

June 06, 2013

News Release

For Immediate Release

State of the City stronger than last year, Mayor says

More than 300 attendees gathered to hear Mayor Bob Stephens share his views this morning about the state of Springfield during the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce's Good Morning Springfield! at the Police/Fire Training Center on West Battlefield.

Mayor Stephens said that the state of the City is stronger than it was last year.

“Last year, I delivered this State of the City address and indicated that, in spite of several years of recession, the condition of Springfield, Missouri was strong. It is truly a high point for me to stand here as your mayor and tell you that today the State of the City is even better,” he said.

The Mayor said that he does not believe that problems exist that we can't solve together.

“One of the things that makes Springfield great is its ability to collaborate on projects—whether our partner be the county, CU, the state, or the federal government,” Mayor Stephens said. He referenced the City partnering with CU regularly to replace infrastructure at the same time that the City is repaving or enhancing streets capes.

“New water mains and new gas lines all enhance not only the commercial aspects of downtown, but also does a far better job of protecting our environment from unwanted leaks and storm water runoff,” he said.

Springfield takes a leadership role on the environmental front, he said, discussing how he and other City representatives met with the Environmental Protection Agency and Missouri Department of Natural Resources to pitch alternate idea for an integrated stormwater plan that could be used as a model across the U.S. City staff also traveled to Washington, D.C., this year to meet with senators and representatives to search for a grant to help finish a project at the landfill.

In May, the City hosted a public meeting at the Springfield Botanical Center to discuss using waste heat generated by the landfill to power a community greenhouse project.

“Just think: the heat that is being dissipated into the atmosphere now can be captured and used to grow local food year-round ... the opportunities for public/private partnerships in this field are tremendous,” he said.

Completed projects Mayor Stephens called attention to are the compressed natural gas fueling station located at the Public Works center on West Chestnut Expressway and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study regarding the City's plans to “daylight” Jordan Creek in center city.

“By opening up Jordan Creek, we will also be able to reduce the size of the flood plain in our downtown area. This will make several buildings more desirable commercially and also serve to reduce flood insurance premiums for some of our downtown businesses,” he said.

On the financial front, Mayor Stephens discussed the renewal of the 1/4-cent Capital Improvement Tax by Springfield voters, City Council’s approval of the 2014 City budget and an increase in reserve funds.

“... in the past three years of our Capital Improvement Tax, over 50 miles of new sidewalks were laid, more than 100 miles of sidewalks were repaired, 25 miles of bike lanes were created, and over 2,000 new trees were planted to enhance our urban canopy,” he said.

He also referenced the fact that Springfield/Greene County’s unemployment rate is well below the national average, thanks to City Council and the Chamber for working to bring better and more stable jobs to the region.

Looking ahead, Mayor Stephens said the following issues will soon land in City Council’s lap: the fall-out from the referendum petition regarding our zoning ordinances; the lessening of penalties for misdemeanor possession of marijuana; any recommendations from the Sexual Orientation/Gender ID Task Force; development of the integrated stormwater plan; recommendations from the Animal Issues Task Force; and the renewal of the Police-Fire Pension Tax.

“These are not easy issues. These are not easy times. However, one of the great things about Springfield is that you have had a Council that is willing to deal with the tough issues,” he said. “We on Council will get these issues dealt with and we will do it while keeping in mind the best interests of the citizens of Springfield.”

- View the [full video of Mayor Stephens’ speech](#).
- Download a [transcript of Mayor Stephens’ speech](#) (pdf).
- View a [photo gallery from the event](#) on the City’s homepage.

For more information, contact: Cora Scott, Director of Public Information & Civic Engagement, 417-864-1009 (office) | 417-380-3352 (cell), cscott@springfieldmo.gov