tools paired with the resources and supports to equip all students with access to engaging, relevant, and personal learning environments, including over 1,500 mobile hotspots for students without Internet access at home. Currently, 20,000 students have personal learning devices through IGNiTE with full deployment completed August 2017.

Continued expansion of SPS Online provides additional access to course credit recovery or course acceleration. More students are engaging with online learning during the summer months, with nearly 4,000 course registrations during Explore 2017, up from 1,947 a year earlier.

With continued expansion of Parents as Teachers, SPS boasts the largest program in the country.

Springfield continues to have **stable results measures**. ACT results for the graduating class of 2016 show an average composite score of 20.8 for Springfield Public Schools, above the state’s 20.2. April 2015 began the statewide ACT assessment given to all juniors in the state of Missouri.

SPS also checks in with graduates 180 days after graduation. Of the graduating class of 2016, 77.3 percent of students attend 2- and 4-year colleges in addition to technical schools. Another 12.6 percent of students are enlisted in the military or employed.



The achievement gap has been listed or referenced in the education section of each Community Focus Report since 2011. While



PROTECTING FAMILIES: Working with community partners, the Springfield Fire Department has conducted free fire-safety surveys to ensure families with young children are safe.

Expanding the base of safe, affordable housing

Collaborative programs seek to reduce homelessness by providing more available options. Still, dozens of people remain without permanent shelter.

HOUSING BLUE RIBBONS

- Collaboration efforts lead to safer homes
- Expanding inclusive housing
- Homeless services streamlined

RED FLAGS

- Limited capacity for vouchers and public housing
- Affordability of rental housing
- Housing quality impact on health and safety
- Homeless population increasing



Housing is a basic need that is a crucial part of human existence. Lack of safe and decent housing impacts our ability to live, work, and be part of our community. Collaboration is key, and agencies, advocates, and local government must work together to create innovative ways to meet our community's increasing needs that strain limited resources. A homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness serves as a foundation by which people can begin advancing their pursuit of greater life goals, improving their quality of life.

BLUE RIBBONS



Collaborative efforts lead to safer homes. The Springfield Fire Department partnered with Parents as Teachers and Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC) to provide free home fire-safety surveys to 504 families with young children in 2016. Springfield families also received more than 1,100 free smoke alarms, 850 smoke alarm batteries and 40 free fire extinguishers.

In 2016, 26 families were referred to the Safe and Sanitary Home program, a voluntary program for families recovering from hoarding and severe squalor. Volunteers donated about 500 hours to the program, including the cleanup of eight residences.

In 2015 and 2016, OACAC completed a total of 146 weatherization requests—128 homeowners and 18 rentals—to increase efficiency of homes, alleviate substandard living conditions, reduce energy use, and increase safer, healthier living environments.

Universal design is now an integral part of public housing in Missouri. The Missouri Housing Development Commission's board of directors formally voted to require that, beginning in 2016, all new construction projects for elderly and single-family dwellings supported by MHDC shall be designed and built in accordance with the principles of universal design, which allows all citizens, regardless

1,100

Free smoke alarms distributed by the Springfield Fire Department, Parents as Teachers and Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

146

Weatherization requests completed by OACAC in 2015 and 2016

Source: OACAC

of ability level, to live independently to the fullest extent possible. This change not only helps meet the needs of disabled consumers but also provides the developer with a wider market. Additionally, it builds value in our housing stock by eliminating the cost of retrofitting units so they can be used by individuals with

accessibility needs. As the market for universal design continues to grow, development of this type of housing should, too.

The Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness has launched a coordinated entry system to help **streamline homeless services** in Greene, Christian and Webster counties. Through an expansion of Community Partnership of the Ozarks' One Door program, individuals experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis can more easily access housing and services that best fit their need through a universal assessment and referral approach for all entry locations.

Since 2013, The Kitchen Inc.'s Home at Last program has served 348 veteran households. The program provides eligible veteran families with outreach, case management, and assistance in obtaining benefits. It also offers temporary financial assistance and/or services as a bridge to long-term stability. In August 2016, The Kitchen received a substantial grant through the Veterans Administration and will be able to provide housing and services for approximately 150 households in Greene, Christian and Webster counties over the next five years.

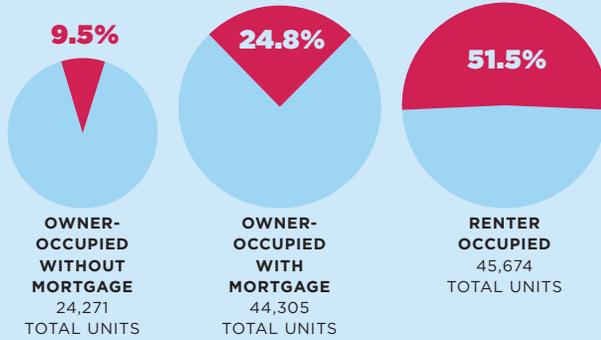
Eden Village, a neighborhood development designed by The Gathering Tree to combat homelessness, is working to provide 400-square-foot micro houses for Springfield's chronically disabled homeless.

