



CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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Key Issues

Forward SGF is the product of an extensive community outreach process that supported a bottom-up approach to the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The *Forward SGF* outreach process yielded an unparalleled amount of participation with approximately **10,000 points of interaction with the Springfield community**. This exceptional level of participation showcased the remarkable commitment and active involvement of the Springfield community. Engagement was conducted through a wide range of methods, both online and in person. This included engaging nearly 1,500 participants in face-to-face workshops, and over 7,000 participants through online surveys and map.social, an online mapping tool.

Community engagement and the feedback received was a crucial component of developing *Forward SGF*. The engagement process gave community members a chance to be heard and take part in determining the City's future. Representation at the workshops included individuals who brought diverse backgrounds and interests to the process, including residents, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, non-profits, environmental organizations, and business stakeholders. The input solicited identified key issues, opportunities, and assets of the City and laid the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

Forward SGF is the result of an extensive and inclusive planning process that engaged a wide range of community members and stakeholders in crafting a shared vision for the City's future. The process aimed to identify and address key concerns within the City while setting a precedent for planning in the community. It contained the following nine steps:

GETTING STARTED

Kicking it off!

The planning process began with meetings with key City staff, elected and appointed officials, and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Team to set the framework of the planning process and review important issues facing Springfield.



1

RESEARCH

Getting to know Springfield's demographics!

Existing market and demographic conditions and trends were analyzed in Springfield and the larger market area to ensure the Plan's recommendations were grounded in market and economic realities. A firm understanding of the existing market and the potential for various types of development throughout Springfield also helped establish the foundation for land use planning and development decision-making.



3

VISION

What does Springfield want to be like moving forward?

An overall "vision" for Springfield was established to provide focus and direction for subsequent planning activities. It serves as the "cornerstone" of the consensus building process, identifying a path for growth and investment and ensuring the Plan is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community.



5

SUBAREAS

Helping areas that need a closer look!

Subareas were selected for more detailed planning and guidance for focused investment. These subareas are considered susceptible to redevelopment and likely candidates for change and investment. For each, guided considerations, objectives, and priorities were identified, firmly establishing the subarea's character and future intent.



7

ADOPTION

The plan for Springfield is moving forward!

The draft Comprehensive Plan was prepared and presented to the Advisory Team, Planning and Zoning Commission, and public to gain input on the document and its recommendations. The Plan was revised based on feedback received and presented to the City Council for adoption.



9



2

ENGAGEMENT

Getting involved in the planning process!

The community engagement process began, with a wide variety of both face-to-face and online activities to obtain the broadest levels of participation and feedback. The engagement process provided an opportunity for community members to share what they believe are Springfield's greatest strengths and weaknesses, and key issues and opportunities that should be addressed by the Plan.



4

HERE & NOW

What is Springfield like today?

Existing conditions and opportunities in Springfield were examined to establish a foundation of where Springfield is at today. This included reconnaissance, research, data analysis, outreach feedback synthesis, and discussions with key stakeholders. A summary of findings was presented in the **Issues and Opportunities Report** in April 2020, which provided a basis for the Plan's development and recommendations.



6

CORE ELEMENTS

Pulling all the pieces together into an action oriented plan!

The core elements of the Comprehensive Plan were prepared that relate to land use, economic development, transportation, housing, community facilities, infrastructure, and parks and natural resources. These plan components provide the "core" chapters of the Comprehensive Plan and reflect outreach activities and the City's vision, goals, and objectives.



8

DOWNTOWN & COMMERCIAL STREET

Creating a plan specific to Downtown and Commercial Street!

Two supplementary planning processes were conducted specific to Downtown and the Commercial Street areas that included reconnaissance, outreach workshops, the development of vision and goals. Based on this information, a plans were prepared that address functional subareas, key development opportunities, urban design, placemaking, and connectivity improvements (see **Chapter 13: Downtown Plan** and **Chapter 14: Commercial Street**).

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Weighing uncertain national and local trends, demographic and migrational shifts, and unanticipated residual effects, created the need to pause and reconsider many of the recommendations included in the Plan. To some degree all cities, including Springfield, are in a wait and see mode as the pandemic cloud lifts and clearer trends and consumer preferences emerge. In anticipation of efforts that will guide new development and redevelopment, *Forward SGF* makes some allowances to reevaluate certain aspects of the City development in the coming months and years, following the official end of the pandemic.

