

## **STATE OF THE CITY 2018**

### **Intro:**

Good Morning! I am very proud to be here with you this beautiful June morning. And I am most grateful to be the Mayor of this great city—the City of Springfield, Missouri. The past year has truly been remarkable.

I want to start by thanking you – the leaders in this audience – both in the room - and those tuning in across the City on television, online and on social media. You are all caring people who take time out of your busy schedules to pause. To listen. And to learn. I am fortunate to get to see the community from the vantage point I have as the Mayor. From this perch, I see that we are all more alike than we are different. We have more positive things moving us forward, than challenges holding us back. And why is that? Because we all care about Springfield. And we are not afraid to show it.

We are honored to gather in the Crusader Dining Hall at Evangel University – it is a campus itself that is steeped in history. Upon these campus grounds, wounded World War II soldiers were once treated at O'Reilly Hospital, and after a short stint in the post-war period, the property was vacated in 1952.

Thanks to the tenacity of people like Reverend Ralph M. Riggs, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God at that time, (incidentally known as “Mr. Education” in the AG) – and against some strong opposition from many members of the Assemblies of God – Reverend Riggs spearheaded a movement to create a Christian-based higher educational institution in Springfield, Missouri. And in 1953, the General Council in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, approved the resolution to create Evangel.

Today, Evangel is a comprehensive Christian university, with more than 100 educational programs and more than 2,000 students. You cannot help but feel welcome here. Whenever I visit this campus, I know that I am going to have a pleasant experience, interacting with faculty, staff and students. There is something special going on here at Evangel. Please join me in thanking President Carol Taylor and her team for making us feel so welcome here today.

Evangel is among Springfield’s more than one dozen local colleges and universities. Nearly 50,000 students choose Springfield every year to pursue academic paths - from liberal arts and business, to engineering, architecture, medicine, science, and theology. And I must say that our town-gown

relationship could not be any stronger. It is a relationship that we do not take for granted and with the vibrancy of these public and private, big and small, four-year and community and technical instruction institutions, I am proud to say Springfield is a thriving city with a college-town flair.

Speaking of college-town flair, some may not realize that our largest university in Springfield is run by a president who wears pants with bear heads on them? And dresses like KISS? And reenacts a scene from the movie Titanic? All fun aside, thank you - Missouri State University President Clif Smart (please stand)- for getting to know your students, relating to and understanding them, and for not being afraid to allow MSU to push the envelope a little – especially when it comes to the student experience.

Keeping students engaged and interested is one of my goals as Mayor, and if my experience with young people so far is providing any indication of the type of leadership we have waiting in the wings for tomorrow, I think we are in fine shape.

I want to take a moment to introduce you to some interesting young people I have come to know. They deserve a moment of recognition. Our young people and young professionals are the future of Springfield.

The 2017 Young Professional of the Year was Britton Jobe and the Missouri Youth of the Year was Jaydun Sydnor (Sid-Nor). These young people are symbolic of the fearless attitude many of our future leaders have in helping shape Springfield into a better place for all. One has already graduated college and law school and the other is about to embark on his college journey.

Britton is an attorney with the law firm of Neale & Newman and also serves on the City's Planning & Zoning Commission and is an active member of the The Network, Springfield's Premier Young Professionals Group. Jaydun, who is now 17, has been on his own since his freshman year in high school. He couch-surfed with friends until he was taken in by the family of his best friend in late 2016. To support himself, he works at least 30 hours a week. Jaydun has been a member of the Boys and Girls Club Henderson Unit for 11 years and has been described as an anchor. As the Missouri Youth of the Year, he will serve as a spokesperson for our young people, sharing his inspiring story and leading the way to transform communities for the better.

Another young person - Molly Riddle-Nunn - caught my attention when she captured the essence of Springfield in a blog called "The Perks of Being a 20-something in Springfield".

She wrote:

“When my husband and I bought our house back in May, we complained about going from a three-minute morning commute to a fifteen-minute morning commute. After hearing our big city friends describe their morning commutes (which only deliver them to work on time if a certain degree of luck is involved), I vowed to never complain about ours again. Despite our modest incomes, we can typically afford the gas and groceries we need because competition in Springfield keeps the prices of both relatively steady. With all our essential payments covered, we can still afford to fund our savings accounts, go out to dinner, and generally treat ourselves from time to time—although there are certain things in Springfield I'd forever be willing to adjust my budget for, like The Aviary's Bloody Marys or fresh bouquets from the Ozark Mountain Flower Truck.”

