

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

AUGUST 2009

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

FINAL RESULTS

Boonville, Missouri



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR MISSOURI (DREAM)
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SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted four focus groups in Boonville, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Boonville community in regard to Downtown. The four groups included the following: 1) new residents, 2) long time residents, and 3) & 4) Downtown business and property owners. Participants of all four groups were from a variety of backgrounds.

This report summarizes responses to posed questions of all focus group members. Attached are the complete transcripts of the four meetings. Names and other identifying remarks are omitted.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO BUSINESS GROUPS

The following questions were included in the business group discussion guide:

General Questions about Boonville

01. Generally speaking, how would you describe this area to someone visiting from another city? Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?
02. What are the main shopping areas for area residents? From how far away do people come or go to do their regular shopping (groceries, household items)?
03. What about dining and entertainment options? What are popular choices for local residents? When friends or relatives visit from out of town, where do you take them?

Downtown Specific Questions

04. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Boonville is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property Downtown (or not in Downtown, for other business owners)?
06. From what you hear from your customers, how user friendly is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for?
07. Is there any residential living in Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more housing Downtown? What kind of housing – rental, condominiums, single family housing, etc.? Who would be the target for that housing, students, elderly, etc.?
08. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what's going on Downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? How effective is communication between business (or business groups) and the City's administration and elected officials?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

09. As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Boonville. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...
 - Additional/types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?
 - Dining and entertainment?
 - Parks and outdoor recreation?
10. Now, we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?
 - Street repair?
 - Landscaping/beautification?
 - Green space?
 - Building repairs, renovation, upgrades?
11. Of all the potential improvements we've just talked about, what do you think the highest priorities should be for the City?
12. What could the City administration or elected officials do to help your business thrive or keep your property values strong over the next few years?
13. Would you be willing to support a special business district in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for Downtown?

B. QUESTIONS POSED TO GENERAL GROUPS:

The following questions were included in the discussion guide for general groups:

General Questions about Boonville

01. Generally speaking, how would you describe this area to someone visiting from another city? Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?
02. What are the main shopping areas for area residents? From how far away do people come or go to do their regular shopping (groceries, household items)?
03. What about dining and entertainment options? What are popular choices for local residents? When friends or relatives visit from out of town, where do you take them?
04. What kinds of recreation are popular with local residents? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in these activities in Boonville?

Downtown Specific Questions

05. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Boonville is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
06. What are the major reasons you visit Downtown? How often do you visit Downtown Boonville? Is there anything that you used to do Downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?
07. How user friendly is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for?
08. How do local residents and visitors get information about what's going on Downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation)?
09. Is there any residential living in Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more housing Downtown? What kind of housing – rental, condominiums, single family housing, etc.? Who would be the target for that housing, students, elderly, etc.?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

10. As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Boonville. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...
 - Additional/types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?
 - Dining and entertainment?
 - Parks and recreation?
11. Now we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?
 - Street repair?
 - Landscaping/beautification?
 - Green space?
 - Building repairs, renovations, upgrades?
12. Of all the potential improvements we've just talked about, what do you think the highest priorities should be for the City?
13. What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like Boonville to resemble?

C. THE BOONVILLE AREA

Generally speaking, how would you describe this area to someone visiting from another city? Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?

The groups described Boonville as a friendly town of about 8,000 with a good sense of community, a good education system, an artistic culture, many recreational opportunities including a casino, and a strong and varied history. Boonville is located along the Katy Trail and has historic ties with the railroad, river, and Civil War. All of these features, according to participants, make Boonville a prosperous City that is attracting more visitors.

Boonville is centrally located in the State of Missouri, so residents feel that they have access to all the luxuries of bigger towns and cities without having to sacrifice living in a small town. Because Boonville is within 25 minutes of Columbia, residents feel that they have all the shopping, entertainment, employment, and education options of Columbia within a convenient distance. Boonville is equidistant from Kansas City and St. Louis and is located on the major east-west connector between the two cities, Interstate 70.

Most participants indicated that the City is moving in the right direction, although slowly and in spite of itself. They noted Downtown renovations and new businesses as positive directions, particularly within the last five years. The Frederick Hotel has been renovated and opened, Downtown has gained some shops and restaurants, and Boonville is beginning to become a destination for visitors from outside the local area. A few participants expressed mixed feelings about certain things in Boonville, citing them as either "the wrong direction" or "no direction". Concerns included the Super-Wal-Mart that is planned for Boonville, the lack of an effort to save the Katy Bridge, lack of support from the Chamber of Commerce, and a perceived resistance on the part of City administration.

What are the main shopping areas for area residents? From how far away do people come to do their regular shopping (groceries, household items)?

Participants indicated that Boonville residents do much of their shopping in Boonville, including groceries, hardware store items, everyday necessities, and gifts. There is shopping along the highway, but the Downtown also has a number of shopping options for residents and visitors.

Residents travel to Columbia for shopping, citing both variety and convenience as reasons. They particularly go there for clothing, shoes, books, and other specialty items for which a wide selection is important. Many residents that work in Columbia find it more convenient to do their shopping there, rather than at local Boonville businesses with limited weekday hours.

What about dining, entertainment, and recreation options? What are popular choices for local residents? When friends or relatives visit from out of town, where do you take them?

There are a number of restaurants in Boonville, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Chinese, an ice cream parlor, fast food, casual dining, and fine dining. The participants overall felt that there is a good variety of dining options in Boonville. Again, participants noted that Boonville residents often visit Columbia for a wider variety, such as

Greek, Thai, and Indian food. Residents would welcome longer business hours and outdoor seating for the existing restaurants, as well as additional restaurant options.

For recreation and entertainment, Boonville has municipal parks and the Katy Trail, and is within a short drive from the Lake of the Ozarks. Within the region, there is a variety of outdoor recreation. For entertainment, participants cited Boonville's many festivals, music, and performing arts. Boonville has Thespian Hall, a permanent performing arts theater, as well as a YMCA. Boonville also has a riverboat casino, which draws people from across the region.

Many people, however, travel to Columbia for entertainment, especially for a greater variety of nighttime entertainment. Participants also noted that there are very limited activity options for teenagers and young adults in Boonville.

D. DOWNTOWN BOONVILLE: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Boonville is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?

Participants generally expressed the belief that Downtown Boonville is moving in the right direction. Downtown has grown and developed in the past 5-10 years and now has new businesses, a casino, property owners who are renovating their buildings, a newly renovated historic hotel, renovated rental property, and civic groups who are working to better Downtown.

The participants felt, however, that there is unrealized potential that could move Downtown Boonville even further in the right direction—priorities included adding more retail and entertainment, focusing on the aesthetics of Downtown, filling empty storefronts, improving pedestrian safety, improving parking, improving signage, creating pedestrian river access, connecting Downtown to the Katy Bridge, increasing support by the City, and coordinating civic groups' efforts. Participants also felt strongly that traffic to and from the casino should go through Downtown, not around it as in the current traffic routing.

Some participants also noted the perceived resistance of the City government to assist Downtown businesses. Others expressed feelings of a lack of support by the Chamber of Commerce or a misunderstanding of the role of the Chamber as a Downtown business promoter.

Business Owners: Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property Downtown (or not in Downtown, for other business owners)?

Business owners cited the great potential and beauty of the historic architecture as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown or invested in buildings. The participants indicated, at different points in the discussion, that new businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focuses on growing the overall number of retail shops in the area, marketing the Downtown more effectively, and providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses. Business and property owners felt strongly that City personnel should be able to help them find funding to rehabilitate their properties.

General Public: What are the major reasons you visit Downtown? How often do you visit Downtown Boonville? Is there anything that you used to do Downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?

The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit Downtown including festivals, plays, restaurants, bars, retail, the post office, and other professional offices. Retail cited by participants included a florist, a bakery, and a number of gift shops and other specialty shops. Boonville has many festivals Downtown which residents attend.

How user friendly is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for? Is there a need/demand for more housing Downtown?

The participants had some significant concerns about the user friendliness of Downtown, including parking availability, signage, pedestrian safety, business hours, and access from the Katy Bridge and the casino.

Parking was a concern for many participants, though others expressed that there is ample parking Downtown. Some participants explained that many people perceive parking to be a problem if they cannot find a parking spot directly in front of the store they wish to visit, even though they may be willing to walk a significant distance from a parking spot in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Participants suggested that if all of the storefronts were populated with shops and businesses, the walk from parking spot to business might seem shorter, and people may be more likely to park at the end of a block and walk. Also, if there were ample signage to indicate to people where public parking is available, including behind the buildings, visitors would be less likely to perceive this as a problem. Finally, because much of the parking is two-hour parking to prevent Downtown employees from taking up parking, day visitors get ticketed—the signage should make clear where there is parking available for more than two hours.

Signage, according to participants, is a problem of user-friendliness, navigation, and marketing. The signage to and from the casino routes people away from Downtown rather than through it, which is a problem, because much of the traffic that Downtown could capture is diverted. Signage in and around Downtown is sparse, and signs to help people navigate and inform people of the businesses Downtown would be welcome. Finally, there is little signage on surrounding highways, which makes Downtown difficult to find for people passing through.

Pedestrian safety, particularly regarding the sidewalks and the building conditions, was also highlighted by participants as an area of concern. Sidewalks are cracked or buckling in place, which could be hazardous to the elderly or to young parents with strollers. Also, because some buildings are in such disrepair, work on streets or other projects has caused bricks and other pieces of buildings to fall, causing a risk to passersby.

Business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are also a problem, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 or 6:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it difficult for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. Some shops that are open on weekends are only open Saturday mornings, not Saturday afternoons or Sundays, which can be inconvenient for residents and discourages the idea of Boonville as a destination, because many travelers may

come to visit only for a weekend. The problem is compounded by the fact that retail stores in Columbia are open in the evenings and on weekends. The participants also felt that restaurant hours are inconvenient, since few restaurants are open late or on weekends.

Finally, access to and from the Katy Bridge, Riverfront, and the casino were concerns. Participants felt that signage, trails, bridges, and sidewalks should be used to connect these various locations to Downtown.

How do local residents and visitors get information about what's going on Downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation)?

Participants mentioned the local radio station, newspaper, Chamber of Commerce, Internet, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events. Many felt that Downtown Boonville could do considerably more to market itself as a destination. Specifically, they felt that all of the civic groups should come together and create a central resource for information and a central marketing plan. Better coordination between all groups is needed.

Is there any residential living in Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more housing Downtown? What kind of housing – rental, condominiums, single family housing, etc.? Who would be the target for that housing, students, elderly, etc.?

There is a growing residential population in Downtown Boonville, and the participants all felt that there would be a demand for more loft-style housing for young professionals, young families, and the elderly (if the buildings had elevators). Some participants expressed that more residences Downtown would create a bigger customer base for all of the Downtown businesses, and would also be a great housing option for Downtown business owners.

E. DOWNTOWN BOONVILLE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Boonville. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What additional types of businesses would you like to see Downtown? Dining and entertainment? Parks and recreation?

Participants suggested a variety of new businesses for Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, entertainment, and festivals rather than larger chains. For retail and food, they suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, more shoe stores, a bookstore, a coffee shop, an organic foods store to appeal to residents and Katy Trail bikers, a deli, art galleries and shops, an ice cream shop, gift shops, and any other type of specialty shops. They suggested that restaurants be open later and on weekends, and potentially add some outdoor seating.

For entertainment, the focus groups felt that a variety of restaurants and shops with later business hours would be a step in the right direction. They also suggested a museum, art shows, music

performances, and anything else that would draw people Downtown. They also felt that, when people come Downtown for festivals, it is important that the Downtown businesses be open. For recreation, the groups felt strongly that the river and the Katy Trail should be well connected to Downtown. Suggestions included restoring the Katy Bridge and finding other solutions to connect Downtown to the river over the railroad tracks. They also suggested adding a marina, a riverwalk, or a park by the river so that people can enjoy the beauty of the Missouri River.

The participants felt that more loft residential space would keep the residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.

Participants noted that Downtown's purpose is not to compete with large chain stores, nor is it to compete with the larger malls in Columbia; it is to offer a unique experience to customers and to make Boonville a quaint, historic destination. For this, the groups felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and the City should find and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.

Now we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do think there needs to be improvements in the following areas: street repair, landscaping/beautification, green space, and building repairs, renovations, and upgrades?

When asked about the look and feel of Downtown, participants generally agreed that Downtown should have a historic look and feel. Participants felt Downtown buildings needed better maintenance, but there seemed to be few vacancies. They also felt that Downtown Boonville should focus on restoring each building's façade to emphasize its unique character.

They suggested that building and façade repair, filling vacancies with retail businesses, improving sidewalks, improving signage, and creating pedestrian trails and parks along the river should all be priorities.

Of all the potential improvements we've just talked about, what do you think the highest priorities should be for the City?

The groups all had strong priorities, but participants in different groups varied as to what those priorities should be. The groups identified as the highest priorities code enforcement, building and façade repair, incentives and grants for potential businesses and building owners, cooperation between City government and Downtown business owners, coordination of civic group efforts, creation of river access from Downtown, and restoration of the Katy Bridge.

Business Owners: What could the City do to help your business thrive or keep your property values strong over the next few years?

