

Frequently Asked Questions about the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

Advising + Planning + Evaluating + Leading



What is the SSCRPC?

The SSCRPC is the joint planning body for Sangamon County and the City of Springfield. However along with its responsibilities to Springfield and the County, the Commission works with many other municipalities, special districts, public agencies, public-private partnerships and not-for-profit organizations throughout the region to promote orderly growth and development.

How was it created?

The Commission in its current form was created by Sangamon County ordinance on October 6, 1987, under authority provided by the State of Illinois' Regional Planning Act. Its predecessor agencies existed well prior to this. The Sangamon County Planning Commission was established in March 1957 and the Springfield Plan Commission in June of that same year. By 1959 they were meeting jointly and were served by the same staff. By 1966 the two commissions had fully joined forces. The creation of the SSCRPC in 1987 formalized a working relationship that has now been in existence for over 50 years.

What geographic area is covered by the SSCRPC?

While some regional planning organizations serve multi-county areas, the SSCRPC limits its work to the needs of Springfield, Sangamon County and its various communities.

What does the SSCRPC do?

Through the work of its professional staff the Commission provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, the environment and economic growth, as well as special projects of local and regional interest. Its specific tasks are described in its establishing ordinance, but include such things as:

- Developing regional and local plans that address present and future development.
- Providing information, reports and data related to planning and planning issues.
- Advising and consulting with units of government and others on plans, projects, proposals and policies.
- Reviewing Federal and State funded programs affecting the Springfield-Sangamon County area.

In carrying out its tasks, the SSCRPC prepares area-wide planning documents and assists the County, cities and villages, as well as special districts, with planning activities, and also conducts numerous research studies, analytic reviews and planning projects each year. For example, the Commission's staff reviews all proposed Springfield and Sangamon County land divisions and developments, and makes recommendations on those jurisdictions' zoning and variance requests.

It also acts in regional capacities, for example serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning (as part of the Springfield Area Transportation Study, or SATS), directing the development of the Sangamon Regional Comprehensive Plan, serving as the County's Floodplain Administrator, and acting as the area's Federal A-95 review process clearinghouse.

Does the Commission have any regulatory authority?

Not directly. The SSCRPC only has the authority provided to it by Springfield or Sangamon County ordinance. In most cases its responsibility is to provide objective, professional opinions on matters that come before the County Board or Springfield City Council. This is the case with zoning and the development of land, for example. In some cases it has a limited regulatory responsibility, as is the case when it acts as Floodplain Administrator or Plats Officer. Since the SSCRPC Executive Director also oversees the County's Department of Zoning, he does have regulatory responsibilities related to this area, but the Department of Zoning is administratively and organizationally separate from the Commission.

Who oversees the SSCRPC?

As the name suggests, the work of the SSCRPC is overseen by a commission.

This commission is made up of 17 members, including three representatives each from the Sangamon County Board and Springfield City Council, five special units of government, and six appointed citizen members from the City and County. The Commission's officers include a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary, all of whom must be elected by the members of the Commission from the six citizen members.

Some Commission activities, such as approval of its budget submission and the selection of its Executive Director, are handled by the SSCRPC's Executive Policy Board. The Executive Policy Board is made up of the Commission's three officers, the Springfield Mayor and Sangamon County Board Chair, the chief presiding officer of one of the special units of government, and one member of the Commission elected at-large.

By ordinance, all of the financial activities of the Commission are overseen by the Sangamon County Board. The SSCRPC is subject to the County's annual audit and also receives its own independent financial audit each year.

Who serves on the Commission?

Representation on the Commission is established by ordinance and comes from three sources:

- **Elected Officials:** The Chairman of the Sangamon County Board; Chairman of the County's Public Health, Safety and Zoning Committee; Chairman of the County's Finance Committee; the Mayor of Springfield; and two Springfield Aldermen nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.
- **Special Districts:** The chief presiding officers of the Springfield Park District, Springfield Airport Authority, Springfield Mass Transit District, Springfield Metro Sanitary District, and Springfield School District 186.
- **Appointed Citizens:** Three citizens appointed by the Chairman of the County Board and confirmed by the Board; and three citizens appointed by the Mayor of Springfield from the members of the City's Planning and Zoning Commission, and confirmed by the City Council.

