

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

January 2010

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

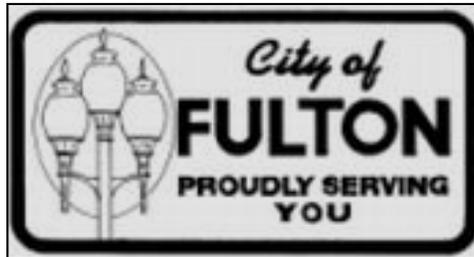
FINAL SURVEY
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Fulton, Missouri



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SECTION I

FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted five focus groups in Fulton, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Fulton community in regard to the Downtown area. The five groups included the following: 1) long time residents, 2) new residents, 3) students, 4) Downtown business owners, and 5) Downtown stakeholders. Participants of all five groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

This report summarizes responses from all three groups to the posed questions. Attached are complete transcripts of the meetings.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUP:

The following questions were asked of the business group:

General Questions about Fulton

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 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 Fulton 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? What is communication like between business (or business groups) and the City 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 Fulton. 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 THE GENERAL GROUPS

The following questions were asked of the general groups (this includes the "Long-time Residents," "Newer Residents," and "Students"):

General Questions about Fulton

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 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 Fulton?

Downtown Specific Questions

05. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Fulton 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 Fulton? 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 Fulton. 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 Fulton to resemble?

C. THE FULTON 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?

Fulton, a town with a population of about 12,000, is the county seat of Callaway County. It has two colleges, Westminster College and William Woods College. The groups described Fulton as a friendly, welcoming, and diverse town with a rich history, which includes Winston Churchill's famous Iron Curtain speech at Westminster College in the 1940's. Fulton lies within an easy drive of Columbia and Jefferson City, which gives residents access to the amenities of bigger towns while still having the atmosphere of a small town. All of these attributes, according to participants, make Fulton a great place to raise a family.

Participants felt that Fulton is moving slowly in the right direction. The Downtown does not have many empty buildings or storefronts, and does a fair amount of business on weekdays. New businesses are coming in on the outskirts of town, and new residents are moving into Fulton, making Fulton somewhat of a bedroom community to Columbia and Jefferson City. The residents, on the whole, are proud of Fulton and feel that the town is slowly but surely embracing change.

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

Fulton residents do much of their everyday shopping in Fulton, particularly at Wal-Mart, but most residents travel to Columbia to shop for clothing, for specialty groceries, for items for children and teenagers, and for a larger variety of things than Fulton currently provides. Residents try to shop in Fulton, especially Downtown, when they can. Downtown has two drugstores, a shoe store, a few restaurants, and some specialty stores, though the Downtown itself is primarily a service-related business district rather than a retail district.

In addition, the participants stated that, other than Wal-Mart, many local Fulton businesses have 8-to-5 weekday hours only, which makes it inconvenient to shop in Fulton, even though many expressed a desire to support local business.

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 Fulton, including both national chain and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Chinese, fast food, pizza, casual dining, family dining, and a little bit of upscale dining. Beks, a higher-end restaurant Downtown, was noted as a favorite and a potential destination for visitors, as it provides good food and a good atmosphere. Also, there are efforts to renovate an old theater and put it in use again.

The participants overall felt that more variety in dining options would be welcome, including a higher-end bar or microbrewery. Many visit Columbia for a wider variety, or they combine dining with shopping trips to those areas.

For entertainment, the participants cited some live music in Fulton, plays and other entertainment associated with the two colleges, a movie theater, and a bowling alley. They felt that while there are things to do in Fulton, there is a need for more entertainment, including more live music, more restaurants, more specialty shopping, and options for teenagers and children. The college students in particular felt that Fulton has very little for them; hence, they go to Columbia for entertainment, shopping, and dining.

D. DOWNTOWN FULTON: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

The groups generally felt positive about the direction of Downtown Fulton. They especially liked the City's efforts to beautify Downtown, though they felt that some of the efforts did not have the follow-through they would have liked—particularly that the brick streets are uneven, the utilities on some of Nickel Street are still above-ground, and the planters and landscaping are not maintained as well as some thought they should be.

Priorities for helping Downtown Fulton move further in the right direction included adding more retail and entertainment, focusing on the aesthetics of Nickel Street and the back alleyways, cleaning up and monitoring the small park nearby that is known for crime, improving the aesthetics of the walkways into Downtown from the colleges, improving building façades, improving signage and wayfinding, improving parking, and making sure that the City has clear two-way communication with Downtown business owners through the planning and execution of improvements.

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)?

The business owners cited a love of historic Downtown, low cost, the small-town feel, and the idea that customers walk from business to business as the major reasons they invested Downtown. The participants indicated, in different points in the discussion, that new businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focuses on improving the aesthetics of Downtown and maintaining the landscaping.

General Public: What are the major reasons you visit Downtown? How often do you visit Downtown Fulton? 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: restaurants, retail shopping, banks, the Courthouse, City Hall, the post office, and other professional businesses. Other than for a few restaurants, residents typically only visit Downtown during weekday business hours, as most businesses are not open during evenings or on Saturdays past noon.

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 a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including business hours, parking, and navigation.

The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are a major problem, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it impossible for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. The shops that are open on weekends are only open on Saturday mornings, which is sometimes inconvenient for residents, and certainly discourages the idea of Fulton as a destination for weekend travelers.

Parking was a concern for many participants, in three specific areas: the amount of parking, the parking meters, and the signage to help people find parking. The groups 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 much more within the Wal-Mart parking lot or at a mall in Columbia. If, however, the City were to improve signage making it clear that there is parking behind many buildings, this might alleviate the problem. Also, having a two-hour parking limit and some parking meters discourages people from shopping and dining, because of concerns about the limited time parking is permitted. Unfortunately, according to participants, many employees and shop owners park in front of the businesses, leaving little parking open for customers. The groups hope that the City will work to find a balance between making parking accessible but making sure that Downtown residents, business owners, and employees are not parking in desirable street spaces all day.

Better signage in and around Downtown, according to participants, would help draw people Downtown and would help people find what they are looking for. Signage within the Downtown to help people find parking and navigate the one-way streets would be welcome improvements.

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

The participants mentioned the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce mailings, City mailings, the Internet, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events. Many felt that businesses and the City should work to use the Internet more as a marketing tool for Downtown, both for residents and for visitors.