The business owners felt that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, offer or make available incentives for building repair and new businesses, and route casino traffic through Downtown. They also felt that marketing Downtown in various ways would help businesses thrive. They felt that restoring the Katy Bridge or creating another way for pedestrians to access the river would help draw people from all over to Downtown Boonville.

Business Owners: Would you be willing to support a special business district in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for Downtown?

Business owners did not express support for a special business district with an additional tax, which some suggested would push people away from Downtown because of the increased sales tax. However, some felt that if the sales tax were distributed throughout Boonville but earmarked for Downtown development, it would be more likely to gain their support.

General Public: What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like Boonville to resemble?

The participants also mentioned a few downtowns whose mix of businesses or aesthetics they admired: Columbia, Missouri; Jefferson City, Missouri; Rocheport, Missouri; Arrow Rock, Missouri; Glasgow, Missouri; Ozark, Missouri; Blackwater, Missouri; Fayette, Missouri; McGregor, Iowa; Leavenworth, Washington; Galena, Illinois; Aspen, Colorado; Vail, Colorado; and Paducah, Kentucky.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Boonville area:

- ◆ Boonville is a friendly small, diverse town of about 8,000 with a good sense of community, a good education system, an artistic culture, many recreational opportunities nearby, and a strong and varied history.
- ◆ Boonville is centrally located in the State of Missouri, so residents feel that they have access to all the opportunities of bigger cities such as Columbia and cities such as St. Louis and Kansas City without having to sacrifice living in a small town.
- ◆ Downtown renovations are a positive direction for Boonville. The Frederick Hotel has been renovated and opened, Downtown has gained some shops and restaurants, and Boonville is beginning to become a destination for visitors from outside the area.
- ◆ There is still considerable unrealized potential for Boonville, which some participants cited when suggesting that Downtown is moving in “negative direction” or “no direction.”
- ◆ Boonville residents do much of their shopping in Boonville, including groceries, hardware store items, everyday necessities, and gifts.
- ◆ Residents travel to Columbia for clothing, shoes, books, and other specialty items; and because some residents work in Columbia, shopping in Columbia is especially convenient.
- ◆ There are a number of restaurants in Boonville, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Chinese, an ice cream parlor, fast food, casual dining, and fine dining.

- ◆ Many residents visit Columbia for a wider variety of dining, such as Greek, Thai, and Indian food.
- ◆ Residents would welcome longer business hours and outdoor seating for the existing restaurants, and would also welcome newer restaurants.
- ◆ For recreation and entertainment, Boonville has parks, the Katy Trail, festivals, music, performing arts in a historic local theater, a riverboat casino, and a YMCA.
- ◆ Many people travel to Columbia for some entertainment, especially for a greater variety of nighttime entertainment.
- ◆ Participants felt that there is not a great deal of activity options for teenagers and young adults in Boonville, and those age groups tend to go to Columbia.

Key points about Downtown Boonville in the present:

- ◆ The groups, overall, felt that Downtown Boonville is moving in the right direction: the Downtown has grown and developed well in the last 5-10 years, and now has new businesses, property owners who are renovating their buildings, a newly renovated historic hotel, renovated rental property, and a few civic groups who are working to better the Downtown area.
- ◆ Participants felt, however, that there is a lot of unrealized potential that would make Downtown Boonville move even further in the right direction—retail, entertainment, aesthetics, pedestrian safety, parking, signage, river access, Katy Bridge access, City support, and coordination between Downtown groups.
- ◆ The business owners cited low cost, tradition, and the beauty of the historic architecture as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown or invested in buildings.
- ◆ New businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focused on attracting a higher number of shops in the area, marketing the Downtown more effectively, and providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses.
- ◆ Residents visit Downtown for festivals, plays, restaurants, bars, retail, the post office, and other professional offices.
- ◆ The participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including parking, signage, pedestrian safety, business hours, and access from the casino.
- ◆ Parking is a perceived problem, which better signage, more occupied storefronts, and a more pedestrian-friendly environment would help solve.
- ◆ Signage should be a priority, routing casino visitors through Downtown, making Downtown easy to find and well marketed from the highway, and informing people of what businesses are Downtown.

- ◆ Sidewalk repair and building repair would help improve pedestrian-friendliness Downtown.
- ◆ Business hours, according to participants, are inconvenient; evenings are important to residents, and weekend hours are important if Boonville tries to market itself as a destination for visitors from surrounding cities.
- ◆ Downtown access to and from the Katy Bridge, Missouri River, and the casino were concerns for participants. Casino traffic should be routed through Downtown, not around Downtown.
- ◆ The participants mentioned the local radio station, newspaper, Chamber of Commerce, Internet, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown.
- ◆ Downtown Boonville could do more to market itself as a destination—all of the civic groups should come together and create a central resource for information and a central marketing plan.
- ◆ There is a growing residential population in Downtown Boonville, and the participants all felt that there would be a demand for more loft-style housing for young professionals, young families, and the elderly.

Key points about the future of Downtown Boonville:

- ◆ The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, entertainment, and festivals rather than larger chains.
- ◆ For retail and food, the community would welcome more men's, women's, and children's clothing, more shoe stores, a bookstore, a coffee shop, an organic foods store to appeal to residents and Katy Trail bikers, a deli, art galleries and shops, an ice cream shop, gift shops, and any other type of specialty shops.
- ◆ Restaurants should be open later and on weekends, and potentially add some outdoor seating. Sunday afternoon was a particularly difficult evening to find an open restaurant.
- ◆ The community would welcome a museum, art shows, music performances, and anything else that would draw people Downtown.
- ◆ When people come Downtown for festivals, it is important that the Downtown businesses be open.
- ◆ For recreation, the groups felt strongly that the river should be well connected to Downtown—they suggested restoring the Katy Bridge, exploring other solutions to connect Downtown to the river, and adding a marina, a riverwalk, or a park by the river so that people can enjoy the beauty of the Missouri River.

- ◆ Participants felt that more loft residential space would keep the residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.
- ◆ Downtown's purpose is not to compete with large chain stores, nor is it to compete with the larger malls in Columbia; it is to offer a unique experience to customers and to make Boonville a quaint, historic destination.
- ◆ The groups felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and the City should find and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.
- ◆ The participants agreed that Downtown should have a historic feel, but a diversity of character in its buildings.
- ◆ Participants' aesthetic priorities included building repair, filling empty storefronts with retail businesses, improving sidewalks, improving signage into Downtown and within Downtown, improving lighting, creating pedestrian trails that link Downtown to the river and Katy Bridge, and improving building façades.
- ◆ The groups identified their highest priorities for Downtown Boonville: code enforcement, building repair, incentives and grants for potential businesses and building owners, cooperation between City government and Downtown business owners, cooperation and consolidation of civic groups, creation of river access from Downtown, and restoration of the Katy Bridge.
- ◆ The business owners felt that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, offer or make available incentives for building repair and new businesses, market Downtown in various ways to help the Downtown businesses thrive, route casino traffic through Downtown, and restore the Katy Bridge or create another way for pedestrians to access the river to help draw people from all over to Downtown Boonville.
- ◆ The business owners did not express support for a special business district with an additional tax, but felt that if the sales tax were distributed throughout Boonville and earmarked for Downtown development, it might gain more support.
- ◆ The participants also mentioned a few downtowns whose mix of businesses or aesthetics they admired: Columbia, Missouri; Jefferson City, Missouri; Rocheport, Missouri; Arrow Rock, Missouri; Glasgow, Missouri; Ozark, Missouri; Blackwater, Missouri; Fayette, Missouri; McGregor, Iowa; Leavenworth, Washington; Galena, Illinois; Aspen, Colorado; Vail, Colorado; and Paducah, Kentucky.

SECTION II

NEW RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Tell me a little about your community.

It's a great community, lots and lots of potential, especially Downtown. Neat historic homes. Lots of things that need love and attention.

(noise, unintelligible.)

I agree. I think it has a tremendous amount of potential. The town has not grown much in the last 50 years, but it's always hung around 8,000 people, which is attractive to some people. It's a quaint community, tremendous historical value. Like you said, it needs work. There's places that need to be fixed up, and this could be gorgeous.

Very eclectic. Part of the town faces each direction. It's about as mixed as you could get with this demographic.

You're an hour and a half from two major metropolitan areas, you're near the lake. You're right smack in the middle.

What attracted us to move here from Seattle was the history, the affordability... the other thing that really stood out was how friendly people were here. Everybody's just very, very friendly.

There's no secrets in Boonville, either.

(laughter.)

That's what makes it kind of neat.

Everybody feels welcome.

Mayberry.

(laughter.)

I have 120 year old house, and when the Amish go by, I feel like it's a flashback.

It's all-American. We've got a baseball field...

Parks.

I'm on the board of the YMCA. The Y's been here 10 years, and it's grown leaps and bounds due to the citizens.

As far as things to do here, we have a fabulous theater, and everything that comes to town here... citizens sometimes don't realize what a jewel we have. The caliber of musicians for the festivals is just amazing. You'd think it'd be some hokey stuff, and it's not. I have not attended anything that wasn't just top drawer. All the different kinds of music at festivals. And there's going to be a festival every other weekend. There's something for everybody.

There's not a lot of things for teenagers to do. We don't have a movie theater or a youth hangout place. It would be harder to sell this place to people with teenage kids.

That's a struggle with every metropolitan area, though. That would be a really good idea to come up with something to keep the teenagers busy.

Moderator: Where do people do their everyday shopping?

In.

I try to keep it in.

Groceries in.

I commute to Columbia, so I split my time. If I want specialty foods, anything organic, I have to go to Columbia.

Somebody has demographic information on that. There's a large percentage of people that work in Columbia, and there's a large number that work here and live in Columbia.

When I was little, the farmer's market used to be Main Street. It was great.

I think that's a possibility. With the agritourism possibilities, we could do that in the Downtown. A lot of downtowns are doing that. Another thing that's great about this town is that you could make a day trip or two in the Boonslick area. I went down to Rocheport, and I had lunch, and then I had ice cream. I love to go to Glasgow. They're bringing tourists to the whole area. You can go to Arrow Rock, the Lyceum Theater. We need to make sure that all the people who are looking for day trips know all the things that can be done in the area.

Any place that a tourist would stop at, we need them to know all the things there is to do in the Boonslick area. I had to research it all, and when I asked people what there is to do. I moved here with teenagers, and they were miserable. But our guests are blown away by how much there is to do. It'll be important that the stopping points, that they be educated about all there is to do in the area.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment? Where do you go for special occasions?

I stay here.

We stay here.

There's a lot of great restaurants in the area, but I try to stay within the Boonslick area.

Most people want the experience. They can go to Applebee's anywhere. They're looking for authentic Boonville.

You've got Café Napoli, Maggie's...

Glen's is busy. It's a little pricey, but it's great food.

You aren't going to find many little towns that have a nice restaurant like Glen's.

There's stuff on the highway, too. Settler's Inn... there's a lot of places. I don't know why you'd want to go into Columbia.

I think the thing about Columbia...I work there and go to school there, and they have a bigger diversity of food. Thai, Indian, Greek. But what's good about Boonville is that you get the quaint, small-town things, but you're just 20 minutes away from Columbia. You have the best of both world.

(agreement.)

And the pace is slower here.

When we left St. Peter's, we laughed at 8 cars at the stop sign being a traffic jam.

Moderator: Would you say Boonville is moving in the right or wrong direction?

Different areas.

I think it's moving, but it's a slower pace than I would've liked. I have 2 places near me that have been empty for 15 years, trees growing out the roof, and the City needs to take action.

Hear, hear.

(agreement.)

Why would the City allow this? We heard about Wal-Mart possibly coming in, but if you dress up Boonville, Wal-Mart will draw people in.

And we've got the casino. It's a huge draw. If you can get people from the boat to Downtown, which is three blocks...

Well, they're not led Downtown. They're led around Downtown. The signs guide you down this back road. When I first came here, I never went Downtown.

(agreement.)

The signs steer you away from Downtown.

If I remember, that was a City decision, not a casino decision.

Probably to keep the traffic away.

I want the traffic!

They had it in their heads that it was like when the ballgames let out in Columbia, and there's all that traffic. They thought all this stuff would happen.

They thought it would make crime worse, and they were going to get rid of all parking.

Anyway, that's one of the negatives. We need to do signage. The beautification thing is so high on the list, I cannot even tell you.

(vehement agreement.)

Cleaning up brush and debris.

You can't make everybody...

But you can say the City should put an ordinance in place against bathtubs or cars in your front yard.

But there is an ordinance now. I know it's being enforced. And that's a start. You can make people move a car, but you can't make them paint their house.

You can say that there's a certain limit to a house standing up with raw wood.

But it's their house. It took over a year to get a City ordinance about the cars in. It takes forever.

We know where we're going, but the process is way too slow, and that starts with City administration.

(agreement.)

It also has to do with laws that protect our property. Unless we become historic.

I don't want that portion of it. But I want to see the buildings near me with trees coming out the roof, I want to see them fix that. It devalues my property.

There should be somewhere we can meet in the middle. You've got the people who want to be a historic area, and there's people who want toilets and abandoned cars in their front yard.

In St. Peters, if you didn't have your grass cut, there was a sign in your yard that said it had to be cut, or it would be cut for you and you'd get a bill.

