

State of the City 2015: Springfield MO

Thank you, Matt. I'm happy to be here at Good Morning, Springfield to present this year's "State of the City." And thanks to the folks at the e-Plex for a great venue.

Earlier this year, I met with Roy Norton, the Consulate General from Canada, who was in town to discuss enhanced economic trade between southwest Missouri and Canada. During the conversation, Mr. Norton mentioned that Mayors in Canada—when they were in a Council meeting—were referred to as "Your Worship." Matt Morrow then proved again why the Chamber Board made the right decision to hire him when he gave me two bits of advice: 1) wait until after the election before you tell this story, and 2) don't take this story home to Cindy!

A couple of months ago, I was speaking to the Downtown Rotary club and during the Q&A session—what they happily call the "Stump the Mayor"—a member asked what was the biggest surprise that I had encountered since I became Mayor. Cindy fully expected me to say that it was the weekend time commitment. But my biggest surprise has been

the number of people in our community who are working in some way to make Springfield better.

It might be a young husband and wife who are leading a Boy Scout troop and brought that troop to a City Council meeting; it might be the lady who is the president of one of the west side neighborhood associations—a neighborhood association that hosts a weekly food bank for their neighbors who don't have enough food rather than planning parties and picnics; it might be the leader of a Neighborhood Watch group who called me and asked me to come out to see a problem sidewalk where the elementary school kids had to step into the street to get around an obstacle—it had nothing to do with nighttime security, but they were concerned about the safety of their neighborhood kids; it might be the hundreds of donors who contributed to the First Annual Give Ozarks day a couple of months ago through the Community Foundation; it might be that group of master gardeners who take care of flowers and other decorative plants in parks throughout the City; it might also be our Chief of Police and our own 911 Director who devote so much of their very rare spare time to Special Olympics. These are only

a few of the pleasant surprises I encounter throughout each year as Mayor.

Annually, when it's time to present the State of the City address, we struggle with what to discuss and what to leave out. This year is no exception. I could take the entire time this morning to talk about one week in the life of our City, rather than the past year. Yes, as a community, Springfield is **that** active. There IS that much going on. And this has been a typical year—full of successes and complete with challenges.

In late May, we completed nine “Community Listen” events in neighborhoods in Springfield’s northwest quadrant. I want to give a huge shout out to Zone 1 Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson for co-hosting and leading these events, along with the City Manager and the director of Public Information and Civic Engagement. A number of my Council colleagues and City Department heads attended these sessions and are working to develop solutions.

After examining all the responses from these meetings, the top

three issues compiled by neighbors included a) chronic nuisance properties, b) sidewalk and other roadway issues and c) crime concerns. One unexpected surprise that was revealed is that, regardless of area or socio-economic level, people like their neighborhoods and they are protective of those neighborhoods. There is certainly more to come on this topic as plans are made to solve some of the issues we learned about.

In the area of economic development, public-private partnerships and private development have really accelerated this year. The renovation and next month's scheduled re-opening of Heer's will mark a signature moment for our community; in the minds of many long-time residents, having the lights on in Heer's will signify that downtown Springfield is once again a complete and viable economic driver.

In fact, many of Springfield's large downtown buildings are currently being or have recently been renovated: the McDaniel Building has opened as The U, the Woodruff Building will open as Sky 11 around the middle of next month, the old Frisco Building became the Landmark

Building and now has reclaimed its name as The Frisco, and the former Vandivort Center will soon open as the Hotel Vandivort within the next couple of weeks. The Sterling Hotel is aiming for a mid-August opening on Park Central East following an extensive rehabbing. Springfield's downtown continues to experience an almost continuous renovation.

Mary Lilly Smith and her great staff in Planning and Development are doing a tremendous job of keeping pace with development as Springfield charges out of the recession.

And the vibe continues. All throughout our community, there is development going on. There will soon be a new Neighborhood Market at the corner of Campbell and Grand. This is particularly important since the Price Cutter on Campbell near Sunshine has closed and the Bistro Market downtown is reorganizing itself to be an outlet for beer, wine and spirits.

Two new Menard's—one on the east side and one on the west—are being planned—one of them at the site of the former Hickory Hills school and the purchase of that property significantly helped the Springfield Public Schools financially.

The area just south of Friendly Ford will be rebuilt as an upscale retail area, thus eliminating the blight and emptiness of the old Clarion Hotel, which—for those of you who remember—was the original Sheraton Hotel and Wicker Works.

And finally, a new 102-house subdivision has been re-zoned by Council, thus marking the first large-scale, single-family residential development in the city limits since before the recession. All in all, it's great economic development news for Springfield.