FORWARD SGF COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARY

The *Forward SGF Community Outreach Summary Report* was created as a result of outreach conducted during the initial phases of the planning process. It provides an in-depth summary of major talking points and online survey responses. Key topics from community outreach have been integrated throughout the Comprehensive Plan in corresponding sections.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON OUTREACH

It is important to note that the second half of the planning process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted alterations in the project timeline and outreach strategy. During this time, in-person meetings were discouraged to slow the spread of the virus, the project team was able to pivot and effectively engage residents and stakeholders by leveraging online and social media platforms and providing virtual meetings, workshops, and tools aimed at allowing people to actively participate in the planning process from home. Throughout this phase of the project, the public was able to see presentations, ask questions, provide input, and remain actively and effectively engaged.



Nearly
10,000
Total Points of Participation



7,108
Online Engagement Participation



2,443
In-Person Engagement Participation



687
Online Goals and Strategies Surveys taken



42
Online Business Surveys taken



3,927
Student Surveys Taken



800
Visioning Workshop Participants



120
Focus Group Participants



1,341
Community Workshop Series Participants



57
Issues and Opportunities Workshops



573
Online Residential Surveys Taken



99
map.social Maps Created



33
Online Community Facilities Survey taken



24
Key Person Interviews



41
Postcards



84
August Kickoff Participants



612
Online Downtown Surveys taken



37
Virtual Downtown Visioning Workshop Participants



1,098
Faculty and Staff Surveys Taken



884
Staff-Led Event Participants



24
Key Person Interviews



41
Postcards



84
August Kickoff Participants



87
Business Workshop Participants



23
Advisory Team Members



122
DIY Workshop Participants

IN PERSON OUTREACH

In-person community outreach events were critical to engaging residents, civic and business leaders, and other key stakeholders to understand the planning process, identify projects or actions facing the City, and share community assets that should be maintained and enhanced. The planning process included a robust variety of events, included the following:

COMMUNITY KICK-OFF EVENT

The Community Kick-off Event was the first public outreach event of the *Forward SGF* process and took place at the Springfield Art Museum in August 2019. With 84 community members in attendance, the event introduced the community to the project, solicited input on community strengths and plan priorities, and shared opportunities for public engagement in the planning process.

ADVISORY TEAM MEETINGS

An Advisory Team was formed for the project that served as a “sounding board” to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is reflective of the Springfield community and serves as a meaningful tool. It consisted of 23 members including residents, business owners, and elected and appointed officials. The Advisory Team met multiple times throughout the process to review draft content and provide feedback.

BUSINESS WORKSHOPS

Business Workshops were hosted in August and September of 2019 that included meetings with Good Morning, Springfield!, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Network Leadership Council. These workshops were attended by a total of 87 business owners and operators to gain insight into the City’s business environment.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SERIES

Three Community Workshops were hosted in September 2019 to gather input from residents on key issues and opportunities facing the community. Attended by 176 people, the workshops included a review of the planning process and an opportunity for attendees to provide feedback on issues, concerns, and potential projects desired within the community. The workshops were hosted at different locations in the City to ensure community members throughout Springfield could attend.

POSTCARDS

Postcards were distributed at in-person informational presentations and pop-up events to supplement workshop exercises and gain additional feedback. A total of 41 postcards were completed and provided feedback on important issues facing Springfield.

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

Twenty-four Key Person Interviews were conducted to gain diverse, first-hand insight into the community regarding local issues and potentials. Interviewees included property owners, new and lifelong residents, local builders and developers, higher education representatives, local business owners and operators, area not-for-profit organizations and service providers, and representatives from other governmental, institutional, and civic groups. Key person interviews and focus group discussions allowed the *Forward SGF* team to gain first-hand insight into the community from a diverse array of perspectives.

STAFF KICK-OFF MEETING

A Staff Kick-Off Meeting was held in June 2019 to initiate the planning process. The consultant team met with 25 members of City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Staff to introduce the *Forward SGF* project and gain initial input on key issues and assets of the community.

DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) KITS & STAFF-LED EVENTS

To engage residents more effectively at the neighborhood level and expand the reach of engagement efforts, City staff worked with various neighborhood and interest groups to conduct about 60 workshops throughout the community. Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Workshop Kits were also prepared that provided the instructions and materials necessary for local community leaders to run their own workshops. 859 participants were engaged through staff-led events and 112 through DIY Workshops, for a total of 981 participants.

