

**AJ Exner**

**1) What is your short and long-term vision for the City of Springfield?**

*For me, when I think of short-term and long-term vision for the City of Springfield, I think of two words that will help build this city into what it is capable of becoming, innovation and redemption. To continue growing and striving to where we want to be as a city, it is essential that we continue to push innovation in our city and look to create and foster redemption. When I think of innovation, I see opportunities across Springfield to be creative and innovative beyond just entrepreneurship. We must be innovative in how we approach non-profits in our city; we must be innovative in how we work with educational systems and programs in our city; and we must be innovative in how we deal with faith-based communities and neighborhood associations across our city. We must continue to find ways to create more jobs for our people and build on an already lowering unemployment rate. The continual redemption and development of areas such as Commercial, Downtown, and Galloway must reflect the heart of its leaders, to see the universal flourishing of Springfield and its residents.*

**2) What are the City's strengths and how will you build upon them?**

*When I look at Springfield and its strengths, I see a city loaded with potential. I see a city that has a plethora of young, passionate, and driven talent that, in many cases, has yet to see all that Springfield has to offer. I would love, in my time on City Council, to harness this group of talented individuals across the many amazing universities Springfield has to offer. I also see a strong pro-business spirit as well as an overall desire to see Springfield-based companies succeed. I believe there is nothing that a Springfieldian loves to see more than a Springfield-based company, restaurant, or otherwise succeed in what they are doing. Whether it is one of the many amazing eating establishments like City Butcher or The Wheelhouse, shopping at Five Pound Apparel, Breweries such as Mother's Brewing Company, Springfield Brewing Company, applauding the work of Jeff at the Mystery Hour, wandering around Bass Pro, exploring Wonders of Wildlife or the zoo. There are few things better than seeing Springfield people get behind Springfield businesses, as they are prone to do.*

**3) Among the challenges faced by the City is the need for adequate revenue to deal with issues such as public infrastructure,**

**sidewalks, nuisance properties, etc. What are your specific suggestions and approaches regarding those and other challenges?**

*I think this goes back to those two words, innovation and redemption. As I look at these issues, I see opportunities for groups to come alongside the community and do things that are both innovative and bring redemption. I think this is really important when it comes to nuisance properties and overall infrastructure. Some great examples are what is currently being done with the Idea Commons, continual work to Downtown and Commercial street, and even the Family Justice Center. Often times when it comes to innovation, it is easy to get caught up in the fear of failure, but we must continue to strive forward as a community; to look out for one another and to work together as fellow residents to find solutions for these problems. Currently at Hill City Church, we are working toward creating a "For the City Center" by purchasing a building such as the Bolivar Insulation property on Chestnut and Trafficway. The plan being to utilize it as office space for nonprofits, creating space for small/medium meeting rooms, and having an area big enough for large gatherings such as fundraisers. We must continue to be innovative, not just in the creation of new jobs and businesses (which is essential to our growth as a city), but innovation for non-profits, government, and infrastructure to find outside-the-box solutions to work towards attaining more funds, and to better steward the funds we do have, such as the work Greene County is doing with open-book management and the Great Game of Business.*

**4) What would you like to see accomplished by the time you leave Council?**

*I think more than anything else, I want to show Young Professionals all across the region that public office is not just for people who have it all "figured out" and are older and more established. There is a place for young people in the public sector who want to see the betterment and flourishing of their community, a place to step in and play a role in the change. We cannot afford to sit idly by and not play a role in what is going on in the city. If I can communicate anything in my potential 6 months or beyond, it is that we as young professionals, with the right mindset and passion for people, can be agents for change in a positive way. We can continue to make Springfield a great place to live and work.*