

# Information Brief

November 15, 2017

## Key Findings:

The SSCRPC found:

- That the 121 responses to the question posed by the consultant — What are the Negative Aspects of Doing Business in Sangamon County and the State of Illinois? — all involved perceptions that could be clustered into 14 local barrier groups.
- Only four of these groupings included more than 10% of all perceptions: General Attitudinal, Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy, Plan Implementation, and Regulatory issues.
- Barriers at the state level formed a 15th barrier group, that included the second highest number of comments.
- The Planning and Plan Implementation comments appear to be inter-related and affect the General Attitudinal issues.
- Regulatory issues made up a rather small segment of the comments in comparison to the other large comment groups, and may be due to concerns about economic development planning and implementation.
- Addressing attitudinal issues may present the largest challenge.

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## Perceptions of Barriers Affecting Economic Growth & Development in Sangamon County

### An analysis of the comments of local leaders related to negative aspects of doing business in the region

The Sangamon County Board engaged a consultant (The Development Consortium, Inc.: DCI) to review and evaluate past and current economic development practices in Sangamon County in a regional context. In conducting this study (Coil & Mathis, 2017), DCI reported talking with “nearly 130 individuals, employment and business leaders, organizations, developers, contractors, educators, unions, government agencies, local and state government officials, national and regional site location consultants and other interested parties”, to gather their thoughts and perceptions (Coil & Mathis, p. 5).

While much might be drawn from DCI’s report, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) found equally important the specific barriers to economic growth and development reported by those interviewed, as these barriers should be addressed in any economic development planning and subsequent strategy development.

This was particularly important to the SSCRPC in that DCI commented that if “an effective regional collaboration [for economic development] existed, the [SSCRPC] could focus on planning and not have to fill the gaps of an ineffective regional development program” (Coil & Mathis, p. 22), and because the SSCRPC is listed as one of the entities with which a relationship needs to exist in order to implement a regional vision to be developed by a new, regional economic development entity (Coil & Mathis, p. 59). If this is the case, then the problems that the planning conducted by the SSCRPC or others would be expected to resolve should be related to the barriers to economic growth that some or all of the respondents reported.

While the DCI report does not describe the protocol used in conducting the analysis, the consultants did explore a number of areas in their interviews. In terms of economic development planning, one question posed by DCI was of particular interest (Coil & Mathis, p. 33) and is the subject of this *Information Brief*:

***“What are the Negative Aspects of Doing Business in Sangamon County and the State of Illinois?”***

The SSCRPC attempted to assess the nature of the barriers identified as they are perceived by those interviewed.

## ASPECTS OF THE REVIEW

For the SSCRPC to consider the implications of the respondents’ answers to the question above, several additional methodological matters needed to be addressed.

First, DCI did not report the number of respondents providing an answer to this question, but did report that there were nearly 130 individuals interviewed. For this reason, the SSCRPC selected 129 as the base number of respondents for the analysis provided here.

Second, DCI did not indicate whether or not more than one response to the question could be associated with one or more individual respondents; that is, did each of those responding provide only one response, or were there cases in which a single respondent provided several? The answer to this question is important, as if numerous respondents identified the same barrier, that should increase the importance of that barrier overall. Equally, if one respondent provided several barriers, this would indicate that the barriers provided are of more limited importance to the respondents overall. Not knowing the answer to that question, for analytic purposes the SSCRPC ultimately assumed that no single respondent provided more than one response to the question. As there were 121 responses to the question identified in the consultant’s report, and assuming 129 respondents with no respondent providing more than one of the 121 responses, 93.8% of them provided some response to the question.

However, even though responses related to state-created issues were separated from locally-created ones in the report (Coil & Mathis, p. 33), and seven state-specific issues were cited by them and separated from the other responses, this leaves 114 responses associated with local barriers.

However, the SSCRPC found that 12 of the responses identified as pertaining only to Springfield and Sangamon County as local barriers were actually state-related issues. These additional responses were:

State pensions unfunded.

