

STATE OF THE CITY 2019

Intro:

Good Morning! I am very proud to be here with you this beautiful June day. I am blessed to be the Mayor of this fine City of Springfield, and humbled and grateful to all of you who are attending and listening to this 2019 State-of-the-City address.

Greetings to all of you tuning in across the city on television, online and on social media!

Good morning! All of you – inside and outside of this room are caring people who took time out of your busy schedules to pause. To listen. And to learn about the state of your city. My door is always open and my heart is full of pride to be your Mayor. I am fortunate to be able to see the community from the position that I do – and I am happy to share with you today that there has never been a better time in Springfield than the here and now. **Right here.**

Right now.

We are honored to gather on June 6, an important date in our nation's history – World War II D-Day. Exactly 75 years ago today, by dawn, 18,000 parachutists were already on the ground; the land invasions having begun at 6:30 a.m. The British and Canadians overcame light opposition to capture Gold, Juno and Sword beaches; so did the Americans at Utah.

The task was much tougher at Omaha beach, however, where 2,000 troops were lost, and it was only through the tenacity and quick-wittedness of troops on the ground that the objective was achieved. By day's end, 155,000 Allied troops–Americans, British and Canadians–had successfully stormed Normandy's beaches. Among those brave men parachuting onto Omaha Beach that June morning was a 19-year-old Springfieldian - Ralph K. Manley.

Ralph jumped from a burning C-47, shortly before it crashed and killed 13 of his comrades. He sprayed fire into German pillboxes during D-Day, to avenge the death of his twin brother, Roland. The war forever shaped the man who is most known today for his public leaps of joy, as a City Councilman for 10 years – a man of never-ending optimism, who always looked for the good things and the good in people. Today, we pause to remember Ralph and know that it is up to each and every one of us to carry forth his legacy of service and hope.

Ralph's daughter Janell is here with us today. Please stand and be recognized at this time. In Ralph K. Manley's honor, I would recognize our current City Council members who are Veterans: (please stand when I call your name). Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson, Army; Councilman Richard Ollis, Navy; Councilman Abe McGull, Navy and myself, Army. Thank you for your service. At this time, I would like to ask that anyone in attendance – if you are currently serving, or have previously served, in the United States Armed Forces, please stand.

We are in the Crusader Dining Hall at Evangel University – it is a campus itself that is steeped in history. We were here last year and specifically asked to return because the team here at Evangel simply treated us like family. Please join me in thanking Evangel President, Carol Taylor, and her staff, for their hospitality and assistance in making this the event possible.

Evangel is among Springfield's more than one dozen local colleges and universities - our city is teeming with more than 50,000 college students as a result. Think about that for one moment. 50-plus THOUSAND students choose to pursue their higher education in Springfield – at Evangel. At Drury. At OTC. At Missouri State University. And at our other

fine higher education institutions. The result is energy, innovation and excitement. **Right here. Right now.**

With all of our public and private, big and small, four-year and technical instruction institutions, Springfield sets the gold standard for higher learning. While many do, we understand that not every person takes a path to a four-year degree. The best way to prepare our young people for a future they desire, is to provide them with options and opportunities.

Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. They are tomorrow's coders, production managers, engineers, doctors, artists, builders and welders. As Mayor, I get the privilege to witness this transformation in action. And I can tell you, it is absolutely inspirational. Just to the southwest of here, Ozarks Technical Community College is enrolling students in a state-of-the-art Center for Advanced Manufacturing. Meanwhile, Drury University is completing the largest master sites and facilities plan in its 146-year history. Missouri State University enrollment continues to exceed record highs, while continuing to drive downtown growth through impressive new projects, such as the new development in our IDEA Commons. There is nothing common, however, about these institutions or aspirations, and there is nothing common about Springfield.

I have been talking with my colleagues on City Council a lot lately about what makes Springfield special. Without a doubt, it is our people. Steadfast in their convictions, optimistic, tenacious, willingness to roll up their sleeves – our treasure is our talent.

I meet 10-year-olds just uncovering what career options are open to them and I meet 90-year-olds re-engaging in the community through volunteering. What's the common denominator? Springfield spirit.

We have a level of pride that allows us to soar above other cities, join hands, and bridge divides. We have a can-do Ozarkian spirit that seems to make the impossible, possible. We are not afraid to compromise. We believe in self-sufficiency, taking care of what we have now and what we are investing in, in the future.