RED FLAGS

Both the 2013 and the 2015 Code of Federal Regulations listed as a cause for concern **insufficient housing vouchers** to meet the community's needs. Over the past two years, both OACAC and the Housing Authority of Springfield (HAS) report that their allotment of vouchers for the general public has remained flat. OACAC, which administers vouchers for Greene County outside the City of Springfield, reports that the wait time for a voucher continues to be long. As of March 1, 2017, they were serving persons who applied before April 22, 2014. Likewise, HAS reports that the waiting period for a voucher within the city limits

COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS IN GREENE COUNTY

Households with housing costs exceeding 30 percent of income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015

is about two years. HAS maintained a low vacancy rate of about 2 percent over the past two years for its 766 affordable housing units.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2011–2015 estimates, **more than 50 percent of rental homes in Greene County are not affordable**, meaning those households spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing and utility costs. These families will have difficulty paying for necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. A single person working 40 hours per week at a minimum wage job in Missouri should spend no more than \$400 per month on rent and utilities for a home to be considered affordable.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the U.S. population spends an average of 90 percent of their time indoors. Therefore, **housing quality is an important factor when considering a healthy and safe living environment**. In 2014, an estimated 450,530 (9.7 percent) adults and 152,007 children (11.2 percent) in Missouri were living with asthma. Referrals are being made to improve housing through weatherization programs, emergency loan programs, and complaint-based housing inspection requests in the city (over 1,000 in 2015–2016). Still, there is an opportunity and need to improve housing quality to impact health and safety.

Nearly 800 individuals are homeless in Springfield; over 200 of those are unsheltered households, sleeping outside or in places not meant for human habitation — cars, abandoned buildings, camps. Though services for the homeless continue to improve, **trends in homelessness continue to rise** in the Springfield area, especially for single adults. Point in Time counts conducted by the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness show that the number of single adults who are unsheltered has risen from 150 in 2012 to 186 in 2016. As homelessness rates have risen, the number of permanent housing units to aid homeless households has also risen from 103 in 2012 to 195 in 2016.

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents praised community-driven efforts to combat homelessness.

“Habitat for Humanity has helped many low income families to finally have an affordable home.”

“I think the Eden housing is a step in the right direction to address poverty resources and homelessness.”



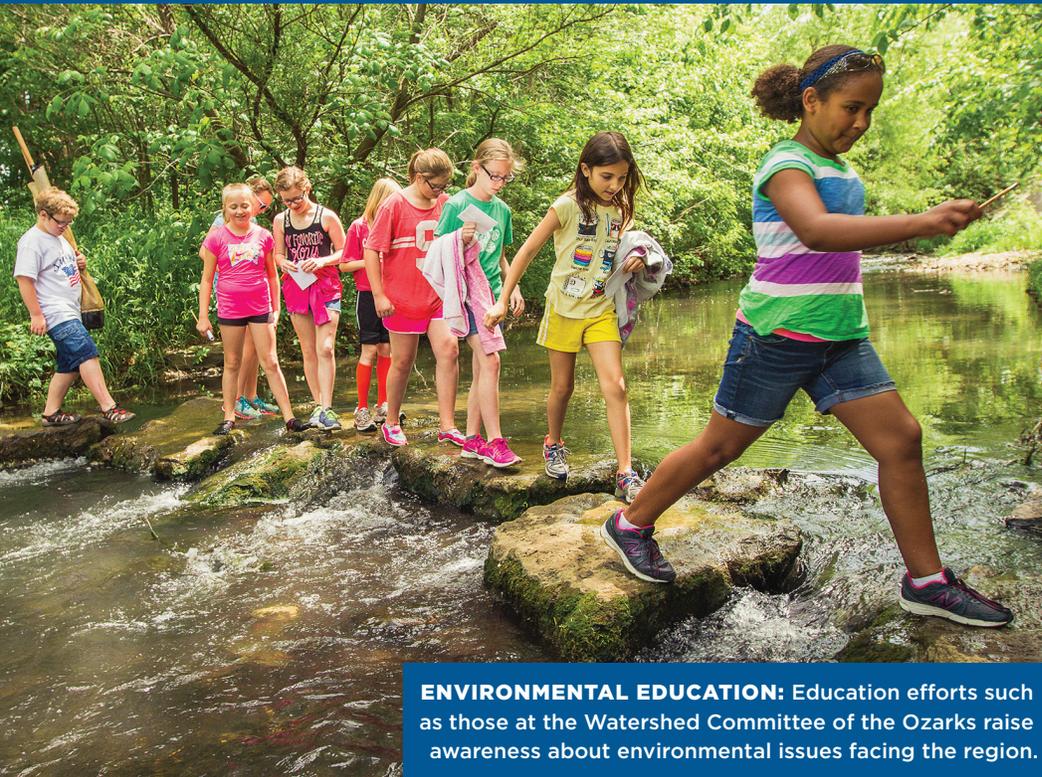
“Having developed affordable housing for over 20 years, I know firsthand of the incredible difference it can make in people's lives. **Good quality, affordable and accessible housing stabilizes families** and is the first step in helping them become productive members of our community.”

—MARIE CARMICHAEL

AFFORDABLE HOMES DEVELOPMENT LLC

For current information on housing in the Springfield area, visit **www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org** and click the Community Commons link.





ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: Education efforts such as those at the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks raise awareness about environmental issues facing the region.

Unified efforts keep environment clean, healthy

Water and air quality remain strong in the Springfield area. Sustaining that success, however, demands substantial investment and commitment in the years ahead.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BLUE RIBBONS

- Innovative integrated planning
- Water and air quality
- An expanding trail and greenways system
- Education and protection efforts



RED FLAGS

- Uncertainty of regulation, agency support
- Stormwater management funding
- Drinking-water supply

Springfield's natural environment boasts a number of features for residents and visitors: Clear streams, lakes, and rivers offering several species of game fish; healthy forests; distinctive prairies, glades, and wetlands; hiking, biking, and walking. The area offers some of the nation's best fishing, cleanest air, most beautiful karst features—unusual caves, mysterious sinkholes, rock outcroppings—rugged but fragile icons of Ozarks living.

Citizen volunteer groups, businesses, institutions, government agencies and quasi-government organizations work together to preserve, protect, educate and foster awareness and enjoyment of our outdoors, balancing these efforts against the reality of a community struggling with poverty, expensive infrastructure needs, and limited human and economic resources.

BLUE RIBBONS



As noted in the 2015 Community Focus Report, Springfield was **one of first communities in the United States to adopt an integrated approach** to the overwhelming total cost (estimated at \$1.6 billion) of meeting environmental compliance responsibilities and infrastructure needs. The City of Springfield, Greene County, and City Utilities of Springfield, work with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, local agencies, and citizen volunteer organizations to determine how best to spend each limited dollar in the most effective manner to meet community needs.

Maintaining **water and air quality** remains a priority for the area. 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. Active citizen groups, such as Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and the James River Basin Partnership, have been protecting water quality for decades and serve as ready sources of educational information, hands-on educational opportunities, and technical and research assistance.

Springfield continues to meet federal air-quality standards for ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter. The Ozarks Clean Air Alliance, which includes stakeholders in a 15-county area in southwest Missouri, work with local community leaders and media to raise awareness of air-quality concerns and promote proactive practices such as education, commuting, and ridesharing programs, to reduce air pollution. Infrastructure improvements and alternative (non-coal) fuel choices instituted by CU have played a significant role in good air quality.

Continuing the long-range improvement

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents focused upon the natural beauty of the area in and around Springfield.

“Sailing, boating, river gazing. I find it to be a stress reliever and provides a sense of peace.”

“I love kayaking and hiking around Springfield. The Ozarks are such a great place to enjoy the great outdoors!”



“The most important investment we can make for any public improvement is to consider our impacts on the community’s environment. **Clean air, water and healthy neighborhoods should be our goal to bring about a strong economy**, retention of workforce and an attraction for growth. Protecting the environment is no longer a part-time job or a special event. Today protecting the environment requires everyone in the game with all parties at the table and all concerns respected. It’s a big task but we all have one backyard and that’s a good place to start.”

—TERRY WHALEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OZARK GREENWAYS

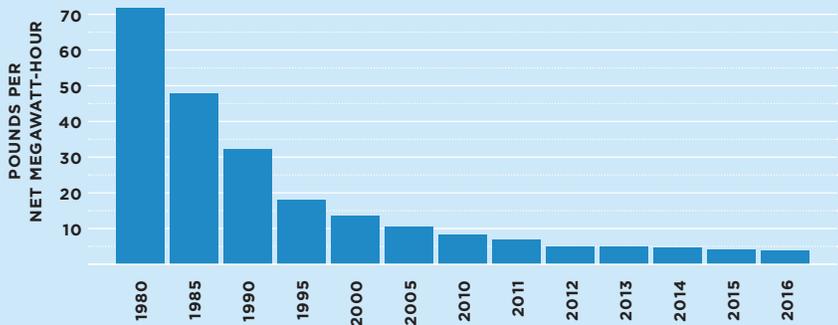
For current information on Springfield’s environment, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.



CITY UTILITIES — CHANGES IN GENERATION & EMISSIONS

GENERATION SOURCE	ACTUAL 2015	ESTIMATED 2017	ESTIMATED CHANGE
Coal	59%	35%	▼24%
Natural Gas	2.6%	10%	▲7.4%
Renewables	8.6%	30%	▲21.4%
Short-term market purchases	29.8%	25%	▼3.2%

DECLINE IN POLLUTANT EMISSIONS



Source: City Utilities

plan, Springfield’s investments in wastewater treatment-plant capacity and pipe efficiency have resulted in impressive returns on rate-payers’ dollars invested. Improvements led to documented reductions in stormwater entering the sewage system, which creates unnecessary volumes for treatment.

Public-sector support combined with the long-standing volunteer support and recent successful \$700,000 capital campaign of Ozark Greenways resulted in the **continuing expansion of Springfield’s trail system**.

Area students and adults also have access to a wealth of **environmental education resources**. Informal education partners such as the Springfield Conservation Nature Center (Missouri Department of Conservation) and the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center (Springfield-Greene County Parks Department) provide hands-on learning experiences to students and teachers. Such efforts are at the core of connecting students of all ages to various aspects of the environment.