So, a big thank you to Chris Straw and his staff with Building Development Services. With all the development going on right now, they are certainly working at warp speed.

Springfield continues to solidify its place as THE medical hub in southwest Missouri and, in fact, in all of southern Missouri and the four-state region.

The School of Pharmacy at the University of Missouri at Kansas City opened a Springfield campus in the fall of 2014, enrolling thirty students in its inaugural class.

The governor has committed \$10 million of state funds for expansion of the University of Missouri Medical School in Springfield. The school will partner with Cox Hospital and Mercy Hospital to provide a clinical campus for third- and fourth-year students, thus hopefully providing southwest Missouri with a physician stream to help staff our clinics.

And the first class of students for the Occupational Therapy program will arrive next month on Missouri State's campus. This program will reside in a new building on Missouri State's campus, now under construction just east of the intersection of Kimbrough and Cherry.

And, finally, out at Cox South, the Dee Ann White Women's and Children's Hospital along with the Jared Neuroscience Center held its ribbon cutting just a couple of weeks ago. These are tremendous additions to our array of local medical services.

Missouri State, as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of its name change, continues to grow and redefine itself as **the** premier university

in the state. (Yeah, I know. I'll probably hear from the MU folks in the room with that statement!) Nevertheless, with its state-wide mission of Public Affairs, MSU is becoming more widely known and respected across the country and around the world.

The recent appropriations from state capital improvement bonds mean that a couple of landmarks (Ellis Hall and Hill Hall) on the campus will have a chance to be rehabbed and modernized.

And we can't mention MSU without giving a thumbs up to the MSU baseball Bears. The Bears came within one out in one game of going to the College World series this year and we want to congratulate them on a great season.

Just a few blocks north, OTC continues to be a story of growth, quality, and finally recognition.

In 2014, OTC was ranked among the nation's best by Community College Week. Nationwide, OTC ranked sixth in the number of degrees awarded in communication technologies and education and, overall, OTC ranked 36th in the nation for awarding associate degrees.

During the 2015 commencement just completed, 3,153 degrees and certificates were awarded.

Now let's turn our attention skyward. The Springfield Airport experienced another strong year in 2014. Total passenger count increased 12% over 2013—even in the face of other regional airports offering some lower fares from time to time. I know the airport staff gets tired of explaining why and even I get tired of explaining that the airlines set the fares and the Springfield airport has nothing to do with them. All they can do is offer a great facility and great service and they do that every day of the year. In fact, they just announced last week two new daily flights to Charlotte, NC.

However, to continue preparing for the future, the General Aviation facility is being re-designed to make it “development ready” for eight new aircraft hangers.

General Aviation is the term used for business aircraft, personal aircraft, and private aircraft and we are seeing more and more of these types of aircraft landing in Springfield. The last time I was at the airport,

a large jet with a big blue star on its tail landed. This was the plane belonging to Jerry Jones' company, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys, but also owner of a shopping center here in Springfield.

General Aviation is where the future growth of our airport will be and Brian Weiler and his staff certainly have done a masterful job of positioning for that future.

Now to the challenges.

About 18 months ago, I proposed the creation of a Joint City-County Planning Task Force to identify and research the most pressing issues facing our citizens in Greene County. And please understand—Greene County encompasses the City. Springfield residents are also residents of Greene County. That fact sometimes gets lost in the noise of office-holders and the media.

This task force issued a report identifying the big three areas of concern. They are a) federal/state unfunded mandates, b) Law Enforcement and the Justice system, and c) City/County financial stability. I will address the first two at this time and Presiding

Commissioner Bob Cirtin will present the State of the County next month.

It was just announced last month that the Department of Natural Resources has accepted and approved Springfield's Overflow Control Plan. This is a part of the overall Integrated Plan for the Environment that Springfield has been working on for over two years and a plan that takes the concept of Community Affordability into consideration. I first spoke about this Integrated Plan in the 2013 State of the City address and we have made tremendous advances, both technically and politically, in these past two years. And there is more progress to make and we will continue our efforts.

The second item emerging from the Joint City-County Task Force was that of the Law Enforcement and Justice System. On April 3, Springfield became the largest city in Missouri to not have access to a jail facility to house its municipal prisoners. These may be people arrested by our police officers on a municipal charge or who are arrested on a warrant issued by a judge or they may be a prisoner who has been

tried and sentenced to, say, 10 days in jail by one of our municipal judges. The county jail is also Springfield's municipal jail.