We’re in IL – no state budget; pension crisis.

State Capital – used to be a draw, but now center of disaster.

Issues with state.

My business is owed \$63 million by state.

Universities not being funded.

Workers comp.

Workers comp.

Unemployment insurance.

State has beaten landlords up on space.

Lack of payments to med facilities from state has trickle-down effect.

State not updating infrastructure.

This means that when considering the answer to the question posed, 19 of the responses, rather than seven, actually related to state, rather than local, barriers to growth. This left only 102 responses related to matters that could specifically be addressed at the local level. Assuming again that there were 129 respondents and no respondent offered more than one response to the question, about 79% of those interviewed focused on a local barrier, while about 21% addressed state-related issues.

Third, a simple review of the responses to the question posed is not informative for two reasons. One is that the responses indicate opinions or beliefs — perceptions — and the study does not indicate if an effort was made to verify the factual basis for the answers the respondents provided. The other arises from the general ambiguity and “fuzziness” of some of the responses: e.g., one response was simply “Springfielditis”.

Even so, when they are grouped, perceptions often indicate a reality — that a problem or problems exist — even though the basis for the perception may be unclear. To get to this level of analysis the individual responses must be sorted to identify larger trends found in the comments. The sorting helps identify the relevancy of the individual comments and makes the individual responses less “fuzzy”. To do this sorting, the SSCRPC used a method designed for this purpose: an “Affinity Diagram” using what is generally known as the *KJ Method*. The method is a commonly used tool to organize notes and insights from often “fuzzy” field interviews or brainstorming sessions (see, for example, Curedate, 2016; Martin & Hanington, 2012). The SSCRPC has used this method previously for similar purposes, such as grouping open-ended responses to survey questions.

An initial sorting was used to identify the groupings (the “affinities”), followed by three independent sortings to identify the final allocation of comments to each group. This final grouping, which provides the basis for the analysis provided here, is included as an attachment at the end of this *Information Brief*.

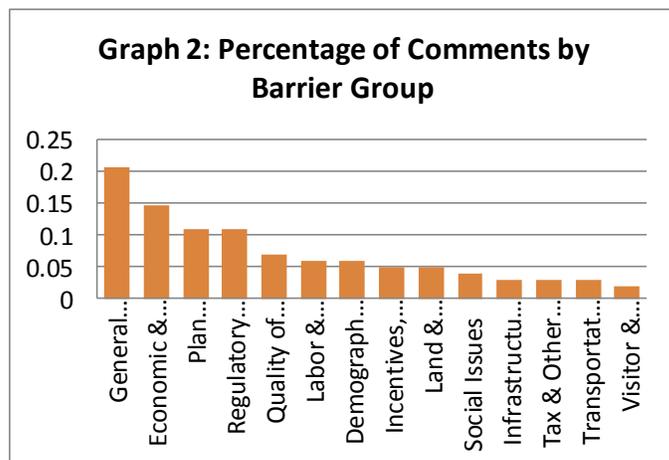
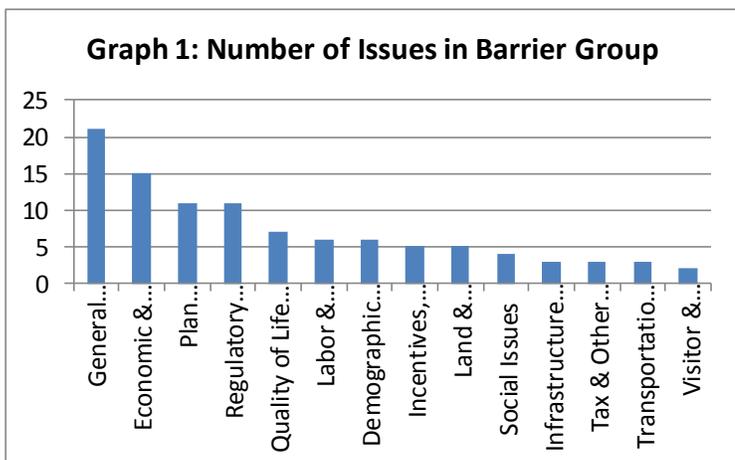
## THE PERCEPTIONS

Following a review of the responses and their sorting, the 102 responses were found to cluster into 14 local “barrier” groups. Table 1, below, lists the 14 groups into which the comments clustered. It also provides the percentage of the 102 responses that fell into each cluster. Graphs 1 and 2 display the grouped data for comparison purposes.