Springfield continues to be recognized as a leader in tree preservation. The city, which has a dedicated policy on the issue, has strong volunteer support through the Tree City USA Citizens Advisory Committee and Ozark Greenways, and the Arbor Day Foundation has awarded numerous accolades to the city, which has been named a Tree City USA for 31 years. In addition, CU has been named a Tree Line USA Utility for 22 years, while Missouri State and Drury universities have been designated as tree campuses for three years each. The city’s arboretum at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Gardens has received international accreditation, and Springfield has joined the Mayor’s Monarch Pledge as a monarch butterfly and pollinator-friendly community.

RED FLAGS



Like other municipalities, Springfield faces **uncertainty with regard to regulation and funding**. As Springfield works to address the long-term and chronic effects of poverty, the competition for community resources continues. The funding required to meet the environmental responsibilities and requirements (\$1.6 billion) add to the staggering total of the community’s overall financial needs.

Environmental issues and the agencies and organizations that deal with them have become caught up in the current fractured political discourse. Extremes in any direction pose a threat to the health of our natural environment and to the ability of regulated communities to maintain consistent, effective efforts toward balancing community resources and the cost of meeting regulatory requirements. In addition, weather extremes have become the norm, and planning efforts—including significant capital requirements and adjustments in emergency response preparedness—are required as a result.

Since 2005, the Community Focus Report has identified the lack of **adequate, long-term funding for stormwater management** in Springfield and Greene County as a red flag. Funding is needed to address aging infrastructure and flooding. The city must also invest to keep its storm-sewer system permits in regulatory compliance.

Concerns regarding **long-term regional water supplies** were first articulated in the 2009 Community Focus Report and remain. While Springfield is well-positioned to deal with future drinking-water requirements for our citizens, many neighboring communities are not. The Tri-State Water Resource Coalition, which includes Springfield, Greene County, and CU, is exploring whether Springfield should become a regional supply source.



WORKING TOGETHER: Greene County Sheriff Jim Arnott (left) and Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams helped craft an agreement announced in July 2017 to have the county lockup hold inmates arrested on municipal charges.

Local agencies connect to tackle ongoing struggles

Law-enforcement agencies have teamed up with nonprofits and community members to confront persistent criminal and societal issues, such as domestic violence and drug abuse.

Public safety is the protection of a community from dangers emanating from crime and disasters, and includes law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services and emergency management.

Public safety agencies in Springfield and Greene County are maintaining the status quo for providing services to citizens. Staffing has not increased to the level of meeting the growing demand for services across all area public safety agencies.

BLUE RIBBONS



Officials have been **collaborating with community members to increase safety and security**. The Zone 1 Blitz, sponsored by the City of Springfield, established public safety projects to create a safer environment for residents and business owners in Springfield's Zone 1. Based on comments and concerns expressed by citizens, the Springfield Police Department increased patrols (including a pilot foot-patrol project) and traffic enforcement in the area, and extended a registration system for privately owned security cameras to residential cameras as well, thus allowing SPD to use the resulting videos to help solve crimes.

SPD created a Block Watch program for area residents, patterned after Neighborhood Watch, and is offering Citizens Alert Patrol to interested neighborhoods. The department is also working to improve communication among residents through social media platforms such as Next Door. The City of Springfield has proposed a plan to install neighborhood cameras in areas where problems are occurring to provide access to SPD officers and neighborhood volunteers to help deter and detect criminal activity.

The average age for first use of alcohol has increased from 12.55 in 2010 to 13.12 in 2016 through community education, alcohol compliance checks by law enforcement, and the Responsible Beverage Service Training offered through Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Missouri Safe & Sober, which has reached 462 middle and high schools and more than 165,000 students statewide.

More resources are concentrating on family-violence issues. SPD spearheaded the Family Violence Task Force in 2012 upon discovering an upward trend in violent domestic assaults. Since then, the task force has become a subcommittee of the Violence Free Families Coalition under CPO. Verizon awarded the task force a Hope Line grant of \$12,000, which funded the fourth annual "Stop the Violence" conference in 2016, allowing the task force to bring in national experts to share insights and effective strategies with approximately 400 attendees. As expected, more awareness contributed to an increase in the number of reports of domestic assault.

PUBLIC ORDER & SAFETY BLUE RIBBONS

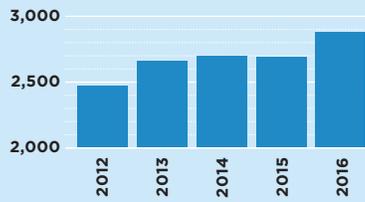
- Community collaboration
- Resources to address family-violence issues
- Agency cooperation



RED FLAGS

- Increased demand for service
- Increased rate of arson
- Jail capacity
- Illegal drug use
- Preventable fatalities

DOMESTIC ASSAULT REPORTS IN SPRINGFIELD



TOTAL 911 CALLS IN GREENE COUNTY



Source: Springfield Police Department

CPO is also **collaborating with 16 partner agencies** to implement the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program to help decrease the incidents of child abuse and neglect. Following a period of training, accredited practitioners have recently begun implementing those programs for parents. Early results are showing significant improvements in participating parents' confidence in dealing with their children's behavior problems and decreased incidence of emotional problems in children.