I agree, Molly. And as you so eloquently stated in your blog, staying in Springfield—and loving it—starts with shedding the stereotype that young professionals *should* leave.

Molly went on to say: “For those of us who stay, I feel that it's up to us to help cultivate a unique culture that people in other cities want to flock to. Luckily, I think us 20-somethings are more up to the challenge than ever.”

I’m glad to hear that, Molly. And I want you and every other young person in our community to know that myself and my colleagues on City Council are here to support you, cheer you and when necessary, get out of your way!

I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on City Council and ask them to please stand and remain standing—Zone 1 Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson; Zone 2 Councilman Tom Prater; Zone 3 Councilman Mike Schilling; Zone 4 Councilman Matthew Simpson; General Seat A Councilwoman and Mayor Pro Tem Jan Fisk; General Seat B Councilman Craig Hosmer; General Seat C Councilwoman Kristi Fulnecky; and General Seat D Councilman Richard Ollis.

We are all volunteering our time to serve Springfield because we care deeply about our community. We take our roles as public servants and servant leadership very, very seriously. I thank each of my colleagues, sincerely, for the role they have played and will continue to play, as our community’s future

unfolds. Together, with City and community leaders and each and every resident from across all four zones, we can move the city forward in the right direction in the right way. I promise to continue working alongside my Council colleagues in a transparent, strategically planned way. Please thank our members of City Council. I thank you for your dedication. And I thank you for your friendship.

In addition, we are honored to have some very special guests joining us today. In April, we hosted a reunion of former City Council members and had a terrific discussion. We all share a common experience of volunteering to serve our community in a very specific and high-profile way. Last year, we referenced the shoulders upon which we stand. These are the men and women who laid a strong foundation of leadership for those of us who have followed. They are the shoulders upon which we stand and we are grateful. I would ask them to stand and ask that you please join me in thanking them for their service.

We are blessed in Springfield to have people who go above and beyond in their servant leadership. Selfless service is a theme I see played out every day at City Hall.

It certainly is evident in the fine work done by the Springfield Police Department and the Springfield Fire Department. These men and women regularly put their lives on the line to protect and keep us safe. They deserve our admiration and respect.

The men and women of the Springfield Police Department continue to serve us through times of both calm and strife. Police work is indeed a calling—we thank you for your service.

We are fortunate to have a proactive police force that fully engages in community policing efforts. In 2017, the number and quality of applicants for the Springfield Police Department increased after four years of declines, and I was pleased to hear from Police Chief Paul Williams that we filled all of the existing vacancies for the 2018 police academy class.

There are many factors that play a role in the crime rate, which has been trending upward in our City for a few years. That trend continued in 2017, but it was encouraging to see that the rate of violent crime, overall, remained **relatively flat**, and the significant increases in property crime appear to have peaked as well.

SPD once again has access to the jail for municipal prisoners, and improvements to the Greene County criminal justice system are under way. Included in those plans is an expansion to the jail, based on a County-wide sales tax passed by Greene County voters.

Another positive - Springfield voters renewed the City of Springfield's level property tax in November—which for the first time included a provision for lifecycle replacement of police vehicles and equipment and funding for additional investigators for the SPD.

SPD continues to engage in successful community policing efforts, including extraordinary efforts in 2017. The Uniform Operations Bureau conducted a 90-day foot patrol pilot program as part of the City of Springfield's Zone Blitz initiative, and that foot patrol pilot program not only increased police presence in the area, but led to positive interaction with community members and allowed the officers to address specific crime and quality of life issues.

I commend SPD for being a key partner in developing a Family Justice Center, a centralized service hub for victims of violence – a service needed to create

innovative, collaborative, trauma-informed approaches to meeting the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children.

Thanks to the collaborative nature of our community, and specifically the close working relationship between the City and the County, along with the new funding from the Level Property Tax and County sales tax, those doors will open later this summer. Thank you, Greene County Prosecutor, Dan Patterson, Police Chief Paul Williams and others, who are working to make this vision a reality.

