



## MARTA WOJCIK

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The phrase “cats & dogs” used to make me think of heavy rain. Since last fall, it’s an instant flashback to an enormous sense of disbelief, frustration and worry about Springfield being affected by a tsunami of misinformation. This was a moment in our history that was profoundly unjust, and with real consequences for our residents, businesses, cultural sites, and, yes, our collective psyche, and after all the incredible progress we have made as a community over the last two decades.

True, Springfield is not a pretty little town with a perfect curb appeal. **Springfield is gritty, complicated, and full of contradictions.** It is also magnificent in so many ways, as often manifested through residents’ daily actions to make it better, more livable, and more appreciated by both our own community and our neighbors. Not all partake, but the majority does. Thanks to those who do, **Springfield has a hopeful path forward.**

### **THIS IS A PAINFUL YET NECESSARY CONTEXT FOR SPRINGFIELD 2051.**

However, as the organizers of this movement, we decided not to fall into the trap of being reactionary. Instead, we created a process that will **lead to an authentic story** that is all our own. As someone said at one of the meetings, “Springfield needs a big couch to tell the psychiatrist how we feel.” True, but we also need a sophisticated approach to scientific data, as well as a deep understanding of the larger forces that will shape our region over the next two decades.

To make that happen, **we partnered with Future iQ**, an expert planning firm helping communities across the country prepare for the next generation. They designed a rigorous process rooted in data, conversation, and local insight. Since August, more than 2,000 residents have taken part in the project - from Think-Tank workshops to community listening sessions to an extensive community survey. And **we’re just getting started.**

Some say we need more listening sessions. Others think it’s too much talking! Some want deliverables right away, as if they could never believe that their input is being sought precisely to shape what these deliverables will be. Some people bring along the pain of systemic, multigenerational disadvantage and distrust. All valid and real challenges that a project like this cannot ignore. **Most embraced the project with cautious optimism. Cautious is good. We will take it.**

The year **2051 marks Springfield’s 250th birthday.** We have big plans, and big plans take time and effort. Our team chose a slogan “Let’s Make History Together.” Ambitious? Yes. I will say this - as far as I know, each one of us has one shot at this beautiful, crazy life of ours. I don’t want to be a passenger, a mere observer.

### **I WANT MY ACTIONS TO MATTER AND TO IMPACT OTHERS IN A POSITIVE WAY. AND I KNOW I CANNOT DO IT ALONE. THAT TO ME IS HISTORY MAKING AT ITS BEST.**

They say actions speak more than words. What I have learned so far is that talking is action. As long as there is a rhyme and a reason in how we come together and share, it is a very real manifestation of being intentional and taking the action. All this **talking will lead to tangible actions** that will be validated by the will and wit of the people who live and work in our community. And then, these actions will speak volumes. They will be louder than words spoken about Springfield last fall.