The Springfield-Greene County 911 Emergency Communications Department is the primary countywide public-safety communications center, which dispatches for 22 agencies (nine police and 13 fire) within Greene County with state-of-the-art technology and dispatching services. An upgrade to the existing 911 phone system to include text-to-911 capabilities will be completed in 2017.

In addition, implementation of hardware/software upgrades to the existing computer-aided dispatch system during 2017 will lead to increased coordination and enhanced capabilities during high demand events, such as severe weather and disaster-related events.

RED FLAGS



The Springfield-Greene County 911 Emergency Communications Department is the "first" first responder, as all calls for a police or fire response begin with a 911 call. **The volume of calls and phone interactions that the telecommunicators handle are increasing every year.**

As the primary law-enforcement agency in the area, SPD has seen an increase of calls for service from 156,000 in 2014 to 176,168 in 2016, and total Uniform Crime Report Part I crimes—homicide, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, burglaries, theft, and auto theft—increased by 8 percent in 2016. A significant increase in property crime, driven by a 32 percent

increase in vehicle theft, is a major concern.

The Springfield Fire Department has also seen an increase in calls for service from 15,298 in 2014 to 16,301 in 2016. The City of Springfield saw a **significant rise in intentionally set fires** in 2016. Fire marshals investigated 76 intentionally set fires, a 21 percent increase from 2015.

On April 3, 2015, the Greene County Sheriff began refusing to accept municipal inmates into the jail because of overcrowding. The City of Springfield originally entered agreements with Miller and Taney counties for housing of inmates; it now contracts with Vernon County for municipal inmate housing. However, **this change has not eased the overcrowding at the jail**, which is at or above capacity on a daily basis. Greene County continues to contract with multiple counties to house prisoners throughout the region. The capacity for Greene County Jail is 601, and the average occupancy rate in 2016 was 705.

Illegal drug use has been a red flag in every CFR since 2004 and continues to be a major problem. Seizures of methamphetamine and heroin are at all-time highs for the SPD. The department's Special Investigations Section seized 73.1 pounds of meth in 2015 and 57 pounds in 2016. In 2015, this group also seized 397.1 grams of heroin; in 2016, heroin seizures jumped to 4,060.57 grams. Part of the sharp increase in heroin use can be attributed to the diversion of prescription opioids, and while efforts continue with state legislators to pass a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, the measure failed again in 2017. Missouri is the only state without such a program. But Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens recently signed an executive order directing the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to begin work creating such a program. While police will not have access to the database, the program ensures referrals will be made to law enforcement of those flagged by the system.

SPD responded to 99 overdose calls in 2015, and 87 in 2016.

Springfield and Greene County have experienced **an increase in preventable deaths**. Significant work needs to be done in each of the following areas:

- Heroin overdoses—Of the 186 overdose calls that SPD responded to in 2015–2016, 15 were fatal.
- Fire deaths—In 2016, the City of Springfield experienced six fire deaths. This is high compared with other communities: Springfield-Greene County averages 22.5 deaths per million, compared to the national average of 13.3 per million.
- Traffic fatalities—The number of people killed in Springfield traffic crashes was 21 in 2015 and 19 in 2016. Primary causes include impairment by drugs or alcohol, distracted driving, medical conditions, and those involving pedestrians.

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents voiced concerns about rising crime rates in the Springfield area.

"My biggest concern is probably that some areas close to our neighborhood have high drug abuse."



"Springfield is extremely fortunate to be served by an **outstanding group of dedicated public safety professionals**. Our law enforcement, fire protection and emergency response personnel are committed to their mission of protecting the community. The Springfield City Council, in recognition of the opportunities and challenges our community faces, has made public safety its top priority and is committed to keeping our community safe."

—KEN McCLURE
MAYOR, CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

For current crime and drug-abuse statistics, visit **www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org** and click the Community Commons link.





PARKS FOR ALL: Springfield and Greene County boast a variety of natural and park amenities including the Betty and Bobby Allison Miracle League Ball Field, a barrier-free field where players of all ages and abilities can hit, run, catch and play ball.

Recreation, parks prove a big draw for Springfield

A combination of public and private support for parks, trails, and sports contribute to a strong recreational foundation. But balancing funding with other community needs remains a challenge.

RECREATION, SPORTS & LEISURE

BLUE RIBBONS

- Accreditation
- Community collaboration and volunteer support
- Trails and connections
- Economic Impact

RED FLAGS

- Obesity
- Preserving green space
- Parks funding



Residents and visitors agree: one of the best things about Springfield is its parks, trails, and sports and recreation opportunities. With more than 100 sites, Springfield parks offer 3 million visitors a year the chance to experience everything from aquatics to Dickerson Park Zoo.

BLUE RIBBONS



In 2016, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board achieved full **accreditation** from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). It is now among 155 accredited agencies — less than 2 percent of all U.S. parks and recreation agencies. The Park Board spent more than two years in the accreditation process, including extensive documentation of compliance with 151 national standards.

Dickerson Park Zoo has maintained accreditation through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums since 1986. Springfield Botanical Gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park was also accredited by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program in 2016.