It truly is the dawn of a new day with the addition of a Police Department Domestic Violence unit of investigators, and the opening of this multidisciplinary justice center, which will create pathways to hope for women, children, and men, in order to break the generational cycle of violence and abuse in families across Springfield and Greene County.

I would like to ask members of SPD command staff here today to stand for recognition when I call your names: (please stand and remain standing) Chief Paul Williams; Major Kirk Manlove; Major Greg Higdon; Captain Vance Holland; Captain Kevin Grizzell; Lieutenant Fred Beck, Lieutenant Jennifer

Charleston; Lieutenant Jason Laub; Lieutenant Eric Reece; Lieutenant Stacey Parton.

Honored guests also include the executive board of the Springfield Police Officers' Association. I would like to ask them to please stand and be recognized:

President Corporal Chris Welsh; Vice President - Officer Michael Walker and Treasurer - 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.

Our firefighters work hard every day to keep our homes and businesses safe. They perform some of the most vital tasks around our city each day, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their life-saving service. In addition to responding to citizens in their most vulnerable situations, the Springfield Fire Department continues to develop an ambitious Community Risk Reduction Program that is a data driven, comprehensive approach to getting at the causes of major risks in our community.

For example, during 2017, the Springfield Fire Department engaged more than 40,000 citizens through their community education efforts. Firefighters visited 6,567 homes, tested 2,121 smoke alarms and installed 1,091 free smoke alarms in 2017 during Project RED Zone canvasses of Zone 1 neighborhoods.

Project RED Zone (which stands for Reduce, Education and Deliver) is an aggressive community risk reduction campaign aimed at reducing home fires. The campaign contributed directly to at least **three lives** saved in 2017 – in two separate incidents, three occupants were notified of fires in their homes by the smoke alarms installed by Springfield Fire Department crews during Project RED Zone canvasses.

Project RED Zone has contributed to other positive metrics as well. In 2017, the number of residential fires was down slightly and there were zero deaths attributed to residential fires. I would like to recognize Fire Chief Pennington and members of the SFD Command Staff, Assistant Chiefs Olan Morelan and Bryan Newberry, please stand. Also joining us today is the President of the Southern Missouri Professional Firefighters, Chad Davis.

The State of Our City is very strong. Local government is strong. And our conviction to continue to keep this momentum is strong. Blessed with a diverse and robust economy, there is very little that cannot be accomplished in Springfield, Missouri. Time and again, we prove that we are on the right track. And we DO what is right to continue to move everyone in our community toward prosperity. Prosperity is a workforce issue AND an economic vitality issue. Fertile ground that has been plowed by City Manager Greg Burris, Zone 1 Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson and a team of City staff, nonprofits, businesses and neighbors through the conclusion of the Zone Blitz, has been nothing short of transformational. People are moving into steady and sustainable work thanks to outstanding and innovative workforce development training offered by Ozarks Technical Community College and through specialized programs, such as Change 1000, Green for Greene, and Ozarks' Promise. The \$3 million dollar America's Promise grant from the Department of Labor is helping to address the labor shortage in the healthcare industry, right here in the Ozarks. This program is currently training 372 individuals in healthcare occupations over the next four years – tuition free. I would like to salute OTC Chancellor Hal Higdon and his staff on the successful passage of the bond issues and look forward to the opening of the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Technology.

Programs at Community Hubs, such as The Northwest Project at The Fairbanks and York Elementary; Springfield Dream Center, and the soon-to-be-open Center of Hope at Pepperdine, are knocking down barriers to prosperity that have been in place often for generations. We are helping provide a hand up to those needing a path out of poverty and into prosperity. These programs provide a roof over their heads - jobs they can retain, and most importantly – provide friendship and support. Our willingness to empathize and assure our neighbors that tomorrow can, and will be, a better day, could be the single most important action we take.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.” That resonates with me as I reflect on Springfield and the great people who live here.

I remember watching Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech when I was 12 years old. His words were very inspiring to me and my generation. We have made great strides in our country and in our community to embrace diversity and inclusion, and yet, we have many miles to go. We must continue to be intentional in our work to truly be a welcoming city.