VISIONING WORKSHOP SERIES

Three Visioning Workshops were hosted in January 2020 to gain input from the community on their vision for Springfield. Each two-hour workshop included a real-time interactive polling exercise to vote on top community issues and concerns, and a hands-on mapping exercise where groups put pen to paper and drew out their vision for the City. Over 800 community members attended the three workshops.

PLANNING STUDIO

The Planning Studio, located at 351 N Boonville Avenue, was used as a venue for numerous workshops throughout the community outreach process. The studio created space for engagement opportunities and will continue to be used as a hub for information moving forward in the planning process.

GOAL SETTING FOCUS GROUPS

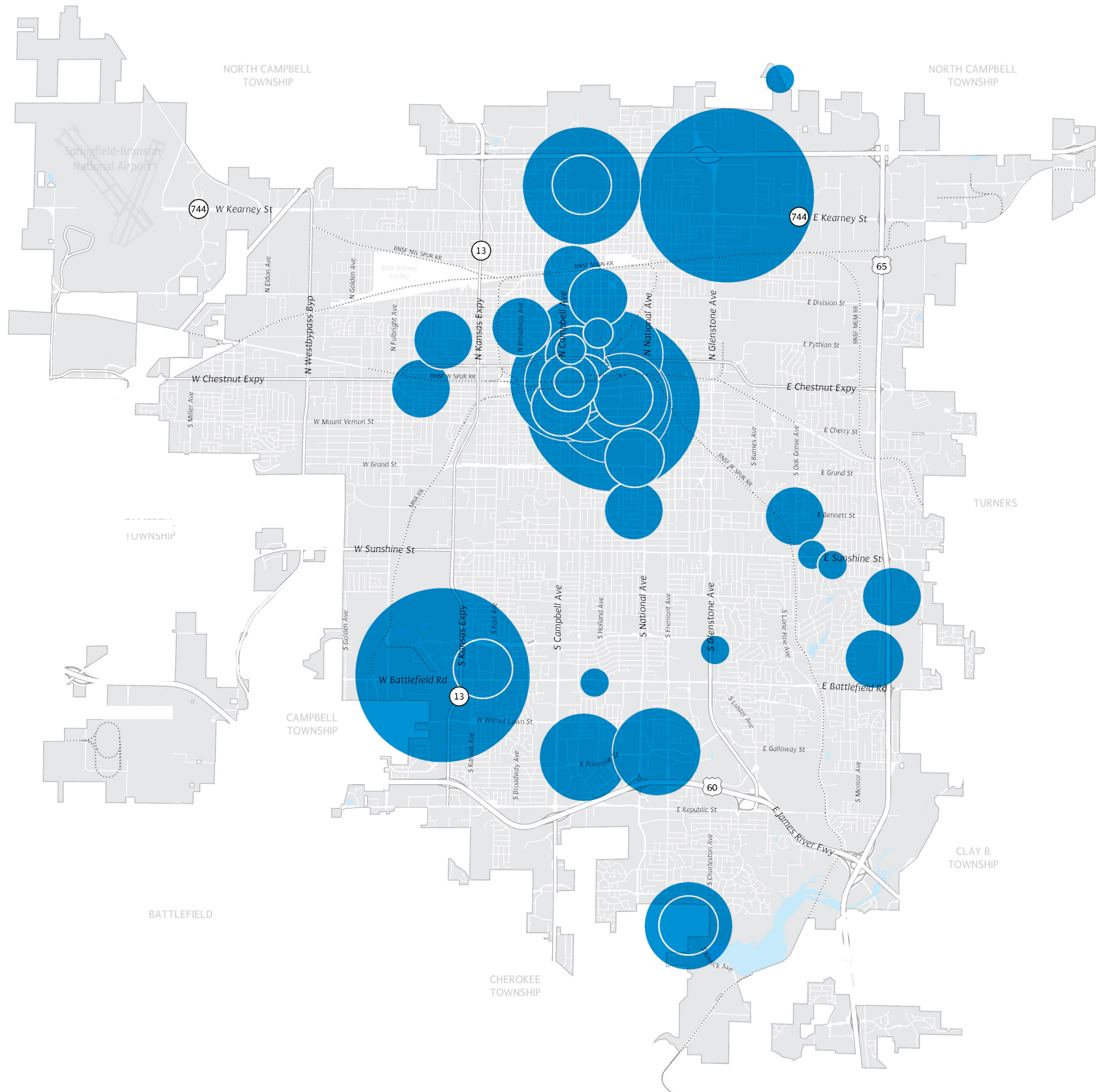
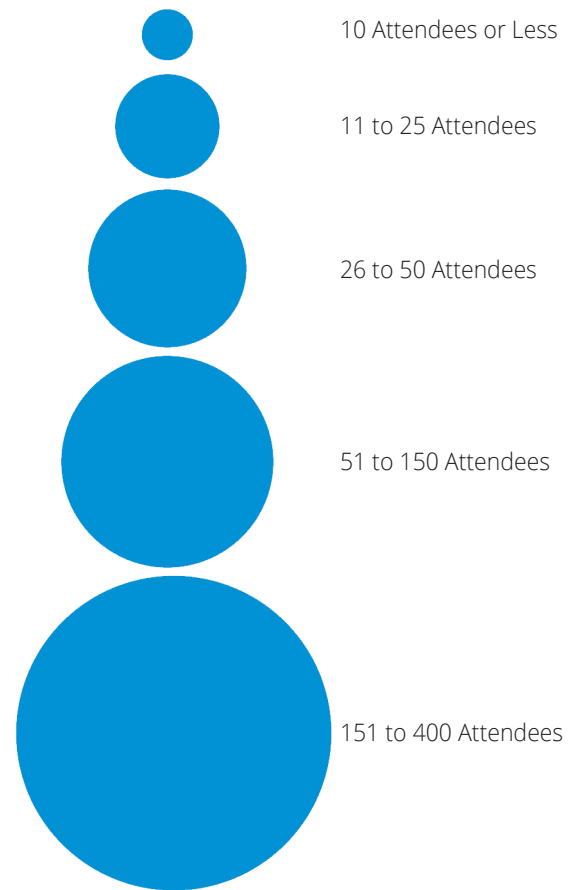
Focus Groups were formed for each Plan topic and each group was charged with helping shape the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The groups consisted of citizens with relevant technical backgrounds, Advisory Team members that oversaw certain aspects of the community, or other community members with unique perspectives. The groups met three times (once virtually) to outline, prioritize, and review the vision, goals, and preliminary strategies of the Plan based on the issues and opportunities identified during the planning process.