Community collaboration is the key to success for the Park Board, which maintains an active partnership with some 300 local nonprofits, businesses and institutions. Primary partnerships include Springfield Public Schools, offering SPARC (School, Parks are Reaching Communities) youth childcare and sports programs at more than 20 sites, in addition to shared park and school playgrounds and other infrastructure. Sports teams from Springfield Public Schools and Missouri State, Drury and Evangel universities regularly practice and play at Park Board facilities.

“Friends” groups provide invaluable financial, advocacy and **volunteer support**, especially Friends of the Zoo at Dickerson Park Zoo, and Friends of the Garden at Springfield Botanical Gardens. The Park Board partners with the Springfield Sister Cities Association and the Springfield Regional Arts Council for arts and cultural events throughout the year. Other community partnership events include Turkey Trot and National Night Out. The Park Board continually collaborates with neighborhood associations and through the Zone Blitz, providing organizational support for neighborhood-initiated events such as Concert at the Cave, Dirt Day and dozens of Neighborhood Night Out events.

Collaboration with donors and sponsors has funded the majority of parks improvements since 2012, including construction of the Peace Through People Pavilion at Springfield Botanical Gardens, new seating and playing surface at Miracle League Field, the new Rotary Shade Sail picnic area at Jordan Valley Park, renovation of Timmons Temple at Silver Springs Park, and various Ozarks Greenways projects. Grants are

another important source of capital improvement funds, with Neighborhood Works and Community Development Block Grants making several neighborhood park projects possible. Donations and grants make up 4 to 5 percent of the Park Board's annual revenue.

Park and recreation programs would not be possible without individual volunteers. In 2016, the Park Board screened 876 volunteers: gardeners, senior 55+ program providers, zoo workers, and youth sports coaches. Combined, these volunteers reported more than 83,000 hours of service. With volunteer work in Missouri valued \$21.57 per hour by national nonprofit coalition Independent Sector, annual Parks volunteer service is worth nearly \$1.8 million—roughly the same as 42 full-time employees.

Greenway trails and connections remain one of our community's most valued assets, and they are consistently busy with walkers, runners, cyclists, and nature enthusiasts. Conservative estimates place trail users at 114,000 a year. Ozark Greenways celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2016, and has now developed 70 miles of greenway trails.

Ozark Greenways' Trails for Generations funding initiative has raised more than \$750,000 for trail improvements. Ozark Greenways opened the Trail of Honor at the Missouri Veterans Cemetery in October 2017, marking the country's first recreational trail spanning a national veterans cemetery. Additional improvements are planned for The Link, a north-south on-street bike and pedestrian route linking greenways, neighborhoods and activity centers.

Sports tourism continues to have a major **economic impact**.

The Park Board, in partnership with the Springfield Sports Commission, hosts more than 50 national, regional and state tournaments, generating more than \$15 million annually. Tournaments bring thousands of youth, college and adult athletes—as well as coaches and families—to Springfield hotels, restaurants, stores and attractions. The March 2017 National Home-school Basketball Tournament alone brought 350 youth basketball teams to Springfield, filling every hotel room in town for a week, with visitor spending estimated at \$4.2 million.

Professional sports teams include Springfield Cardinals AA minor league baseball, with average annual attendance of 315,000–350,000, Springfield Lasers World Team Tennis, and Springfield Express Junior-A hockey. Combined with university sports teams, fans enjoy supporting home teams while contributing to the economy.

And after years of investment and

renovation, the new Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium opened to the public in September 2017, the largest attraction to open in Springfield since Hammons Field in 2004.

RED FLAGS



Springfield's **obesity** rate has been a red flag since 2007. SPARC running clubs at elementary schools and the summer Run for Fun club give youth structure to stay active. Family Centers, accessible for many seniors through the Silver Sneakers program, offer aerobic classes, workout machines, indoor walking tracks and indoor pools.

The Springfield Business Journal reports the largest fitness centers in Springfield, combined, have a membership of more than 78,000.

Walking is the most accessible form of exercise. The Park Board supports the Healthy Living Alliance in community walking programs, including the Move Your Shoes Challenge, encouraging neighborhood and business walking groups, and the Walkable Neighborhood Project, surveying neighborhoods and identifying steps to make a more pedestrian-friendly city.

Preserving green space

for future parks, trails, storm-water and natural areas is another long-term concern, a red flag since 2011. Specific recommendations for expanding public parkland are included in Field Guide 2030. New park acquisition and development was dramatic 2001–2012, with capital funding through a parks sales tax. With the expiration of that funding stream, however, parks

expansion has slowed significantly, and recently has been limited to greenway development.

Further parks development is hindered by **parks funding**, a red flag since 2009. The Park Board is entirely self-funded through dedicated parks tax revenue and user fees. Parks receives virtually no funding from the City of Springfield, Greene County, or the State of Missouri. When the last park sales tax sunset in 2012, the Park Board budget took an immediate \$7 million cut. Since then, nearly all new park and trail development has been funded by grants and private donations.

Until a new funding source is secured, much of the 20-year Parks Master Plan and the Field Guide 2030 recommendations remain on hold, and the Park Board has few options to address long-term needs.

876

Springfield-Greene County Park Board volunteers in 2016

83K+

Service hours contributed by those volunteers

Source: Springfield-Greene County Park Board

Community Voices

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents praised the parks facilities and events for helping to build a sense of community.