If you will indulge me just a minute, I want to share with you the story of Mary Jean Price Walls. In 1950, Mary Jean was denied admission to Southwest Missouri State College, because she was African American. This, of course, was when Plessy vs. Ferguson's "separate but equal" was the law of the land. She was denied admission because the classes she wanted to take were available in Jefferson City at Lincoln University.

However, Mary could not afford Jefferson City. Her dream was to be a teacher. She married, had children and looked on from a distance as the first black students eventually enrolled at SMS following the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, which said that having "separate but equal" public schools in Missouri and 16 other states was unconstitutional.

The bottom line: Mary never went to college. She retired from the workforce in 2009.

In August 2010, MSU awarded her the university's first-ever honorary bachelor's degree and in recent years, students rallied to have the

Multicultural Resource Annex named after her. The story of Mary Walls is just one example of so many inequalities that happened in the past and still continue in one form or another today.

We must never forget our past, but also must remember what sorts of things we need to do to improve our collective future. Over the past year, I have been pleased to see the success of an ever-growing number of minority-owned businesses. I recently had the pleasure of attending the Springfield Minorities in Business annual banquet. Under the direction of Samuel Knox, M-I-B promotes economic development and business opportunities through advocacy, networking and capacity building for minority owned businesses and entrepreneurs. MIB serves as an advocate for increasing the number of minority and women-owned businesses in our community and recognizes those who have played a role in strengthening business opportunities for minorities. I applaud those who run these outstanding establishments and those who frequent and support them. Samuel, would you and your board members please stand up and be recognized?

The City of Springfield is proud to be a founding member of the public entity diversity task force, which has developed guidelines to increase diversity in

awarding contracting and purchasing jobs, as well as increasing the percentage of people from historically under-represented groups who are employed by our public entities. We have created a performance measurement group to ensure that we are making progress. We must continue to be intentional and thoughtful in our efforts moving forward.

I am pleased today to share with you some information about a project we are working on to shine a light on the history of African Americans in our community. Because of the unique and difficult history, key events in African-American history have not always been documented, or given the prominence that they should have in our local, regional and even national collective conscious. I am proud to announce the creation and development of an African American Heritage Trail for the City of Springfield and Greene County. Our City departments are working with a core team of partners that includes Drury University, Missouri State and Ozark Greenways, to gradually mark sites on, and formalize the trail. Similar trails have been gradually introduced in various parts of the nation. This is an outgrowth of a multi-year research project by MSU faculty members Lyle Foster and Tim Knapp, called The Journey Continues. Lyle and Tim are researching the history of the African American community in Springfield.

## **Economic Growth**

It is more than a cliché, the term “a rising tide floats all boats.” It is a philosophy that Springfieldians not only embrace, we prove its veracity.

Springfield’s economy continues to be fundamentally strong. And it is strongest when we work together. We continue to see growth in most sectors of the local economy. Springfield’s great advantages include modest but steady population growth without major increases in cost of living, a real economy that provides positive outcomes for middle and working class residents, and lower housing prices than most cities around the country. Many cities are seeing housing prices at 8-10 times the median household income, compared with Springfield’s 3 times the median household income.

City Council will be focused later this year on the community’s economic future as the City begins work on a comprehensive plan to identify the community’s priorities for economic vitality, neighborhood preservation and land use. We will need your help, as the comprehensive plan requires extensive public input. This is your opportunity to help shape Springfield’s future. What is important to you? Your children? Your grandchildren?

The health care sector continues to be one of the key drivers of our region's economy, employing nearly 40,000 people in the Springfield region, with more than \$1.5 billion in annual payroll. Let's think about that for a moment. \$1.5 billion in payroll. We are fortunate to have world-class health care systems in our community, as both top-notch employers and high-quality service providers. And we are fortunate to have so many partners coming together in the Healthy Living Alliance, a consortium that just announced we will take the challenges of mental illness and substance abuse head on in our community. As usual, we have everyone at the table together. The health care community, the criminal justice experts, the funding partners, the business sector, and more. I am confident that we will be among the leading cities in the nation in our successful efforts to address the opioid crisis.