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 some residential living in Downtown Fulton, and participants felt that there would be some demand for second-story living, particularly "nice" rentals and condominiums, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated and if new businesses came in to meet the needs of those residents. According to participants, much of the Downtown living space is lower-priced

rentals, and is populated with college students who do not spend much of their money Downtown.

Some participants expressed that more desirable residential space 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 FULTON: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Fulton. 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?

The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains. For retail, they suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, a bookstore, a music shop, gift shops, and any other type of specialty shop that would appeal to a higher-end clientele. For food, they suggested high-end or organic groceries, high-end liquor and wine, more restaurants with longer business hours, and a coffee shop with Wi-Fi. For entertainment, groups suggested an arcade, laser tag, or paintball for teenagers, music performances in a variety of venues, more live theater after the old theater has been renovated, dance clubs, any family entertainment, and other "classy" nightlife for adults on nights and weekends. Downtown retail, said some participants, should focus on offering unique options for both residents and tourists with discretionary income.

The participants felt that more upper-story residential space would appeal to young professionals and business owners, and would keep the residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.

The groups generally felt that the Downtown's purpose is not to compete with large chain stores like Wal-Mart, the stores that are coming in near Wal-Mart, or even the malls in Columbia; but rather to offer a unique experience to customers, to offer interesting things that will make residents and tourists want to spend time Downtown, and to make Fulton a quaint, historic, interesting destination. For this, the groups felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and the City should find ways to improve the aesthetics of Downtown to make small businesses more likely to take the risk of opening Downtown.

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, the participants mentioned a number of high priorities: improving the aesthetics of Nickel Street, improving the alleyways, cleaning up and improving the safety of the small nearby park, making walking access to the colleges from Downtown aesthetically appealing, improving the streets, improving parking lots, adding green spaces and flower pots, making trash cans more aesthetically appealing, and maintaining the

landscaping. Other suggestions included more signage, awnings that are not uniform but are unified in their aesthetics, and burying all of the utilities in and around Downtown.

Their suggestions all focused on giving Downtown a historic and cohesive look and feel while making it still feel safe. Again, according to participants, the aesthetics of Downtown should emphasize the town's strong history and feel classic and quaint to visitors.

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

The groups identified as the highest priorities improving the aesthetics Downtown, creating a unified vision, bringing new business Downtown, and working to create strong, two-way communication with Downtown business and property owners.

Business Owners: 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?

The business owners felt that the City should make sure that Downtown business owners are involved in the planning and execution of the changes to Downtown. The business owners cited examples of the City's past plans being aesthetically appealing but impractical, such as improvements to back parking lots that did not leave enough room for delivery trucks to access the buildings.

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?

Participants in the Downtown business owner group did not support a Special Business District. They believed that extra sales tax Downtown would be "detrimental" to Downtown business, and they felt that if it were a city-wide tax, the money would end up going to support newer businesses on the outskirts of town.

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

The participants mentioned a few downtowns or city areas whose mix of businesses, aesthetics, or marketing they admired: Columbia, Missouri; St. Charles, Missouri; Springfield, Missouri; Washington, Missouri; Hermann, Missouri; Branson Landing in Branson, Missouri; Boonville, Missouri; Boulder, Colorado; Denver, Colorado; Austin, Texas; Buford, South Carolina; Charlottesville, Virginia; Lexington, Virginia; and Naples, Florida.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Fulton area:

- ◆ Fulton is a town with a population of about 12,000, the county seat of Callaway County, and home to Westminster College and William Woods University.
- ◆ Fulton is friendly, welcoming, and diverse, has a rich history, is a great place to raise a family, and is within an easy distance of Columbia and Jefferson City.
- ◆ Participants felt that Fulton is moving slowly in the right direction because of Downtown improvements, new businesses on the outskirts of town, and an increasing population.
- ◆ Fulton residents do much of their everyday shopping in Fulton, particularly at Wal-Mart, but most residents travel to Columbia to shop for clothing, for specialty groceries, for items for children and teenagers, and for a larger variety of things than Fulton currently provides.
- ◆ Weekday hours of 8-5 for many businesses make it inconvenient for many residents to shop in Downtown Fulton.
- ◆ There are a number of restaurants in Fulton, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Chinese, fast food, pizza, casual dining, family dining, and a little bit of upscale dining, including Beks, a newer destination restaurant.
- ◆ The participants overall felt that more variety in dining options would be welcome, including a higher-end bar or microbrewery.
- ◆ Residents often travel to Columbia for a wider variety of dining options.
- ◆ For entertainment, the participants cited some live music in Fulton, plays and other entertainment associated with the two colleges, a movie theater, and a bowling alley.
- ◆ Fulton is working to renovate their old theater and put it in use again.
- ◆ There is a need for more entertainment, including more live music, more restaurants, more specialty shopping, options for teenagers and children, and a variety of options for college students.

Key points about Downtown Fulton:

- ◆ The groups, overall, felt positive about the direction of Downtown Fulton.
- ◆ The participants felt that some of the City's beautification efforts did not have the follow-through they would have liked including Nickel Street and overall landscaping and maintenance.

- ◆ Priorities for helping Downtown Fulton move further in the right direction included retail, entertainment, aesthetics of Nickel Street, the alleyways, the small parks, the walkways from the colleges, building façades, signage and wayfinding, parking, and communication.
- ◆ The business owners cited a love of historic Downtown, low cost, the small-town feel, and the idea that customers walk from business to business as the major reasons they invested Downtown.
- ◆ New businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focuses on improving the aesthetics of Downtown and maintaining the landscaping.
- ◆ People visit Downtown for restaurants, retail shopping, banks, the courthouse, City Hall, the post office, and other professional businesses, and would come Downtown more often for retail and restaurants if business hours were more convenient and consistent.
- ◆ The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are a major problem, and are currently inconvenient for residents and visitors who work regular 8-to-5 jobs.
- ◆ Parking was a concern for many participants, in three specific areas: the amount of parking, the parking meters, and the signage to help people find parking.
- ◆ Better signage in and around Downtown, according to participants, would help draw people Downtown, would help people find what they are looking for, and would make navigating the one-way streets easier.
- ◆ The participants mentioned the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce mailings, City mailings, the Internet, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events, and they would like to see more of an Internet presence for Fulton.
- ◆ There is some residential living in Downtown Fulton, and there would be some demand for second-story rentals and condominiums, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated and if new businesses came in to meet the needs of those residents.