IN PERSON EVENT LOCATIONS

This map provides a visual representation of all the in-person community outreach events completed as part of the *Forward SGF* process. A circle is placed at each outreach location that is proportional in size to the number of attendees at the event. In total, there have been over 70 in-person events conducted, engaging a total of 2,443 participants through face-to-face engagement events.



ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The following online engagement was conducted as part of the *Forward SGF* outreach process to increase the reach of public participation efforts:

MAP.SOCIAL

Using map.social, an online mapping tool, over 650 points of interest were mapped by community members through the planning process. These points identified public safety concerns, community assets, development priority sites, problematic intersections, undesirable uses, desired uses/developments, desired paths, and areas with poor appearances. Callouts shown on the following map represent a random selection of comments from the *Forward SGF* survey.

PROJECT WEBSITE

A project website was created to support the planning process and act as a central hub for information for the Plan. From the website, community members were able to learn about the Plan and upcoming events, access interim documents and reports, and take part in various online outreach tools, including online questionnaires and map.social.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES

The following online questionnaires were conducted during the planning process:

- Resident Questionnaire** – available to residents on the project website throughout the entire planning process to allow for remote participation, featuring questions about housing, transportation, land use, and more.
- Business Questionnaire** – sent to business owners, business operators, private developers, and other stakeholders to gain input on the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within Springfield's business environment.
- Community Facilities Questionnaire** – sent to Springfield's community service providers to gain insight on agencies' current and future plans and potential improvements within the community.
- Student Questionnaire** – sent to students, staff, and faculty at high schools, colleges, and universities throughout Springfield to gain their perspective on issues, assets, character, public places, and services within Springfield.
- Goals and Strategies Surveys** – available to the public on the project website to gain feedback on the draft Vision Statements, Goals, and Strategies that would serve as the framework for the *Forward SGF* plan content and recommendations.
- Downtown Springfield Survey** – available to the public on the project website to receive input on issues and opportunities within Downtown Springfield as part of the planning process of the Downtown Plan (see **Chapter 13: Downtown Plan** for more information).