We believe in education and training. We are already seeing progress as promised from your vote last year to renew and increase support for OTC and its continued mission to skill up our future workforce. And we believe that this education should start early, before our future leaders even enter kindergarten. I was proud to see our tiniest of citizens able to enroll in Campbell, Shady Dell and Shining Stars Early Childhood Education Centers and now that access is growing, thanks to state funding, as well as local passage of Proposition S that creates more facilities for them. **You** did this. And this investment was needed. Just a few weeks ago, the 2019 Mayor's Commission for Children Kindergarten Readiness Report revealed that one in four SPS kindergarteners still arrive not ready to learn. As we strive to become a skills-rich region so that we can attract high-paying jobs, it all starts with children arriving at kindergarten ready to learn.

You also strongly supported – by 77 percent – renewing our city's ¼-cent capital improvement and transportation sales tax – which will quite literally provide THE ROAD forward for continued future business growth and jobs. All of this is inter-related and inter-dependent.

City Council Priorities

We recently started a new City Council term and we are all eager to share our priority commitments with you. Will my colleagues on City Council please stand as I recognize you by name? Mayor Pro Tem and Zone 1 Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson; Zone 2 Councilman

and new member of City Council, Abe McGull; Zone 3 Councilman Mike Schilling; Zone 4 Councilman Matthew Simpson; General Seat A Councilwoman Jan Fisk; General Seat B Councilman Craig Hosmer; General Seat C Councilman Andy Lear and General Seat D Councilman Richard Ollis. Let's recognize these fine volunteers who dedicate their time and talent as your local City Council!

City Council recently held a retreat at the Lake Springfield Boat House and with help from City leadership staff, we mapped out and reaffirmed our major priorities for the next two years.

After collecting feedback from you, our neighbors, over the past two years, we strongly reaffirmed priority commitments to: **economic vitality, legislative engagement, fiscal sustainability and accountability, and public safety**. A fifth priority emerged during our discussion, however. And that is the priority of **quality of place**. I would like to start there.

QUALITY OF PLACE

So much of how we live is dependent upon *where* we live. Quality of place literally means the physical characteristics of a community, the way it is planned, designed, developed and maintained. The quality of life of the people living and working in our community, as well as those visiting it both now and, in the future, is affected by the quality of place. Our desire to invest in projects that improve the livability of Springfield will be at the forefront in the coming months. Under the leadership of our Planning Director Mary Lilly Smith, the comprehensive plan process will provide an opportunity for input and engagement as we

map out land use for the next few decades. The planning process gives us the opportunity to really dream about what we want our community to become, much like our predecessors did during the creation of Vision 20/20. As I have said before, *“if I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.”*

We are very fortunate today to have some of those giants in the room with us. Many people worked on Vision 20/20 and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Several City Council alumni are here with us today. Please join me in thanking them for their years of service.

Making sure that Springfield is a place where every individual, family and business can thrive, a place we can all be proud of, takes an entire community. Quality of place enhancements help Springfield continue to be a community where existing businesses have the growing, skilled workforce needed for them to create quality jobs and where businesses want to locate. It is where students want to attend school – and stay after they graduate – and where people want to live and want to visit.

It is very easy to be a proud Springfieldian. People from all around the country tell me that when they visit Springfield, they are inspired by our people and our places. There are very few things better than strolling through Phelps Grove Park on a summer day or watching a Springfield Little Theatre production with your family. We have a vibrant arts scene and the people, well, the people are so talented. There are plenty of innovators and dreamers in Springfield. **Right here. Right now.**

You never have to go far in Springfield to connect with others and enjoy our natural surroundings. My family really enjoys our Ozarks Greenway Trails. Whether you like to walk, run, or cycle, trails provide both beauty and function and as we’re learning from

other communities, they can be incredible gathering places where we can all enjoy being a part of a shared community. I had the opportunity recently to travel with three of my Council colleagues and other community members to Northwest Arkansas for a community study tour. We rode the Razorback Regional Greenways bike trail and learned about its important role in community development. Suffice it to say, we are now focusing on ways we can improve our trail connectivity within Springfield. We know that trails offer something for everyone regardless of age, abilities, or interests.