Key points about the future of Downtown Fulton:

- ◆ Participants said that they would like to see in Downtown Fulton independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains; the retail should *not* focus on competing with Wal-Mart, but should instead focus on offering unique options for both residents and tourists with discretionary income.
- ◆ For retail, participants suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, a bookstore, a music shop, gift shops, and any other type of specialty shop that would appeal to a higher-end clientele.
- ◆ For food, participants suggested high-end or organic groceries, high-end liquor and wine, more restaurants with longer business hours, and a coffee shop with Wi-Fi.

- ◆ For entertainment, participants suggested an arcade, laser tag, or paintball for teenagers, music performances in a variety of venues, more live theater after the old theater has been renovated, dance clubs, any family entertainment, and other nightlife for adults on nights and weekends.
- ◆ More second-story residential space would appeal to young professionals and business owners, and would keep the residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.
- ◆ Downtown's purpose should not be to compete with large chain stores like Wal-Mart, large chains, or the malls in Columbia; it should be to offer a unique experience to customers to make Fulton a quaint, historic, interesting destination.
- ◆ Small business should be encouraged, and the City should find ways to improve the aesthetics of Downtown to make small businesses more likely to take the risk of opening Downtown.
- ◆ High aesthetic priorities included improving the aesthetics of Nickel Street, improving the alleyways, cleaning up and improving the safety of the small nearby park, making walking access to the colleges from Downtown aesthetically appealing, improving the streets, improving the parking lots, adding green spaces and flower pots, making trash cans more aesthetically appealing, and maintaining the landscaping.
- ◆ Other suggestions included more signage, awnings that are not *uniform* but are *unified* in their aesthetics, and burying all of the utilities in and around Downtown.
- ◆ The aesthetic of Downtown should emphasize the town's strong history and feel classic and quaint to visitors.
- ◆ The groups identified as the highest priorities improving the aesthetics Downtown, creating a unified vision, bringing new business Downtown, and working to create strong, two-way communication with Downtown business and property owners.
- ◆ The City should make sure that Downtown business owners are involved in the planning and execution of the changes to Downtown.
- ◆ The business owners were *not* in favor of a special business district, feeling that the additional tax would draw people *away* from Downtown.
- ◆ The participants mentioned a few downtowns or city areas whose mix of businesses, aesthetics, or marketing they admired: Columbia, Missouri; St. Charles, Missouri; Springfield, Missouri; Washington, Missouri; Hermann, Missouri; Branson Landing in Branson, Missouri; Boonville, Missouri; Boulder, Colorado; Denver, Colorado; Austin, Texas; Buford, South Carolina; Charlottesville, Virginia; Lexington, Virginia; and Naples, Florida.

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SECTION II

LONG-TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Fulton's got all the necessities, grocery stores.

Wal-Mart.

(laughter.)

You don't have to go out of town for anything except specialty items. Only takes 15 minutes to drive across town.

I think it's very stable as far as income, because of the state institutions very close by. It's a friendly place, too.

I think for a town of this size to have two colleges is a definite plus. You don't see many towns of 12,000 people with two well-respected colleges. That's how I got here.

I think the colleges and the state institutions and the nuclear plant give us economic and social diversity. I came as a student, and it's very interesting to have all of that.

It's a good place to raise children because it's a nice town without all the violence. I sold my place to a couple from Hawaii, and they just drove through Fulton, and they really liked the looks of it, and they wanted to raise their little girl here.

Moderator: *Would you say that the city is moving in the right direction, wrong direction, or both?*

It definitely seems to be growing, and handling the growth okay, traffic-wise and school-wise.

It's unique that they own all their utilities, too. Most cities don't have that luxury. That's thanks to our forefathers... gas and electricity. So you pay your bill at one place. To me, that's...

I don't know the exact number of Downtown businesses, but the number of businesses may be declining.

The retail businesses?

Yeah.

I thought about what we had here 50 years ago. Two or three men's clothing stores and several women's.

I'd love to see the Downtown have some more upscale...

Yeah.

Everybody came to town Saturday night, parked along the street, and hung out. But the Downtown couldn't handle that volume now.

Moderator: Where do you do your everyday shopping?

I hate to say it, but Wal-Mart.

It depends on what I want and what I believe are the best values, north end of town for some things and south for others.

Columbia for some things.

Our location is both a blessing and a curse. We have Columbia and Jefferson City very accessible. It's an easy drive. But at the same time, we lose that sales tax. But we do have more retail opportunities today than we did 10 years ago. We're giving them more reasons to stay and shop.

There are more businesses?

Yeah. Look at Fulton Commons, look at what's in the Churchill Center, those types of businesses weren't here 10 years ago. We have more opportunities than we did, but it is hard. Everybody wants certain type of businesses, but you've got to have the demographics to support that, and until we grow more, some of those things are just outside of our reach. Our market trade area isn't much more than 10 miles outside Fulton, because others have Mexico, Columbia, and Jeff City. We need to grow that.

Something to make it more unique.

It's also due to a misperception by Columbia that we don't deserve to have a single-malt Scotch or nice cheeses. The supermarkets need to convince their distributors in Columbia that people want and would buy those upper-end products. I talk to the proprietor of the new liquor store, and he was assured by his distributor in Columbia that he couldn't sell top-of-the-line stuff here, and people do buy it. Their attitude toward Fulton just isn't true anymore.

If you look at, for example, there's a number they attach to how much people in Fulton spend to eat out, and we have the lowest expenditure, but all they're looking at is how much they spend in Fulton, not what you're spending in Columbia. Potential restaurants look at that.

If you want Red Lobster, you have to go Columbia.

Beks is the same price as the good places in Columbia, and it's always packed.

It even draws people.

Moderator: Where do people go for dining and entertainment?

54 Diner is a new restaurant here, and they're good.

They're busy.

We thought that location was a jinx, but clearly not.

It depends on who's running it.

It's good to see it succeed.

My family and I have enjoyed the new movie theater, and the school takes field trips to the bowling alley, which is a nice addition and a good option for birthday parties.

The best steak around is G&D Steakhouse in Columbia, and it's also the most economical. Right next to Best Buy.

If you want... my husband's daughter calls it Fulton's fine dining, Sir Winston's for a nice evening out.

We go to Beks a lot.

And China Palace is the best Chinese.

They're really good.

And Fulton Café is really good. Cute little sandwiches and soups.

The new place over there.

I've not eaten there.

And Arris's is a really nice addition, pizza and salad and Greek sandwiches.

Moderator: What about other entertainment?

The theater that's being refurbished, they've had a few concerts there, and there's going to be a play there this summer. I really hope that that turns into a neat place. It needs some work.

