Springfield, Missouri – gateway to the Ozarks and home to some 420,000 people – currently is in a unique transition phase. With a growing population and a reputation for a suburban flavor, Springfield unavoidably needs a new strategy to manage growth and meet the challenge. What features will make Springfield a desirable location in the immediate and long-term future? Currently some of the biggest issues include sustaining an interest from native Springfield citizens. It seems many have concluded that Springfield is a wonderful place to grow up, but perhaps not the best to start a career. The development of a multidimensional "feel", all the while retaining the well-loved characteristics inherent and associated with Springfield – that is the strategy on which Springfield should capitalize. In order to address its shortcomings, Springfield necessarily needs to grow and develop. But, it cannot afford to sacrifice the things that make it special in the first place. With this in mind, the High School Committee has several suggestions.

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Housing:

New Orleans has the French Quarter, New York has the brownstones, San Francisco has the painted ladies, and San Antonio has its Hispanic feel; but what does Springfield have? Place yourself in any neighborhood around Springfield and more than likely the word that comes to mind is "suburbia". This is something that should not have a negative connotation – Springfield has attracted many people with its suburbs. However, suburbs by themselves are rather one-dimensional. It is difficult for just a suburb to symbolize a particular town. With this in mind, Springfield should aim to develop a unique theme to identify the town. This could involve both protecting its southwest Missouri, "Ozark" flavor (via caring for its zebra houses [rock and mortar houses]), while also expanding the lofts project downtown, and opening up new and ambitious neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with primarily cookie-cutter homes should not be the predominant investment because they are, while cheap, a shortsighted investment.

In addition to these goals, Springfield should invest in the improvement of current neighborhoods. When neighborhoods expand, several things should be avoided. Neighborhoods with one exit might be personal, but they also risk congestion if the area grows past a single entry size. This can be avoided via smart advanced planning, and prioritizing a certain degree of efficiency.

Another important facet is living space. If planned correctly, this concept would improve a community and its desirability. The thought is to provide essentials and desirable characteristics within a close proximity, be it jogging trails or smaller stores near by. The further a person has to travel for their activities, the less desirable the neighborhood is. The goal should be to maintain privacy, but not at the expense of efficiency.

Transportation:

Part of the necessary transition to a larger city is a well-utilized public transportation system in conjunction with efficient infrastructure. Springfield is special in this regard for two reasons. First, Springfield is growing rapidly, and will face the challenge of a developing urban center. Additionally, Springfield is positioned roughly in the center of the continental United States. This is a significant advantage in terms of a tourist draw, and one that necessitates a broader variety of travel methods to come to Springfield. However, the city is limited to such variety of access, with too few flight connections to the airport, leaving only the automobile as the major travel method. Springfield's transportation systems are certainly not dismal – the city is in the process of improving the highways and local infrastructure and we have built a new airport that has increased flying connections. However, more improvements could be made that would develop and expand transportation alternatives for Springfield.

Beginning with long distance travel, there are many opportunities for enhancing the experience and making it more accessible and affordable. One idea is to extend the Amtrak railway from Poplar Bluff, MO to Springfield, MO. This Amtrak system connects to places like Austin, TX, St. Louis, MO, and Kansas City, MO. All of these places are popular destinations for residents of Springfield, whether for business or for pleasure. The Amtrak system would provide an alternative to flying, thereby increasing competition. Also, trains have been found to be safer than travel on highways. Almost 95 percent of transportation fatalities are highway-related.[1] Extending the Amtrak would be initially expensive but ultimately a safer and more economic option for people traveling to and from Springfield. It would allow business people to reside in Springfield and make the normal three-hour drive to either destination much shorter and therefore more desirable.

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[1] "Transportation Statistics Annual Report", U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (Nov. 2005), p.7.

Another idea is to introduce more roundabouts into the Springfield roadways. An increase in roundabouts will inversely decrease the amount of traffic and allow efficient travel from destination to destination. Rush hour can be a hectic time to travel in Springfield, with roundabouts increasing the fluidity and efficiency of commuting, traffic could flow much more smoothly.