What a year in sports we have had!! MSU Lady Bears -a conference championship and a trip to the big dance – NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament; an appearance at the NCAA Division II women’s Elite 8 for the Drury Lady Panthers. A State Class 2 championship win by the Greenwood Bluejays and a State Class 3 championship runner-up in the Springfield Catholic Fightin’ Irish. I think our City motto should be “the granddaddy of all basketball”. It’s very exciting to have this level of play **right here, right now.**

Speaking of champions, the Springfield Lasers are the current World Team Tennis reigning champions! Springfield overpowered the top-seeded Philadelphia Freedoms, 19-18 in the championship final last August in Philadelphia. Lasers coach John-Laffnie de Jager dedicated the win to team founder Harry Cooper who passed away earlier last year. (quote on screen) Families like the Coopers make up the very fabric of Springfield. Their generosity makes life fun for all of us.

We cannot speak about sports without mentioning the boys of summer – our minor league baseball team – YOUR Springfield Cardinals! While the current Cardinals are a relatively new team, dating back to just 2005, not everyone knows that Springfield originally had

professional baseball teams as early as 1905. The 2005 re-emergence of today's Springfield Cardinals at their beautiful Hammons Field home, was worth the wait. Springfieldians do love their baseball. I am most relaxed when I am at Hammons Field, enjoying the intricacies I believe is most like life. As in baseball, life is going to throw us curve balls, and sometimes we are going to get beamed, whether we step up to the plate or not. But, we must all keep moving forward.

There is never any shortage of great things to do in Springfield, or great people to meet. Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium continues to be a jewel in our city crown. The busiest tourist destination in the state, WOW continues to live up to its name. Thank you, Mr. Morris.

One of my favorite things about being Springfield's Mayor is meeting Springfield's people. I had the pleasure of attending Miss Barker's 5th Grade Occupation Convention at Robberson Community School one day last April. Enthusiastic 10-year-olds greeted me and other community members as we entered the school on a red carpet. It was quite a deal. I remember Rowan Gaines because he approached me with such professionalism. Role playing local career options first hand is a great way for students to feel what it is like to serve in a particular profession. I met future teachers, hair stylists and naval officers that day.

(Rowan Gaines interrupts on screen)

Rowan: Mr. Mayor, excuse me, Mr. Mayor. Just a few follow-up questions for you this morning.

Mayor: Good morning, Rowan. How are you today. I am kind of in the middle of something here.

Rowan: I apologize. But I was asked by my colleagues at the Robberson Occupation Center to thank you, our City Council, our City staff, our Chamber of Commerce, our local businesses, for their support and belief in us.

Mayor: I think that is very nice, Rowan. Are you still planning to pursue a career in journalism?

Rowan: No, sir. I plan to become the Mayor someday.

Mayor: Well, I am so very pleased to hear that. Tell all your friends there at Robberson hello for us.

Rowan: You, bet, Mayor McClure. And can I ask one thing? Can I get paid when I become the Mayor?

Mayor: Let's give Rowan a big round of applause for his enthusiasm and mastery of technology! (Rowan waves)

Community schools, like Robberson, help stabilize and even enhance neighborhoods. Miss Michelle Barker, Laura Schulteis and Principal Kevin Huffman are here with us today – please stand and be recognized for the innovative things you are doing. ((Applause))

(Rowan also walks out and waves to the audience, before taking a seat at the table with his teacher.)

As we work together to plan Springfield's future, I want it to be a quality place that retains our "homegrown" talent like Rowan. If we focus on building that sense of place, that captures our aspirational vision and expresses our unique spirit, it will fuel our success in developing, retaining and attracting the talent we need to ensure Springfield's economic vitality – another one of our Council priorities.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

So much of our economic vitality hinges on being a dynamic place with a growing, skilled workforce where Springfield employers and those looking for the right place to expand and create quality jobs, see a strong talent pipeline and many opportunities for education and training.

The State of Our City is very strong. Local government is strong. And several economic indicators are showing an upward trend, signaling that our local economy is strong. Sales tax growth is steady and unemployment is very low. Despite low unemployment, however, Springfield continues to have a high poverty rate – an issue we continue to tackle together with all sectors of our community working as one. Across the community, organizations are working to address the barriers that some of our neighbors face in achieving prosperity. We are making remarkable progress, thanks to collective impact model efforts such as Prosper Springfield and Community Partnership of the Ozarks' O'Reilly Center for Hope and program like the Northwest Project. Springfield is fortunate to have a diverse economy and seemingly sustainable economic climate, yet we are seeing historic workforce shortages. We have people who need quality jobs and employers who cannot fill those jobs. It is a classic skills gap.