It needs some help.

(side conversations about the DREAM initiative)

Moderator: Do you think Downtown Fulton is moving in the right or wrong direction?

I think it wants to move in the right direction, but it faces challenges.

Well, there's mostly one owner to each store down there, which means that people just can't work those kinds of hours like Wal-Mart.

They've not stayed open at opportune times, when the best opportunities present themselves.

You just can't be there all the time, though.

We had a sporting shop here in town, and one year, we had the Show-Me Games soccer, and that store was closed that weekend. I couldn't understand that. That would be a good opportunity.

They have a hard time, though.

It's hard to get all the business owners to do something together. If a few want to stay open later, others don't. The one great thing we've got going for our Downtown—other downtowns are all boarded up, and ours is much more active, because it's the government and banking center of the community. You've got banks, City Hall, Courthouse. Other towns don't always have that.

Moderator: Why else do people go Downtown?

We have a good shoe store. I thought we were going to lose it, but we aren't.

I think Gidley's is an interesting... they have a great selection and a good price.

He's gotten a new building, and he's going to move.

I think there could be more retail places like Gidley's, because they have good prices.

We have a lot of antique stores, and they don't have to stay open if they don't want to. It's not their livelihood—it's a hobby.

When we had Hallmark that was...

The drugstore...

Do you know what businesses we have Downtown? We've got two drugstores Downtown.

Moderator: How often do you go Downtown?

Every day.

To eat.

I don't go Downtown very often.

I go maybe once a week.

I wanted to point out that, before they paved the road, I just enjoyed the drive, but now it's almost impossible to drive. Did you notice that?

We've all noticed that.

I thought they were going to change it after the winter.

Those bricks...

It's gone from charming to annoying.

They can't get the bricks as smooth as they were for the last 120 years.

If we could've done the parking in the right-hand lane...but hindsight's always 20/20. It's got to have some attention.

Moderator: How user friendly is Downtown? How easy is it to find your way around?

I think if you're not familiar with it, it's a nightmare, because it's always one-way. There's always students and visitors driving the wrong way.

The signs are confusing.

Somebody enters Fulton from the north and stops and asks for directions, and it's difficult to give directions. You explain to people, and you can see that look on their face...

It changes names in there, too.

I always just send them to 10th street.

You're good.

I used to live there.

Moderator: How's signage?

Now they've got historic Downtown signs routing traffic down Court Street where I live. When I first came to town, they routed me down 54 Business, and I didn't even know there was a Downtown. But maybe the signs now and the routing will help.

It might be a good sign, though, where you make that jog.

Right in front of the tanning place or something.

That's a good idea.

Moderator: How's parking Downtown?

And during the lunch hour.

When the Courthouse is in session, it's really difficult.

Why is that one parking lot metered, but the other spaces are not?

The whole Downtown used to be metered. Why is it still metered? So that people don't stay there all day.

So there's limited parking Downtown.

(some argument about the state of the meters.)

Nickel Street's usually full, and that's metered.

I'll avoid it if I can.

A lot of businesses on Court Street are starting to use their back entrances.

It doesn't make the City rich, but...

Is there a free lot by the library?

Yeah.

It would be nice if that were advertised a little more.

It's not very convenient.

They don't want to cross the street.

(some discussion about where there's free parking and where there isn't.)

Some people, if they can't park right in front of the business, they won't come Downtown.

I could count on one hand the times that I've never found an open spot on Court Street. It might be a block away, but...

Fulton's small enough that you could park and put on your emergency flashers and run in.

There's some people that think we need a parking garage, like take the Market Street lot, make it a nice façade with brick, put retail stores in it, and build a lot. I'm not sure we have that demand yet.

Moderator: Is parallel parking an issue?

The older you get, that gets harder.

Or the younger people.

Moderator: Does that keep people from coming Downtown?

I'm sure it does.

I try to find a parking spot where I don't have to parallel park. I park in one place and walk all over. I don't re-park for every place I need to go.

Moderator: Does everyone agree that business hours are inconvenient?

It's disturbing when they say they're going to be open at 10 and they're not. You don't know when or if they're going to open.

It would be nice if they could all be on the same schedule, so everybody knows it's open from 10-6. A lot of stores close at 5. You can't go there after work, then. But getting them all on the same page is part of the challenge.

I think Columbia has them all about on the same hours.

I've not had any trouble. If I think I'm getting close to opening or closing, I'll call first.

Moderator: How do you get information about things that are going on Downtown?

From the *Fulton Sun*.

The one time a week we get it.

Sometimes Smockingbird's sends newsletters.

The Chamber has a monthly newsletter.

The City puts out a newsletter, too.

Yeah, but I don't know how much current events that has in it.

The City Council meetings are on TV also.

For me, it's word-of-mouth, because I don't read the paper or listen to the radio. My wife works in an office, and they talk.

I get mailings from individual businesses that I frequent.

(many people talking at once, unintelligible.)

If you all wanted to find out what was going on in Fulton, what website would you go to? Younger people just go online to find what's going on.

I'd just Google Fulton, MO, and see what's available.

Maybe the Chamber.

A lot of people are going to go online. We don't really have one umbrella website that you can tap into everything. I just wondered where you'd go.

As long as all those are up-to-date and current. People get really frustrated if the information is not current.

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

Organic food store.

Oh, yeah.

I've thought about a small grocery that would have good cheeses and some things like that that the grocery stores don't carry.

I support that.

Generally, you can request stuff from the grocery stores.

But if you want to buy something that day. Plus it's just fun to go to those stores.

What about clothing?

I used to love Zen's, because I could haggle.

(laughter.)

He and I used to play the game.

Well, that's the great thing about a locally-owned business.

I miss those clothing stores, the men's clothing, and I wish we had those. You have to drive to Columbia if you want to find something.

You can haggle in Columbia, too.

(laughter.)

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment that you'd like to see?

Well, I've mentioned that theater that they're trying to refurbish. If that is able to be refurbished, they're hopefully going to have concerts and plays, and that'll add to the cultural and the nightlife.

(side conversations.)

We need the younger generation to weigh in. I'm getting to the point where I hate to spend money.

We need a coffee house with computer access. We had one, but it wasn't supported very well.

I was surprised that that didn't make it.

The manager from the coffee house, he was the same person, and he was not a very good manager.

I'd like to see a franchise like Applebee's or Ruby Tuesday's or Longhorn, but our demographics are a problem. They don't see the numbers. But that wouldn't be a Downtown thing.