Only four of these groups generated more than 10% of all responses, with only one above 15%. The answers to the questions were, then, quite dispersed, with no particular group of perceptions being overwhelmingly noticeable.

Those above 10% of the total are: *General Attitudes* about the region and/or its communities (e.g., “No vibrancy”, “Nothing happening”, “No progressive, forward-thinking people to move the community forward”); *Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy Issues* (e.g., “Local community doesn’t understand extent or potential of assets”, “Continued dependence on single industries”, “No good vision”); *Plan Implementation Issues* (e.g., “Who brings it all together”, “Need a very hands-on approach”, “There needs to be a unified voice instead of individuals”). And *Regulatory Issues* (“City regulations are being misinterpreted or are over the top”, “Too much regulation”, “Regulations are too intrusive at every level of government”).

TABLE 1: Local Economic Barrier Groupings Identified	Number of Responses Identifying a Barrier	Percentage of All Responses in Group
<b>General Attitudinal Issues</b>	21	20.6%
<b>Economic &amp; Community Development Planning &amp; Strategy Issues</b>	15	14.7%
<b>Plan Implementation Issues</b>	11	10.8%
<b>Regulatory Issues</b>	11	10.8%
<b>Quality of Life Issues</b>	7	6.9%
<b>Labor &amp; Workforce Issues</b>	6	5.9%
<b>Demographic &amp; Population Issues</b>	6	5.9%
<b>Incentives, Financial &amp; Marketing Assistance Issues</b>	5	4.9%
<b>Land &amp; Business Facility Issues</b>	5	4.9%
<b>Social Issues</b>	4	3.9%
<b>Infrastructure Issues</b>	3	2.9%
<b>Tax &amp; Other Cost Issues</b>	3	2.9%
<b>Transportation Connectivity Issues</b>	3	2.9%
<b>Visitor &amp; Tourism Related</b>	2	2.0%
<b>14 Identified Issue Clusters</b>	<b>102 Responses</b>	<b>Total does not equal 100% due to rounding</b>



Referring to the number of responses as grouped, it is important to note that the number of responses found to be associated with barriers created at the state level was 19 (see Table 2, below). This indicates that respondents found state actions, or inactions, as more problematic for economic development in the region than all but one of the locally associated barrier groupings. State-related answers were only marginally lower than those grouped as local *General Attitudinal Issues* (21 vs. 19), and palpably greater than the next largest grouping, *Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy Issues* (19 vs. 15).

Comments related to State created barriers were noted by respondents eight more times than local *Plan Implementation Issues* and *Regulatory Issues*: 19 vs. 11, or 72.7% more often. Of course these are small numbers, so percentages can differ greatly due to only small numerical changes.

The SSCRPC thought that it would also be useful to consider not just the number of comments as grouped, but also the number of respondents providing the comment. Unfortunately, and as previously noted, the consultants did not provide the actual number of those responding or whether one or more respondents provided one or more of the 102 responses.

If the number of those interviewed amounted to 129, and none of the 129 provided more than one answer to the question, the results would be as indicated in Table 2's column A, which provides the percentage of respondents providing an answer to the question associated with a issue area identified.

This would mean that only three issue groupings generated interest from more than 10% of all respondents, with the second highest being state barriers rather than local. Slightly more than 6% (8 respondents) appear to have provided no response if each response was generated by only one respondent.