Project Website

Springfield Comprehensive Plan - Resident Questionnaire

Housing & Residential

When considering Springfield's existing housing and residential areas, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness for the City today.

	Weakness	Neutral	Strength
Character of residential neighborhoods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Range of housing options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing options for seniors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing that appeals to young professionals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Residential Questionnaire

Springfield Comprehensive Plan - Business Questionnaire

Business Community

When considering existing conditions within Springfield, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness to operating a business in the City today.

	Weakness	Neutral	Strength
Visibility and access to customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proximity to public transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nearby competition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal permit fees and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Business Questionnaire

Forward SGF Goals & Strategies Survey

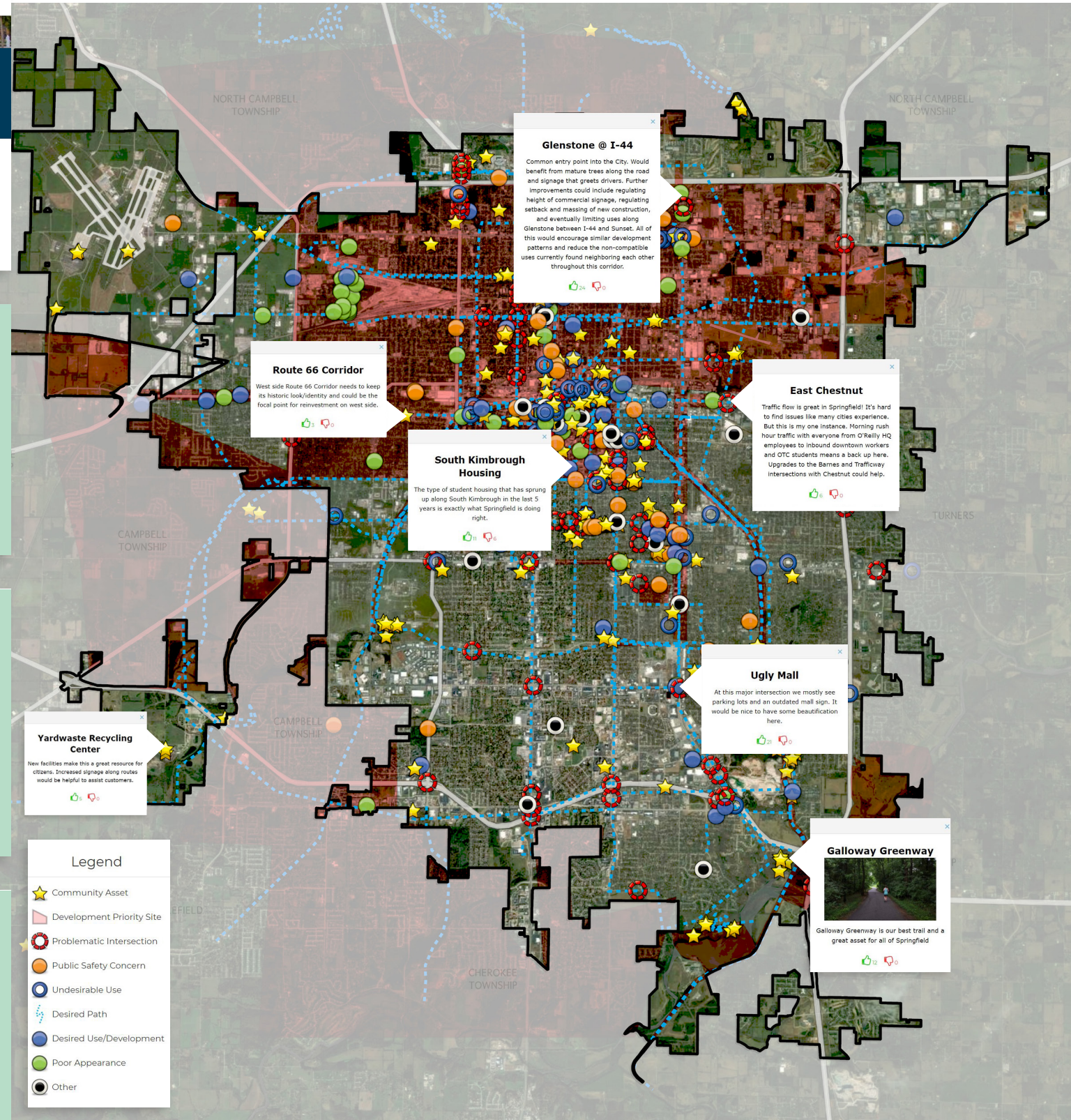
Housing & Neighborhoods

Please rank all the goals related to Housing & Neighborhoods in order of importance.