I've thought about a Waffle House, too, but I don't want to work the hours.

We're supposed to get an IHOP.

No, it's Huddle House.

I was hoping we'd get an Applebee's.

We almost had a Steak 'n' Shake.

But not Downtown.

Moderator: What about things like parks and recreation Downtown?

Green space is a nice idea, like a park for kids.

It's not near Downtown, but a park on Court Street would be nice, and take that ugly apartment building and tear it down, between 9th and 10th.

I'll tell you, I think that when I had little kids, there's just not that much to do with little kids. There's the library and YMCA. If you did have a green space for little kids, that could be neat.

This is a little radical, but I'd be curious to hear your opinions. What if you paved over between 5th and 6th street on Court and made it into a pedestrian mall with a fountain in the middle. I know the City likes to keep that open as a fire lane, but we've seen other communities be successful in doing that. You could have so many different things there that would bring people Downtown. The businesses, though, their entrances would have to be in the back for people that want to park and come in... you'd be eliminating some parking, though. But Boulder, Colorado does that.

Yeah.

Oh, yeah.

That's just beautiful. I think that would be a draw. But paving over those bricks, a lot of old-timers would have heart attacks.

Depends on what you could draw as entertainment. In Boulder, they draw a lot of entertainment...

Hippies.

Yuppies.

A guy walking around and says, "What's your ZIP Code?" and he tells you all about your town for a dollar. That's the kind of thing that they have there.

Street bands.

Street performers.

Branson has the new Branson Landing, and you enter from the back, and some people doing balloons and kiosk vendors and street performers. Charlottesville, Virginia has that, too.

You could probably attract a different type of retailer Downtown, too.

What would paving that over do to utilities?

It would be under concrete.

You'd have to make sure it doesn't become the local skateboarder or drug dealer hangout.

A little place like that somewhere Downtown would be a draw.

You could really make it a showpiece.

Do a farmer's market down there.

You could stop the skateboarders by doing a dimpled section of concrete every 30 feet or so.

Moderator: What about the look and feel of Downtown? What should be the highest priorities, whether that's streets and sidewalks or building repairs or landscaping?

I'd like to see the old building façades maintained and restored, to keep that character, instead of replacing them with some concrete thing.

And fix the street.

A lot of landlords down there have buildings in terrible shape, but they don't have enough income.

I don't know if that's a grant sort of thing, but that would be nice. A lot of them are for sale, actually... and more landscaping. Big pots of flowers and stuff like that.

Moderator: *No one's mentioned residential living. Is there much of that?*

Not so much.

Except over the shops.

I went to college here, and that's where a lot of the college kids live, and they're not very well maintained.

Moderator: *Is there a demand for different housing Downtown?*

I don't think there is now, but with some of these changes, I think you can make Downtown more attractive to people. There's a lot of unused space on the upper floors of those businesses. If you change the whole Downtown, more of a night scene, and things that they can buy like maybe a little grocery store, then you've got an opportunity to draw people to live down there. A lot of the cities are doing that. If we give them what they need down here, we could do it.

Moderator: *Are there other downtowns you've been to that you admire? Other than Boulder, Branson Landing, and Charlottesville?*

I worked 3 years in Lexington, Virginia, which is a charming... it has the kind of charm that all downtowns would strive for, and it just had a lot of neat stores and restaurants, and they had a lot of tourists. They had two colleges, and they really, really worked with the parents for parents' weekend, and they had several bed and breakfasts downtown.

Didn't Denver close off a street downtown?

Yeah.

Austin, Texas. Of course, they're about as progressive as anywhere in the country.

Boulder's neat.

Yeah.

Of course, we don't have those mountains back there.

Washington, Missouri. They've really built up on their riverfront.

They're really charming.

And Hermann. They've got the whole winery thing, but there's a lot of places to walk around and look. And antique stores.

St. Charles has got a lot of little shops and good restaurants.

Their downtown is really cool.

Moderator: That's all. Thank you very much.

SECTION III

NEW RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Positive, I've been involved in the community and networking, and my job, I've met a lot of people, and it's very community and family-oriented.

It's friendly. I've found it to be very welcoming, but I was told I'd never be a Callawegian because I wasn't born here.

I was going to say, anything, I know when, before we moved here, I went to the Chamber of Commerce site, and anything you want to know about the area, that's a great place to start.

And the City's got a good website, too.

For a small town in mid-Missouri, it's surprisingly diverse. Blue collar, white collar, ethnic diversity, the colleges, the agriculture. We have an interesting mix.

When we were looking to finance our house, our neighbor was _____, and I had the loan all lined up with a major place, and _____ said, "Let me beat your rate." Even though we're small, we can compete. I laugh, but my seven-year-old and I can name the first name of everyone who works at every shop Downtown. You don't find that in metropolitan areas.

Everybody's been very warm, inviting. They make you feel like they want you to be here.

Which is unusual for a small town.

I grew up in a small town, too, and I didn't know everybody at the Chamber, but now I know all 3 ladies at the Chamber.

_____ has been here forever, and he was our official, what _____ is to the Chamber, and he knew everybody. He just passed away, and that was a huge loss, because that was our ambassador to Callaway.

Moderator: *Where do you do your everyday shopping?*

Groceries, I would stay here most times, although I don't have as good a selection as I want. As far as the price comparison, I don't think they can compete if you go to Mexico and you go to Wal-Mart Supercenter. Of course I shop at Gidley's for shoes. I think clothes and that kind of stuff I'll go out of town for.

Aside from Wal-Mart, there isn't a clothing store here.

Maurice's and Cato's.

There's good things, though. One of the things we noticed was the tractor supply, Sutherlands, Orscheln's. West Lakes. And they're bringing the Kirlin's back, which is great.

For our animals and stuff like that, there's a lot of selection, because it's a huge agricultural community, so they take care of the farmers.

We try to shop CNR, and they're more expensive than Wal-Mart, but they have customer service. You don't have to wait around.

The manager will ask you how you're doing. We also used them for our crew expo, and we bought a couple of fruit baskets from them, and they gave us one free. So, they're very helpful, and they'll do anything to keep you. I shop at Wal-Mart because I'm cheap. I don't do a lot of department store shopping anyway. When we first moved here, I'd go to Wal-Mart and get the St. Louis paper and cut out all the coupons and then go to Columbia. A few places here match coupons. Through the Chamber, I've learned more about how important it is to contribute to your local economy.

Yeah, and I've always wanted to support my local community, but for clothes I have to go to Columbia and Jeff City. But stuff for my home, I can find here.