As stated before, the majority of travel within the city is still by car. Despite the existence of taxi and bus systems, these options are often times forgotten and underused. Though both are prominent and accessible in the city of Springfield, both could undergo changes. The bus system could be an excellent mode of transportation in this city. Improvements could be made to the bus routes, expanding them to take more people to work and school. An expansion of the system's equipment, personnel, and capabilities is also needed to achieve the goal of a well used system.

An additional suggestion would be the creation of a standard monthly fee for regular use of the bus system. This would increase the number of citizens who ride the bus on a daily basis. A simple flash of a card would allow them simple, cheap, and safe travel to their destination. Another possible modification to Springfield's public transportation would be the addition of a senior citizen discount. This would draw Springfield's elderly population into the bus system. Once these changes have been made, the bus and cab systems can better serve north, central, and downtown Springfield. Centralizing the bus and cab systems to focus on downtown Springfield would allow downtown to further grow and prosper from the increase in population density. These simple modifications to Springfield's public transportation system can exponentially increase its efficiency and allow a safe mode of transportation to all in need.

Sustainability:

In the past five years, Springfield has shifted their focus. Student task forces, university and high school green teams, garden projects, city partnerships, and Green Ozarks have been created to increase environmental awareness and boost sustainability efforts. These organizations hold a strong foundation of ideas for recycling, reusing, and reducing waste. However, the public in general is still lacking the necessary information to participate in these ideas. The public awareness starts with our businesses and schools. The schools have initiated green teams and recycling, but some business still lack this motivation. Bars, coffee lounges, printing shops, small and large businesses, and restaurants are capable of fulfilling the green standard but are lacking motivation. This catalyst could come through government incentives of tax returns, discounted or

free recycling services, or a reduced property tax. However, building materials, light bulbs, recycling, and energy sources must be adjusted soon to ensure a green city.

A green city must be a major priority, as this factor affects our city's future more than any other. First, the green effect must start with businesses who are fully capable of creating sustainable habits of energy sources, building materials, sources of product (such as locally grown foods), and recycling initiatives. Second, these standards must address public areas, such as parks and schools, along with public events, such as Art Walk or Arts Fest. Third, Springfield must encourage the average citizen to recycle, use sustainable or compostable materials, buy locally grown foods, reuse household items, and carpool or take alternative transportation. These types of motivation might be achieved through such ideas as tax refunds for recycling, or discounted electricity bills for using compact fluorescent bulbs. The city should establish, as soon as possible, this as the priority for the future of our environment.

Transportation in Springfield is generally by automobiles. The bus system and routes have been expanded to encourage public transportation but it must continue to expand. In addition, bike routes must be prioritized to favor bikers on Springfield roads. The transportation section of this paper focuses on certain changes that are possible for Springfield to make. But the way our citizens travel affect our city's future.

Recycling services are too limited for the average Springfield resident. It currently is a bit of a hassle to recycle and return reusable waste. Even though recycling bins have been multiplying on Springfield sidewalks and in businesses, they are not available to households without expensive fees. Each trash service is required to provide the option for a recycling service, but most citizens do not want to pay for these services. In addition, the public recycling areas around Springfield have restricted hours and rules for recycling. The city government could be a major change agent in encouraging recycling, by advocating for a city recycling service, increasing bins in businesses and public places, and requiring the separation of materials before trash collection. Private trash collection services that choose not to cooperate would be subject to moderate municipal taxes.

Education:

Springfield's main source of employment is its nationally recognized hospital system. Another large employer is a major university, plus other smaller universities and colleges. Surprisingly, though, there is not a single medical school that can offer our pre-med students in Springfield an opportunity to stay. This forces St. John's and Cox Health to recruit totally out of the city. On the one hand, our current system of strong hospitals brings desirability to Springfield. On the other, our current system means we lose good medical personnel. A medical program would fix this problem and significantly improve our educational community.