We are so grateful for the work of Governor Parson and the Missouri Director of Economic Development, Rob Dixon, a former Springfieldian, to align the focus of our businesses, the education system, and government through efforts such as Fast Track, which removes the barrier of cost for those seeking training for in-demand skills for higher-paying jobs. This kind of educational attainment is key to creating a path for upward mobility for all Missourians. Thank you, Governor. Thank you, Rob.

Our Missouri Job Center, led by Workforce Development Director Mary Ann Rojas, continues to have phenomenal success addressing the skills gap by creating innovative custom programs for potential employees and employers, like Change 1000, Build My Future, Green for Greene, Aspire and Ozarks Promise.

Despite workforce shortages, Springfield continues to see growth in our local companies in a variety of sectors. Electronics manufacturer, Positronics, announced expansion plans at its corporate headquarters in Springfield, investing \$2.5 million and adding 90 full-time jobs. Local bike manufacturer Kuat Racks broke ground on a \$2.8 million facility at the opening of Partnership Industrial Center West to house its new corporate offices and warehouse. At the end of 2018, our economic development partnership had successfully worked projects, resulting in 415 new jobs, \$14.6 million in new payroll and \$18.5 million in new capital investment. We are anticipating more announcements this year from committed projects.

A critical piece to sustained population growth is what I alluded to earlier placemaking – creating a vibrant place to live with competitive assets, amenities that help use increase our working population growth to fill current and future jobs created in our region. We must have the place that attracts people – and the jobs will follow.

In order to recruit and retain the best and the brightest, we must also commit to ensuring Springfield is inclusive and welcoming. This can only be achieved in an environment that fosters mutual respect of **all** people. It is the right thing to do. When Irshad Manji (Ear-shad Man-gee), keynote speaker for Missouri State’s Collaborative Diversity Conference and founder of the Moral Courage project, spoke at the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

recently, she was encouraged by our approach. She said she would point to Springfield as an example when she speaks around the world.

We will have a unique opportunity this fall to celebrate the more than 7,500 diverse people from around the world who call Springfield home. Led by Life 360 Church pastor Sahee (SAW-HEE) Duran, and a diverse lead team, Springfield CultureFest is a citywide event, taking place Sept. 14 on Historic C-Street. We will celebrate the rich ethnic diversity and heritage represented in our community.

Thank you, also to Samuel Knox, President of Minorities in Business, for his involvement in this event – and – his continued dedication to promoting economic development and business opportunities through advocacy, networking and capacity building for minority owned businesses and entrepreneurs.

You may remember that last year we announced the creation of the African American Heritage Trail. I am happy to report that in the months in between we have installed the first marker in Historic Silver Springs Park, secured funding for, and have created the next several markers: they will include: two in Church Square, one Park Central Square, one at the former home of Lincoln High School and one where Alberta's Hotel once stood. Trail development, including a multimedia storymap, will continue this year. Please watch for announcements and join us at the dedications later this summer and fall.

LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT

One of our priorities this past year was to increase City Council's personal engagement in the state legislative process and provide helpful input and support to our state legislative delegation. It helps both the City and state if our legislators understand our issues and

concerns. Our legislators have a difficult job and must weigh countless priorities. We want to be supportive and helpful.

Members of our State legislative delegation that represent the city of Springfield include:

(please stand if you are present): State Senator Lincoln Hough House Speaker and

Representative from the 134th district, Elijah Haahr, from the 131st district: Sonya Murray

Anderson; from the 132nd district – Minority Leader Crystal Quade; from the 133rd district,

Curtis Trent; from the 135th district - Steve Helms; from the 136th district - Craig Fishel; and

from the 137th district, John Black. Thank you for your service.

We very much appreciate that the state legislative delegation passed a spending plan that fully funds the foundation formula for K through 12 education, and that the plans also made significant investments in higher education. I believe you can judge a community's health by assessing the health of its schools and educational systems.

I am also pleased that the State of Missouri spending plan specifically increases Missouri State University's annual funding by \$10 million for the next fiscal year and provides \$4.5 million in one-time funds for OTC's Center for Advanced Manufacturing. This investment is integral to developing a \$40 million facility at OTC, expected to train students in emerging fields.

This happened under the leadership of Springfield's state Senator Hough, who served as Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Springfield Representatives Black and Trent, who are both members of the House budget committee - and Speaker Haahr. Both MSU and OTC have had the lowest funded, per-student funding in the State, and it has been a priority to improve that ratio. OTC continues to have that dubious distinction and there is still work to be done on the OTC funding level. Every bit helps.