A lot is absentee ownership.

Once the code enforcement is ushered in, it might be self reinforcing, but for so long it's been overlooked. It's just going to take a while. Once people realize, it'll be self reinforcing.

(agreement.)

And it won't be 40 bucks. It'll be 500 bucks.

Moderator: *Let's talk about Downtown in particular. Is Downtown moving in the right or wrong direction?*

Hopefully it is. You want people to move in, to fix the buildings up, to put shops in. It's hard to get people to invest in them. There's a lot of things that need to be done, and if you say something to the City about it, they...we're a third-class city, and there's only so much we can do, and I understand that. But...one of the meetings we had, we were walking around Downtown, and we noticed that the building next to the bakery, the bricks had pulled away, and we had one of our festivals, and then two days later, the top of that building fell. If that had happened at the festival, people would get hurt. The City's aware of it, and the City's liable.

The owner is liable.

But if the City is aware of it and not enforcing it.

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

It seems like one of the challenges with Downtown is that it's heading in the right direction, but it's heading with five different small groups, and there's not a lot of crossover. I hope the DREAM initiative helps combine all those groups into one group. They should be able to combine their resources.

Someone asked me to create a website so that all the groups could have a single website... there's a lot of factions that want to do things their own way, though.

That's what we're talking about. Everybody knows where we want to end up, but we need a central entity, and that needs to be the City administration. Somebody needs to be the central focus, so that multiple groups aren't doing the same thing. There needs to be a coordinator.

It could be a Downtown development organization. It doesn't have to reside in the City. The more we put the onus on the City, yes, there are responsibilities, but there's a lot the community can do, and if we don't take our responsibility, it's not fair to them. There's a lot of community organizations that could fulfill some of that.

Building codes have changed 4000 times since they were built, but there are things you have to do now to make the buildings safe. They're putting band-aids on things, and there's no reason for it. There's no reason for a building to collapse.

Moderator: *How do people use Downtown? Why do people go Downtown?*

I go to Browning's all the time. And Wal-Mart can't touch 'em.

Someone can help you.

About the big box stores, you go from point A to point B. But you go to Browning's, and people can help you.

I go to both. A lot of us eat Downtown. Our office is Downtown, so I have lunch Downtown.

Florist.

There's a lot of professional services.

Library, bakery.

My clients outside of town, when their husbands come to the boat, they get their money's worth. They come back and they go on and on.

We have a new clothing store opening Downtown.

A new hobby store.

The ice cream shop.

And there are historic sites Downtown. The jail, the thespian hall.

There's appliance stores. That's where we buy our appliances. They have TVs. We have a lot of people that come into our office for tours. I work at Missouri Life Magazine, and I show them the warehouse, but it is a cool old building. We give tours during the day.

We do have some beautiful buildings.

We have historic homes and neighborhoods, and we stroll around.

It's a walking town. It's easy to walk to the shops and the historic sites. It is a walking town.

There's lots of possibilities for the alleys. They're cool. They could be made into something...

I don't know how much the upstairs are used.

I would love to have a loft. We looked at doing lofts in some buildings.

There's wonderful spaces down there. We lucked out. Ours had been renovated in the 80s, so we didn't have as much to do, but most of them, nobody's been in them for 50 or 60 years, and the electricity isn't even on.

Asbestos.

Yeah, and it's a huge thing to renovate.

If there was a mechanism to get that started.

Low-interest loans would be fabulous. I think that's what people need. I know there's tax credits, but when you buy one of these buildings, it's huge money. We've looked at 2. The JC Penney building and Diamond Lil's, and you're talking a lot of money. Even if you're talking about what you think it would cost—

Add 35% to it.

And the time of doing it, I just don't know if there's enough people running around with deep pockets.

The economy's reflecting that.

I just bought a building Downtown, and the tax credits don't apply to me, because I won't be doing enough in short enough time. If I have to piece it together, it comes right out of my pocket.

Moderator: Do you think there's a demand for more housing Downtown?

Yes.

I think if they were nice enough.

There's some gorgeous buildings.

Loft apartments.

(agreement.)

It seems to me that there's enough housing, but if there was something that could put some more things on rental property...we need affordable housing here, but the opportunities that are available for renting, and it was cheaper to rent in Columbia than here when I moved here.

We have a house up in Fayette, and when we bought the house, I went down to City Hall to turn the water on, and the fellow asked me all different kinds of questions and gave me all this information. I had to have it inspected it before it was rented out. That doesn't happen here. We have rental property here, and we don't have any trouble renting it out, but nobody has ever looked at it.

In Sedalia, where I lived, there are neighborhoods where you can't rent. You can't have an apartment. There are some things like that.

I like that there's a mixture where I live, and all the different people, but I just worry about some of the rental properties. Where I lived before, the rental property was so dangerous, and people were falling through the floor. There's a gap. There's the nice and the expensive, and then there's the cheap and dangerous.

But that's a City responsibility to inspect buildings, to make sure things are safe.

There's just got to be some enforcement somewhere.

That's the highest thing on my list. The number one is code enforcement for abandoned vehicles, broken windows, derelict property.

Vegetation on roofs.

I walked out of City Hall the other day, and there was garbage all over this garage.

Where I live, we have a duplex next to us, and nice houses, but across the street, there's an abandoned house that's just falling in on itself.

That's where the law of eminent domain comes in. The City should take the property.

In Portland, where I was before, there was a mechanism in place. Anytime a property complaint was lodged, after about 5 complaints, the City had the option of taking possession and making it affordable housing. People are delusional about the states of their buildings.

(many people talking at once, agreeing about code enforcement.)

Moderator: How user friendly is Downtown? How is parking?

I don't like the parallel parking.

I agree.

Make it at an angle.

I walk Downtown.

For the amount of traffic we have, the parking is sufficient, other than at festivals, but if we were to bring more traffic in, then it's absolutely not adequate.

When the delivery trucks stop, you can't get around them.

The streets were built for Model-A cars, and nothing can be done. Maybe the parking should be behind the buildings.

The best way to get the parking to work is to have 2-hour parking. I'm down there, though, and it was last summer, and these ladies were getting into their van in front of our building, and I saw her pull a parking ticket off her car. They had bags of stuff, they had shopped. I ran outside, and I said, "I'm so sorry you got a ticket." They parked there, and they walked Downtown, had lunch, shopped some more, and got a parking ticket.

They're spending their money, and it's what we want them to do, but then we penalize them for it.

I understand the point of the 2-hour parking to keep employees from parking there, but I wish we had enough parking to avoid that. If we want people to come Downtown and shop down there, we need longer parking.

If we put signage to announce the public parking behind the buildings.

If we did angled parking.

There's not enough room for it.

(many people talking at once.)

I think we could use some more parking.

Moderator: What about business hours? Are they convenient?

You never know until you go down there.

No consistency.

As a business owner, it's hard to figure out what hours you should be there. Our business is very specialized—we sell hearing aids. That's different than a gift shop. But trying to figure out if someone's going to be there from 10 to 6 or 7... how can you afford to pay anybody? I watch the baker over there, and she's there from the crack of dawn until 5, and on Saturdays until 2 or 3. When they were working on that store, they were there until after midnight for months. Trying to figure out what we can do that's worth our time and has some kind of return...

We're catering to the non-working people, though. If we want to bring people into Boonville, we need things open nights and weekends.

Sundays especially.

In spring and summer, people walk around and shop.

And 9 to 5 doesn't work for most people.

If you want to cater to tourists, you need to open them on the weekends.

A lot of my older clients that live in smaller towns, when they heard we're getting a Super Wal-Mart, they were so happy, because they want to come here. But they'll go to Wal-Mart and leave, because they don't know there's stuff Downtown. If we had more publicity. There's good publicity in Fulton, and Fayette advertised years ago, and in Fayette, they're busy all weekend long. They'll go eat at Emmitt's and walk the Square.

But Emmitt's is open. There's no reason for us to be on TV if nothing's open. When I first moved here, I'd try to go antique shopping on Sunday, and it wasn't open. And I had a lady come to town, and she got here Sunday at 2, and there was nothing open Downtown. There was nowhere to eat lunch. I had given her this great picture of Boonville, and everything was closed. If we're going to act like...

But you've got to get people Downtown to shop there.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

If you did the advertising, and you did open the town up on the weekend, and you invited people to come to town, and people did come to town...

The one thing I don't even understand is when there are festivals in town, and there are people Downtown, and they close up... knowing that we're going to have this big deal, you'd think there would be more businesses open.

I think if the flow starts to come...

It's not going to start until they start...

If the City ties in with the business owners and advertises...

We have to advertise why. Why should you come to Boonville for these businesses? We've got to point out that it's more than just going to get that dress or whatever. We've got to focus on... as a Downtown area, all together, in unity, on the theme. Let's say it's the historic buildings. We don't play that up.

I think it's the only thing we do play up.

As an outsider, when I came here, I didn't hear a word about any of the history.

The only thing you ever hear about is the boat. We moved from Montana 2 years ago, and Boonville was a spot on the map. We had family here, so we moved here, but you get outside Boonville, and all you hear about is the boat.

You've got to realize, the boat is doing a lot of advertising for Boonville.

They're advertising for the boat, though.

They're coming to Boonville, though.

And the City has made sure that people don't go through Downtown Boonville when they come to the boat.

Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown. What kinds of businesses do you think would be a good fit?

I think we need a boutique.

I think we need to cater to the Katy Trail bikers. We need to be more bike-friendly.

We need bike parking. We are right there on the trail, it comes right through.

Imagine you're a biker, and you're turning off the bridge. Where am I going to go? Is there something to draw me to Main Street?

I wish the ice cream shop had been Downtown.

(agreement.)

As a new person coming into town, that's the kind of thing I think of.

I think if they had some kind of kiosk or information for bikers by the trail...you don't even realize you're a block from Main Street. We could use a business for the bikers. Something organic groceryish that has the water and the granola bars.

That's part of whoever's in charge, going outside of here and attracting businesses to the Downtown area.

We have to have good, safe buildings. It goes back to buildings.

That's where the government subsidies come into town. We can vote on these things.

Our City Council needs to be a little more open-minded.

Yes!

Whenever the City does hire people to bring them in to help, they need to be civil to them.

(agreement. Side conversations.)

With the Y, nobody ever spoke up.

Whatever has to be done in the government level... the center of this whole deal is the government. I don't want them messing with my home, but there are parameters...there are building codes.

If one house is bringing down property values...

(agreement.)

The historic society doesn't have any legal leverage to change or preempt anything. The City inspectors are incredibly friendly. They were very helpful when I bought my building.

(agreement.)

...there's no code for fire alarms.

...I think we've run off track.

Moderator: Do you think any dining or entertainment would be good Downtown?

An art gallery.

I agree.

Yeah.

That's what I'm developing.

Great!

We are going to have a library Downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

I think we've got an adequate amount of places to eat.

And we have Turner Hall and Thespian Hall.

We don't have a movie theater.

We do have a bowling alley and a golf course.

There's vacancy Downtown, and I do think we could use a youth center.

What about the new spaces at the YMCA?

Yeah. But I think you're missing the teenage niche. They're not interested in family night.

There's a whole property at Kemper that the City owns, and it's a great property. It could be an entire community center. It would be phenomenal. You could attract offices.

You're talking about Kemper, but the City doesn't even keep *it* up to code. And the City owns it.

When you drive by, there's that yellow tape that says, "Don't go here, because it'll fall on you." We sort of feel like the City has been remiss in taking care of property.

And no one's doing anything for teenagers. At 1:00 or 2:00, these kids are walking the street.

We have a curfew.

That doesn't make any difference. Cops just keep on going.

I'd like to see more coffee shops Downtown.

A coffee shop would be good.

I'm planning on doing that, too.

(many people talking at once.)

I was going to bring coffee in from Portland and do a coffee shop. And I had some idea of doing a heritage festival.

Do you need crown molding?

(side conversations.)

I like antique stores. I love antiques.

Yeah, nicer antiques.

I think we need awnings. I would like the town to look... window boxes with flowers, and awnings that match.

I agree. You know why? When it rains, and you're shopping, you're getting drenched.

I'd love awnings and flowers and beautification programs that makes it all look...

Not the same.

Not the same, but you do want it to look like it's on the same page.

Unified.

I come from a DREAM community, and what they've done in 2 years, their Downtown is really being revamped. Kirksville. They have a courthouse, and they have these old awnings from the 70's, and they took all that stuff down, and it became a huge scandal about agreeing on it, and it caused a lot of controversy.

Do City codes allow tables on the sidewalk?

(many people talking at once.)

That makes it more of a quaint community, to have that.

I'd like to see a farmer's market Downtown.

I agree.

Me too.

I'd like to see more residents Downtown.

When I was in high school, I worked at Ben Franklin's, and they stayed open every night and all day Saturday, and when they stayed open, everyone else stayed open, and Downtown was full. All the buildings were full, and all the upstairs were full, and there were lights everywhere. We had a lot of fun.

Another town that's fabulous is Ozark, Missouri. They did have the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, but it's absolutely gorgeous. They have an upscale retail shop, great restaurants, unique little gift shops, baby shops, and there is the business part of the town. The sidewalks are fabulous.

Bring some of the cobblestones back.