Growth in the manufacturing sector continues to be strong. Several significant announcements over the past year continue to add jobs to the local economy. In mid-summer 2017, One Call Care Management, a leading provider of worker's compensation care management services, announced it had selected Springfield to expand its operations. One call has already begun hiring for

more than 100 new full-time jobs created by the expansion, with additional growth expected in the future.

We continue to experience strong growth in the manufacturing sector. In 2017, Austin-based Vital Farms cut the ribbon on “Egg Control Station,” a new egg processing plant in the Partnership Industrial Center West. The pasture-raised egg company created 50 new jobs, with an additional 50 slated for the future.

In early 2018, electronics manufacturer Positronic Industries announced expansion plans at its corporate headquarters in Springfield, investing \$2.5 million and adding 90 new full-time jobs.

The Springfield region’s manufacturing has grown about 18% over the past decade. Another good sign of a balanced economy. And this growth is in the right direction—the average wage for manufacturing jobs is 17% higher than the average wage in the ten-county area. This aligns well with our community’s recent investment in OTC’s plans to build The Center for Advanced Manufacturing that will increase opportunities for both employers

and those individuals who need to skill up for high demand, higher paying jobs.

That is another really good sign of a balanced economy.

In all – our partnership team facilitated the investment of \$73.8 million in new capital investment in 2017. Other major capital investments in the manufacturing landscape included O’Reilly, 3M, Information Technology firm Ascynchrony Labs, and Springfield Underground.

Our collective investment in infrastructure, real estate and workforce helps us to sustain the positive economic environment we all enjoy in the Springfield region.

### **Infrastructure & Transportation**

I am particularly thankful to the Public Works department and their teamwork with City Utilities, MoDOT and other partners who fulfill our underlying need for modern, efficient and reliable infrastructure. The City’s nationally accredited Public Works department maintained 1,800 lane miles of streets, added 13,700 linear feet of sidewalk in Zone 1 alone, and plowed

27,000 lane miles. And - 70% of Springfield's streets are rated in good condition or better by a third party evaluator. The nationally accredited Department of Environmental Services continues to do ground-breaking work on an Integrated Plan for the Environment that has received national attention and is laser focused on maintaining the air and water quality we all enjoy in southwest Missouri.

Last year was another record-breaking year for the Springfield-Branson National Airport, which offers non-stop flights to 13 cities. Passenger counts for 2017 were just shy of one million, which was an increase of 41,000 over 2016.

Improving the customer experience will continue to be a theme at the City of Springfield throughout the next fiscal year. Plans to expand and enhance the citywide culture of customer service will be an area of focus in the coming months, as we continue to cement Springfield's business and citizen-friendly reputation.

The economic development arm of the Chamber, The Springfield Business Development Corporation recently hosted Joel Kotkin, known as "America's

Uber-Geographer” to speak at this year’s SBDC annual meeting and the thoughts he shared were both uplifting and possibly catalytic.

He said, “You would never know it from reading the New York times, but there are a lot of smart people who live in places like Springfield.”

He noted that current trends show people are moving away from the largest cities on the coasts and toward mid-sized cities, especially in the Mid-west. These cities, like Springfield, are appealing because they offer access to many of the same urban amenities without the burden of exorbitant housing prices. Kotkin said we are well-positioned to benefit from this trend if we continue to invest in community assets to attract talent and jobs. And, his data shows our region’s job growth in higher paying sectors such as professional, scientific and technical services—which has grown 38% over the last decade— is some of the strongest in the Midwest and well above the national average.

“These are very hopeful and very positive signs that show that something is happening here that is extremely positive.”

Since 2010, there have been huge slowdowns of population growth in big cities, and increases in growth in second tier metropolitan service areas like Springfield's. Even though Springfield showed only modest population growth - many cities saw **decreasing** populations this past year.

### **Fiscal Sustainability**

Too often the core City services of health and public safety, infrastructure and regulatory enforcement, are forgotten as we go about our daily lives – that is - until something goes wrong. That pothole we encounter on the way to work after an icy freeze reminds us there are people taking care of our roadways. That surprise hepatitis outbreak reminds us that our public health experts are protecting us and treating us when the unforeseen happens, and the beautiful tree canopy in our local park may not be appreciated until lightning strikes it. The City of Springfield is a very functionally diverse operation. Its 21 departments serve the residents of Springfield 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The extent to which our City departments work together well and have adopted a common mission of service excellence, is a testament to our City Manager, Greg Burris.