My wife does the bulk of our grocery shopping, and she works in Jeff City, and she buys stuff. Clothes is a glaring omission for me. Wal-Mart, but that doesn't cut it.

We go out of town if we want to go to a restaurant. We came from Houston where you can get Indian food at 2 in the morning. But here, we have Chinese. But we like to go to Columbia to get more options.

Do we have a furniture store here?

Yes, there's several. Not big furniture.

Sutherland's has a little bit.

And antique stores.

(many people talking at once.)

I have to dress up in suits for my job, and I've never bought a piece of clothing in Fulton. But _____, who works for Joseph A. Bank, I can order stuff and he will bring stuff to my house. He lives here, and he'll deliver stuff all the way from Columbia.

Moderator: *Let's talk a little about food. Do you think in general, there are enough dining choices?*

I think unless you're looking for something specific... there's certain things that they don't have here.

I go to the Longhorn if I want good steak, in Columbia.

Somebody said the Post Office does.

They're okay.

Beks is the best.

I agree.

That's the most cosmopolitan, fun atmosphere, like a Columbia. Excellent wine and beer selection, good staff, good food. It's a nice little jewel that we have for Downtown.

Have you been to the Barn? They have chicken-fried steak and fried chicken. A friend of mine raves about it.

I've enjoyed the Grill, but it has a limited menu. The service is excellent and the food is good. And the Diner... that's really surprising to me. I was pleasantly surprised.

Their soups are good.

(side conversations about people.)

I think there's a certain degree that you just settle for, and if you want a better selection, you'll go out of town. If you're looking for higher quality...

You've got to go to Shakespeare's Pizza in Columbia.

What do you think of Arris's?

I've never had good service there.

I'm not a fan of their pizza.

Moderator: What do you do for entertainment?

I've got a two-year-old. That's entertainment enough.

You've got theater programs in the schools.

And I hear they're trying to bring that up. We have rumors... I've lived all over the world, and there's certain things you're going to have to go to a city for. But there's an 8-plex movie theater here.

And a bowling alley.

You make your own fun.

We've got a trail going all the way through town for people who like to walk.

I think the entertainment is that you have the opportunity to become part of the entertainment. There's a community theater group, and a community band.

And the Post Office, there's an Elvis impersonator.

(many people talking at once.)

And there's a Neil Simon play.

Nowhere other than Fulton can you see a Porsche next to a rusted-out pickup and Elvis serenading people.

How did they get the American Idol? David Cook was at our campus.

Moderator: Let's talk about Downtown specifically. Do you see the Downtown moving in a positive direction or negative direction?

I think it's nice compared to a lot I've been in.

I think it's nice, too. I don't know how much business they have.

The Court Street section is much nicer.

City Hall is nice, aesthetically, and the brick streets.

It's annoying to drive on.

The only thing I don't like seeing is the Payday Loans on Nickel Street.

Yeah, things shift a lot one street over from Court Street.

The first thing I was told is, "Don't go near the Post Office late."

That's just people leaving a bar at night, though.

We find all the remnants of the parties in our parking lot.

I can't answer to the direction, but what I've heard and read, it's just wanting to revitalize that area more. The arts and, you know... it seems to me that they are trying to go in that direction.

I think that people love Court Street, but trying to get them to invest back into those buildings, I don't think they have that commitment, and I think that's sad, because it's just Halloween when everybody's lined around, or when they're blowing snow off the rooftops, it's like a Norman Rockwell. But it's less expensive to build a new facility. Or, you have businesses that are renting,

and they can't get the owner to do updates. Those are probably some of the issues with those buildings.

Was it Century 21 that redid that old building? That's great. That's economic development! And now there's quite a few things in there.

The town I came from, we had a Main Street program, and urban renewal had wiped out our Downtown in the 70's, and I was surprised that Fulton wasn't already a Main Street community, because we're way ahead of other communities. We have antique stores and jewelry stores...

You don't see that kind of stuff Downtown a lot and they're struggling to keep their doors open, because people don't spend their time there and invest. And we're developing on the south side of town, and that's great, but it takes away from Downtown.

I moved here from Los Angeles and before that Fort Worth, huge areas, and we bought a bed and breakfast on Court Street, and we specifically chose Fulton because of the rich diversity, a charming Downtown, two colleges, the potential was huge. But what we've run into is the fact that there's still the old mentality that doesn't want to embrace change. Part of the thing the Chamber's trying to do is, "the economy's tight." But stay local, shop local, instead of jumping to head out somewhere. There is that push to focus Downtown.

Moderator: How often do you use Downtown?

Gidley's. I love Gidley's.

The shoe store?

They're moving. They're expanding.

Are they close to Beks?

Right next door.

When I go Downtown, they're waving at you when you're walking down the street. It's fun just to walk.

I go to Beks and Smockingbird's, a little gift shop.

Something Different is really nice, too. This little candy store with hand-dipped chocolates. They have jelly beans and some consignments...

How many places have a soda fountain at the drugstore?

Best milkshake in town.

It brings back memories of being a kid.

It's tough, just because of the convenience of Walgreens.

When we moved from Wentzville, I don't think I'll move my business from our drugstore, because we wait at Walgreens all the time. If you're running late and leave your checkbook, they know who you are. I like shopping someone locally owned. I think medical is such a personal thing.

Do you work Downtown?

Yeah.

It's a convenience factor. It's not the easiest to stop Downtown.

I'm never Downtown unless it's my lunch hour. I'll buy jewelry Downtown for my wife.

(agreement.)

It's convenient for me. But it's because I work Downtown.

I don't work Downtown, but I make a trip down for Smockingbird's or Beks.

Moderator: How user friendly is Downtown? How are business hours?

I think it depends. You've got limited parking, a very unforgiving meter maid. You're paying to park there, and a lot of the businesses are only open for lunch. They'll close down at 1 or 2. I know that Mom's does that, and they're right next to Beks. And Fulton Café. So, I don't think... I think it supports what it can right now, but the community's going to have to commit more to make it succeed.

If I had one suggestion for the Downtown, it would be to do away with parking meters. If I want to shop, I don't want to have to put quarters in all the time.

Callaway Bank, when I take my son to school, it's easier for me to do my banking on 54. Because it's open earlier.

And we have the north facility by the high school.

It's interesting, because you've made it because it's convenient enough to go to the bank by Wal-Mart, but you can now bypass Downtown.

