

Good Morning! As I prepared for this day – the annual State-of-the-City address - I could not help but think about not only the past year, but the past two years as we are now 27 months out from our first presumptive positive COVID-19 case in Greene County. You can go back to the initial decisions in March 2020, and I can remember just about every day of that month. It was just so challenging. But those initial decisions, I think, paid dividends. Early action led to a flattening of the initial curve of cases, buying time for our health systems to scale up. Despite the trauma of both the deadly disease and the roller coaster – both economically and emotionally - we were all forced to ride, I am lifted up by the stories of resilience, of sacrifice and of service. Overall, Springfield and Springfieldians have come together in new and different ways and are actively working for a brighter future. And on this day, I implore of you: we cannot allow ourselves to resume what was; we must reimagine what *can be*.

Is that not the question we pose in all institutions of learning, like the very institution – Evangel University – we assemble in today? The power of “what can be” is inspirational and hopeful. Thank you, Dr. Mike Rakes, Evangel President, for hosting us once again. It is very nice to be joined by an in-person audience at an esteemed campus of higher learning. And as always, it is nice to be joined by those of you who are viewing on television and online.

I have had the good fortune of spending time with learners of all ages this past year. I visited this year with elementary students at the Boys and Girls Club facility at Ed V. Williams elementary school as they talked with excitement about their activities and future plans; with Drury University students celebrating Earth Day and gave the commencement speech at Give 5 graduation – a Civic Matchmaking program for older adults who have decided to never stop learning. Our educational institutions are second to none and we are very fortunate to have an outstanding public school system led by forward-thinking leaders like Superintendent Dr. Grenita Lathan. More than 45,000 college students bring us a vibrancy that is both social and economic. Drury, Evangel, Missouri State and Ozarks Technical Community College – are all breaking ground on new initiatives and programs - and breaking barriers that can sometimes prevent our young people from reaching their full potential. At Parkview High School, choral director Nathan Cook is focusing on being an innovative leader – diligently and creatively working to build unity within classrooms. He says: “By loving one another and by pursuing excellence in our classrooms, we allow students the opportunity to do the same.” Congratulations, Mr. Cook, on being both a product of Springfield Public Schools and now teaching future generations. Nathan Cook is Springfield’s Teacher of the Year.

Today, I commemorate our community's brave, innovative and critical work in the battle of our intersecting crises. The pandemic has illuminated vast inequities and now we are collectively feeling the post-traumatic reverberations and unpredicted ramifications ranging from workforce shortages to supply chain issues to mental health struggles. As I speak with people throughout our community, I encourage them to keep hope and faith alive. It is ok to reach out for help. It is ok to not be ok. We should always look forward, however, shining a light on meaningful efforts to heal and reimagine "what can be" and turn it into "what **will** be." I have said it before, but will say it again: there is nothing wrong with Springfield that cannot be fixed by what is right with Springfield. Thank you Pastors Bob Roberts and Jenn Simmons for continuing to convene the Have Faith Initiative. This regular touch base for members of the faith and nonprofit communities has been a source of strength and comfort for me personally, but also a great source of information and enlightenment for all who participate. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our educators. And our health care workers. And also to our public and private sector professionals who refuse to give up - who keep on innovating, adapting, serving and thriving. I am very proud of our business community. Boasting a very diverse economy, Springfield is blessed to

have a very large number of small businesses and entrepreneurial start ups.

Businesses of all sizes learned to adapt their operations and are helping

Springfield continue to be a hub for great job opportunities and are providing the excellent goods and services Springfield needs to be a vibrant city on the move.

Mercy, CoxHealth, Jordan Valley Community Health Center and the Springfield-Greene County Health Department scaled operations to unprecedented levels this past year, both in volume and collaboration. They worked with other medical providers in the region to share information and resources and coordinate response as the pandemic continued to affect us in waves in 2021 and early 2022.