I sometimes wonder if we don't need to have a focus group go somewhere and get a vision. Visit other communities. Look what Paducah did.

I have a lot of respect for people who have lived here forever, but new people coming in... it's time for a change.

Absolutely.

Initially when I mentioned I was going to do an art gallery, people thought I was delusional.

No. That's going to attract people from Columbia.

A book shop.

Can we just pile everything into your business?

Moderator: What other downtowns would you like to see Boonville echo in one way or another?

My dream community is a town called Leavenworth, Washington. They have a website. It is a town that used to be a logger's town in eastern Washington, and the town died. They revitalized the town to turn it into a Bavarian village, because it was at the foot of the mountains. They were utilizing their surroundings. There's flower boxes, and there's city codes. Your storefront has to look like the village.

Look at Blackwater. I mean, I remember going to Blackwater when my children did theater at Arrow Rock, and now look at it.

Arrow Rock, Rocheport.

Look at Glasgow. The painting on the buildings.

Franklin, Kentucky.

Cape Girardeau.

I'd like to see a park where you could sit and relax.

And eat ice cream and drink coffee.

Yeah.

I heard a rumor about a dog park?

(many people talking at once.)

When we have semis going down Main Street...there needs to be a truck bypass.

But we have the bakery right Downtown. That's part of the deal. When there's business and industry...

We still need places to sit Downtown. We need benches.

(agreement.)

Do cobblestones, and turn Downtown into a courtyard.

We need an outdoor hangout.

You don't necessarily need a hangout, but you need a bench to sit on, to eat that ice cream or drink that coffee.

Moderator: One other thing. How do you get information about what's happening Downtown?

The radio in the morning.

Yeah, but there's a whole group of people that don't listen to it.

I didn't even know we have one.

Some people do listen to that at work.

Yeah.

I listen to the local radio station. I think it's very Boonvillish, and I laugh, and I like it. I have called in. So there you go. I think obviously the radio is...

The music sucks.

I agree.

(many people talking at once.)

I want to say that everybody here subscribes to Missouri Life Magazine.

But we've got to find a way to communicate events to people outside of Boonville.

We do. The tourism board gives money to all those groups who advertise on the radio.

We don't see some of the TV ads out there.

They're utilizing what we have.

But we're the only ones listening to that radio or reading that paper.

We encourage people to advertise in Columbia. Some festivals advertise all over. I will tell you, the Boonville tourism board does give money for the events to be advertised.

The website does do good, though.

We need to work on the website.

I travel all over, and I don't think there's a state that I traveled where I haven't met someone who knows where Boonville is. We're more recognized than you think.

We have parades and festivals.

I feel like some of the information, if I wanted to get involved on a local level, the advertising isn't that good. I went to the public DREAM meeting, but there was one poster about it, and that was it. How would anyone know about it? I feel like when the budget's being discussed at City Council, unless you know, you might miss it.

The tourism board is going to a whole lot of trade shows and travel shows. It amazes me how many people in Kansas City are looking for a 2 or 3 day trip. They ask what there is to do in the area, too.

It's kind of a proven thing with the economy the way it is, people aren't going to go to Hawaii anymore.

Or Mexico.

(laughter.)

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SESSION III

LONG TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Tell me a little bit about your community.

It's friendly.

It's got great houses.

Rich in culture.

Nice focus on the arts.

Katy trail.

Good visual arts, too. It's a good small town. It's easy to get anywhere else in the country you want to go. Good place to raise kids.

Close to Columbia. Probably the economic center of the region. So there's a fair amount to do 25 miles away.

We're on the Interstate, which is a major east-west route. We've always been on the Interstate because of the river.

I don't know if it's that much of a plus anymore. We're situated where people are moving. And we're very rich in heritage.

The economy's...the unemployment rate is a little lower than the national average.

It's a safe community, too.

Moderator: You said there's a diverse economy and low unemployment?

There's a lot of jobs here.

Moderator: What are the major employers?

The prison, the casino...

(many people talking at once.)

Small business. And a number of people work in Columbia.

And people who work here live in Columbia.

Any cultural thing you want, you can drive a half hour and get it.

That's less than the commute time in the city.

(agreement.)

There's a lot of people who commute to Columbia.

It's convenient.

We're safe.

Safe.

Low crime rate.

(side conversations.)

I think one of the things with this being a smaller town, we have a diverse culture with a lot of the arts. A lot of the things bring in a lot of national notoriety. The things we do get accomplished with the cultural arts...

My friend who has tickets to the St. Louis Symphony came here for a festival, and he said, "I've never even seen Dave's face, but now I got a chance to sit with him."

(agreement. Many people talking at once.)

There's a great newspaper here.

I wouldn't call it great.

(laughter.)

There are a lot of churches here.

Boonville has produced world-class citizens. Dave and the director the Missouri Historical Society, and now he's in Wilmington, Delaware... (unintelligible.) These are the kind of people who Boonville produces. When my children were entering college, they all tested really well.

60% of the children who graduate high school continue their education.

(many people talking at once.)

As small towns go, this town is not... it can be cliquish, but it's open to people who aren't from here. Friends of Historic Boonville, how many presidents were people who were not from here? It's a town that's open to people who are not from here who have a good idea.

We do a really good job of coming together as a community. For example, Relay for Life...

80,000?

Not sure how much.

(many people talking at once.)

We do parties pretty well.

We have wonderful parties. And all generations will be represented.

I think there's more structures on the National Register here than in any other city in this state.

Not just any other community of its size, but all the communities.

We have an excellent education system.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Where do you do your retail shopping? Groceries, clothing, that kind of thing?

Most people will shop Boonville first, and then go somewhere else if they can't find it.

We shop here.

I prefer to go to the local shoe store here.

Some of his suppliers will say that they won't stock their line because the store is too small. If you're looking for shoes, you know what's there.

He can always order it.

But it's a small business. A lot of small businesses are fragile, because they depend on a small clientele.

Since I've worked in Columbia for the last 7 years, and my wife has too, we've always been bedroom community people. Doing shopping, it's a little bit of a challenge, because a lot of the shops Downtown are closed by the time we get back. There is a large percent of our population that does leave our city limits. And on Saturday morning, we have stuff going on with our kids here and all that, and a lot of the shops are open only on Saturday mornings. It is a major challenge. I'm not saying their shops need to stay open. They can't stay open all the hours of the big box chains, but still.

Boonville is a small town, with extremely varied people, and a lot of stuff can't be found in Boonville. And Wal-Mart is here. You have to be a really exceptional merchandiser or not make much money to have a place here.

And parking is hard.

There's plenty of parking here, but the only walking people do is across the street. If you can't park in front of the store, then "there's no parking." There's a lot of parking in Boonville.

If you're after essentials, groceries, hardware, pharmacy... beer.

(laughter.)

Those kinds of things are there, but if you're going to do mostly clothing, that kind of thing...

Or bookstores. We don't have a bookstore.

We had men's and women's clothing.

(many people talking at once about what used to be Downtown.)

...some of us remember Friday nights Downtown...

...Saturday nights...

...on Main Street...

...there were 5 pharmacies...

...the shoe store draws incredible business.

...They've got the clientele. Wing-tip shoes, he can literally count how many people will buy them. It's such a small clientele...

A niche market like high-end shoes, there's not the clientele to support it.

Downtown Boonville either has to be deep discount or very high end.

(many people talking at once.)

...in small towns, high-end stores...

...sports coats for funerals and weddings...

...we have two grocery stores. I'll have to admit that when I want nice vegetables and fresh fruits, I can't get those in Boonville, unless you get there the day they come in. There's just not a good selection of healthier foods in Boonville's grocery stores.

I'd like to see a community garden.

There's 40 acres out on the highway.

An expanded farmer's market.

In Bardstown, Kentucky, they planted out on their parkway. You could walk up your block and gather different vegetables that you needed.

They did something like that on HGTV last week.

And when we cut down all our trees on Locust...

(laughter.)

Moderator: How are the restaurants in Boonville?

Wonderful.

Amazing.

Good selection, good quality.

Five years ago, it stunk, but now it's great.

You can get a nice sit-down, WJ's or Glen's, or a nice casual thing at the Palace.

(many people agreeing.)

There's at least 2 restaurants that will draw people to this town. WJ's and Glen's. People will come for that.

Those are Downtown.

One's a block off.

They both draw a lot of people.

The Riverside Diner is packed. And I heard that the Café Napoli people just purchased it.

It's a breakfast place.

At Glen's, you sit down and have a meal, and I won't know 4 other people in there.

I never thought I'd be able to buy oysters on a half-shell in Boonville.

He was in Columbia for many years, and he moved into the Frederick.

And he does specialty Cajun.

We have 3 Chinese restaurants and a Mexican restaurant.

We have a buffet.

The deli's not bad.

We have an ice cream parlor.

Oh, yes.

It's kind of a surprise, the number of restaurants that have opened recently and stayed.

The ice cream place is attracting a lot of kids. Junior high kids are always hanging around.

Also, the YMCA is a major plus to this town for activities, opportunities, fitness and stuff like that. It's really been a focus of a lot of energy.

It's amazing for a town of 8000 people.

Very economical, taking an existing structure and using it.

Everybody who lives here, they're all commenting about how much there is to do. We went to Kansas City a month ago, and we were listening to the radio, and they said, "Don't go to Boonville, because there's only the casino there, and nothing else."

No.

I met a pretty renowned travel agent, and she came here for the Big Muddy, and she loves the town. She loves the hospitality, and she now wants to bring in all these musicians.

She should bring in a tour.

We're making the assumption that she knows what Thespian Hall is. It's the oldest opera theater...

(many people talking at once.)

It's excellent.

My family owned funeral homes here, and people would come for funerals, and they saw the true beauty of the place.

One thing when they planned the town is that the power lines are in the alleys, and the trees are on the streets, so you don't have the trees destroying the wiring.

Moderator: You mentioned the casino. Do locals go there?

Yeah.

It's cheaper to eat there if you're gambling, but...

There's a birthday special.

They do all kinds of specials.

(many people talking at once.)

...it's good food...

I wanted to comment back on what you're saying about what there is to do in Boonville. If you're a teenager to early twenties, there is kind of a void of something to be able to do if you're not interested in...you go for being involved in sports with your kids, to a void, to the next realm of the more community stuff. But there is kind of a void from late teens to twenty-something.

If you compare it to Kansas City...

Or to Columbia...

But that's the benefit to living here. You can go to Columbia to get what you need.

Every kid wants to go somewhere else.

Moderator: Since this is about Downtown, let's talk specifically about it. Do you see positive changes or negative changes Downtown?

A lot of nice buildings have been restoring their fronts, and it even draws young people's attention. I was talking to high school students last week, and I showed them pictures, and they know what's been redone in the last year or two and comment on how much better it looks.

(agreement.)

Thespian Hall has a stability to it now.

I'd like to see more improvements on some of the buildings.

We've got empty storefronts and we've got some that are about to fall down.

There's a lot of opportunity when you look at the second and third levels. Historically, they were apartments, even in the 80's. Now people have moved out, but things could be revitalized to bring in some income to support the ownership of those buildings. If you get people living down here, they'll bring business.

(agreement.)

When I was in high school, all the professionals were on the 2nd floor, but most of them have moved out.

Moderator: What do you use Downtown for, and how often do you go?

Every day.

Post office.

(many people talking at once.)

When county people come into town, they avoid Main Street.

We've got to find a way to get all that traffic to stop.

I don't know how many of you went Downtown Saturday for those motorcycles.

Yeah, 200-something of them.

And last year, they made 500 dollars for the Shriner's hospital, and that was the most of any city in Missouri. When all of those people come to town, they spend the night, and some are here a week. It seems like a little thing, and I'm not a motorcycle person, but to see all those people here...

I saw them having breakfast that morning. 10 different people dressed up with all that leather. They were new people in town.

When we started moving our festivals off Main Street, it hurt everything.

(many people talking at once.)

Heritage days...

When Heritage Days was Downtown...

If the Chamber does something that brings people Downtown, it's up to you to get them in your store.

Yeah. When we do Festival of Lights every Thursday night, what a great opportunity for Downtown retailers, but there are a number of them that weren't open.

We used to have Sidewalk Days, and that was great.

We had the same problems in the 70's. Has anyone been to Westin? One guy bought the whole town, and he runs it like a mall. If there's a sale, everyone has it. If we could get the Downtown merchants to buy into then, that'll help our chances.

Isn't that the Chamber's job?

That's got to be a merchant's association.

We have a committee within the Chamber that's gaining momentum, but it's not going to happen overnight. One thing they're working on...the motels and hotels are sending people to Columbia. So we're going to develop a tour of Boonville to show people what there is to do.

And the Katy Trail brings so many people in. If you're riding the trail, we're the perfect stopping point. If we could figure out a way to inform them what's here, they've got money to spend. They just go to the casino but don't explore what's in town.

Ultimately, I wish we had a visitor's center. It needs to be down there, right at the Katy Trail. That building sitting there, that would be perfect.

If it were a casual eating and visiting place, that would be nice. We see cars from all over the US, and when we ask why they're there, it's the Katy Trail 9 times out of 10. They're going to stay here for a night, often. I think there's a lot we're missing. There should be something right there.

Like in Sedalia, the depot there, what they've done with it, it's amazing. It's a combination of a gift store and a museum.