But the main bank does the lion's portion of the work. We've got 6 different facilities, but probably 60% of all the business goes through the main bank.

Moderator: Do you think that there's ample parking in lots?

No.

Unless you want to go across from Callaway Bank.

There's a parking lot way over there on the street, not attached to anything.

Isn't that Boyd & Boyd?

(discussion about the location of the parking lot.)

I'm on the branding committee for Fulton, and the idea behind that is to go after tourism. We want to go out to people outside of Fulton and let them know that we are a destination. But we aren't user friendly with the hours. The restaurants do stay open, but the shopping, if you work somewhere else, they close at 5. And on Saturday, they close at 2, and they're not open on Sunday. There's that fine line of, "Well, we tried it once." You've got to advertise it. If you have tourists on the weekends, they're vying for the same parking... how do we embrace this change, and fund it, and do a positive spin so people don't complain about parking and all that.

It'll be a nice problem to have.

My husband used to do a lot of weekend trips, and if you found an area with antique stores, and this was never a destination for us because nothing was open on Sundays.

There's a critical mass issue. One or two places, that's great, but people don't go just for one place.

It's a strolling kind of place.

Is it St. Charles that has all the brick and the shops? They're open on the weekends.

One of our employers is a vice president of a huge grocery chain, and we took him to Beks, and he loved the Downtown, and he said it reminded him of St. Charles.

We don't even think of coming Downtown on the weekends. We just go to Columbia. And Sutherland's will beat the prices at Lowe's and Home Depot...

Moderator: How do you find out what's going on Downtown?

Word of mouth.

Newspaper.

Chamber of Commerce.

I don't subscribe to the paper, and I don't always get the free Wednesday one, but I learn through the Chamber mailings.

I think that's the biggest thing for me.

Yeah, I pay attention to those.

Moderator: Let's talk a little about the future of Downtown Fulton. What kinds of businesses would you like to see?

I would like a night life.

Yeah.

Not necessarily just the Post Office...there are some places with live music or karaoke, but like a nice venue for entertainment. I know the Callaway Arts Council is trying to redo the theater.

Upscale, like, let's go out and get a drink and dance a little.

There's a place in Boonville, at the Boonville Hotel, and in the summer, they have a band on Friday and Saturday night, and they've got a little bar and a dance floor.

Something like that. And maybe the shops, once a month, pick a Friday night and stay open.

They do that in Columbia. Evening Under the Stars or something like that. They usually do it in spring. That would be a good idea.

I'm going to use Hermann as an example. The man who owns Dierberg's, he's investing tons of money in Hermann. And we have a lot of sugar daddies here in Fulton, and how do we get them to embrace that? I'm surprised we don't have the theater up and running. We've got to go outside our community, but there are new people coming into town, and they see the potential.

And for some people, they struggle against change. And where do you get that balance?

(agreement.)

In general, I was really surprised when I moved here, I didn't get that cliquish, you weren't born here, mentality.

I haven't had that either.

I think that the colleges, they kind of create this community to where they're not afraid to change, it's just how quickly are they willing to let it... they don't want it to ruin the gem that it is.

This is the thing I've talked to the mayor about, and I've lived in many places, and when a town starts to grow, like Columbia growing rapidly, we should either embrace that, or we'll let it sweep over us. You can't catch up. But if you embrace that and know it's coming. And if that nuclear plant comes in...

They just announced that they're not going to.

We're talking about a bedroom community.

Yeah.

Everybody here's been open and wonderful, so I hope that I didn't miscommunicate that.

I don't think anyone would complain about investment and development Downtown. If you put in a decent clothing store that wasn't a consignment shop, that would be great.

I used to go to Puckett's in Columbia, and I would pay more for the level of service and the quality of products. Service is important to me. I don't know if the market is there to support that kind of store, but I would like to have a clothing store.

I don't see why a formal store couldn't succeed. Where do the kids go to get their tuxes for prom?

Columbia.

There used to be. Where the candy store is, that's the old Baumgartner's furniture store, and when the kids took over, we lost it to Columbia. We need to lure some things back.

We need another restaurant like Beks. That's like the number one thing we do Downtown right now. That's the one thing that brings us down. Good food. And good service.

It's not the kind of place to go for a quick lunch. It's the atmosphere.

The ambiance.

If we could dream anything, right, what would you really dream for Fulton right now?

Skating rink.

Roller or ice?

Roller.

Ice.

There was a lot of disappointment when the Y wasn't able to get that swimming facility.

Restaurant, live music.

A jazz band.

The Post Office brings in people sometimes.

I think we have a lot surrounding us in Boonville or Jeff City, we have some nice little wineries, and we are really romanced by the bed and breakfast stuff and the wineries. We could open up a brewery. It would be really great.

Shoot, yeah.

A microbrewery.

Go for it. Do it!

I'm Irish. I thought we could do a brewpub. Those kinds of places... I think just little specialty shops like that.

Stuff that's totally unique in its own way.

Look at St. Charles and Hermann. It's hard to keep those going unless you are a tourist destination.

And with today's economy, the children's clothing, when the economy's bad, even though the prices are good there, people aren't thinking of that, they're thinking of Wal-Mart. How is that affecting...?

If people come in from out of town, you have to have more than one little strip. You're not going to drive from Columbia to just walk down Court Street. It has to be somewhere where my wife wants to go. That's true of a lot of family. The dream for me is that critical mass, to have enough so people will come in from Columbia. Unless you have a critical mass, like St. Charles.

So you can take a weekend and stay there.

Yes.

We have the Churchill Museum, that's the only thing like it in the country. That's amazing. That's actually the oldest building in America. It was built in England and brought over here. Unbelievable. We have a fantastic auto museum. There are things but people never think of them.

Those who can afford to buy homes, if they can be given an intro to Fulton packet...

The Chamber does have a welcome packet.

I think you have to register with the Chamber.

My thought was, if my realtor or the bank had given me a packet from the Chamber...

And you'd appreciate it.

We also need a brochure saying, "these are the things you can and can't do in your yard." My son left stuff in the side yard, and we got a letter after 3 days of rain that we have to clean it up.

Moderator: Let's talk about how you would like your Downtown to look. What would you change about the aesthetics?

Change Nickel Street to look like Court Street.

Yeah.

It needs to look like Main Street, USA.

Window boxes and shutters.

The charm and the cute Victorian, slick-looking... some new restaurants, businesses... and there are a couple places that need to go. We have too many banks Downtown.

We have 4 on Court Street.

Banks are the ones that keep the façades the nicest.