When we were among the first communities hit by the Delta variant, I was called upon to address the nation to warn others and share what we had learned. With Delta thrashing Missouri fast and first, we did not have much time to summon sufficient reinforcements. Mercy and CoxHealth, however, quickly recruited about 300 traveling nurses, respiratory therapists, and other specialists. We also turned to our own very trusted firefighters to assist us in improving vaccination rates among those who were hesitant. An impressive variety of volunteers, staff and retirees coordinated by Jordan Valley Community Health Center, the Springfield Greene County Health Department, Springfield-Greene County Medical Society and our hospitals, physicians and pharmacies, continued vaccinations – at one

point hosting such an impressive number of locations – it was noted that you could receive a vaccination pretty much within walking distance of any particular place in town. Once again, our community collaborated and responded.

The list of impressive deeds this past year is long. Let's please give a round of applause for the Springfield-Greene County Health Department and our health care professionals around the region.

But, COVID-19 is not the only thing from which we need to heal.

Our safety net nonprofits refocused their efforts this past year, working with increased demand for the basic necessities of food, shelter, health care and jobs - such as The Community Foundation of the Ozarks announcing millions of dollars in grants; The United Way of the Ozarks reinventing its community investment model and The Community Partnership of the Ozarks facilitating and promoting the building of resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods. Too many of our friends are living on the streets and I commend the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness, the Gathering Tree, the Connecting Grounds and others who are working together to help those in need.

COVID-19 has significantly affected mental health and substance use in our community, a continued Red Flag in Community Focus Reports. The pandemic not only caused illness and death, it disrupted many lives. Yet it also has created new community dialogue, leading to a reduction in the stigma associated with seeking care for mental health, and new resources for area citizens including the Be Well Community, a free and public Facebook-based resource created by Burrell Behavioral Health. Outside of the COVID response, collaboration to address mental health and substance use has been strengthened and is thriving. Following 2019's Community Mental Health Assessment, which identified access to behavioral health and substance-use services as a key need for our area, partners from healthcare, behavioral health and the criminal justice system came together to work towards launching Burrell Behavioral Health's Behavioral Crisis Center—Rapid Access Unit. In its inaugural year, the Rapid Access Unit, which is used for treatment of crisis-level mental health or substance use, provided care to nearly 1,500 individuals – 400 of whom were directly diverted from jail by law enforcement or from overtaxed local emergency departments. This facility was established in large part through \$1 million from the Greene County Commission, funds allocated as part of a tax levy passed by citizens in 2017 to fund mental health needs in the county. In-kind support from CoxHealth and Mercy, plus a

grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health, allowed the facility to be renovated and staffed in a matter of months during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a true community solution to a community problem, supported by City of Springfield and Greene County officials, Chief of Police Paul Williams, and healthcare and law-enforcement partners. The Behavioral Crisis Center also has served as a model for the rest of the state, and with Governor Mike Parson's prioritization of such centers in his FY 21 budget, this concept could very well be the future of behavioral health access — locally, regionally, and throughout our state. The final FY 21 budget signed by Governor Parson included significant investment in behavioral health needs, including increased funding for behavioral crisis centers. Additionally, the Certified Community Behavioral Health Organization funding model, established as a federal pilot program (including Missouri) by United States Senators Roy Blunt and Debbie Stabenow, and adopted as the state model by the Missouri General Assembly, continues to set Missouri apart in mental health programming and innovation. More recently, the final FY 23 budget approved by the Missouri General Assembly has provided significant funding for additional Community Behavioral Health Liaisons positions, to work closer with local law enforcement agencies and courts... as well as

providing a large increase for statewide community mental health providers. This funding is so needed and so timely.

PUBLIC SAFETY

An expansion of resources, enhanced prevention programs, new public safety personnel recruitment efforts and technology upgrades are all serving to address and improve public safety.