“The more cultural interests we can explore the better. ... More ways to lift up small pockets of interest that help create awareness, exposure, and acceptance (instead of dividing lines, hatred, etc.)”

“I like to be downtown or out exploring the parks that Springfield and the surrounding areas have to offer to residents!”



“The Park Board is a fully-accredited, Gold Medal-winning agency: the elite of the elite. **The community of Springfield reaps the benefits of that, and it just seems normal to us.** But when you visit other communities, you begin to realize that the parks and recreation opportunities we have in our own back yard are really special.”

—DR. SARAH MCCALLISTER
DEPARTMENT HEAD, MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY AND CHAIR OF THE SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD

For current information on public amenities, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.





INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT: Voters approved transportation sales taxes that will allow continued upgrades and investment in roads, bridges and sidewalks throughout the Springfield area.

Area continues to invest in road improvements

Springfield is keeping up its roadway network and airport, but sidewalk and transit options remain a challenge, despite public-private partnerships.

TRANSPORTATION BLUE RIBBONS

- Collaborative projects
- Transportation tax approved
- Increased airport traffic
- Growing bicycle and pedestrian network
- Increased transit amenities



RED FLAGS

- Transportation funding
- Lack of sidewalks
- Increasing congestion
- Transit challenges
- Increasing crashes

Over the years, Springfield's public, private and non-profit organizations have worked together to build a better transportation network. These partnerships have expanded not only the roads, but the bicycle, sidewalk and trail network, airport services and the support of public transit.

However, challenges are mounting in terms of meeting the diverse needs of a population that might not have access to a private automobile. In northwest Springfield, the costs of auto ownership exceed 30 percent of household annual income.

BLUE RIBBONS



In Springfield and Greene County, numerous collaborative projects have leveraged state and federal dollars with local and private investment. Approximately \$387 million has been invested through collaboration in the roadway network over the past 30 years.

In 2016, voters approved both the ¼-cent and ⅛-cent transportation sales taxes for the City of Springfield. Improvements will include intersection upgrades, street and bridge widening, signal system and turn-lane updates, alternative transportation projects such as sidewalks and trails, and street resurfacing. Specific projects that will result from these initiatives include additional lanes on Primrose Avenue, Republic Road, and Cherry Street, as well as intersection improvements at Battlefield and Fremont.

Airport facilities have gone through several major upgrades in the past five years, including expansion of long-term parking at the terminal, a new U.S. Customs Office, and remodeling/expansion of general aviation facilities serving private and corporate aviation. Four airlines serve the airport providing service to 13 direct destinations, up from six destinations in 2000. Airline passenger numbers have grown 30 percent in the last five years, which makes Springfield one of the fastest-growing small hub airports in the country.

The trail system for bicycles and pedestrians continues to grow. In 2016, two miles of sidewalks were added in Springfield, bringing the percentage of streets with a sidewalk to 31 percent in the Ozarks Transportation Organization planning area. The city limits of Springfield has 49 miles of signed bicycle lanes, up from 7 miles in 2011.

The City Utilities transit system compares favorably with systems in cities with similar characteristics. The Bus has 12 daytime routes with reduced service on nights and weekends. Nearly 1.5 million rides were provided in 2016. The transit system has improved amenities over the past few years. CU Transit now

Students at Missouri State University gathered input from the Springfield citizens via Padlet. Respondents hoped for more public-transportation options to ease traffic congestion.

“I think we could improve our public transportation to cure some of the traffic issues.”

“Extending the Bear Line Shuttle just one street to the Transit Center is collaboration that would benefit both the campus and the community.”



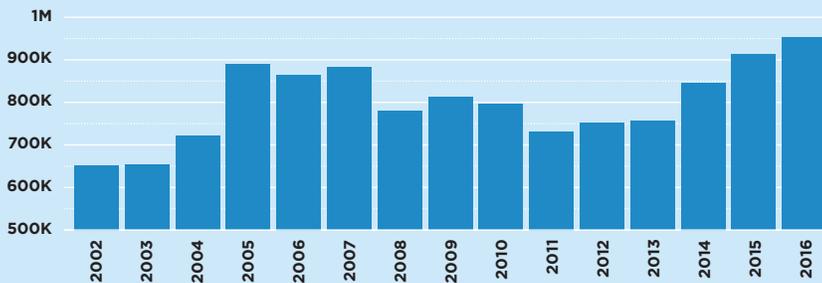
“We must take a broad view as we grow and expand the transportation system of our community. For many citizens, **accessible sidewalks, bicycle friendly streets, trails, and good bus routes are their only modes of transportation.** It is our duty to serve the needs of all Springfieldians.”

—PHYLLIS FERGUSON
ZONE 1 REPRESENTATIVE,
SPRINGFIELD CITY COUNCIL

For current information on transportation-related issues, visit www.springfieldcommunityfocus.org and click the Community Commons link.