**TABLE 2: Local Economic Barrier Groupings Identified**

Number of Respondents Identifying a Barrier*	A. Percentage of All Respondents Providing a Response by Group if 129*	B. Percentage of All Respondents Providing a Response by Group if 121**	
<b>General Attitudinal Issues</b>	21	16.3%	17.4%
<b>State Barrier Issues</b>	19	14.7%	15.7%
<b>Economic &amp; Community Development Planning &amp; Strategy Issues</b>	15	11.6%	12.4%
<b>Plan Implementation Issues</b>	11	8.5%	9.1%
<b>Regulatory Issues</b>	11	8.5%	9.1%
<b>No Barrier Issues Identified</b>	8	6.2%	—
<b>Quality of Life Issues</b>	7	5.4%	5.8%
<b>Labor &amp; Workforce Issues</b>	6	4.7%	5.0%
<b>Demographic &amp; Population Issues</b>	6	4.7%	5.0%
<b>Incentives, Financial &amp; Marketing Assistance Issues</b>	5	3.9%	4.1%
<b>Land &amp; Business Facility Issues</b>	5	3.9%	4.1%
<b>Social Issues</b>	4	3.1%	3.3%
<b>Infrastructure Issues</b>	3	2.3%	2.5%
<b>Tax &amp; Other Cost Issues</b>	3	2.3%	2.5%
<b>Transportation Connectivity Issues</b>	3	2.3%	2.5%
<b>Visitor &amp; Tourism Related</b>	2	1.6%	1.7%
<b>14 Identified Issue Clusters</b>	<b>121 Responses</b>	<b>Total does not equal 100% due to rounding</b>	<b>Total does not equal 100% due to rounding</b>

\* Assumes 129 respondents with 121 respondents providing no more than one response to the question: 102 providing a response indicating a local barrier and 19 providing a response that indicated a state barrier. \*\* Assumes that all of those interviewed provided a response, meaning that there were only 121, rather than 129, interviewed.

If, however, there were only 121 respondents, meaning that every respondent identified a single barrier in answering the question, the results would be as presented in column B of Table 2.

As the consultants only reported that they questioned nearly 130 individuals, the answer is likely somewhere between 121 and 129.

As it is also unknown as to whether or not some individuals interviewed provided more than one answer to the question, Table 2 can only be presented for general purposes.

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

As the top four perceptual barrier areas shown in Table 1 represent almost 57% of all the comments concerning local barriers, and with the addition of the 19 state-related items represent almost 64% of all responses to the consultant's question, the SSCRPC focused on these four groupings.

### General Attitudinal Issues:

Almost 21% of the comments described in the consultant's report revolved around what the SSCRPC defined as attitudinal issues. These were reported by between 16% and 17% of those interviewed (see Table 2). They also tended to represent some of the less specific and more "fuzzy" answers to DCI's question.

Such negative attitudinal responses were not surprising. A previous survey of residents at-large showed a similar response, with negative attitudes about the region increasing the longer a respondent had lived in the area, and natives being more negative than those who had moved to the area (UIS Survey Research Office, 2015).

To the extent that residents demonstrate negative attitudes about the region, increasing the longer the residents have lived in it, one should not be surprised that this "glass half empty" attitude — as it was called by one respondent — is also held by those in leadership positions, whether these perceptions are valid or not.

As these negative perceptions appear to be long held opinions, showing up in more than one survey over time, it is doubtful that they are affected by the second largest grouping of comments — those pertaining to state barriers. That cannot be ruled out at this time because the data provided by DCI in its report does not allow for this level of analysis, and because state difficulties were common in the media during the period that the study was done.

Given the nature and purpose of the DCI study and the context in which the question was likely asked, the SSCRPC believes that the nature of this response is more likely intertwined with the comments associated with the next two largest groupings of comments: *Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy Issues*, and *Plan Implementation Issues*. For this reason we will consider the next two groups of perceptions together.

### Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy Issues, and Plan Implementation Issues:

Almost 15% of the respondents' comments fell into the *Planning and Strategy* issues group, with between 11.6% and 12.4% offering a response of this type to the question concerning barriers.