As COVID numbers waned, police officers and firefighters were able to restore interaction with our citizens. The dedication and hard work of the men and women of the SPD resulted in the community being able to “hold the line” on crime in Springfield, in the face of increasing crime rates nationwide.

They also developed a creative and innovative recruitment strategy which, coupled with significant pay improvements, is leading to an increased number of police applicants and larger recruit classes. The current SPD Academy Class has 24 members, with a new academy class beginning in September. Technology, such as the trunked radio system used by area public safety departments has been upgraded, and Springfield Police officers began using body-worn cameras, the result of new funding. The implementation has increased the department’s transparency and accountability regarding citizen complaints as well as providing

critical information for criminal investigations including officer-involved shootings. For criminal investigations, body worn camera footage gives detectives real-time views of what a crime scene looks like before processing begins, thus providing a better perspective of the crime scene. Throughout the year, investigators took advantage of investigative resources such as NICHE, leads online, social media, Nextdoor, Flock, and various city traffic cameras to assist in identifying suspects. Please join me in thanking the fine men and women of the Springfield Police Department.

This past year challenged the Springfield Fire Department in ways not previously seen. On full display were the resiliency and professionalism of your Springfield Firefighters in their determination to meet the fire and emergency services needs of the community, while also stepping forward to play an important and trusted role in the public health needs of our neighbors. As the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus exploded in our community, our firefighters, in partnership with the Springfield-Greene County Health Department and Southern Missouri Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 152, administered nearly 1500 doses of vaccine at 52 shot clinics held in fire stations and in “pop-up” clinics throughout the community. The department also continued to demonstrate innovation in the

recruitment, retention and advancement of firefighters. Changes to the hiring process increased opportunities for recruitment of diverse and underrepresented persons and the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is reflected in the design of the new fire stations. This past year the fire department established the registered Firefighter Apprenticeship Program – the first of its kind in the state of Missouri – in partnership with the City of Springfield Workforce Development department and the state Department of Labor. Please join me in thanking our Springfield Fire Department.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Springfield's economic strength and consistent growth, continues to buoy us through unprecedented and uncertain times. Springfield's population as reported by the 2020 Census is now 168,911 – up 6% from 2010. We are now the fastest-growing MSA in the state. Our diverse industry base and strong foundational employers in health care and education is complemented by strong employers in the fields of manufacturing, logistics and information technology. During the worst economic effects of the pandemic, Springfield's unemployment rate was lower than both the state and national averages and despite the pandemic's enormous impact, area businesses demonstrated an ability to innovate. The

strong economy has made our region attractive for new and existing businesses to expand operations.

Due to the collaborative work of the City of Springfield, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Greene County, City Utilities and additional partners throughout the region – nine economic development projects were completed in 2021. These projects are expected to create more than 1,300 new jobs in our area and will result in nearly \$319 million in capital investment.

New Projects include Costco, American Airlines' new maintenance hangar, Hy-Vee's new reimagined flagship, a CoxHealth SuperClinic and CarMax. All are injecting millions of dollars in payroll and capital expenditures into the economy.

Also at The Springfield-Branson National Airport, air cargo volume increased 14 percent last year and passenger numbers improved 61 percent over the previous year. The region's strong economic performance, along with the passenger growth, helped persuade Allegiant Air to add additional service in 2021. The airline added service from Springfield to Austin, Punta Gorda, and Houston. The additions give the airport 15 non-stop destinations — that's a record number.

Bass Pro Celebrated its 50th Anniversary with the World's Fishing Fair, bringing in hundreds of thousands of visitors and showcasing the nation's number one aquarium, Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife Museum & Aquarium.

The City assisted one new business and one existing business with \$7.1M of capital investment and created 38 new jobs in the Enterprise Zone.

Several new developments are taking shape and will have a significant impact in the near future. The \$14.3 million dollar expansion of Missouri State University's Jordan Valley Innovation Center is well underway – a private-public partnership between the university, and Vecino Group, with the City providing upgrades to nearby streetscape, stormwater and sewer infrastructure.