(agreement. Many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

...a museum in this town. There really should be one...

...we were in a little bitty town on vacation this summer, along the Mississippi River, and it was the best museum. It wasn't fancy, but it was the coolest thing.

We have such a rich history.

But it takes a lot of money. If we had 5 million dollars, we could have a spectacular museum. We have tons of stuff, but we don't have a place to exhibit it.

Moderator: You mentioned parking earlier. Other than parking, how user friendly is Downtown? Is it easy to find Downtown?

(many people talking at once.)

All roads lead to Downtown.

US-40 used to be Main Street.

Most of the buildings are handicapped accessible. Very few have steps. And all intersections have ramps. So everything is accessible.

There are still an awful lot of empty buildings.

Yeah.

If you own a building Downtown, you have to charge low rent to the renters...people that are doing the best Downtown own their own building. The hardware store. They own their own building.

Sedalia managed to do pretty good with all those antique shops on their main drag. Sunday afternoon antiques.

(many people talking at once.)

...local artists or regional artists.

We have so much talent. It's a shame we don't have a way to market it.

I want to open a store on Main Street. And have it be a place where potters and artists and weavers can display their goods.

What is credit like if you want to open a store Downtown?

Real estate, hard assets, it's not too bad. But intellectual capital, inventory, you've got to come up with it yourself.

I've talked with a couple young people who have looked at doing something like that, and they didn't have a lot to put into it, and you have to sacrifice something. You have to put up your house for a small business loan... (unintelligible)...there's great opportunity there.

So instead of putting a pool of money to help people deal with their facades, maybe it should be a pool of money to help the business owners get started. Not so much to help the property owners.

Once you get the businesses in, you'll have rent coming in, which creates cash flow, so they can fix it. Now, they'll want to go in somewhere attractive and appealing, but the best storefront doesn't do anything if it's empty.

(side conversations.)

There's another difficulty. There's lots of folks that would like to do a business, but we don't have any way to teach them how to plan it. We look at people who have no plan. A great idea, but no plan.

(agreement.)

If people would go and sit down with some of the resources, to plan. They need to study about it.

I know the YMCA is doing workshops for resumes and stuff like that. Maybe you could do an SBA class. SBA has really good consultant services that are free. USDA, also.

The guy at the university does an awesome job.

It's well covered, but people need to be directed to it.

That may be something through the extension office. They do some classes...

_____ makes a good point. The tradition of the Chamber and Downtown is not to pull people through, it's to create business financing. We have some very successful businesspeople, and those are people we could use as examples.

(many people talking at once.)

...when you think about the loft opportunity Downtown...there's an awful lot of people in this room, at our age, looking to live somewhere simple.

There aren't very many people living Downtown.

It's a new thing. Last 5, 10 years.

Maybe 15 years.

Some of them are full time rentals.

And there's some above _____'s store.

(many people talking at once.)

And the hearing aid people. They live in the store where the ice cream parlor is.

The investment to do those loft apartments is substantial, too.

(agreement.)

Where Missouri Life is, there's so much there. It's huge. It's an awesome building.

_____ makes a really good point. In the core Downtown, those first half a dozen buildings have some structural issues that have to be addressed.

I wish a fire would just take out that block.

(laughter.)

Moderator: My last series of questions is about the future of Downtown. Are there types of businesses that your community needs Downtown?

Children's clothing.

Adult clothing.

Bring back JC Penney's. If you had a store like that...

Fabric store.

But you can't make it Downtown and compete with Wal-Mart.

But look at what Wal-Mart doesn't have. Fabric.

And we've never had a bookstore.

(many people talking at once about books.)

We need an art shop, an antique store... those types of things.

It could bring people in from Columbia.

We as townspeople would like to see stuff that would support us, but that's not viable. You'd have to have things that would draw from elsewhere.

Maybe half of Downtown would be open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, instead of earlier in the week.

The upholstery shop that we used to have, that's a niche.

Why does Browning continue? Why does Gordon's continue to stay in business?

Service.

We're looking at each other, and it's personal service. We can charge accounts—Wal-Mart doesn't do that... do the things that Wal-Mart won't do, and you'll win. We have to teach our young people to take that risk.

With the Wal-Mart phenomenon, there's an opportunity that comes with the new Wal-Mart, because we've got the communities around us that have been going to Sedalia, Marshall, Columbia, that are now going to come here, hopefully. And we could draw them Downtown, and it's up to Downtown to do something with that opportunity.

What would be the physical things you would have to take care of...there's two physical things. You've got to have a place to park, and we were really smart as a city where we set up the traffic pattern...the only place we have 3 lanes is by Wal-Mart, which means we can't get on and off the highway to go Downtown. Go back to the angled parking, and get that 3-lane running all the way up. If we could get those cars going north into Downtown...

If you wait for the perfect spot, you'll never get it, but the fire station is right now our tourism center anyway. Why not add a tourism center there, officially?

We don't have good signage, not for the Katy Trail or anything else people look for.

We need to put up signs along I-70. Now, at least, our exits are there on the east and west.

Let's put _____ on this.

The signs are sitting in the street department's sign room. They took them down and never put them back up. That's so important. Sedalia's not marked really well, either, and they have this wonderful museum, but no signage for out-of-towners. Your signage is so important.

(agreement.)

One thing we haven't talked about that Columbia and Arrow Rock have done—there's a Downtown district, and it's designated that way. Other communities undertake these improvements and enforce renovation. Is Downtown going to be an official district?

That's an owner's policy, not a business policy.

We need to maintain our historic significance.

...a Downtown historic district...

That's a good question, because it has been talked about. There was a plan, almost a plan...it was for the business owners to tax extra to do facades and keep the place pretty.

There was federal money available for a couple years, right?

For the exteriors.

Didn't they have a façade committee?

That's what we were talking about. The buildings that are occupied with businesses, they're usually owned by the business owners.

No, I think the majority of them are rented.

(many people arguing about the ownership of buildings.)

The buildings that are in rough shape, it costs significant dollars to repair the structure. I don't know if there's any incentive to help them get back in shape.

I think that's part of this, to look for grants, but I think we're also trying to drill down what's most important. You can't do everything at once.

Part of what the DREAM program is is drilling down what the area is that the program is going to focus on. What we do from the Chamber of Commerce or whatever taxing district, how we market what we're doing down there, as Columbia does...they use that as a marketing thing. They say, "Come down to the district."

And they have a standard that the businesses are following. They've torn down the awnings, and they're coming back to the small town look.

Moderator: How do you want your Downtown to look?

Drive Downtown Glasgow. There are one or two blocks, and they've fixed up that whole street, and everything has a common theme.

Lexington is another one.

Blackwater's one person.

People say, "Why can't we be like Arrow Rock?" We're not going to be like Blackwater and Arrow Rock, because we've got more buildings to take care of.

I'd like to see some conformity. In Columbia, a lot of buildings do have awnings, but they're made out of cloth.

Those look nice.

(many people talking at once.)

If there were some standards in place.

For signage, too.

Some historic district rules...

The problem is, we always say, "well, it can't be done."

If the other towns around us are doing it, why can't we?

Someone's bought the whole town.

But if you take a look at what _____ has done with her 3 buildings...it is a new look, but it has an old-time feel to it, and it's very nice. It's not the old square thing on the front.

It has integrity.

There's something about brick and mortar that makes it look solid and inviting.

Our Downtown just needs cleaning up to look good. It doesn't need conformity, it just takes money.

Some of it's just tearing off what's on the outside.

Some incentive to make that happen.

We have a really good example by the Y of a little house that was rehabbed.

He has lots of money.

He did it on a low budget, though. He refurbished the original roof.

Somebody vandalized it last night.

(horrified reactions.)

One of the problems with Boonville is we can do a lot of great things, but we've got so many organizations doing different things, with different silos...we need to start working together. With this new bed tax, tourism will generate double the revenue, but there's no plan of what to do with that money. You've got the Chamber doing one thing...you get a lot of pushback, because nobody wants to give up their piece of the pie.

Monetarily, I think in terms of time, you have a percentage of people who actually go out and do stuff. It's the same percentage here, but the group of people is small, and a lot of us are in this room.

(agreement.)

People who want to get involved, they get involved, and suddenly you're involved in everything, and you don't have time. Time is a precious resource.

But if you could consolidate energy...

There's a lot of organizations doing a little bit of the same things, and I don't want to step on any toes, but the Historical Society and the Tourism Division and the Chamber, so many different places...

They all have meetings, too.

And they're all coming back to a common focus, but nobody wants to talk together.

The DREAM initiative, that's what it is. That's what it's all about. I'd like to go back to the facades. They were all built one at a time, and they all have their own personalities.

Our claim to fame as a small town is that we've been able to keep our historic buildings, and if the Downtown follows that, now you're creating the anchor to attract new businesses because there is an appeal, you have something to market... it has to look appealing to get people to come. We have some things could be big draws, but if we had some consistency, and people would know where to shop, to eat, and to stay, we could draw them.

Each owner, each business, we try to do that to set ourselves apart. In the same sense, I can see that you try to kind of set some kind of guideline of what you're doing. We're starting to see a little bit of it. You can still do individual things, but if you're trying to get all brick and mortar, you can't really have one building that sticks out. You're trying to accomplish a common goal. I think it breaks up the whole theme. But you can still have individuality.

Look at the Plaza.

There's no way they're all going to look the same. But I see what you're saying. You don't want somebody to put up aluminum siding or something like that, since we're taking it all off right now.

They should have to wash the upstairs windows.

And make sure the blinds are straight.

I walked by _____'s one day, and somebody had washed the windows, and I walked inside and thanked her.

I think some of the windows are even boarded up Downtown.

Back to the facades, those buildings should be restored to the original whatever they were. They're all going to be different.

I agree with you.

And don't paint it. It's brick.

Moderator: I think you've answered all of my questions. Thanks.

SESSION IV

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AND PROPERTY OWNERS (GROUP 1) DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Tell me a little about your community.

When we had our bed and breakfast, people would comment that it was beautiful, historic, and clean. It's hard to look from an outside view, so I take people's comments.

I think of family-oriented. My children were raised here. Park, baseball, apple pie. Friendly home town.

I'm the new guy on the block. From a business standpoint, very business-friendly.

As someone who brought their business here 3 years ago, I've found it very warm and welcoming and open. As an example, the small town our business was in before, there might be 3 or 4 exclusive little women's clubs, and here, there's one big one that welcomes everyone.

It's a good place to raise our children, because they were always complaining there wasn't enough to do.

(laughter.)

I think it's safe. I'm from Columbia, and I used to think of Columbia is safe...I feel safe here.

I think that outsiders see Boonville as a wonderful place. The history, and...but I think that people...my family's been here 7 generations, and I've lived other places, but I don't think that people who have been here really appreciate what they have and what they could have, and I don't know why that is. Lots of people have moved here with grand ideas, and Boonville's beaten them up, and they've left, and I hate that. It's pretty resistant to change. I love Boonville. I lived on both coasts, and I'm back here, but I'm really disappointed at times. We have 6 trails, the river, every possible thing that the most wonderful tourist town could have, and it's not taken advantage of.

I agree. We're going to have traffic through to go to the boat, and instead of bringing them Downtown, we're routing them out here to nowhere-land. I don't know what the population is here, but I think there's a senior population here that doesn't want the tourists down there. They want to move all the highways off Downtown because the traffic is too bad. You're killing us.

Any successful tourist town, traffic moves slow. They zip through or around here.

One of the problems that I see... Boonville businesspeople will not speak out against things that are wrong because they're afraid of a backlash. That's one thing. And our City Council is a lot to be desired in this town. They don't do things to support Downtown, and if all the business owners would be honest, they would say the same thing. I'm not against Wal-Mart, but we have

history and opportunity for tourism here, we have the Katy Trail, we have Kemper, and these are points we could build on. How many years have we owned Kemper, and we don't do anything with it.

We have clients from Columbia who are sick of the big box shops. They want the old town stores. People in Boonville will spend their money in Columbia. You have to fight to have a business Downtown if you don't have your City backing you up. I hear from people in Columbia that when they were growing up, they used to be able to walk around Downtown...

Moderator: Where do people do their shopping?

I think there's a nice variety. If they're in Columbia, that's where they shop, but if they're die-hard Boonville fans, they're going to try to shop local as much as they can.

I see us keeping on passing the same buck over. We asked City Council to do more tourism publicity, and we just got a tax increase, but they seem to continuously not want to market Boonville, and I think it's a terrible strategy.

One decision that we need to make is whether we're going to be a tourist town or just cater to the City of Boonville. In all honesty, for us to be able to rent our buildings Downtown, we're going to have to be unique shops, like the new train shop. When people see other people shopping Downtown, they're going to shop. We have to fight, because Boonville doesn't want to change, in a lot of ways. One of the concerns I have... you're going to hear people say that there used to be a dress shop Downtown, but they don't go Downtown anymore. We used to have 3 ladies' shops, 2 men's shops...

2 theaters.

There was a lady here who designed clothes, and I'm not even sure that she's still in business. We're going to have to decide whether to be a tourist town or not.

Moderator: Let's talk about Downtown in the present. Would you say that Downtown is moving in the right or wrong direction?