Greg is a well-known and well-regarded leader in the region and has initiated significant positive change in the City of Springfield organization, making it one of the most fiscally sustainable cities in the country. The community has greatly benefitted over his 10 years of service. His tireless work ethic and ability to bring teams of people together to proactively and successfully address difficult issues are characteristics that both he and the City have become known for over the course of his tenure.

With community support, Greg addressed a \$200-million-dollar shortfall in the Police-Fire Pension Fund, presented a balanced budget each year without borrowing or dipping into the City's reserves and likely saved citizens \$400 million by creatively addressing unfunded federal environmental mandates through a first-of-its-kind integrated plan for the environment.

Auditors look upon Springfield favorably, issuing all clean external audits, and the City has received the highest possible ratings in all eight external audits performed during Greg's tenure. Moody's has continued to reaffirm the City's Aa1 bond rating – the second highest a city can earn. In addition, the Citizens Sales Tax Oversight Committee, created in a good faith effort to reassure citizens that the Police-Fire Pension Sales Tax (and subsequently, other City

taxes) revenues and expenditures would be reviewed regularly by a highly skilled and experienced group of citizens, has also delivered only positive ratings to City Council and the community.

Greg and I became acquainted in 2000 while we were both members of Leadership Springfield's Class XVI. In the ensuing 18 years it has been my privilege to work with him in a variety of capacities at Missouri State University as well as the City of Springfield. As Mayor, I am honored to work with Greg on a daily basis. I see first hand his commitment, passion and dedication to his work. To my dear friend and colleague I say, 'well done.' You have the most sincere thanks of a grateful City Council and community. We wish for you every success.

**Vision and Excitement:**

In conclusion, I want to reflect a moment on where we go from here – and I would like for you, too, to dream a minute about how we embrace a grand vision for Springfield real and attainable? First, we must decide what we want our city to be and then we must go out and make that dream a reality. I support the work of the Chamber's private-sector driven Visioning Committee

and commend the committee for aiming high. We must have a bias toward action. We must not give up. We must all come to the table together.

In the heart of downtown's marquee innovation district – IDEA Commons- a bold project is emerging. In a true public public-private partnership - Missouri State University, The Vecino Group, Springfield Business Development Corporation and the City of Springfield, are working on a proposed \$55 million dollar project that is bringing new excitement to the IDEA Commons.

This project embodies the City Council priority of Economic Vitality – redeveloping downtown, creating a sense of place, and providing opportunities for existing businesses to expand and a place for new businesses and jobs to locate.

The project will expand the high tech research facility at the Jordan Valley Innovation Center, bring sizable, modern office space to the downtown market that will help Springfield land IT companies, accommodate growing parking needs in the district and allow for stormwater improvements and facilitate the daylighting of Jordan Creek. Daylighting the creek would create additional economic development and quality of life amenities

needed to attract workers to the Springfield region.

Making good progress on the project will require a complex stack of incentives and assistance. I want to thank Senator Jay Wasson for his leadership in modification to the State TIF law this past session. Thank you, Jay. That will help to make this project dream a reality.

Perhaps the Springfieldian most well-known for never giving up and subsequently making dreams a reality is Johnny Morris. Johnny and his team at Bass Pro and Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium have once again proven that hard work, persistence and a laser focus on the seemingly unattainable, can in fact, become a reality.

We are sitting only a few blocks away from what recent USA Today national polls named the number one best new attraction in America and the best aquarium in the United States. Let that sink in for a moment. We have the number one best new attraction in America right here in Springfield. My vision is a strong economic vitality corridor running from Bass Pro to Park Central Square to IDEA Commons to Historic Commercial Street.

The bar is now raised incredibly high. But, so is the level of inspiration. Our cooperative spirit, our can-do attitude, our non-stop focus on ideas and arts and entrepreneurship and innovation....we are poised on the precipice of a new destiny for our city, our people. Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.