O'Reilly Hospitality is investing \$19 million dollars in a redevelopment project, the Moxy Hotel.

Brody Corners Tax Increment Financing was approved, which will provide funding for utility extension and roads to serve a new \$20 million commercial development in southwest Springfield.

Buc-ee's is building Missouri's first location right here in Springfield, a 53,000 - square-foot travel facility with up to 225 employees, an estimated 6 million customers and projected \$30 million in retail sales annually.

Sports Town Soccer Complex is a new indoor/outdoor venue boasting 12 outdoor soccer fields, including four turf fields and a 90,000-square-foot indoor facility featuring four basketball courts and two indoor soccer fields.

The region has prided itself on creating an environment that is welcoming to entrepreneurs, startup businesses and young professionals. Missouri State University's eFactory encourages new business ideas and serves as a business incubator. The Network for Young Professionals, a committee of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, aids in placemaking efforts by encouraging the area's young professionals to get involved and plant roots in the community.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

The City continues to be financially sound and provides high quality vital services to the community. The Springfield Fire and Police Departments, Springfield-Greene County Health Department, Office of Emergency Management,

Springfield-Greene County Parks, Environmental Services and Public Works all have achieved professional accreditation and numerous other divisions and departments throughout the City have received regional and national recognition. Moody's Investors Service reaffirmed a rating of double-a-one to the City's outstanding general obligation bonds (the second highest possible) in December 2021. Municipal issuers with an Aa1 rating demonstrate very strong creditworthiness relative to other U.S. municipal or tax-exempt issuers.

The fund balance of the General Fund has adequate reserves and the debt load is exceptionally low.

Springfield continues to experience exceptional retail sales and strong progress in the overall area of economic development. Sales tax is used to fund vital functions such as police and fire operations and development-related services.

During positive economic times, this reliance is beneficial to the City.

The state of the city is strong. We stand on a firm financial foundation.

My colleagues on City Council, City Manager Jason Gage and Deputy City Managers Collin Quigley and Maurice Jones, have provided steadfast assistance and encouragement, supporting my role and actions as Mayor. I am thankful for the leadership and courage displayed by each City Council member. I salute each member of City Council for taking the high road in difficult times and always

putting the interests of the community as a priority. Springfield, like other cities in the state, has nonpartisan governing bodies. Our Charter requires it. In the past few local elections, however, we as a community have suffered the toxic effects of divisive and ugly political campaigns and tactics. There is no room at the local level for those types of actions and personal attacks. Some in Jefferson City have even filed legislation and advocated for partisan local elections. Thankfully, wiser heads prevailed. We should be proud of our non-partisan structure. We are a community fueled by volunteers, motivated and driven by a desire to make Springfield better. It should stay that way. Please join me in thanking the members of the Springfield City Council: (if you are here, please stand as I call your names) Mayor Pro Tem Matthew Simpson; General Seat A Councilwoman and our community's first woman of color on City Council - Heather Hardinger; General Seat B Councilman Craig Hosmer; General Seat C Councilman Andy Lear; General Seat D Councilman Richard Ollis; Zone 1 Councilwoman Monica Horton; Zone 2 Councilman Abe McGull and Zone 3 Councilman Mike Schilling. (applause)

Thank you for your service.

The state of the city is strong. And it is encouraging to see that despite what we have been through together – Springfield still continues to grow and thrive. Our new City flag has become a visible symbol of our invisible bonds.

QUALITY OF PLACE

The Springfield region continues to focus on creating unique places and experiences for residents and visitors alike. The City of Springfield has made strides on placemaking and improving quality of life as demonstrated by numerous momentum projects in various states of progress underway across the city.

On opening day, April 8 of this year, I had the honor of throwing out the first pitch as the Springfield Cardinals began the 2022 Texas League season. We have been so fortunate in this community to be a vibrant part of the Cardinals family. We look forward to the Cardinals being a part of Springfield for many years to come.