I think it's getting better in spite of itself. _____'s storefront's gorgeous. But the question still goes back to, are we going to be a tourist town? We need more specialty shops and restaurants. It has to be a destination.

I don't think it needs more restaurants. We can't support the ones we have now. It needs to be retail and specialty shops, not attorneys.

You can't do that, because until we do something about bringing something Downtown, I won't have any tenants.

You can't throw them out.

But as a tourist town, all they have is retail.

But you can't limit me, or them.

People look at it as there's nothing Downtown, but most buildings are full. They're all offices, or they have specialty hours. They're taking up the space, but they're not open to the public to walk in.

There's 8 empty buildings Downtown right now.

Out of how many?

I don't know.

I feel like Boonville's moving in the right direction, because I just came fairly recently. The Frederick hotel and some of the boutique shops...I might even have a different perspective, and maybe it's because we're new enough that we haven't gotten into trouble with anyone, but we've found the City Council supportive of things we want to do. I think it's almost an infrastructure problem. We live right in between Rocheport, Boonville, and Fayette, and there was a lot of work that needed done in a lot of buildings, and our building is marvelous, and we would love to look at that longer term, but it means 80,000 worth of tuckpointing. The infrastructure's scary.

I think people like you have made a vast improvement. The big thing that you put on last year, that drew so many people, and was so impressive. You did it right. Somebody has to come in from outside and do it right.

I have a location, it's perfect to set up individual offices on the 2nd floor, perfect for insurance and lawyers. Get them off Main Street, but keep them Downtown. But I'm hesitant to develop the elevator, because suddenly I've vacated 3 properties.

It can't be done right away, but...

The 2nd floor would handle 5 suites and a conference room and a secretary. But you can't jump right into that.

I'm attracted to the town for its history and my love for the Missouri River. I've been in Missouri all my life, and I made my living as a stained glass craftsman, and I'm charmed by the wrought iron work, the historic architecture, the brick work...if I was sending somebody to this town, I'd hope they'd enjoy the architecture and the craftsmanship. The river, I don't think Boonville even realizes that it has the Missouri River at its door, but it could become a major recreational resource. Many of my friends from downstream are out there all summer long. If there was a marina in town, it could be great. I don't know what happened to the MFA building. It seems available, and what a place for a Marina. Just go to McGregor, Iowa, and see their Marina. The railroad tracks wouldn't be a problem. I think its past will be the future of Boonville. Cherishing, relishing the architecture, the Santa Fe trail, all of the history that you could pull together in a brochure. The failure of the City to appreciate that...I'd look at each building as a child out of 60. The City needs to inform people of tax credits and all that.

I have two issues...

I did all my improvements myself...

There's money out there, but nobody tells us.

We have to do our research ourselves.

When you reach a critical mass of historic buildings, you can have a St. Charles, a Parkville, a Lexington. The City Council there, they did a Main Street program, and each and every building was researched.

Moderator: Why did you choose to own property or a business Downtown?

My family came in 1965 out of Kansas City. We were on Main for over 40 years. The building next to me came available, and it was twice as big, and I jumped on it. We spent a lot of money fixing it up. But I think with this DREAM initiative, as we get farther along, and there's talk about a revolving loan fund, we could have standards for façade work, code work, an incubator for new businesses. As far as 2nd floors go, I would fix up the old 408, because I don't want anyone above the jewelry store. We have designated the Downtown area.

(Side discussion about the DREAM initiative.)

This is Boonville's dream for itself, not anyone telling us what to do.

About 15 years ago, there was a similar thing that I knew nothing about, and I was awarded 25,000 dollars, and I wanted to fix the front of my building, but what I got was nothing. The money went to some guy that colored a picture and picked out a color of paint. I didn't come in with the best attitude. I knew what I wanted to do, I knew what color I wanted, and I wanted to take it back to the original, but this guy drew the same thing for 25,000 dollars. I had to do it in 3 stages to be able to afford it. I'm just afraid that this is leading in the same direction. We're going to have all this consulting, and this money could actually be put to use. All this money could be put to use to actually fix things. Just to have somebody bring me a folder of pictures for 25,000...

14 years ago, the State of Missouri came to the Council and was going to put in a boat ramp and a park. They had the money to do it. They came to the City of Boonville, and the Council turned them down. That was a separate State tax to buy property. St. Joseph got one. They also bought property to set up as national preserve. They did come to the City, and it was going to be free. All you need to do to see it is to go along the Missouri River. _____ did come to the City, no cost to the City, and they would not do it. I think that would be great to have down there.

If we gained river access, it would be a nucleus like Washington, Missouri. They are the best city for that. They have ramps and courtesy docks, and boy, their museum. You want to see what a museum in a small town looks like...

Moderator: They were selected as a DREAM community two years ago. I'd like to ask a little more about Downtown Boonville in the present. Could you tell me how user-friendly people perceive Downtown to be? What about parking and traffic?

There's not enough parking.

I think the parking's there. People just want to be at the front door.

That's true.

There's always parking on the side streets.

It's perception.

There's always parking in the City parking lot. People say if they can't park at our door, they're not going to shop. But if you go to the mall, you walk a lot more.

Same with my restaurant. I have a big parking lot on the back, but they won't use it. If they can't park in the front, they won't go.

I think signage would help. Let people know that this is public parking. There's nothing that says "public parking this way." Behind 419, that's a senior parking thing, and those parking areas that are public need to be designated.

That is parking behind the buildings, and it's public, and the business owners use the back parking lot to keep the fronts free...

If you're not involved in Downtown, you may not know that it is public. At least we'll catch the tourists.

(agreement.)

Moderator: Is it easy to find things Downtown?

My customers will come in and ask.

If they can't find it on their own, people will give them directions.

I really liked how easy it is to walk to the things we need. I taught in Columbia for years, and you had to drive anywhere you wanted to go. I really like...it's a very walker-friendly town, with the buttons that you punch for the walk signal. I really like it.

The address of the buildings aren't very evident. It needs to be done tastefully. Even if you just number the blocks, they would know which block they're looking for.

I have people from several different towns, and they love the community. Words are power, and the more negative you are about your community, that's what you're going to get back.

I think we're already a tourism destination. There's eco-tourism with the Missouri River. I just came from McGregor, Iowa, and Marquette is the exact opposite, right next to McGregor. Our casino was in Marquette, and they just hoarded the money. If we don't like our Council, let's do something about it. But we are a tourism destination.

With the boat here, we have to be.

What I'm saying is that if you own a property...I wouldn't spend as much money as I do if I didn't have hope for Downtown. But what I'm looking for from them is the support that says, "okay," because you can't sink 40 or 50,000 into a building Downtown and get 400 dollars back a month. Like St. Charles, St. Joseph, they have a historic plan for Downtown areas where they will do loans, grants, incentives...I just sold a building in Columbia, and that man hired a lawyer and an accountant to do tax credits. We don't have the money or the time to do that.

I don't know much about this program, but I think it's a good thing for this community. There's plenty of tax or grant dollars out there. The historical society, for one.

The information has to be here for the building owners and the business owners to tell us what's available. You don't have the time to go search and find what's available. I've been here for 24 years, and nobody's contacted me to do anything.

4 years ago, I contacted _____, and I needed money to rebuild a front, and they recommended I contact the State, and the State told me to get back to the City. Every bit of money goes through the City. You can't do anything on your own.

(many people talking at once.)

I agree about people being negative. I don't think what we're being is negative. It's a concern. You asked a question a while ago, why did we buy our business here? I grew up here, went to Minneapolis for 12 years, and I came back. We left the City, and I bought the Main Street Café. I did okay there, sold it, bought the Stein House, and then we bought both of the buildings, and then we bought two more buildings, but when you go and you ask for help, or you ask what the City can do, and I'm not a Chamber member... the Chamber should be working for the business owners. I couldn't care two craps about a yearly dinner. I want to do business and make a dollar. To say that people are negative, we just have to push that to the side. It's not negative, it's concerns. Year after year, I was there the day that building fell...

That building fell because the City was jackhammering in front of my building.

We had the issue with the church, and I called to ask them to stop pounding with jackhammers.

The structure, you need to be cautious when you're doing that.

The jackhammering, it was just horrible.

The buildings were built with dirt streets, and the concrete just vibrates throughout.

90% of what we have is stone Downtown. The foundations are stone with brick on top.

All twelve stores I own have that, and my dad put concrete over it.

Moderator: *I haven't heard anyone mention whether there are 2nd story apartments Downtown.*

I live Downtown.

My building's for sale for a year, and 8 of the 12 or so people I've shown it to want to live upstairs, and my building doesn't have a separate entrance.

Moderator: *Is there a demand for Downtown houses?*

Yes.

Absolutely.

(agreement.)

It costs a lot of money to renovate. It's pretty prohibitive. But I've got a huge loft, and I love it. Build it, and they will come.

Our tenants love it. They're a young couple. We do have a deck out back. She keeps saying it's like living in a New York condo. They don't mind the stairs. If it's done right, I think it would work.

Moderator: *Rental or condos?*

Both. Artist studios. The artists come, the money comes.

The people that were interested in my building wanted to operate a business downstairs and live upstairs. They used to do that all the time.

Not in my building.

(side conversations.)

I don't think there was that many people, but it was low income. My buildings don't have any bathrooms.

In 1858, people didn't go to the bathroom where you slept and ate.

Moderator: *Some things don't need to be restored back to the original.*

(laughter.)

Moderator: *How do you communicate with your customers or clients?*

Internally, we have a fact sheet, and we talk about community events.

I think the people that rent the buildings put out brochures. People try to promote everyone else.

I think so.

There's kind of a fellowship in the people in Downtown Boonville. If I have a tenant come to me and it's not suitable, I'll send them to someone else. There's kind of a friendship.

Moderator: Let's look to the future. What types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?

I'll start. I left Boonville without a clothing store, and I hate that. I took over the store that was there because I didn't want us to be without a clothing store, and I had to close it. I think the opportunity is there for new clothing, for retail.

If you open back up, it only serves half the population. We need a men's store.

I'd like to see some kind of major outlet store. All my life, we drove all over for outlet stores. People go down to the Lake for the outlet mall. I did talk to Levi a few years ago, and they took everything to Mexico, but an outlet mall...we have an enormous draw with the boat, and from Columbia. What are the areas that we could draw from? You could draw a lot of people Downtown with a good outlet store. Women will drive a long way for it.

I think there's a great demand for clothing.

We need to get 'em Downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

We'll see if it goes through, but I'm in the process of buying 501, just to protect my building next door to it. There's water leaking into my building from it. That building has almost 13,000 square feet in it, and 205 has 13,000 square feet with 3 stories.

We should put outlet malls in there.

We even have the building down the street from you. There's a lot of big buildings here. We've got some square footage.

We need to draw business, but it takes business to draw business.

We need to give them something. Maybe we give them a break on sales tax or real estate tax. They won't come here for nothing.

I like some of the businesses that have opened recently, like Never the Same. Even Girlfriends—get an ice cream cone, look at the specialty stuff. I do see change in Boonville. Restaurants, I mean, Main Street, there's wonderful stuff to eat. When you go into some of the shops, look at the décor... even gift gallery, it's a gift shop, but she has some unique things that draws people. We do need some clothing stores, but I think I'd like to see more specialty businesses.

I just talked to them, though, and she's just barely making it.

If you had a body, though, of...if you had lots of different artists studios, art shops, specialty boutiques, a candy store, like in St. Charles...the more you get, the more people will come. If they know about it... I have some friends that come out to that Celestial, and if you get more of those kind of things, it's not just a one-stop.

We have a new ice cream shop.

Even our jewelry store has unusual stuff.

Galena, Illinois is another example of a diverse community.

Yeah.

They're great idea, but how do we market them? Boonville people won't spend that kind of money.

Where do the tax increase dollars go? If you could earmark them for advertising...

I have the feeling it's already earmarked somewhere else.

But Boonville people have money. If we market here to them, keep them from going to Columbia...

Have you been to Glasgow lately? It's really incredible.

How did they get it going?

Individual money. Just like we've all fixed up our own buildings. No State money. One guy died and gave a quarter million to fix up buildings...

Moderator: Is there a place for dining and entertainment Downtown?

Absolutely nothing to eat on Main Street on Sunday night. There is nothing open. My clients told me this. The other comment they made is that there's no nightlife. None.

There's only a couple businesses open on Sunday, and these bicyclers, a great source of people and money. I opened my building to them one Sunday when it was raining, and there was nowhere else for them to go.

As an owner, you're already there six days a week...

But if you had the profit, you'd be able to hire someone.

If everyone was open...

(many people talking at once.)

How do you start it? You're not going to be able to do this on Sunday until other things are in place. A lot of things are going to have to come together all at once. We have two buildings, your employees, your insurance, your utilities, and if you're depending on local business, it's not going to happen.

There are entertainments. Thespian is opening more and more things. Our minister from Columbia, during Black History week, they're doing things like that. When Thespian is open and our friends from Columbia come, there's nothing that's open. When there are things going on, it's important that the businesses Downtown support that. When they leave Thespian, people are hungry.

I'm just going from my own experience. Things are closed.

If the Friends and every other organization would quit having their food right across the street, Big Muddy, they feed about every person that comes up there.

That helps fund some of your activities.