The citizen members are appointed for four-year terms, while the elected officials and special district representatives' appointments are coterminous with the terms of their elected or appointed offices.

How is the Commission funded?

The Commission's work is primarily funded by four sources: Sangamon County, the City of Springfield, the Illinois Department of Transportation (due to the SSCRPC's role in the Springfield Area Transportation Study), and various grants and contracts that the Commission competes for and receives.

Who handles the day-to-day operations of the SSCRPC?

The Commission's Executive Director. He or she is appointed by the Executive Policy Board of the Commission and confirmed by the Sangamon County Board. The Executive Director also serves as County Plats Officer, County Floodplain Administrator, and oversees the County's Zoning Office.

How is the Commission's staff organized?

Currently the SSCRPC's staff members are organized around five functions: Administration; Strategic and Comprehensive Planning; Land Development Planning; Transportation Planning; Land Use and Environmental Planning. The largest staff commitment is in the area of Transportation Planning due to the Commission's work for the Springfield Area Transportation Study (SATS). Even so, most of the projects and tasks carried out by the Commission's staff require that they work together as a team. The development of a local comprehensive plan, for example, requires the involvement of staff from all five functional areas.

Will the Commission do work or take on projects at the request of individual citizens or private firms?

Not usually. The Commission's work plan and staff assignments are built around the needs identified by its principal partners (the City of Springfield and Sangamon County), projects funded by other governmental bodies (such as the work that it does for SATS or when it works with a municipality to develop a comprehensive plan), or on assignment or subcontract with a private firm or not-for-profit organization that is acting under a governmental agreement, grant or contract. The Regional Planning Commission is a governmental body, so its work is related to public — rather than private — interests.

However, the Commission regularly adds tasks to its work plan that arise from suggestions made by members of the public or private sector representatives. These suggestions often come from the various public engagement activities that the SSCRPC sponsors throughout the year.

So what must a local government pay to become involved?

Aside from the planning services that the SSCRPC staff provides to Sangamon County and the City of Springfield, the Commission is authorized to conduct activities for other local units of government, State and Federal agencies, and a number of other organizations. These services are most often provided through grants from the agencies or organizations or under contract with them. The Commission also has conducted work for private firms when those firms are involved in a project supported by one of the member jurisdictions of the Commission.

So how can an individual citizen become involved?

Citizens can become involved in SSCRPC activities in a number of ways aside from being appointed to the Commission by the Springfield City Council or the Sangamon County Board. Meetings of the Commission, its Executive Policy Board, and the Land Subdivision Committee are open to the public, as are meetings of SATS. The Commission often seeks citizen input on projects and surveys it is conducting. It holds public workshops and meetings on various subjects throughout the year, and provides a great deal of information on its website: www.sscrpc.com. Citizens can also request to be placed on the Commission's email list.

Individuals interested in Commission activities should also check the events calendar on the SSCRPC website as well as the other information provided there. The information resources provided through the SSCRPC website are specifically intended to provide current information to the public. The public can also keep up with the Commission — and the topics it is following — on its Facebook site.

Who should I contact for more information?

Contact the Commission directly. This can be done by:

- **Mail:** Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, 200 South 9th Street, Room 212, Springfield, IL 62701-1629.
- **Email:** sscrpc@co.sangamon.il.us.
- **Phone:** 217-535-3110.
- **Fax:** 217-535-3111.
- **Through the Commission's website:** www.sscrpc.com, on the "Contact Us" page.

Visitors are welcome as well, but since SSCRPC staff members are often involved in a number of activities, including field work which takes them away from the office, those wishing to visit are advised to contact the Commission to make an appointment with the appropriate staff member prior to a visit.