But, there is still work to be done. Springfield enacted a prescription drug monitoring program in July 2017. Eighty-seven percent of the state's population is now covered through local initiatives, but the Missouri General Assembly needs to make this program applicable statewide. Missouri is the only state which has failed to do so. Opioid and prescription drug abuse is a major problem.

The General Assembly needs to pass legislation authorized under the Wayfair Supreme Court decision to allow implementation of an Internet sales tax. This is a fairness issue to our local employers their families and employees. They deserve tax policies to be applied evenly and fairly.

Legislation also needs to be passed, reigning in the egregiously high interest rates of short-term lending facilities. Only the General Assembly can do this. I commend Representative Steve Helms for his leadership in introducing legislation and urge the General Assembly to follow his lead.

Fiscal Sustainability and Accountability

Springfield continues to be a smart and thriving city. We have made very wise decisions as a community, investing in things that matter most AND addressing fiscal challenges head on. We are fortunate to have a history of being responsible and forward-looking.

We have a strong team in the City Manager's office: City Manager Jason Gage and Deputy City Managers Collin Quigley and Maurice Jones, please stand and be recognized.

((Applause)) These gentlemen lead a top-notch team of department heads – strong individuals who lead this community through good times and though bad, taking responsibility and public servant leadership very seriously. We are a very strong and very busy municipal government.

Thanks to good stewardship of resources and solid voter support of tax initiatives, Springfield is able to meet primary service delivery needs and financial commitments over the long-term, while preserving a healthy financial position.

- We are heavily dependent upon sales tax, which is a volatile revenue source, and yet...
- Moody's Investors Service reaffirmed a rating of Aa1 to the City's outstanding general obligation bonds (second highest possible) in June 2018.
- The fund balance of the General Fund (which contains the City's "rainy day" fund) remains within the Council-established reserve goal of 20% of the operating revenue.
- And, the current debt load is less than 1% of the state allowed maximum. Moody's acknowledges the City as having a "light debt burden."

Blessed with a diverse and robust economy, there is very little that cannot be accomplished in Springfield, Missouri.

PUBLIC SAFETY

A community cannot thrive if its citizens do not feel safe. If you grew up in Springfield, you probably enjoyed summers where the kids stayed outside until the street lights came on, without so much as a worry. It was a simpler time. As we all grew up, so did our town.

Our public safety departments – police, fire, 911 emergency communications and office of emergency management – work together to keep our growing city safe, while continuing to warn us and protect us from the realities of today's world. Steps taken over the past few years have allowed us to make significant progress in addressing public safety needs, while staying nimble in order to face and address unpredictable threats. We use a systemic approach, as best we can, to address public safety – with success depending upon superb crimefighting and firefighting, but also attention to risk indicators, such as substance abuse,

mental health problems and other threats to public safety, including unsafe living conditions.

2019 is the year we will see a strong focus on nuisance properties. Citizens have brought this to the forefront, and we have heard you. No one deserves to live in uninhabitable and unsafe conditions. And no one deserves to live in or next door to houses like these. (photos) Springfield is better than this. Together, we will address this public safety issue.

Renewal of the Level Property Tax in 2017 allowed the City to fund capital improvements and equipment, especially for our police officers and firefighters, and this past year, we were able to hire additional domestic violence investigators for the police department and purchase a new fire engine and land for new Fire Station 13 on West College Street.

We are fortunate to have a proactive police force that fully engages in community policing efforts. The Springfield Police Department is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement and has made steady additions to staff to address increases in population, calls for service and reported crime. SPD has also worked with partners to increase community awareness, education and crime prevention efforts. We are appropriately reminded by Chief Williams that the only valid comparison we should make with regards to crime is to ourselves. Crime (as reflected in the FBI Uniform Crime Report) decreased significantly in 2018, in total and across the board, after generally inching upward annually over the last decade.

Over the past few months, the City of Springfield and the Springfield Police Department have also examined our role and approach to addressing the specific needs of the victims of sexual assault.

My colleague and Mayor Pro Tem Phyllis Ferguson, is to be commended for being the driving force behind the creation of a Sexual Assault Task Force that will help provide insight to City Council, the Springfield Police Department and members of City staff. The task force, which includes members of *Me Too Springfield* in addition to sexual assault survivors and leaders of agencies assisting survivors, is reviewing several aspects of our community's response to sexual assault, including prevention education and community awareness. Thank you, Phyllis, and members of the task force.