However, when one sees these comments as being intertwined with *Plan Implementation* related ones, particularly given that Plan Implementation tied with *Regulatory* issues (which will be addressed on the following page) as the third largest grouping of responses, the importance of these two planning related groupings becomes clearer.

Almost 11% of the respondents answered the consultant's question with a comment associated with plan implementation. As poor planning and strategy development — the subject of the answers addressed immediately above — will intuitively affect perceptions about plan implementation, it is reasonable to consider them in tandem.

When looked at in this way, considering poor economic development planning and strategy development in conjunction with poor plan implementation, 26 of the 102 locally related responses, or over 25% of the comments reported by DCI, relate to economic development planning and implementation. This represents a larger percentage of responses than the *General Attitude* grouping, and even a larger response than found in the *State Barriers* issue grouping.

While between 16.3% and 17.4% of respondents mentioned an attitudinal barrier, and between 14.7% and 15.7% mentioned a State barrier, collectively between 20.1% and 21.5% provided a comment related to economic development planning and plan implementation.

In part this may indicate that *General Attitudinal* issues are an outcome of what is seen as poor economic development planning and strategy development, and poor implementation of these strategies.

### Regulatory Issues:

As the SSCRPC often hears comments made concerning state and local regulations as a barriers to development, it was again not surprising that such comments would be made by some respondents.

However, the number of responses of this type is noticeably smaller than *General Attitudinal* issues, State driven barriers, and the combination of poor economic development planning and implementation. *Regulatory* issues accounted for only 10.8% of all comments related to local barriers, being mentioned, based upon the assumptions as estimated in Table 2, by between 8.5% and 9.1% of the respondents.

Previous work found a similar result in terms of impact on the larger economy. For example, when the SSCRPC studied the regional economy between the years 1970 and 2015 (Sims, 2015a), attention was given to this matter.

As part of this study, the SSCRPC analyzed six regulatory changes made by the City of Springfield during 2000 to 2005 to determine if they had had any positive or negative effect on the local economy within three to five years after passage, and found no statistically significant effect.

That is not to say that *Regulatory* issues are unimportant, but if they did have an effect, it was being masked by larger forces that had greater influence on growth and development.

The SSCRPC reported in its conclusions to the 2015 study:

In the end we found that looking at long-term trends was important because they are often overshadowed by local economic development planning and policy discussions that tend to focus solely on such matters as municipal regulations, tax rates, and place marketing. While all of these are important to economic development, we found that many of the forces acting to constrain growth in the economic area had little to do with them. The forces often crossed decades, bridging the terms of local elected officials, acting regardless of the regulations in place at the time, flavored by demographic conditions, and many times had more to do with state actions and conditions in the national marketplace than local policies or practices. (Sims, 2015a, p. 86)

The influence of these other forces are evidenced in other ways as well.

For example, and given that a lack of manufacturing in the Springfield metro area is often presented as local economic development planning failure — as it is again in the DCI report — the SSCRPC conducted an initial analysis that compared per capita personal income growth in some manufacturing vs. non-manufacturing areas over two time-frames: 1995-2015, and 1970-1990 (Sims, 2017). Income growth was selected as the point of reference for this study as manufacturing is often offered as having higher paying jobs than non-manufacturing ones.

Six MSA's were compared: Springfield, Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington, Peoria, Decatur, and Rockford. The results of this comparison evidenced how larger trends can affect local economic growth and be particularly relevant to a local economic development strategy. For example, the two areas that would generally be described as having a noticeable manufacturing base tended to lag behind the other areas with more diversified economies. Unfortunately this analysis found that the Springfield economy was less diverse that that in other MSAs that had performed better, indicating that business diversity itself — rather than the specific industries in a local economy — may have a significant impact on economic growth and long-term vitality.

This was consistent with the SSCRPC's shift-share analysis of the region, which found that a significant portion of its lagging growth was due to an industry mix inclined toward industries that experienced marginally faster growth than their national counterparts, but that was coupled with a larger share of local businesses that were simply underperforming theirs (Sims, 2015b, p.5). This does not represent a regulatory problem, but a market-based, industry mix one.