If they're eating up there, they're not eating from our restaurants. All the money's being spent up there, and it's not paying my bills to stay open.

For Black History week, there wasn't any food.

What day?

There was a Friday night and a Sunday program, and there wasn't food.

We will stay open later, but Thespian hall doesn't contact you. They don't want that money coming down.

There's not a lot of support.

(many people talking at once.)

If everyone works together...

There's a retail committee that meets once a month, and it's open to everybody, but the same people show up every month.

The Girlfriend weekend Downtown, more activities like that with everybody working together, promoting it...Friends brings in a lot of people. Why isn't Friends and Downtown working together?

The Chamber and the Friends, they're trying to work together and try to create a common calendar...

It's hard to do, though.

Let me tell you all something that's positive. The four and a half years that I had the Suites open, you pulled people for the Big Muddy from New York, and we had booking for the steam engine show from South Carolina. We're doing some things right. Maybe we just need a coordination of those things. Maybe it's the City's function to put out a calendar of events, on the City site, so you can see what's happening. But they make it the responsibility of each organization, but you have one individual handling it—a City site.

I think there are links on the City site to the Friends and the Chamber.

Yeah, but why have them drop that link? If you try to go out there and find the Chamber's website, it's really hard.

Well, they changed it.

There is not... the City, under GOV, it's easy to find that website.

Why not have a calendar at the City site?

Moderator: Other than some of the things you've mentioned, what else could the City or elected officials do to help your businesses thrive?

They ought to have somebody trained in helping us to apply for grants, tax credits...

Tell us what's available.

I think that is so important since there's so much money available. I'm here for the charm, the craftsmanship, and all of that can be preserved and enhanced and draw others here through the national tax program...there's already a huge number of places on the national register. That's part 1 of a 3-part application. Has anyone else made it through that paperwork? They pay 45% of your money for historic renovation. If the City hired one to help with that... they should help get them through it. I think the town ought to have a 10 or 20,000 grant to get people to restore the buildings to original condition. The more we can bring Downtown back into its historic nature, the more of a destination it'll become. The City won't help that happen, though. If you go through the paperwork one time...

(many people talking at once.)

There's two things I want to bring up. I looked, and the people that own these buildings...we have a porcelain-front brick. This person could do the research for this type of stuff. How do we restore porcelain brick? It's all chipping, and it looks terrible. 416, the shoe store, the bridal shop, 427, 301, 303. Also, for years, I've watched the bikers down there, and if they catch me taking a picture of my building, they want to know about the building. Why can't we do some uniform thing? In St. Joe, we did a sign with a picture and the history of the building.

Absolutely. Everyone should have a bronze plaque. My building was one of Sam Walton's first Woolworth's. Each one has a history that's already recorded to put them on the national register. There's 2 pages on every building Downtown. I wrote up the history, and I usually put it in the window, but other towns have done a bronze plaque.

I'm on the streets snapping pictures...you know, the University of Missouri, two years ago, a couple of students were over here doing research. They were looking at the architecture of Downtown Boonville. They were riding in this thing and asked me about the building, about the swastikas at the top. It's not, though. It's an Indian sign.

(side conversations.)

They do things at the school where they take pictures of the tops of buildings and make them figure out which one's which.

Moderator: *How would you feel about a special business district with an extra sales tax with revenues dedicated to Downtown services?*

I think it would be a terrible idea because we're fighting to draw people Downtown. If they could go outside of Downtown to get it cheaper...

(many people talking at once.)

Would that go all the way out to Super-Wal-Mart? If it does... if it can be set...if it got all the way...if I come Downtown, though, I wouldn't want to pay more tax.

Yeah.

That would support people putting their businesses outside of Downtown.

(agreement.)

That Kemper campus could have 300 students or so... we could draw people for historic preservation studies. It could draw people from around the world. What if we had that movement? I talked to someone who does this, and asked them if she wanted to come to Boonville. Anyway, I would love to see something like this happen. And the State's looking for a place to move the State archive.

We have the jail, but we don't have a museum. You think about tourists. We don't have a place with Kemper memorabilia. We have a van over at Central Missouri College, but we have no place to have it. My mother's got a notable historic library, and I don't necessarily want those books...I want them to be some place that would take care of them, keep them, and make them available for research.

(agreement. Side conversations, background noise.)

...when that school was open, the town was busy all the time and booming on Sundays. Whether it be filled with the school or a learning center or homeland security, whatever...

...the heartbeat of a town... if our town could beat again, I think we'd be happy to see it. Whatever's happening, I hope it doesn't get all chopped up.

I think, too, we literally missed the boat. I was in Minneapolis when this stuff was taking place, and they were promising how all this traffic was going to come through Boonville, and we've had people come to the restaurant, and they didn't even realize that we existed Downtown. That's really sad that this city detoured all this traffic around when it was such a huge selling point.

I think there was some opposition from store owners that didn't want that traffic.

Really? They were idiots.

Moderator: *Thank you very much.*

SESSION V

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AND PROPERTY OWNERS (GROUP 2) DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *Tell me a little about your community.*

It's really historic.

The history of it, there's over 400 buildings on the national registry.

It's the second leading historic registered town in Missouri, so historic is the number one thing.

It's a river town.

I've been working on different aspects of the history, and now we're pushing on the Civil War. We had 4 battles which are unusual, and we're in the process of an educational program, signage, interpretive panels. That's going to be a big thing to push.

To me, it seems like it has a lot going for it that bigger towns don't have. It's more progressive than some other towns.

When we've traveled around to larger communities, they don't have what Boonville has to offer. The amenities, the stores, that kind of thing. It always seems like it's had that to offer to people.

And the river, we have that to offer, and very few towns our size have. We're quite different than most of the communities in Missouri with the river, the history, the Civil War—it's all tied to the river. We're a river town. And we have a bridge that's historic. There's a lot of things going on in connection with the river.

Boonville is a bedroom community to Columbia, and people live here because of the cost of living compared to Columbia. The same square footage in Columbia... that's something that drives people over here. Weekends, you see people who just come here to sleep, but they go to Columbia to work. It's a nice place to raise children. I'm from Boston, and I'm originally from Nigeria, and Boonville is like where I came from. Quiet, laid back.

(laughter.)

We're halfway between Kansas City and St. Louis, and you can go there for city shopping.

Moderator: *Where do you shop?*

I try to shop in Boonville exclusively. I haven't been to Columbia in many months. And it used to be the other way around, years ago, so I try to spend my dollars here.

I do some in Columbia, but... it's like a big adventure to go to Columbia.

I work in Columbia, so I shop both places.

We can't get cat litter here. Fresh Step. I have to go all the Wal-Mart in Columbia.

I have to mail order stuff that I can't find in Columbia or here, so I don't find the need to go to Columbia.

There's a lot here in Boonville. The public... (unintelligible). What we have, we should have a sign in town to let people know what is in town. In big cities, you see a sign on a corner of the businesses in that area. Like the sign on the highway, 98, it fell down. And they took the sign out, and it's been out for almost a year. People drive by, and they don't know what's in that location. We need some more signage to let people know what's happening around.

There are a few things like office supply things that you need to go to Columbia for.

(agreement.)

A good percentage of the time, if it's a newer printer, your Office Depot will be the only one that carries it. But you do have the option of Radio Shack. I buy probably 500 dollars a month of cartridges from Radio Shack. They'll order stuff and carry it for you, if you tell them.

(many people talking at once.)

Because of the cash register rolls and tapes and all that, I'm able to order that stuff, and I keep stock. As long as somebody will be using them.

That's a good point about the awareness about what's in Boonville. People come in and say, "wow, we didn't realize you carry these items." It seems like if there was a general awareness, even among Boonvillians, if they knew they could go here for this...I know, because I've been shopping in Boonville. I know people will special order things. As a shop owner, I will order stuff. My wife flies over to India and brings things back specifically for people.

One of the most important things is to network, and I don't think Boonville does a good job marketing. I had someone asking about fingerprints, passport, a timer, and four other things, and I said, "Okay, go to you for the passport, go to Snap for the timer, go to _____ for this, go to Browning for this." Within 5 blocks, she was able... you were next door, and she didn't even know you were there. It said "passport photos" on your sign.

People don't look. I had people ask me the other day where the casino was, and then someone else asked me where the corrections is. People don't look.

I will do photo processing... people go to Wal-Mart, and Wal-Mart will send them back to me when they get stuck. Wal-Mart always sends me the garbage, the difficulties with their camera. And they drive by here...(unintelligible, background noise.)

Yeah.

I send them to you.

We need to be able to find ways to get information through. A way to send information to everyone in town, not just members of the organization. There's too many groups here, and we need to all come together to get information to our people.

(agreement.)

I would give them a discount and keep them happy. We need to find a way to send information to our citizens. When I just moved to town, they used to give out a welcome package that has information.

The welcome packet's gone.

(many people talking at once.)

...that was _____ doing it...

...I don't think that was the Chamber...

One of the groups that does the best marketing is the Chamber, but the Chamber will not reference you unless you are a Chamber member. I don't blame them. Somebody's got to be paying for that.

Why should I have to pay them when somebody from our town comes to them, and they don't even tell them I'm here?

As a member, you're paying to be part of that group and to have the referral.

That's how they staff it.

Yeah.

I'd say \$120 a year is so worth it. I get a lot of business from them.

They have to pay to staff it.

(side conversations.)

If a customer was to come to their office, they'd say, "I was sent from the Chamber," and that might give them the incentive to become a member of the Chamber. I have a lot of pictures of Boonville, the area, the train...I get people from out of town that buy my pictures. If somebody was to come to me, I'd send them to you, and you'd send them to me.

You to me, I don't care if you're a Chamber member, but for the Chamber office, they have to... The Chamber has the biggest pull of the people in the community all in one group. You do have a lot of different groups, but the biggest group is probably the Chamber.

If somebody comes to town, they're going to go to the Chamber. There's people in there all the time looking for places to go.

To eat, sleep, and stay.

Because it's a known thing.

That 10 bucks a month is worth it.

And they have to pay somebody to staff it.

And you're on that website. Put in your business and Boonville and see if your business comes up. The Chamber website comes up before even my business's website does. It's a great website.

The Chamber would be integral in a DREAM initiative. Last year, we did extensive marketing throughout the state, and I called probably 200 Chambers in the state, and it's an effective way to reach town and find answers to do any marketing to that town. The businesses list with the Chamber. And the problem with the Chamber not referring to non-members, that's a standard practice everywhere. I'd say 95% of the Chambers are unbelievably helpful. I'm not really quite sure what this DREAM initiative is trying to accomplish, but I think the Chamber is an integral part of it. We're a member, and I have been for years. I kind of waffled, but it's only \$120 a year. How many customers does it take? A dozen a year? As a Chamber member, I'll name all the restaurants. I don't know who's a member and I don't care.

I try to keep them to the local owned. I don't send them to McDonald's.

Well, that's not even an option.

I was really angry about the whole situation when Wal-Mart was planning to come to town. I was trying to stop them, a lot of us were, and when they decided to come this time...we've stood up against it, and the Chamber didn't want to take sides. Right there in the meeting, Wal-Mart was saying, 10% of the business will be gone before we come to town and 15% when we get there. I don't see how our City Council can stomach that, to see people like us who put our lives into business out. When I saw the Chamber not do anything, that was a bitter pill for me to swallow. The DREAM initiative, I don't know what it's trying to accomplish, but what makes Boonville great is the small businesses. The big box store is just a number. I think it's a sad day to allow them into town, because they're taking out energy from people to do things. A lot of businesses are going to be gone just because of Wal-Mart, and the economy, and a loan from the bank. The bank won't talk to you if you're a small business. We need to have that small business industry. People like me...the local bank here will not do business with people like me, and I have the credit and the background. For us to have the dream, we need all these elements and all of our people to come together to keep the dream alive.

Moderator: *Let's focus on Downtown specifically. Do you think that things are moving in a positive or negative direction?*

There's a lot of people that say it's negative, but I've never seen that. They're talking about the big box store, and the effect on the Downtown, but we all know you can't compete with Wal-Mart. It's an evolution in the shopping experience. Those businesses that are trying to compete, that's a hard battle. The successful businesses have a niche market, something to offer that Wal-Mart doesn't have. Boonville is trending toward a destination Downtown, where you can come here and find things you can't find in your town, and you're going to have the amenities, the restaurants, shops, bars, hotel. I see a positive change, but it's an evolution. There's empty locations, places that are switching places and moving. You look at St. Charles, where there's the shops that are really vibrant, every one is different from the others. You can find things you can't find. Aspen and Vail, Colorado, all their shops are very unique, and they weren't offering your standard items. I see Boonville as having the opportunity to go this direction with the right types of businesses, and they'll all offer something that people will come to Boonville for. We don't have river access, and we really need it. It's integral with the Downtown business district. Our business district dies at the river. We're a river town. If you're Downtown, you can't get to the river. The Fredrick Hotel has rooms that overlook the river, but try to get to the river. You can't. You can't sit by the river and watch it go by. If Boonville had river access, it would be very marketable, along with a unique Downtown district. The Downtown, I think, is going in a positive direction, but it needs encouragement. There are a few too many open shops right now. There's a few more than in the past. The one right across from UMB, something's happening, but I don't know what. And the one that used to be the furniture outlet, that building's looking. People will shop in a store, and then go to your restaurant. It's mutually beneficial to get these storefronts occupied. People need to see that there's something to do. And we have to give people access to the river.