And we are not alone. The surrounding municipalities of Ash Grove, Willard, Republic, Battlefield, Rogersville, Strafford, Fair Grove, and Walnut Grove also found themselves without jail facilities with only two days notice.

As many of you know, I came out of a career in Human Resources, primarily in the manufacturing sector. Today, we've put together an animation to show you the concept of Constraint Management—an idea where you identify the constraints or the "pinch points" in your system and work to fix them.

In our animation, you can see that there are several parts to the overall Law Enforcement and Justice flow. It starts off with the 911 operation, followed by contact with the Springfield Police Department. If the situation warrants, an accused person is then detained, ticketed, or taken to booking and then to the jail to be held until they post bond or go to trial.

Following that step, the accused enters the justice part of the system. The Prosecuting Attorney's office works up the case to file charges and prepares for trial. Then, if there is no defense attorney, one is provided through the Public Defender's office. When both the prosecutor and defense attorney are ready, the accused goes to court where a judge presides. Once a verdict is ascertained, the accused is either released if found innocent or is sentenced if found guilty.

Now let's take a look at what entities fund each aspect of this flow. First of all, 911 is funded by a county-wide tax since it serves all parts of Greene County. The Springfield Police Department is funded by the City's general fund as well as a percentage of the Law Enforcement Sales Tax, which is split with the County in accordance with our 1997 agreement. At that time, the County had come to the City with the proposal to house our municipal prisoners at no cost since between 80% and 85% of the LEST-I tax would be generated within the city limits of Springfield.

Now is where it gets complicated. Jail operations are funded by the County. The Greene County Prosecutor's Office is obviously funded by

the County; the Public Defender's office is staffed by the State, but the County is responsible for providing office facilities and the Courtrooms are likewise provided by the County. However, the judges who make up the 31st Circuit are selected and paid by the State of Missouri as are the remaining parts of the system.

We've often said that the jail overcrowding is merely a symptom of the problem, so NOW let's look at what is really happening.

A call goes into 911. The information is taken and assigned to an officer. A bad guy is detained or arrested. The bad guy is transported to the jail facility where he is booked in. If it's a municipal charge only, the bad guy is booked and released or, more likely, cited and released.

Since the letter arrived from Sheriff Arnott refusing to accept any municipal prisoners, the bad guy is most often simply given a citation and told to appear in court by the police or else is booked on a state charge, which further clogs the system. If officers encounter a subject with municipal warrants, the bad guy is arrested, but released on his own recognizance by the office and he is provided with a court date. So individuals who are arrested four or five times are allowed to walk away.

The problem is actually caused by the next four spots. The County Prosecutor's office currently has over 4200 cases to work up and more than 14,000 warrants awaiting execution. It can't keep up with the workload as currently funded and staffed by the County. The state likewise has not appropriately funded the Public Defender program to handle the workload.

The next bottleneck occurs in the 31st Circuit. Even though the state provided funding for another judge in 2014, that funding was withheld by the governor. We do have one more judge coming this year, but estimates are that the 31st Circuit could actually use five more judges to keep up with the workload. And finally, the County is out of room in the Justice Center. I'm told there simply isn't room to shoehorn another Courtroom into the Center.

So, with these constraints, it's doesn't matter how well the following segments are functioning. The flow in the last part of the system is only as fast as the tightest constraint. We have four constraints in a row. All of those constraints are funded by either the county or the state, so the City of Springfield really has no control over them. It's possible that the

jail is large enough—we don't know because those four constraints have not been rectified. It could be that we're trying to fix the wrong problem. There is, as they say, more to come.

So, what does the future hold? I think it holds more development activities around and throughout the city. The former Regal-Beloit factory has an "Under Contract" sign out front. The new Menard's will kick off a development boom on the both sides of the city. OTC and MSU will continue to grow in numbers, in reputation, and in variety of educational offerings.

And I think it's time to begin a new conversation about annexing sections of residential real estate. There are a lot of folks who live on the perimeter of the city who are "of Springfield" but not "in Springfield." They work in Springfield, they shop in Springfield, but have no voice in Springfield. Perhaps it's time to talk about including them.

As I do every year, I thank my wife Cindy for her patience. I could not do this without her rock-solid support all year long.

This concludes the State of the City address for 2015. The future for Springfield and those of us who live and work in Springfield continues to be bright. As I've said, the City is growing, changing, developing, re-developing, renovating, and moving from a large small town to a small city. Our city is strong and getting stronger. We are the third largest city in the state. It's time we took our rightful place in influencing state decisions. Our work will continue.

And, as I've said annually, "May Springfield live long and prosper."