This result was also very consistent with a previous SSCRPC study that considered the resiliency of the Springfield MSA's economy (Uden, 2014). This study found that the metro area should especially target improving the business climate, but the factors that should be emphasized related to business climate were economic diversification, improvements in the educational system to bolster educational attainment, and retaining residents and assisting them in finding owner-occupied housing that will meet their needs (Uden, p. 12).

None of these actions are those that we would normally think of as regulatory, but all can be affected by local planning and the policies needed to implement it, placing the first three issue groups identified by DCI in better context.

## INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to draw conclusions from the individual perceptions of a selected group, but the SSCRPC is of the opinion that those offered in the DCI report are likely to be consistent with those of a larger group of stakeholders. In developing strategies to advance the regional economy, these perceptions will need to be addressed if gains are to be made, regardless of the nature of the entity intended to implement them.

First, we find that the *General Attitudinal* comments are likely to be intertwined with those related to *Economic and Community Development Planning and Strategy*, as well as *Plan Implementation*. To the extent that development stakeholders — and the public at large — see efforts being made to devise reasonable actions and then take them, the *General Attitudinal* problems may be mitigated if not eliminated. The perception that barriers created by the State of Illinois have a significant impact on local growth are likely to remain in the near-term, exacerbating both the *General Attitudinal* and *Planning* problems. However, these state problems are not likely to last forever, and if they do, they will affect other competing regions in the state as well.

*General Attitudinal* issues combined with concerns about state actions and inactions are likely to create a challenge for economic development planning and its leadership.

The hallmark of leadership is the willingness of the members of an enterprise to voluntarily share information, take on new roles, adopt new strategies, and change the nature and scope of its goals without constant administrative oversight, regulation and exhortation. If one believes that the glass is half-empty at on-set, then one is not likely to do the things mentioned above in the hope that the glass will eventually be filled.

Without a positive and agreeable outlook — and a common vision for the future — among those involved in economic development, the odds that the problems perceived to exist concerning economic development planning, strategy development and plan implementation will be addressed, are slim.

However, should these barriers be overcome, concerns related to regulatory matters are likely to be reduced, or at least come into better focus as the larger barriers that hide the influence of regulatory burdens will be reduced and their relationship to the plan better ascertained. There is simply no advantage in addressing regulations that have little effect in offsetting larger problems, if those that actually would be left in place. Indeed, it may be counterproductive.

It is clear that there are barriers to economic growth in the region. However it is also clear that many of them are of our own perceptual making.

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## ATTACHMENT: Grouped Comments from DCI Study Pertaining to Barriers

**COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS PERTAINING TO THE STATE:** 19 identified, 17.7% of all responses.

**Answers pertaining to State barriers** [As specifically identified under “State of Illinois” in the DCI report]

1. No Budget.
2. Political Chaos.
3. No adults in charge.
4. Workers Compensation is huge problem.
5. Employers are viewed as a necessary evil, not as a fundamental driver of growth and prosperity.
6. The state owes too many businesses in Springfield and Sangamon County too much money and it’s killing our economy.
7. This area is branded in the media as being dysfunctional, but it’s not us, it’s the State of Illinois who just happens to be headquartered here. Unfortunately, we are paying the price in terms of negative publicity.

**Additional answers pertaining to State barriers** [included under “Springfield and Sangamon County” in the DCI report but found to be State related during analysis]

1. State pensions unfunded.
2. We’re in IL – no state budget; pension crisis.
3. State Capital – used to be a draw, but now center of disaster.
4. Issues with state.
5. My business is owed \$63 million by state.
6. Universities not being funded.
7. Workers comp.
8. Workers comp.
9. Unemployment insurance.
10. State has beaten landlords up on space.
11. Lack of payments to med facilities from state has trickle-down effect.
12. State not updating infrastructure.

**COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS PERTAINING TO SPRINGFIELD AND SANGAMON COUNTY:** 102 identified, 84.3% of all responses.

**A. General Attitudinal Issues:** 21 identified, or 20.6% of Springfield and Sangamon County related responses.

1. Closed community, hard to break into social circles.
2. Not very stimulating community – not venue for new ideas.
3. “Springfielditis”.
4. No vibrancy.
5. Nothing happening.
6. We have to decide who is first here, individuals or the community.
7. People locally are negative – “why does anyone want to come here?”
8. We belittle Springfield ourselves.
9. No progressive, forward-thinking people to move community forward.
10. Lots of factions:
  - a. Chatham v Springfield;
  - b. Rochester v Springfield;
  - c. County v City.
11. Glass half empty attitude in community.
12. City not progressive.
13. Springfield has ego problem as state capital—used to be 18,000 state employees in Springfield, now, less than 10,000.
14. Ultimately, it is very political here—need to go to alderman or mayor to champion. Don’t have same issues in other similar IL markets.
15. Does Springfield have an atmosphere of success? The answer is simple - No!

16. Speed of progress is slow.
17. Some mistrust because of some that keep things close and don't share – government.
18. Perceived barriers to access.
19. Development community risk adverse – used to fat paydays from the state, got lazy, didn't update buildings.
20. There is a definite “we and they” mentality here – I've never had a “how can we help you” response
21. People get excited about a Chick-fil-A while manufacturers are closing. What's wrong with that picture?

**B. Economic & Community Development Planning & Strategy Issues: 15 identified, 14.7 %.**

1. Local community doesn't understand extent or potential of assets.
2. City has ignored blue collar jobs since Fiat Allis closed.
3. Med District:
  - a. not utilized;
  - b. no dollars –biggest excuse for not moving forward;
  - c. why don't hospitals underwrite –do they believe this is important?
  - d. Med district commission are political appointees—are they the best to serve?
  - e. Is worthless.
4. Bring back manufacturing—why did the old guys who used to run the place decide to let it go away? That was incredibly short-sighted.
5. No one is doing any recruitment of major employers.
6. Just service industry community –sell, don't produce except for Bunn, maybe Nudo.
7. Area argues about low income housing vs the important things, like creating jobs:
  - a. YMCA [*sic. We believe YWCA was meant here*] is a good example – the City owns it; why didn't they just put a job creator there.
8. Continued dependence on single industries.
9. Need to focus on retention.
10. Need to take care of what we have – keep & help grow – NO one is doing this.
11. Current markets shrinking – outmigration troubling.
12. No potential tenants for downtown.
13. Now takes 3 years to earn what you could in 1 before in real estate.
14. No good vision.
15. Not much industry for middle class blue collar workers who, contrary to popular opinion – do live here.

**C. Plan Implementation Issues: 11 identified, or 10.8%.**

1. Development plans in this area are hard to implement.
2. Lack of having a plan.
3. Who brings it all together ?????? “I think that's the Chamber's job.”
4. City-County-chamber (sic) need to get heads together with an integrated plan – currently high speed rail seems to be the only point of integration.
5. City does not involve taxing bodies in new TIF until very end when they need a letter of support or board vote. It's not a cooperative environment.
6. Not a lot of collaboration. Church rehab project is exception – City, developers and Chamber.
7. Collaboration key—bring all together, starts with Mayor and the Chairman.
8. There needs to be a unified voice instead of individuals.
9. Challenged with re-developing around City squares in outlying communities.
10. Need a very hands on approach.
11. No entity is building relations with building owners downtown to work with them on upgrading the buildings.

**D. Regulatory Issues: 11 identified, or 10.8%.**

1. City regulations are being misinterpreted or are over the top.
2. City building/zoning department—look for why not vs how can; not welcoming (looking for problems).
3. Navigating City is difficult—needs to be clear.
4. Most of the time, government doesn't come at it from perspective of business and creating a better community –instead bureaucratic/paperwork driven. Instead we should ask how we can help and get rid of barriers.
5. Regulations too intrusive at every government level.
6. An end user told me this is the toughest City they have worked with on permits and site inspectors – there's inconsistency.

