

Springfield is an area where town does in fact meet country. We are located in a rich, agricultural area. But, our area is also a growing industrial center, and our industry in the city has now expanded into the area beyond our corporate limits into the county.

Springfield is an old city, having been settled long before the Civil War. We early became an industrial center, the publishing center of the world and a leading producer of farm machinery. But these are days gone by because we are not noted today for either publishing or farm machinery.

Now, there has been great industrial growth in Springfield. We are one of the homes of International Harvester Co., lightweight trucks, Steel Products Engineering Co., a division of Kelsey-Hayes and Bauer Bros., all three companies having expanded recently. But the closing of some of our major concerns and the attendant problems which have been created by empty buildings and decaying buildings in the heart of our city has created blight in our surrounding neighborhood.

This has damaged the morale of our people and has caused decline in our tax base. This has had a damaging effect upon our entire community.

In other words, I think that we might say that antiquity is setting in in many of our neighborhoods and areas in our city. Obviously this has harmful effects on our residential areas.

In conjunction with this, the downtown core area has decayed. It has decayed to such an extent that unless there is massive expenditure of money in the downtown area, our central area has decayed beyond reclamation.

This massive spending is in fact beyond the capabilities of our city.

Now, Springfield, like most cities, has traditionally been what we might term a housekeeper government. We have maintained the peace, we have put out fires, we have sold water, we have provided sewer service, and we have maintained the streets. Since antiquity has set in in our industrial areas, in our downtown, and in our residential areas, our physical setting is not attractive, and this among other factors has created social problems.

In an attempt to reverse this trend downward, our city has come up with a new spirit of progressive desires, I think, in government and among our citizens. Our people now have an air of optimism about the future, and our government in Springfield has started to change its thrust from that of a housekeeper to a person-centered approach. We are not just maintaining the peace and maintaining streets, but we are looking at people, and the needs of people in trying to help them create what we might call the good life.

Therefore, we have turned our attention to urban renewal. We have turned our attention to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. We have turned our attention to our health department and have improved it in an attempt to try to assure that each citizen will have at least minimal health care for his family.

We have entered into a rather large demolition project without Federal funds in order to remove some of our slums and to provide better housing for our citizens.

We have established a human relations committee to work with the problems of minority groups. We have established a recreation department to help our people use their leisure time.