



THEMES

Theme: Sustainability

Why is “sustainability” a cross-chapter theme within this plan? Our region has been blessed with incredible beauty and natural resources. For generations, we have allowed the condition of our environment to slide. Will we be the generation to reverse that trend and leave the environment in better shape than we inherited it? If not us, then who? If not now, then when? In many cases, we only have one shot at preserving our incredible natural resources – let’s get it right the first time.

To address the theme of “sustainability,” we asked each of the citizen-based planning committees to consider how their committee’s recommendations support energy efficiency, recycling, low-impact construction, and other measures of sustainability.

The Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee, when asked to measure the inter-relationships between “sustainability” and the thirteen chapter topics, indicated the following (see Graphic 4):

- Very strong relationship with Growth Management & Land Use, Housing, and the Natural Environment chapters
- Medium-strong relationship with Economic Development, Education & Workforce Development, Recreation & Leisure, and Transportation
- Moderate relationship with Early Childhood Development, Global Perspectives & Diversity, Progressive Management, Public Health, and Public Safety
- Weak relationship with Arts/Culture/Tourism

The very strong inter-relationship with our growth management and land use is readily apparent – how we use our land and how we grow our community will have a tremendous impact on our collective level of sustainability. “Green” initiatives within the City of Springfield, Greene County, City Utilities, and surrounding municipalities in our region will be the key to setting the tone. Will our metropolitan community be known as a “green” place to live, work, and play?

The very strong relationship with our natural environment is just as readily apparent. By definition, the natural environment and our community’s interaction with it, has everything to do with sustainability. As noted by the Natural Environment Planning Committee, “the investments called for within this document have returns measured in dollars, but also in more intangible and lasting measures of community health. The end result promises to be one of a substantially increased sense of community.”

There is obviously also a strong relationship between sustainability and our community’s future economic development. Not only will “green” jobs be more prevalent in the future, but many existing businesses will likely transition to more “green” practices. Some will do this because they consider it the altruistic thing to do; others because it lowers their expenses. These trends, obviously, demand a workforce trained to possess these new types of skills. The educational and workforce strategies will foster stronger partnerships with the regional “green” initiatives with a goal of building new educational programs that lead to new career paths. Having a qualified workforce depends, in part, on early childhood development efforts that position our citizens, over time, to become more employable. A qualified, local workforce is one of the first things a business evaluates when considering cities in which to locate.

Preservation of our parks and other recreational areas is vital. Let’s face it . . . we take our high-quality parks for granted. However, they are one of the first things many visitors notice about our community. Tourism is a major economic driver within our community. A significant part of our tourism revolves around the incredible beauty of our natural environment. Maintaining that natural environment for future generations – managing our water sources and quality, preserving the beauty of our land, and keeping our air clean – will provide the Springfield area with a

competitive advantage relative to those communities that ignore or abandon their natural surroundings. Our citizens' health and quality of life depend on stewardship of these resources.

Our future transportation infrastructure will greatly impact our level of sustainability. Will we achieve population densities during the next 20 years sufficient to support mass transit systems? Or will we rely on more efficient vehicles to allow the majority of citizens to continue to use independent transportation (personal cars and trucks). Mass transit on any significant scale requires population densities much greater than our current densities.

Sustainability can increase the economic, social, and environmental health of the region. We must educate our citizens about the linkage between increased sustainability and these many benefits. Museums that teach visitors about sustainability, the Springfield Regional Arts Council's rain barrel art project, and the Partnership for Sustainability's lightbulb exchange are examples of initiatives that need to be continued and ramped up. The Partnership for Sustainability must continue to take a leadership role in educating the community – businesses, non-profits, government entities, and individual citizens – about the benefits of sustainability.