7. Challenging to work with City.
8. City hard to do business with – permits hard to obtain.
9. Too much regulation.
10. Permitting historically difficult – Springfield has reputation of being worse than anywhere else.
11. County harder to work with – specifically planning entity.

**E. Quality of Life:** 7 identified, or 6.9%.

1. No one knows how to integrate quality of life into Economic Development.
2. Need to be more recreationally friendly – for instance, bike paths throughout City.
3. Finding a restaurant that is open on Sunday or Monday.
4. Depth of retail is not great.
5. No outdoor recreation opportunities in the rural areas.
6. Not as many dining choices in small towns.
7. How do we create neighborhood?

**F. Labor & Workforce Issues:** 6 identified, or 5.9%.

1. Too much unskilled labor.
2. Unions aggressive/harmful.
3. Springfield is in race to the bottom-“right to work”.
4. There is no progress on holistically training.
5. New ordinance in Springfield–workers on City project must live here.
6. District 186.

**G. Demographic & Population Issues:** 6 identified, or 5.9%.

1. Businesses looking to locate here may believe there are not enough people.
2. Need area youth to come back after college – to create more vibrancy.
3. Our kids don’t come back here.
4. Aging workforce.
5. Young leaving – want to live in St. Louis or Chicago or go into military.
6. No real reason for people to move here. Nothing makes us exceptional.

**H. Incentives, Financial & Marketing Assistance Issues:** 5 identified, or 4.9%.

1. No strong start-up assistance.
2. No marketing programs.
3. Need to put together land incentives.
4. Need to create excitement.
5. Reactive, not proactive in selling our product – the region.

**I. Land and Business Facility Issues:** 5 identified, or 4.9%.

1. Suitable space is an issue, even with vacancies, inventory is low.
2. Signage – looks temporary.
3. Lots of empty buildings in City.
4. Need to have places ready to develop.
5. No build-to-suits going on anywhere.

**J. Social Issues:** 4 identified, or 3.9%.

1. African American males – don’t have enough pride in themselves.
2. This area can be, I dare to say, racist. It is not welcoming to outsiders or people who are different.
3. Panhandling is a big problem, but non-aggressive.
4. Springfield is a segregated City.

**K. Infrastructure Issues:** 3 identified, or 2.9%.

1. Infrastructure is challenging for municipalities.
2. Parking is limited—at least that’s the business perception.

3.CWLP in financial trouble for 10-15 years:

- a. Get rid of back door tax;
- b. Need to keep viable;
- c. Need guaranteed rates to attract Biz.

**L. Transportation Connectivity Issues:** 3 identified, or 2.9%.

- 1. Air travel is challenging.
- 2. Airport.
- 3. High speed/reliable rail.

**M. Tax & Other Cost Issues:** 3 identified, or 2.9%.

- 1. Property taxes high.
- 2. Pension deficit/retiree healthcare – non-sustainable.
- 3. Tax base eroded.

**N. Visitor & Tourism Related Issues:** 2 identified, or 2.0%.

- 1. Sites/attractions are government run, no marketing dollars.
- 2. Convention center needs expansion.

## ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SCRPC) serves as the joint planning body for Sangamon County and the City of Springfield, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning in the region.

The Commission also works with other public and semi-public agencies throughout the area to promote orderly growth and redevelopment, assisting other Sangamon County communities, special districts, and public non-profits with their analytic, evaluative and planning needs. Through its professional staff, the SSCRPC provides overall planning and analysis related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economics, environment, and special projects.

The Commission has 17 members including representatives from the Sangamon County Board, Springfield City Council, special units of government, and six appointed citizens from the city and county. The Executive Director is appointed by the Executive Board of the Commission and confirmed by the Sangamon County Board.



ADVISING + PLANNING + EVALUATING + LEADING

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