While crime is down, Police recruitment is up! Recruiting is a concern for police agencies across the country—but we continue to “buck the trend” in Springfield.

The number and quality of applicants for both our regular and lateral academies continues to increase.

I would like to ask members of SPD command staff and the Springfield Police Officers Association Union here today to stand for recognition when I call your names: (please stand and remain standing) Major Greg Higdon, Captain Chad Eutsler, Captain Kevin Grizzell, Captain Stacy Parton, Lt. Chris Wells, Lt. David Meyer and Lt. Jennifer Charleston.

From the executive board of the Springfield Police Officers' Association: Vice President - Officer Michael Walker and Secretary - Corporal Matt Shackelford.

The citizens of Springfield can and should be proud of their police department and each of the officers that have chosen to wear the badge.

Under the direction of Fire Chief David Pennington, Springfield Fire Department has had an impressive performance this past year. Firefighters kept busy throughout our community; in our schools educating our children about fire safety, in our neighborhoods as a part of

Project RED Zone providing smoke alarms and reducing the risk of fire, preparing for and responding to nearly 18,000 incidents, and more.

The department achieved International Accreditation,

- Completed a 5-year community driven strategic plan
- Developed a new community risk assessment and standard of cover
- And completed a Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual which involved being evaluated against 252 performance indicators which include 82 core competencies.

I would like to recognize Fire Chief Pennington and members of the SFD Command Staff, Assistant Chiefs Olan Morelan and Bryan Newberry and with the Southern Missouri Professional Firefighters, President Chad Davis, Vice President Devin Keeney and Political Director Garrett Olson.

We have also made great progress in addressing the Police fire pension funding. This is again, thanks to our voters. In June, 2009 before the initial passage of the 2011 sales tax, the funded ratio was 35.5%. It is now 86% funded. It is likely we will need to renew this again and City Council will be considering putting it before the voters in the near future. We owe this to our prior officers and firefighters. Thank you for your support.

VISION & EXCITEMENT

In my many years in public service, I have rarely witnessed such an incredible community groundswell like I am seeing **right here** and **right now** in Springfield, Missouri. We have our challenges. But we also have extraordinarily strong-willed people who are dedicated to making Springfield become something more than just a mid-size city in a mid-size state in the middle of the country. The public sector. The private sector. The educational and faith-

based sectors, the non-profit and health care sectors – all seem to be rallying around the notion that Springfield’s time has come. **Right here. Right now.**

On behalf of my colleagues on City Council and the City staff, I promise that we will work with you, hand in hand, to become the City we aspire to be. We have listened and will continue to do so. Allow me to share the following vision for the years ahead:

- Daylighting of Jordan Creek and completion of the development of IDEA Commons
- Realization of the Art Museum Master Sites and Facilities Plan
- Springfield’s continued development as a transportation hub
- Development of the 60-65 corridor
- Completion of an Interstate Loop – Springfield Beltway
- Becoming a truly inclusive and welcoming community

This is not simply a list of accomplishments and priorities – it is all tethered to our shared vision for Springfield’s future. We want Springfield to be the most vibrant metropolitan area in Missouri, and the Midwest – where individuals, families and businesses thrive. As we compete every day for the jobs and economic growth that will enable our community to prosper, it must be clear to employers and to those considering living, working, learning and playing here that we are on an aspirational journey – and – that we are defining and working toward what we want Springfield to be.

We must cultivate and feel a sense of pride in this place we call home - building on our assets, like the beauty of our outdoors here and our higher education and health care partners. We must invest in the community and improve it.

As we conclude our time together this morning, I draw your attention to the stickers on the table, generously provided by our friends at Guaranty Bank. As they point out, the heart in the middle of the City of Springfield's logo has been there for years. I commend them encouraging us all to start a love for our city movement - for supporting bottom-up community development and encouraging us all to engage our fellow businesses in citizens in this effort. Together, we can work to ensure that Springfield is a vibrant and thriving community to live, work and play today and for future generations.

And I leave you with this thought from Herb Caen, a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist who wrote daily columns of local goings-on, social and political happenings, painful puns and offbeat anecdotes that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle for almost 60 years:

“A city is not gauged by its length and width, but by the broadness of its vision and the height of its dreams.”

Thank you, and good morning.