Performance Measures – Sustainability

- By 2013, the City of Springfield and Greene County will form a Green Building Task Force to solicit recommendations for additional “green building” practices and accommodations.
- By 2016, increase the number of City major recycling drop-off points from 3 to 5.
- By 2016, average residential electricity usage per household will decrease by 10% compared to 2012 levels.
- By 2016, the per capita amount of solid waste delivered to the City's landfill will decrease by 10% compared to 2012 levels.
- By 2016, the residential density along transit corridors will increase by 7% over 2012 density levels.
- By 2016, the number of miles of “complete streets” will increase by 20% over the 2012 level.
- By 2015, an adequate, permanent level of funding for stormwater and clean-water improvements in Springfield and Greene County will have been established.

Theme: Civic Engagement

Why is “civic engagement” a cross-chapter theme within this plan? Well, without civic engagement, we don’t really have a community. If we all just go about our own way without worrying about and assisting our fellow man, woman, or child, then we really don’t need this “community plan.” Civic engagement is key to creating community, developing trust, and moving forward. Without it, we can stop right now.

To address the theme of “civic engagement,” we asked each of the citizen-based planning committees to consider how their committee’s recommendations will increase the level and breadth of civic engagement within our community.

The Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee, when asked to measure the inter-relationships between “civic engagement” and the thirteen chapter topics, indicated the following (see Exhibit xx):

- Very strong relationship with Early Childhood Development and Economic Development chapters
- Medium-strong relationship with Arts/Culture/Tourism, Education & Workforce Development, Global Perspectives & Diversity, Natural Environment, Public Health, Public Safety, and Recreation & Leisure
- Moderate relationship with Growth Management & Land Use, Progressive Management, and Transportation
- Moderately Weak relationship with Housing

The “civic engagement” theme had more medium-strong and strong relationships with the thirteen chapter topics than any other theme. Does civic engagement have a greater impact on these topics? Is civic engagement impacted more by these topics? Possibly.

The very strong inter-relationship with early childhood development is not a surprise. Addressing an issue like early childhood development can only be successful as a community-wide effort. Government can’t do it. If we agree that early childhood development is a foundational key to the future of our community, then the community-at-large must take ownership of the issue and agree to accept the challenge en masse. Only civic engagement can trigger that type of community ownership. It must begin with a public awareness campaign so that our community learns the current situation and the incredible community payoff if we get this right. And one of the payoffs is that these children are more likely to become adults that will be civically engaged in their community.

To be successful with an early childhood development effort, the public education campaign must stress points that overcome the “don’t tell me how to raise my kids” attitude. The education campaign must stress not only the benefits to the child, the family and the community, but also that early childhood development does not equate to social engineering. Multiple research studies have proven what works; now we must determine how best to implement those proven strategies in our community. Civic engagement throughout this process is a key to success. This is a wheel worth turning, even if we can only turn it slowly at first.

The strong linkage with economic development is, similarly, not unexpected. Studies show that children that receive quality early childhood development programs do better in school, achieve higher graduation rates, are more likely to go to college, and, thus, are more likely to become a highly skilled workforce. And a skilled workforce is one of the first things companies seeking to relocate evaluate in the communities they are considering. Additionally, the Economic Development chapter recommends the City annex surrounding developments in order to broaden the pool of civic-minded individuals who are eligible to serve on City boards and committees. (Many of the City’s boards, committees, and commissions require that the individual live within the city limits.) The growth of the past decade or more has resulted in a number of large developments just beyond the city’s current limits. Despite the cost of providing services to these additional areas, it is recommended that these annexations proceed in order to increase the civic engagement of those citizens who work, shop, and recreate in Springfield, but may live only 50-feet from the city limits.

The medium-strong relationships between civic engagement and many of the other chapters indicates we must apply attention to many pressure points. Civic engagement is enhanced when our citizens have pride in their community. Civic pride cannot be created without celebrating a community's rich past, present and future through museums, public art, festivals and events. Visual, literary and performing art can tell important stories of a community and has the power to engage citizens like no other sector.

The 2008 and 2010 Social Capital surveys both indicated a high correlation between education levels and civic engagement. They also indicated a high correlation between income and civic engagement. Thus, the better educated our citizens are and the greater income potential our citizens have, the more likely they are to be civic-minded.