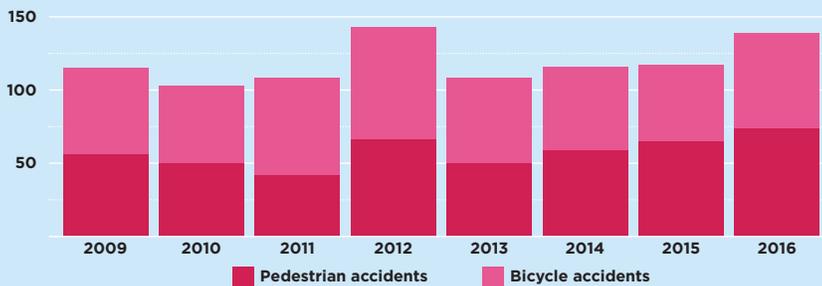


SPRINGFIELD-BRANSON NATIONAL AIRPORT PASSENGERS



Source: Springfield-Branson National Airport

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN ACCIDENTS IN SPRINGFIELD



Source: City of Springfield

boasts 100 transit shelters, many with accessible sidewalks. A \$6 million transit center opened in spring 2016 with state-of-the-art ticketing and scheduling information.

In the November 2016, the City of Springfield voted to **allow transportation network companies** to operate within the city limits. The wording was used as a model for the Missouri law that passed in spring 2017 allowing them to operate in Missouri. While official data is not in, there is hope that this service will decrease the number of drivers under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

OzarksCommute.com, launched in early 2017, is an online rideshare matching service that connects commuters who want to share rides to work.

RED FLAGS



Transportation funding at the state level continues to create issues. The motor fuel and diesel taxes have not increased nor been indexed since 1996. In 2017, public school bus funding was once again cut by state government because of a budget crisis. Public transit funding has decreased significantly in Missouri resulting in minimal operating assistance for public transit.

Lack of sidewalks continues to be an issue for Springfield, especially in northwest Springfield where pedestrian accidents continue to rise. There continue to be over 100 annual crashes involving bicycles or pedestrians annually within the City of Springfield. Accessibility that complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act is a big concern for those with disabilities, and sidewalks continue to be a pressing need.

As the economy has recovered and unemployment is at record lows, **the peakhour congestion continues to grow.** In 2016, 17 percent of measured roadways were congested in the evening, up from 7 percent in 2005. Travel times are increasing during the afternoon rush hour. The north-south corridors in Springfield are continually congested. In addition, we have not been able to identify a funding source to expand Interstate 44, where over 27 percent of the traffic is from large trucks.

Consistent with national trends, **transit ridership has declined** over the past 12 months largely due to external factors that make driving more affordable, such as low fuel prices and unemployment. Additionally, transit routes were redesigned to improve efficiency and available destinations, resulting in some trips requiring fewer transfers. For residents who continue to rely on transit, lack of density continues to be a challenge for providing higher-frequency transit service at an affordable level. These transit corridors need density of 15 units/acre and clustering of residential, employment, and social-service destinations. Springfield lacks centrally located services and has density of less than 4 units/acre. These challenges, combined with limited funding, hinder the community’s ability for transit expansion.

After many years of decline, **the number of crashes locally is on the rise**, mirroring a national trend. In 2016, crashes in Springfield were up over 6 percent. It is believed that distracted driving and a growing number of vehicles on the road are contributing to this increase. The Missouri legislature has not addressed the need for state legislation prohibiting mobile-phone use while driving.

Acknowledgements

The Community Focus Report is the collective work of dozens of individuals who contribute their time and effort to ensure the report accurately reflects the community's strengths and challenges. (Steering committee members in bold.)

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Lisa Cox
Justin Coyan
Stephanie Cramer
Jennifer Crouch
Nancee Dahms-Stinson
Chris Davis
Emily Denniston
Bridget Dierks
Mark Dixon
Grant Dorrell
Sabrina Drackert
Laurie Duncan
Laurie Edmondson
Jenny Fillmer Edwards
Nancy Eike
Jason Elmore
Jeremy Ellwood
Rick Emling
Cara Erwin
Dave Faucett
Sara Fields

Leslie Forrester
Dave Fraley
Judith Garson
Michelle Garand
Cindy Garner
Mandy Hagseth
Mike Haynes
Daniel Hedrick
Cindy Howell
Matt Hudson
Adam Humphrey
David Hutchison
Brett Johnston
Kirk Juranas
Casey Jo Kellner
Errin Kemper
Tracy Kimberlin
Mary Kromrey
Mike Kromrey
Allen Kunkel
Carrie Lamb
Lisa Langley
Denise Lock
Natasha Longpine
Barbara Lucks
Summer Massey
Anne-Mary McGrath
Denise McIntosh
Morey Mechlin
Debi Meeds
Rebecca Miller
Jon Mooney
Marty Moore
Nick Nelson
Anjanette Nowell
Kathleen O'Dell

Heather Parker
Avery Parrish
Dan Patterson
David Pennington
Danny Perches
Nicole Piper
Debbie Pitts
Joey Powell
Crystal Quade
Kasha Revie
Missy Riley
Mary Ann Rojas
Pam RuBert
Karen Burnell Ruff
Lexy Saner
Lou Schaeffer
John Sellers
Zim Schwartz
Cara Shaefer
Kimberly Shinn-Brown
Alberta Smith
Dan Smith
Mary Lilly Smith
Tim Smith
Tim Stack
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Kelly Turner
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