Note: Only one goal can be ranked 1st, 2nd, and so on.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Goal 1: Preserve and enhance quality of place in existing residential neighborhoods, while promoting context-sensitive infill development to address "missing middle" housing needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Goal 2: Support new residential development in strategic locations to leverage the City's assets including greenways, neighborhood nodes, and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Goals and Strategies Survey

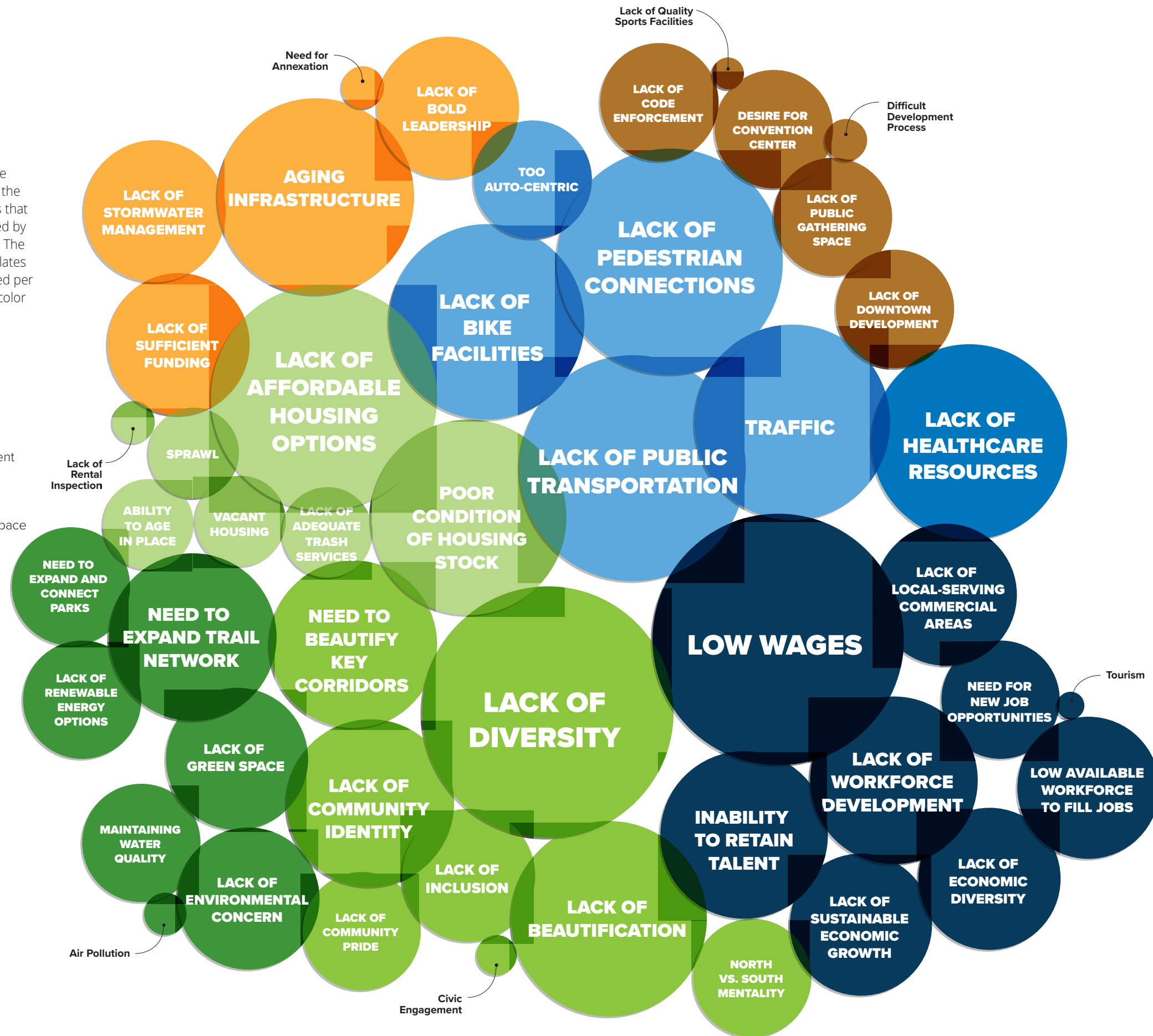


KEY ISSUES

The graphic on this page highlights the top issues and concerns identified by the community across all outreach efforts that are directly related to topics addressed by the *Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan*. The size of the topic bubble roughly correlates with the amount of comments received per topic. The top issues are grouped by color under overarching topics as follows:

Key Issue Topics

- Health and Safety
- Transportation
- Jobs and Economic Development
- Character and Identity
- Housing
- Natural Resources and Open Space
- Government and Infrastructure
- Land Use and Development

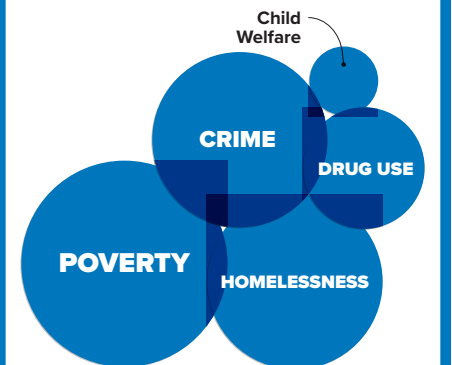


NO SILVER BULLET

Per State of Missouri planning enabling legislation, a Comprehensive Plan must first and foremost address land use and development. While the Comprehensive Plan addresses a wide variety of topics, it is not a silver bullet for all public policy and City initiatives. While a wide variety of issues and opportunities were identified by the community during the outreach process, the Comprehensive Plan is geared towards spatial issues related to future development and growth. It does not address all issues in Springfield identified by the community.

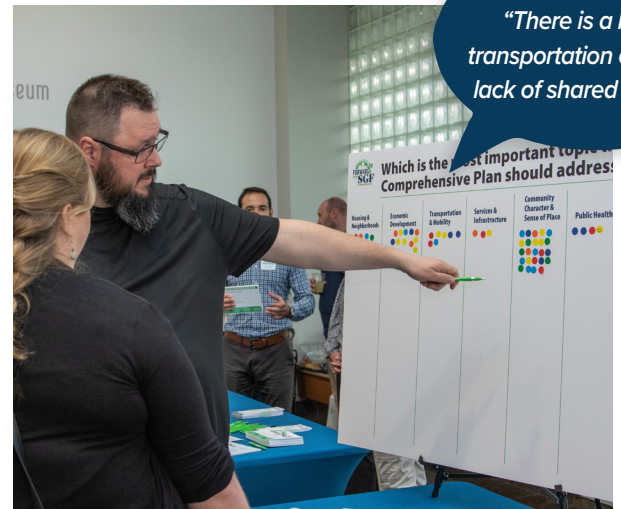
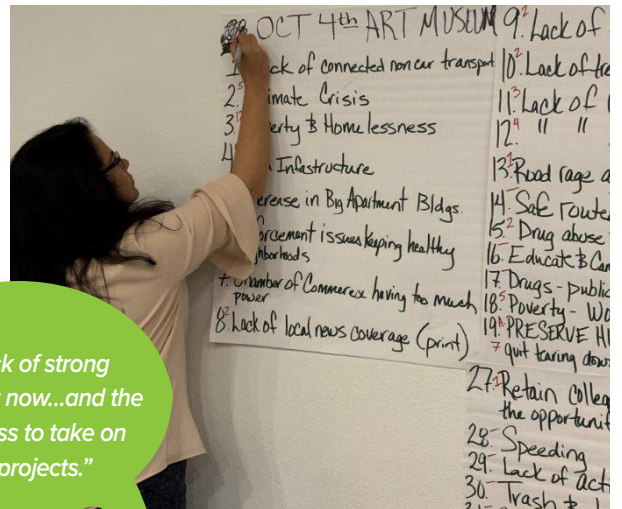
Several of the outreach themes highlighted are dealt with directly in the Comprehensive Plan while others will require an indirect approach. For example, the Plan directly addresses housing issues using established mechanisms like code enforcement. However, issues such as drug use and poverty are less directly related to land use and development policy. For these issues, the Comprehensive Plan can play an indirect role by addressing environmental contributors to the issue and raising awareness of community priorities that need to be dealt with outside of *Forward SGF*.