The "inclusiveness" and "welcoming" tenets of the global perspectives and diversity chapter are obviously aligned with getting more citizens engaged in their Public initiatives and events focused on inclusiveness that welcome all to participate are necessary to creating a climate that promotes civic engagement.

The inter-relationship between civic engagement and the natural environment, public health, and transportation appears to be education of the community about the importance of both of these issues on our community's future. Sometimes the benefits of natural environment or public health initiatives are not readily apparent. And that education is going to both require civic engagement (to break through the static of everyone's daily lives long enough to tell the story of why these things are important and you should care) and, if successful, will certainly build greater civic engagement in our community. While transportation project benefits may be more visible, we must increasingly attempt to engage the citizens via customer surveys, citizen surveys, open forums, and public report cards to help educate the community.

One of the most successful organizations in increasing civic engagement over the past few decades has been the Park Board. The Springfield-Greene County Park System currently engages over 235 groups and organizations throughout the system on a daily basis. Numerous volunteers are engaged in the Park Board programs, services, and support of park properties. The Park System's volunteers are fans – they are engaged and have ownership.

In the current political environment, government entities are not permitted to make a mistake. Any misstep results in the entity being heavily criticized and an increasingly uncivil populace. Government entities are considered guilty until proven innocent. As a result, many governmental entities tend to shy away from creative or experimental approaches to problem solving. The safest road is taken because of the fear of making a mistake resulting in public vilification. The City of Springfield is not going to shy away from creative or experimental strategies. Some may work; others will surely fail. The City's leaders will surely be publicly ridiculed for any failure. So be it. A new day demands new approaches. We won't throw out tried-and-true approaches just to change for change's sake. But we will look for ways to re-engineer what we do and how we do it. And we will also consider whether we need to keep doing it at all. This attitude will give government's critics much fodder; however, it's the right thing to do.

It's no secret that the development and implementation of this plan is intended to increase civic engagement. The development of the plan was citizen-led and citizens staffed all of the planning committees. Hundreds of citizen volunteer hours have been invested in the development of this plan. However, unlike many plans, this plan is also asking the community to "adopt" a chapter or a theme and remain engaged for the next five-year implementation phase. We are not aware of any other community that has attempted this quite in this manner, and it's an experiment that may succeed or may flop . . . we'll see. But we do know that civic engagement is necessary to build community trust, and community trust is necessary for us to move forward to collectively address our challenges. Will we work together to create our own future? Or will we just cross our fingers, close our eyes, and hope it all just changes for the better on its own?

Performance Measures - Civic Engagement

9/4/12 -- DRAFT

- By 2016, percentage of eligible voters who vote in municipal, county, state, and national elections will increase from an average of ___% to ___%.
- By 2015, United Way giving will increase by 20% over the 2011 campaign level.
- By 2015, the number of neighborhood watch committees will increase from ___ in 2012 to 12.
- By 2016, the _____ measure from the MSU Social Capital Survey will increase from _____ to _____.
- By 2016, the City's community survey will _____
- By 2016, the number of neighborhood associations will increase from 19 to 25.
- By 2016, the number of qualified applicants who apply to serve on City boards and commissions will increase to ___ from ___ in 2012.
- By 2016, the number of volunteers participating in the United Way's Day of Caring will increase from 1,700 in 2012 to 2,000.
- By 2016, the number of citizens who said they attended a public meeting will increase to ___% from the 2012 level of ___%.
- By 2016, the number of individuals "following" the City via social media will increase to ___ from the 2012 level of ___.

Theme: Regionalism

Because Greene County's future workforce is primarily developed regionally, a broad based effort will be required to adequately impact the county's economic growth. Media based awareness campaigns for early childhood issues can have an influence regionally. Centralized training and services can be provided at a lower cost than replicating them community by community. Economic problems of the rural areas tend to gravitate to the urban center where services are provided and become Springfield's problems. A unified effort to prevent poverty, mental and physical health issues and adequately trained workers through early childhood development is a winning combination for all.