You can't.

There's nothing that can't be done. There is a crossing down there, that they had, and it's still there. I still cross there. But how you get to it, you have to work on that problem. But the MFA has just vacated their building, and they don't have plans for it. If that property were purchased, you could make a bridge over the railroad. It's high enough. And then have a dock, or just a place to sit by the river. If I want to walk to the river, I should be able to do it. The other piece of real estate is the bridge. It's missing a span, but if we replaced it, you could cross. There's two potentials that I know of.

You'd have to go to the other side of the bridge to develop it.

But you could go over the top. You've been to river towns, and you want to go to the river, and the business district takes you there. Right now, you can't get to it.

The railroad...we've talked several times about crossing the track, and Union Pacific says they own the space above the tracks, and they'll resist it. We talked about building a ramp, and they argued about it.

Well, if legally, they do have the right to withstand any arguments for a bridge, but you could get the Katy Bridge and put back the connection they tore down. It's a great attraction to Boonville, the Katy Bridge. If you could successfully save it, and make the connection between Boonville

and the bridge, it's a world of opportunities. It's a unique bridge, they'd have river access, and they'd shop. People would come because it's a destination. There's going to be all types of businesses here, and you need all those...as I see Boonville going in a positive direction, but they need a bridge.

I agree. I'd like to reinforce his point. I had customers today who made a point to swing back through here, and they said, "We'll see you again in the fall." Becoming a destination. And water has always been an attraction. People love it. It's always been an attraction. Everything you're saying about the bridge, the architects that were brought in to look at it, they're talking about the fact that as engineers, they mentioned the possibility of doing their own fundraising because it is so cool and so unique and in such good shape. If we had that kind of thing that would draw people in... it comes down to not losing the bridge. We need to take advantage of what we have. We need a marina. We want them to be here, not at the Lake.

The bridge, if you want to see the last train that went through, go to my website. You'll see a picture of the last train that went through the bridge. For us to keep the Downtown, like Fayette, every time you look at them, they get grants.

They've got a good grant writer.

There's a lot of federal money for historic homes. This bridge was the fifth longest bridge in the whole world when it was built, and there's a lot of history. We need to find ways... when we had a festival here, _____ was working for somebody, and the business was dying out, and she didn't want it to die, and she took the training and discipline that she learned and she made a life out of it. It's scary for me to see the big companies killing dreams and visions, and now we need good financing, low-interest loans. The Frederick, for example, was possible because of a half-million-dollar grant. Everyone would be happy to receive loans to fix up your building. It would bring a lot of people back into business. My brother, in Florida, two businesses approached him and said, "If you come to my building, I'll give you 6 months free." Another said, "I'll give you a 1000 a month discount for the first five months." Those buildings should drop the rate to get people in there.

There are people who do that. I dropped my rates to get Domino's down here.

All those things help. Dropping the rates, good financing, a good grant writer.

One thing about what he's talking about, none of this will do any good unless we have the traffic down here. We've got to draw the people here. If you draw the people, you've got to draw the businesses. If I saw the effort to save the bridge and that they're going to market this as a destination, I'd say, "Here's an empty shop, and this town is marketing themselves," and I'd entertain the notion of having a new business. If you attract the businesses, where are the people? It's the cart before the horse. We need to make sure our businesses stay here, but we need to attract people here, and we have the bridge and this river, and to not look at that as part of the DREAM initiative, that's missing the boat. You could hang banners and put up park benches...it has to go further. Otherwise, we're any other town. I know the railroad's a big hurdle, and Union Pacific is impossible, and the only foothold we've got is that bridge. Union Pacific says we need to buy the bridge from them, and there's nobody willing to put up that kind of money, but this should be involved in the DREAM initiative. Then you could market the bridge, the access, the shops. The Katy Trail, too. The longest trail in America, and they're trying to

make it even longer. We have a lot here that's already here that can be utilized in the marketing of Boonville. Kemper's in limbo as the bridge is in limbo. I'd say the bridge is a little more important...

Union Pacific, there has been a determination that they did not go through the actual process... the Corps of Engineers can't make that choice, it's the transportation board. That may be one shot. And we have one other man that suggested, rather than buying the bridge, buy some steel...buy their steel to build a bridge. That is one thing that might reduce the cost.

This bridge, not to hammer it, but when you talk about the DREAM initiative, I thought, "What could encourage the Downtown district?" and it's getting people to come Downtown. We've offered people the Katy Trail, but let's make the river connection.

I've been here 11 years, and for 10 years, I've been talking about, "We need to have a sign on the Interstate." And now we have a sign. I have a tremendous number of tourism people coming through my restaurant. We have a lot of people, I see them every 6 months. They did a documentary on the Katy Trail, and part of it was shot in my restaurant, and people have seen it. People go out of their way to stop to see us. Tourism needs to be a bigger emphasis in this town to get where we're going to go. I mentioned to somebody who works for the City that we should suggest this to the Council, and they said, "Oh, no, the Council will get upset." When I brought the idea to them, they said, "Oh, no. There's no tourism here. We're a farming community." We need people who are going to think forward. I don't have time to be on the Council, but how many of our Councilmen run a business here?

How many of them shop here?

We need to get the awareness out, but that in itself isn't going to save the Downtown. We need to draw in people to our community. We used to be a farming town, but now we're a tourist destination. We now have a classic hotel Downtown, by the river. It's been rehabilitated and it has a very nice restaurant, and now we need to go beyond that. That added to the traffic. We need to market what we have.

Moderator: Let's think about the future of Downtown. What would you change about the way your Downtown looks?

Money trees.

All of the historic buildings, make them look the way they were. If every one is eye-catching...

The building that I'm in, I do rent it, but we're looking at redoing the front, and that building was originally with the door here and windows on both sides, and now it's at an angle at a 40's and 50's setup. To return that to original, we can't do it. The cost is outlandish. Yet, it's not a new building either. It fits in a different time period. We need to be careful how far back we go, and at what cost.

If I took the Stein House back to the 30's, that would be siding. And that's not attractive. I talked with the historic preservation people, and they said, "Use new material now, and make it look old." The quaintness... have a historic look with quaintness, but...if you've been in Jeff City, there are big cement flower pots, and they've redone it. It's nice, and it's my idea of what's historic.

People love to come Downtown and stroll and walk, and pop in and eat and shop. They love to walk up and down. And the more we encourage that, anything we can do to encourage it, encourages the destination. The sidewalks have got to be straight. You can't have buckled sidewalks where people will trip. We have a lot of elderly clientele, and they've got to have a smooth walking surface.

In St. Louis, there was a thing on PBS on it, and they showed pictures of them scurrying across the street because there was so much traffic, so what they did is increased the width of the sidewalks to encourage pedestrian use. They had a different situation. We couldn't do that. When you talked about the buildings, there's several districts that were built in the same time periods. Some are the same as they were before, and some have had facades put on them. But what's unique about any town is that every business looks nice. If every storefront is unique, it adds to the visual appeal. I think it's up to the individual owner to make their building look attractive. If your paint is different than their neighbor, that's better than exactly the same. The only time they're the same is when they have an ordinance.

In Liberty, they have an ordinance, and the buildings all blend together.

I'd be happier with the City getting an ordinance that says, "No vacant buildings that aren't for sale or for rent or anything."

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

...It's unattractive, the building with the Rabbit Hutch...

...There's people interested in buying that building, if he just washed the windows or something...

We were on vacation a few years back, and we went to Galena, Illinois, and that town was so cool. If Boonville would do that, it would look neat.

We need to do something beyond just the street level. We need to look at the upstairs, get people in there. The City should find grants for people to fix the buildings up and rent them out.

Moderator: Do people live Downtown?

A few.

We have two rented apartments.

I'm getting ready to build two.

We've got an upstairs, but it would take so much money to make it habitable. Upstairs is our future expansion.

And 201 has two apartments.

And that other one right past us, they've rented those apartments out.

They finally took it to a real estate agent.

And the hearing aid people live upstairs.

(many people talking at once.)

There's a few.

And potential for more.

There's a lot of discussion about it. We need to have something for people to come to, and especially on the weekends. We can attract people here, but we have to have something going on to do. Not everybody wants to gamble. People want to get their money's worth.

I was at that meeting, and there was an issue that we'd be successful if our Downtown had something to offer the people that come to the casino. Maybe they want to leave the casino and do something. Wives come in whose husbands are gambling, and husbands sometimes when their wives are gambling. People are looking for something to do.

Moderator: What kinds of businesses might do well Downtown that might target that kind of customer?

You need to be open Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

It's hard.

I'm going to address that issue. I don't know the answer. People come in, they're shopping, it's 3:00 on Saturday, and they can't find a place to eat in town. They can't get a sandwich or a drink. For the restaurants to stay open, they take a break, and they need it, but we have this gap, and it's like, which comes first, the customer or the product? That question has come up, but there's no answer. I want to throw the question back to the DREAM people. It's a big issue, and we don't have an answer.

The City Councilmen actually told people, on TV, that there's no place to eat at 3:00 in the afternoon, and I'm open.

Even if he does have his shop open, it wouldn't hurt to have another business. Like a deli, maybe. We need shops that have art. We need a natural food place for people off the trail. Natural foods. A small boutique that has that. A lot of people around here could come and buy them.

That would have appeal to our residents and tourists.

We now have an ice cream parlor.

Maybe some of these businesses need to be seasonal. Believe it or not, the more of the same offers choice and is good. If there was a deli, there would be a choice. You can't leave it all on one person's shoulders to be open. We opened on Saturday and Sunday, and we were the only store open.

We're staying open on Sundays.

We've been open on Sundays for 26 years.

We're open every day that we can keep somebody in the shops. 7 days a week if she's not flying. So we're not always.

We're there till 5:00 on Saturday. Sometimes longer.

That's a lot of times what we get. I fight it with my employees in the restaurant. They say, "There's no business. Let's close early." No. If someone comes by wanting to eat and it's closed, they won't come back.

(agreement.)

When I was in high school, there was a small group of us talking about how to involve that generation. Come to my studio, go to the hobby shop... if you have 17, 18-year-olds working with us, they can stay until 6 or 7 or 8. I work almost 7 days a week, and I have 2 young kids. If we had some cheap labor, I think it would help. If we could bring the school into this.

Financial income would solve this. We need people coming Downtown.

If I had a student working for me, maybe their friend comes, their parents come, their grandparents come. That'll bring them in. There are things you can do that can bring people in. Having those young students, people will walk right in. When I had a student working for me, people walked right in to talk to the student.

The kids that work for us have their own little clientele.

We need to bring them into the equation. How can we get them in? Last week at the high school, we had a program to teach students about what's here. I post stuff on my website.

That's a good point. We have a young person in our shop, our daughter, and the business is different when she's there. That helps. But getting people to come to the community is what we need.

We need a sign on the highway.

We need to advertise the destination and have the destination.

If we put the sign on the highway about the Katy Trail and the Katy Bridge, people would come. They'd be curious.

How many people have heard of Wall Drug? If they show the river and the bridge, a picture, it'll look cool. People will want to see it.

I had a gentleman from Europe who was biking, and he saw the Boonville sign, and the town he was from in Europe was also called Boonville, so he came here. And he wanted to know why the place was so deserted and why the bridge wasn't working. I told them about Union Pacific, and he was furious. They told me to take more pictures of the bridge before they tear it down. We need to put a big sign of the bridge on the highway. The buildings, and everything.

You talk about the highway and signs...we have a huge number of people going past us, and we need to get them to come into Boonville and stop. Stop here on your way to Columbia. We have 3 exits.

One suggestion that was made is that we need better lighting on the intersections and on the avenues.

Yeah.

If you come in 87, it's completely dark. If we had better lighting, even on the exits themselves.

What's being talked about here is the signage, but if you put a sign of the bridge, you need to save the bridge. How can we save the bridge? How can this initiative get involved to save the bridge so we have the river access and we can put the sign up?

(side conversations.)

Lambert's has signs everywhere.

Antiques.

(many people talking at once.)

Maybe a series of the same signs. I don't care if it's as hokey as "you're getting there." Something to keep them moving along. Even when I give directions, especially from 87, it's a long, dark stretch. People wonder if they're in the right place.

We talked about the same thing at the casino meeting, and the manager made an astute observation. Be careful. They've got to have something to see if you put signs up there. Get the Downtown full and have the access to the river with the bridge. People will be disappointed if there's nothing down there. The shop owners need to be open on the weekends, and the bridge needs to be up. This was 3 or 4 years ago.

(questions about the scope of the DREAM initiative; moderator answers.)

I'd like to make another point. This is a push for the Chamber, too, but we need to get beyond talking and arguments and disagreements, and past one more discussion about the chicken or the egg... I don't care, because if we're talking and talking, nothing's happening. We're working on a tour where we take hotel employees, paying close attention about their staff, and take them around and show them Downtown. We need to be doing that kind of thing on a regular basis. We're thinking of coming up with a 1-page map. A simple street map, no bunch of advertising or anything. Get them to come into town, and then worry about them. We've got to start them moving this way.

Moderator: Thank you very much.