Springfield has very well developed high schools, and the average Springfield student scores higher on the ACT than their national counterparts. However, the primary and middle schools of Missouri have tended to accept lower requirements of their students. A strong education system requires equally impressive parts, and therefore Springfield should embrace comprehensive and flexible programs like the Primary Years Program (grades K-5), and the Middle Years Program (grades 6-10).

Diversity:

In order to improve diversity, Springfield needs to have some ability to draw people of different ethnicities and backgrounds. As Springfield works to retain talented natives of the city, it should also increase it propensity for attracting people from all around the country. If Springfield were to build a medical graduate school, it would increase not only the chances of keeping talent in of Springfield, but expanding the educational and ethnic diversity of the city as well. Graduate schools create a magnet for people from all over the world to come to the city and specialize in a particular field.

Recreation:

Recreation and leisure are pursued by people of all ages, both young and old. There are not nearly enough emphases placed on the importance of providing safe, quality recreation for all citizens. Successful establishments like Rendezvous and the Mud House, already exhibit a healthy, relaxing environment for younger people to congregate and share. However, our main concerns in this report pertain to the South Creek Greenway trails; they are currently a wonderful green resource for people of all ages to enjoy and on which to become healthier. It is important to note, though, that they could be enhanced via the 'completion' of the Greenway trails project.

To bring more people into their limits, larger cities are taking the initiative to complete and maintain running, biking, and walking trails. In New York City, for example, there are many

opportunities to exercise with other individuals who share similar interests. The beauty of Central Park affords runners and other park-goers a unique experience including beauty and leisure. Given that Central Park is unique and impossible to replicate, the idea of allowing people to 'escape the city' within the city should utilized here in connecting the full circuit of trails within Springfield. Currently there exists the South Creek Greenway, Galloway Creek Greenway, James River Greenway, and the Ward Branch Greenway trails. Our own South Creek trail is a fantastic trail to run, bike, and walk on, but it ends too abruptly at National Ave, only two miles away from the next largest trail in Springfield: The Galloway Creek Trail. It would take little to connect these trails, providing a city wide circuit.

While studying the use of the Greenway trails, it is also important to take into consideration the safety and comfort of user. In order to promote security throughout all of these trails, there are a few safety measures, which should be taken into account. Many adults are uncomfortable with sending their children to the trails after sunset. For this and other reasons, the trails are underused especially during the evening hours. One factor that could be beneficial would be to light the trails, with the intention of helping provide a safer environment during nighttime hours. This will help people of all ages feel more comfortable traveling on the trails after dark. Another source of security would be to install emergency phone poles alongside each trail. On these poles could also be installed security cameras. These surveillance cameras would be used to monitor any crimes, use of illegal substances, and non-criminal problems on the trail. These forms of security would be a deterrent to offenders.

Nature:

Children today are growing up in a world that is very different than the one their parents knew – activities are increasingly oriented towards an indoor environment and technology. This is a complex multifaceted development and one that should not be regarded as unfortunate. However, it is also important to kindle an appreciation of the environment, especially because of Springfield's natural endowment. For this reason, there is a noticeable overlap between goals for teenage attractions and an appreciation of the natural environment.

Springfield has done well thus far is its utilization of the natural environment in the immediate area. Nevertheless, there could be more effort in connecting nature to teenagers and young adults. The demographic most targeted, as evidenced by park equipment, is young

children. Teenagers around Springfield would be more apt to utilize the numerous parks if there were age-specific offerings designed to serve them.

One example of such a strategy could be updating the parks with sports equipment other than the average basketball courts and tennis courts. Adding equipment for sports like volleyball, bocce ball, tetherball, skateboarding and others would be a valuable asset for the recreational areas and could draw in different demographics.