Continued investment in our award-winning parks, recreation facilities and greenway trails and tourist events, such as the Birthplace of Route 66 Festival (thank you Representative Craig Fishel for securing substantial funding in the state budget this year) – these investments have also spurred impressive growth, while essential services such as those provided by the Public Works and Environmental Services Departments play an important role in creating a great

place to live. Citizen engagement also helps with important decision making as we strive to make Springfield a great place for all to live.

Grant Avenue Parkway & Forward SGF

Last month we broke ground on the \$26 million dollar Grant Avenue Parkway to create an off-street pedestrian and bicycle pathway along Grant Avenue between Sunshine Street and College Street, through the heart of Springfield. The 3-mile stretch will connect downtown Springfield with the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium – linking authentic Springfield experiences for both residents and visitors. The Parkway route will further connect parks and recreation amenities, neighborhoods, schools, and fill a vital gap in the Ozark Greenways trail network.

This summer, we will unveil the much anticipated Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan which also includes sub-area planning for catalyst sites downtown, on Commercial Street, Trafficway, Lake Springfield and in spaces around a creek daylighting project known as Renew Jordan Creek.

Renew Jordan Creek

In the late 1990s, the Springfield community came together to form a collective

vision for a community gathering place – Jordan Valley Park. This vision that was cast nearly 30 years ago still rings true today through a project called Renew Jordan Creek. Located in the IDEA Commons, the project area is envisioned to serve as an urban amenity within Springfield that will encourage private redevelopment in this important part of downtown. Components include: pedestrian and connectivity enhancements; sustainable greenspaces integration; comfort and safety improvements and sense of place development. This project is only one part of a big picture planning effort and other large-scale improvements in the downtown area, largely focused on water quality improvement and flood reduction.

Art Museum

The Springfield Art Museum's 30-year Master Plan to bring the museum into the 21st century has been expedited thanks to a \$5 million gift from The Sunderland Foundation. The Sunderland Foundation is a family foundation based in Overland Park, Kansas. This is the largest single charitable gift the museum has received in its 93 years of being open. The generous donation will accelerate the museum's 30-year plan into a seven-year project. The hope is that construction and renovation will be complete by 2028, the museum's 100th anniversary. Thank

you, Dr. Tom and Kim Prater for agreeing to serve as co-chairs of the capital campaign.

Lake Springfield Area Master Plan

The City received a one-time grant from the Economic Development Administration of the United States Department of Commerce to fund hydrological and environmental evaluations of the James River and Lake Springfield, and develop, with public engagement conducted by City staff, a plan for the reuse of the power plant, lake, and surrounding acreage.

Lake Springfield was formed when the James River in southeast Springfield was dammed with the construction of a coal-fired power plant for City Utilities of Springfield. Over its 65-year life, the power plant and approximately 1,000 acres around it have served the public well. With the plant being decommissioned, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity exists for the community to reimagine its future.

In the glow of these impressive projects and plans, Springfield has, over the past year, received national recognition for a variety of indicators including being among the best cities to start a business, for job growth, for business and careers,

for recovery and for being a top place attracting young adults and a top place to live.

LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

Our local colleagues in Jefferson City have been most helpful this legislative session. Several Springfield projects received specific funding. Those include: \$500,000 for capital projects at the Discovery Center; \$5 million for the OTC airframe and power plant maintenance center; \$30 million for the MSU Temple Hall Life Sciences project; an additional \$10 million for the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds project; \$13.5 million for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board Cooper/Killian project; \$6 million for the Springfield-Greene County Library capital project; \$5 million for the Commercial Street Jefferson Avenue Footbridge restoration and \$7.5 million for the Renew Jordan Creek project. The foundation was laid and strongly encouraged and supported by our local delegation members of the House Budget Committee: Representatives Craig Fishel, John Black, Alex Riley and Betsy Fogle, as well as former Budget Committee member Curtis Trent. Our sincere thanks for a job well done. I want to take a moment, however, to thank Senator Lincoln Hough specifically. If you will, allow me a moment of personal reflection. I cut my professional eye teeth with the Missouri Senate and