Crime, poverty, drug use, child welfare are examples of key issues in Springfield identified by the community that are not directly addressed by the Plan.





"We lack of strong vision right now...and the willingness to take on bold projects."



"There is a lack of transportation choices, a lack of shared mobility."



TOP 10 KEY ISSUES

The following is an overview of the top 10 issues identified by the community during the outreach process that are addressed by the Plan. These issues informed the foundation of the *Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan* and its recommendations.

Note: The issues are ordered in alphabetic order and not by any priority level.

Beautification

The lack of beautification in Springfield was identified as a prevalent concern. Commercial Areas and key corridors were identified, as well as the poor condition of some of the city's housing stock and the apparent lack of pride and investment in the community. Community members wish to enhance the appearance of the City's key gateway routes, such as at major intersections and expressways, routes to the airport, and frequently traveled corridors, as well as within the neighborhoods throughout the community.

Community Identity

Community members highlighted the lack of a strong regional and national identity despite Springfield's many assets. There is a desire to leverage natural assets, particularly the City's unique position as a gateway to the Ozarks, and create a cohesive vision for economic development to attract businesses and talent from across the nation. The City's neighborhood organizations were also identified as great assets in defining local identity and organizing local initiatives.

Diversity & Inclusion

The lack of inclusion and diversity regarding racial and ethnic groups, the LGBTQ community, and people of varied socioeconomic backgrounds were highlighted as concerns by the community. There is a desire to grow the City as more welcoming for different types of people and strengthen inclusion.

Healthcare Resources

The community identified insufficient access to healthcare as a key issue, particularly related to at-risk youth, drug use, and homelessness. This includes the desire for more affordable healthcare options across the City, increasing the rate of insured individuals, and improving the local culture and social stigma related to mental health treatment.

Housing Affordability, Diversity & Quality

The lack of affordable and diverse housing types is a major issue identified by the community, particularly for supporting different socioeconomic backgrounds and stages of life. This includes providing quality, attainable housing for low-income families and for target demographics like professionals, young families, and seniors. The community also called for improving the quality of the existing housing stock, neighborhood revitalization, and rental inspection.

Low Wages

While community members highlighted lower cost of living as a great attribute of Springfield, the prevalence of low wages is a major concern. It was identified as detrimental to attracting new residents from outside the region, upward mobility for low-income individuals, and improving living conditions.

Pedestrian & Bike Connectivity

Community members identified the lack of pedestrian and bike infrastructure as a top priority, including bike facilities, sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails. The need for a connected, safe, and accessible multimodal network was frequently cited to connect destinations across the City.

Public Transportation

Community members cited public transportation as a concern. There is a desire for more frequent buses, shorter distances between stops, larger service coverage, regional connections, and increased service times.

Talent Attraction & Workforce Retention

Attracting and retaining the next generation of talented workers is a key concern of the community, including "brain drain," where well-educated graduates from local universities are moving elsewhere for better employment opportunities. There is a desire to improve workforce development, attract businesses with competitive wages, and improve quality of life and amenities in the City to draw talent from across the nation.

Traffic & Congestion

Traffic and congestion were identified as a top issue in Springfield, particularly in Downtown and on major roadways. Community members underscored auto-dependency as a primary cause with too many personal cars crowding the roadways.

IN THE PLAN

While these top issues are interrelated with different topics of the Comprehensive Plan and are addressed in multiple sections, the following list identifies key areas of the Plan where each issue is further discussed:

Beautification	92
Community Identity	214
Diversity & Inclusion	97
Healthcare Resources	123
Housing Affordability, Diversity & Quality	71
Low Wages	87
Pedestrian & Bike Connectivity	108
Public Transportation	105
Talent Attraction & Workforce Retention	95
Traffic & Congestion	106

"Not enough safe, affordable housing, especially for low-income and homeless."

"Springfield suffers from a lack of opportunities for young professionals and lack of career development—brain drain to other bigger cities."

"Springfield lacks a community identity on a national stage."

"The City is generally not very aesthetically pleasing. Beautification efforts need to be expanded."

"We need for more trails and pedestrian-oriented infrastructure"

"Lack of the diversity of people, thoughts, and beliefs."