Effort should also be put into making the parks as visually appealing as possible. Adding more plant life would also help make the parks more appealing to the eye. People enjoy going to Nathanael Green or the Japanese Garden specifically because of the outstanding plant life and colorful flowers. Retrofitting existing parks or creating new parks modeled after Springfield's successes is a strategy that should be followed. The grills and tables tend to be an eyesore due to a lack of maintenance and heavy usage, and therefore need to be replaced or refurbished. This would include basic maintenance of the walking and biking trails – making sure that they are clean and easily maneuverable would go a long way in ensuring expanded usage. Funding park improvements could include private donation endowments in honorarium or memorials as is evidenced in a small way by the memorial benches on our trails.

Finally, it is important to look to the excellent models Springfield and its surrounding areas already have. Recreation centers, which combine pools and parks, have been an attraction for all age groups. Areas like Republic, Nixa, and Branson all have centers that enjoy great use. The issue, however, is that these sites are not always accessible for Springfield teenagers. A few centrally located recreational centers could potentially be a positive and beneficial place for building community and meeting individual needs as well as a possible source of revenue.

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Springfield, Missouri is already a wonderful city with numerous strengths. However, Springfield is a growing town – inarguably a good thing. Growth demands change and requires accommodations. On the one hand, Springfield cannot afford to compromise the qualities that make the city special – its essence, its unique architecture, its position as a crossroads of America, its natural beauty, its reputation as a good place to raise families--these are the very aspects that make people want to come to Springfield. On the other hand, as Springfield grows new things need to be developed. The key areas, identified by the High School Committee, are: Housing, Transportation, Sustainability, Education, Diversity, Recreation, and the Natural

Environment. If done correctly, these changes in these fields can be made without sacrificing the historic strengths of Springfield. In fact, many of these established aspects overlap or complement what needs to be developed.

Remaining the third larges city in Missouri might not be a bad thing, but becoming without a doubt the best city in which to live, work, go to school, and have fun is our goal.

Methodology – High School Committee – Springfield 2030

The process of designing a strategy for improving Springfield held much thought and delegation – particularly at the beginning. The first step involved meeting future teammates from the high schools of Springfield. This was followed by a rapid trade of ideas and potential strategies – many of which survived to the very end of the process. This was the hook for the project. We were all interested in the future of Springfield, but perhaps had spent more time investigating the flaws rather than the methods of solvency for its issues. Thus, we isolated the subjects we thought to be most important – coinciding for the most part with many of the suggested topics. At this point, we decided it would be best to let a nature runs its course. We left the first meeting with the promise of unstructured individual research, hoping that the interests for each person would float to the top and therefore provide an instinctive specialized field for the research teams. This strategy had mixed results. Some teams latched on to a particular area, while other teams required a more specific prompt than "go, research". However, enough specialization was apparent by the third meeting that topic division was relatively obvious.

The next portion of the process was the most difficult to monitor. The amount of oversight and monitoring was minimal, as to promote the most creativity and self-sustained interest in the project. The most tangible suggestion was to create surveys for peers, which was followed by all teams. Surveys ranged from open-ended questioning to ranking systems, and a large quantity of data was collected. All surveys were based off of opportunity sampling, handed out in classrooms. This data didn't necessarily yield many valid or workable ideas. However, what the data universally provided was a perspective on what students think needs to be changed. Springfield's largest dilemma, as highlighted

by the paper, is a lack of ability to retain its natives. There is simply not a lot keeping people bound to the city. For most people, Springfield is a great place to raise kids – not stay to start a career. Granted, this is a sweeping generalization, but this is the sentiment echoed by many of the students. In addition, the committee learned first hand what Springfield's future believes to be the most pressing concerns and most enjoyable strengths of Springfield.

After the data collection and research process, writing began. This was probably the most intricate of all the steps, namely because five committees were writing a paper that was supposed to have one voice and flow. This issue was resolved with the appointing of a veritable "Editor-In-Chief" position, which would oversee the transitions of the paper, and handle the first round of edits.

The conclusive process involved peer review. The ultimate product was sewn together and cleaned up, finally being looked over by all team members and a slew of others. These were delivered to as many potential editors as possible, with all final edits being handled by the second "Editor-In-Chief". This process, heavy on student freedom, delivered the final product.