am proud of being among the first professional staff members of the Missouri Senate Appropriations Committee. Initially, a budget analyst, then as staff director. The Senate taught me the State budget, parliamentary procedure, how to research and form good public policy, how to run a meeting, how to be civil in the midst of contentious debate and how to listen to all sides and seek consensus. Who I am as a professional is because of values I learned as a Senate staffer. I love the Missouri Senate. To see the Senate disintegrate during the last session hurts deeply. My first memory is of longtime Springfield Senator Jack Curtis. I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Springfield Senators Paul Bradshaw, Dennis Smith, Roseann Bentley, Norma Champion and of course, my dear friend and colleague, Greene County Presiding Commissioner Bob Dixon. Senator Hough follows this long line in superb fashion. This session he has risen above the fray and successfully navigated toxic waters. Senator Hough is more than a friend to Springfieldians, he is a tireless advocate, a fighter for the common good and an amazing diplomat and strategist. His work as the Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee yielded benefits to our community that have not been realized in decades. Thank you, Senator Hough.

MAYOR'S INITIATIVE ON EQUITY AND EQUALITY

As the local representative government, the City is held to a high standard as a beacon and guiding organization in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion. We are committed to taking a leadership role in addressing prejudice, bias and racism. It is my hope that we, as individual members of our community, will respect each other, find common ground and hold ourselves accountable for being a welcoming community.

Earlier this year, the Mayor's Initiative on Equity and Equality - a diverse, multi-organizational, multi-sector group, completed its charge of developing guiding principles for our community to improve equitable access to opportunities, recognizing the inherent dignity, value and worth of each individual.

The MIEE is a diverse group, representing multiple sectors in the community and was tasked with completing its work within a year. (list names on the screen)

The City of Springfield is compelled to reflect and to commit to positive and needed change and to commit with both words and actions.

The following guiding principles will be applied to make Springfield more inclusive and improve equitable access to opportunities. I encourage all entities, public and private, to commit to these principles.

Dialogue and Understanding

"We are committed to..."

- Seeking and listening to diverse thoughts respectfully
- Fostering a culture of mutual learning through continual dialogue and education

Cultural Consciousness

“We are committed to...”

- Developing awareness of our own existing biases
- Understanding, valuing, and respecting diversity

Advocacy and Partnerships

“We are committed to...”

- Cultivating inclusive partnerships to increase intentional and effective collaboration
- Welcoming diverse voices and advocating for the underrepresented and the disenfranchised

Structural and Systemic Barriers

“We are committed to...”

- Identifying and removing diversity, equity, and inclusion barriers
- Refining policies and implementing practices to protect the rights of every member of our community

Personal and Organizational Accountability

“We are committed to...”

- Inspiring, modeling, and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion excellence
- Honoring individuals and organizations that demonstrate accountability for fostering an inclusive community

A sincere thank you to co-chairs Doug Neff of Commerce Bank and Saehee Duran of Life 360 Church, the full committee and staff who support this effort - for your work and dedication.

Closing:

When I closed the State-of-the-City address last year, I did not anticipate that we would face another large surge of the COVID-19 infections through Delta and Omicron, and so many things seemed still yet uncertain. We have learned how to sit in the uncertainty of a complex world. Yet, there is beauty in the way our community has coped by coming together rather than pulling apart. There is no better city in America than Springfield, Missouri. I recognize that I may be a bit biased. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” On this beautiful June day I encourage you

to embrace the future and dream on. As they say in baseball...swing for the fences!

Thank you for your kind attention. And may God Bless You. And may God Bless the city of Springfield.