As the largest city and economic hub, Springfield will benefit from the growth and economic expansion of the region and should lead the way with economic development initiatives and market the region in order to continue healthy, well balanced growth.

One of the most effective ways to provide a real future for people who need jobs is to provide education and training that is related to the economic future of the region for the jobs in growth industries. The Ozark Regional Economic Partnership engages key Ozark leaders from many sectors including education and workforce development in the development of regional economic strategies supported by the region. The committee's recommendations will serve to align the workforce development goals and strategies to ensure that they are coordinated with the work of the region's education and training institutions. This will assist the Ozark region's students and workers to develop the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the region's labor market.

One of the major goals for the Growth Management and Land Use committee was to increase collaboration between the City of Springfield, Greene County and the surrounding municipalities to provide better and more cost effective services to our community. All initiatives are inclusive of Greene County, surrounding cities and Springfield Sister Cities Association.

Regionalism and the environment go hand in hand. As evidenced in the objectives within this chapter, many of the initiatives have social, economic, and political ramifications beyond the geo-political boundaries of Greene County. When we look at air and water quality in particular, we have to consider where the impact is coming from, and where our community's impact is going; it's certainly not limited to just us and regional cooperation is essential. Efforts regarding these initiatives have very little effect without regional coordination.

Many of the objectives detailed in this chapter will establish Springfield/ Greene County as a leader in the region and prompt other municipalities to follow suit. While we can improve some of our local environment with programs and initiatives, it's only when communities come together as regions, and regions come together as states and a nation that we can effect true and lasting environmental change.

The only effective way to improve the community's health and sustain strong public health functions is to work globally and understand there are minimal limitations, if any, to geographic boundaries in improving population health. Essentially everything the committee is recommending has at minimum a regional focus in that all responsible parties serve the greater region and beyond and that outcomes will be measurably evident throughout the region. The committee's recommendations will serve to align public health goals to ensure a regional effort is coordinated, measurable, and effective.

Regionalism is considered throughout this plan – in the Vision Statement, the Goals, and the Objectives. This City is consistently asked to work with the region's jurisdictions and organizations. This plan recognizes that transportation is not an activity unto itself. The decisions made for Springfield impact the surrounding region, while the transportation system in Springfield is also impacted by the activities and decisions of the surrounding region.

Performance Measures – Regionalism

9/4/12 – DRAFT

- By 2016, a Regional Transit Authority will be formed.
- By 2016, the Springfield Regional Economic Partnership will _____.
- By 2015, State funding for public health will increase by 25% over 2012 funding levels.
- By 2014, early childhood development will be listed as a legislative priority for the City of Springfield, Greene County, Springfield Economic Partnership, and all municipalities within the region.
- By 2016, the region’s air quality will improve by 3% compared to the 2012 level.
- By 2016, the region’s water quality will improve by 5% compared to the 2012 level.
- By 2016, a regional workforce development initiative will help improve the level of workforce readiness to ___ from the 2012 level of ___.
- By 2017, average regional earnings will improve by 7% over the 2012 level.
- By 2016, the Parks property acreage and linear miles of trails will have increased to ___ compared to the 2012 level of ___.

Theme: Minimizing Poverty

As pointed out in the Market Street Competitive Assessment report, Springfield has developed “a culture of poverty.” The strategy being suggested here is for our entire community to attack poverty from multiple directions, represented by the various chapter topics that have a relationship with minimizing poverty.

To address the theme of “minimizing poverty,” we asked each of the citizen-based planning committees to consider how their committee’s recommendations can help minimize the level of poverty and the effects of poverty in our community.

The Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee, when asked to measure the inter-relationships between “minimizing poverty” and the thirteen chapter topics, indicated the following (see Exhibit xx):

- Very strong relationship with Early Childhood Development, Economic Development, Education & Workforce Development, and Public Health chapters
- Medium-strong relationship with Growth Management & Land Use and Housing
- Moderate relationship with Global Perspectives & Diversity, Public Safety, and Transportation
- Moderately Weak relationship with Progressive City Management, Natural Environment, and Recreation & Leisure

The very strong inter-relationships with economic development and education & workforce development is not a surprise. It’s obvious that the better-paying jobs associated with a vibrant local economy can equal more affluence and open the door for more and better education. Accessibility to education and training opportunities is often a barrier for many in poverty. New public-private partnerships will be needed to provide more education/training opportunities for the poor in our community.

Likewise, the very strong relationship with early childhood development is not surprising. Research shows that children who grow up in poverty are more likely to be less successful in school, less productive as adults in the labor market, have lifelong health problems, and commit crimes and engage in other form of problematic behavior. The greatest indicator of whether an adult is homeless is whether they were homeless as a child. Thus, the cycle must be broken. Providing health, education and financial supports to children in their earliest years can break the cycle of poverty and produce a return on investment of 7 to 12 dollars for every dollar invested. While the biggest impact is usually derived through legislative or policy changes, community support for proven programs and services must help fill the gaps. Much of the poverty in Greene County consists of the “working poor” – the parent or parents work, but don’t make enough money to adequately support the family’s needs.

With healthcare costs continuing to rise and consume a greater portion of everyone’s income, public health will become increasingly important as a method of minimizing poverty in our community. Research has empirically proven that the underserved not only struggle with access to health care, but have far poorer health care outcomes. Research has also suggested that low-socioeconomic status individuals tend to live close to other low-socioeconomic individuals, developing neighborhood pockets that have higher rates of infectious and chronic diseases and overall poorer health outcomes. It will become even more critical in the future to provide access to public health and health care services, as well as ongoing health education, which will not only sustain a healthy population, but level the population’s health, reducing vulnerable sub-populations in outlying neighborhoods.

The medium-strong relationships between minimizing poverty and growth management & land use and housing indicates we must apply leverage from these two perspectives, as well, if we are to attack poverty from multiple directions. Poverty-stricken areas will need to be revitalized, which could also provide increased density of housing needed to provide more cost-effective public services, easier access to transportation, and greater access to jobs. The City will use its Economic Development Policy to incentivize the redevelopment of areas designated as “blighted.”

Even the chapter topics that have a moderate or weaker inter-relationship with minimizing poverty in our community have a significant role to play if we are going to address this problem from all directions. Here are a few of those roles:

- It will be important to provide access to job opportunities and awareness of available services to all members of our community.
- Access to jobs, job opportunities, education, and services depends upon a multi-modal transportation strategy that moves our community toward decreasing household transportation costs.
- Arts education is significantly related to higher standardized test scores, higher attendance and graduation rates, and lower disciplinary rates for serious student infractions. Arts, culture and tourism industries create jobs as well as increase civic pride. Creative and cultural education, as well as artists or public art, can transform low-income neighborhoods and are powerful tools in rebuilding impoverished communities.
- Programs, such as PACE, that can help create many area jobs and lower utility bills. Local food production can both provide jobs and help feed the hungry in our community more cost effectively.
- Quality parks and open spaces can help poverty-stricken areas by promoting safe gathering places, community events, and community education.

Performance Measures – Minimizing Poverty

9/4/12 – DRAFT

- By 2016, the poverty rate for citizens of Springfield will be reduced by 5% compared to the 2012 level.
- By 2016, childhood poverty rates within Springfield will be reduced by 5% compared to the 2012 level.
- By 2014, early childhood development will become a community-supported initiative by appearing on the City's annual legislative priorities.
- By 2016, the number of new jobs within Greene County will be 2,000 greater than the 2012 total.
- By 2016, access to healthcare will be improved for those without healthcare plans in 2012.
- By 2013, an Affordable Housing Office will be created and staffed.
- By 2015, high school graduation rates within the region will increase by 5% compared to 2012 levels.
- By 2016, the number of reports of child abuse and/or neglect in Greene County will be reduced by 25% compared to the 2012 level.