If it could start off like Court Street but just expand...

To me, Nickel Street is such a difference from the next street over... it has the potential over the long term to be a much more cohesive unit.

Is it true the City owns the old train station building?

That would make a great restaurant.

It's not in the best of neighborhoods, but it would be really cool.

You could make a train museum out of that.

You could make it into a restaurant.

The little town where I'm from, right beside it was a really little town and they made a museum out of their train tracks, and they had a little stage, and they do concerts there. It might work.

Is there open-air entertainment?

At the park. But not down here. There's a lot of potential. A friend of mine, we call them "wine conversations," and we talk about... the idea was to block Court off completely and turn it into an open walkway, and it just becomes a...

Like an open mall.

A pedestrian Downtown.

I would say that people won't search for a spot to walk 5 feet down the sidewalk.

There again, if you want to go tourist or if you want to go local. It's a Catch-22. What's the vision? What's the target market? So, I mean, that's what you need to balance. You have to find your target market, too. A lot of things we're discussing, without that target market...

We kind of get a feel for blocking off Court Street when we have the street fair, and those are random events, and...

So they're built up. It's not an everyday thing. Like in St. Louis, if you live there, you don't go to the Arch all the time.

A fountain.

I'd love to see a park Downtown.

Access to the colleges. I think, to make it... we're focusing on this way, but how about this way. Making walkways to draw in that... they have... some of those kids have money, and if you want to pull them in to that, you have to... we're focusing all this...

We need to think a little bit past Downtown.

No, actually, that's ideal, because Westminster and William Woods are like their own little entities, and there's a big push to try to bring them all together. They're all right here. There's even talk about getting a double-decker bus to drive around.

That would be fun.

Both campuses are beautiful.

I was at a conference last summer, and the presenters were from Michigan State and Lansing, Michigan. The guy with the city of Lansing was saying that the students never had a connection with Lansing, and they realized that they had opportunities for the students, and so the city decided that they needed to draw them in, and they put out flowers, made the place look pretty, and it gave them something to see. One student had an internship at the Governor's place, and it only took her 15 minutes to get there, but she had no idea how to get there. Put out some flowers and landscaping, clean up sidewalks...

Greenery is important to me. It makes me feel more comfortable and makes me want to spend time there.

If you take care of your greenery, people assume that you're going to take care of your customers, too.

If they could spruce up 5th street, because that comes right out of Westminster...

Yeah.

What about the park right there by the fire department.

Right now, it's a scary place to be.

I've driven that way at night before, and you just know that stuff's going on there that's just not good.

Drugs.

A lot of us pretend that it's not happening. When I go home, I live out that way, and I'm going to have to go past there, and they're signaling to each other. And you've got the old brick plant, beautiful trees... it would make a great park extension. And then you run into the college and the beautiful campus. I think that was one of the biggest deals when we moved here, that park, because people tell us to stay away from it.

So we need more police cooperation for that park.

(agreement that the park is dangerous, and that the town and colleges suggest that pedestrians stay away from there.)

Moderator: Other than St. Charles and Hermann, are there other downtowns that you would like to emulate?

There's a little town not too far from my hometown, I can't remember its name. I was thinking Carlinville, maybe?

Maybe.

Petersburg?

I would think... how many years ago was it that Fulton one of the top 10 places to live? We should try to attract those types of magazines.

USA Today said that the Churchill Memorial was one of the top 10 things to see in the Midwest.

We love bed and breakfasts, and last year, when we were traveling, we got the Missouri Planning Guide, and Fulton was not there. They had Kingdom City, but Fulton wasn't on there. Churchill wasn't there. Nothing. I just think more exposure in general.

Who's responsible for getting it posted?

Also through the Chamber, ways of getting people connected to the community. Do something open to the public, something that makes new residents appreciate what we have here and know and see what we have here.

There are some beautiful old homes here, and you wouldn't know it unless you'd done the home tour.

And the King's Row connection.

We're known as the Kingdom of Callaway.

(many people talking at once.)

A tour every couple months, maybe.

We have a great golf course and the country club at Tanglewood.

And when people came from out of town, that might draw more people in—a home tour.

Good idea.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION IV

STUDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *So, how many of you are not from Fulton? ...All of you? And you're freshman? Okay, so you've been here a few months. What do you think?*

I don't really like it much. I'm from a bigger city.

It's small, and there's not a lot to do.

I like it because it is small and it's easy to get around.

It's not very modern. There's not much to do.

Moderator: *What do you do for fun?*

Wal-Mart.

(laughter.)

We shop at Wal-Mart.

We go to Columbia.

Moderator: *Is there other stuff you have to go out of town for?*

Like a sports bar.

Commerce Bank. The closest Commerce Bank is in Columbia.

Moderator: *Do you buy clothes here?*

Online.

Or Columbia.

Moderator: *Is there anything you can buy here?*

Food.

Clothes from Maurice's.

Walgreens.

Moderator: What about eating. Is there enough places to eat out?

Beks is like the only thing.

Taco Bell.

Arris's pizza is okay.

I drive like 5 minutes down the road to Huddle House.

Columbia.

Moderator: What about Downtown. Do you go there?

No.

What is Downtown?

The cobblestone road part?

Yeah, I think.

There's no reason to go down there.

Beks, and that's it.

Unless we go to Tiff's, and that's a bar.

Everything's old and antique-like and boring.

The soda pop place, we took a field trip over there, to Sault's Drugstore, and then we went to the Mexican place by the movie theater.

Moderator: So, basically, you don't really go Downtown except to Beks or one bar?

Yeah.

Moderator: What about the way it looks?

The roads are horrible.

They were cool a long time ago.

They need to be taken care of.

They need more stores. It's a college town, and there's nothing here for us.

Moderator: Do you feel safe down there?

No.

I feel safer Downtown than by 10th street.

People have been killed over there.

There are a lot of gangs.

A lot of townies.

Moderator: Do you think that a lot of people don't go down there because it's unsafe?

Yeah.

But really, there's just no reason to go down there. It's not that I don't feel safe. It's just that there's nothing to do.

Moderator: Does it feel safe during the day?

Yeah, totally.

They just don't keep up with it, that's all.

The historic part, trying to keep it all old.

Moderator: Let's switch for a second to the future. If the Downtown were something that had stores and stuff, what kind of things would you like to see Downtown?

A nice sports bar.

Yeah.

A coffee shop.

Yeah.

There used to be a coffee shop right over there, and it went out of business, and now it turned into a café. Lots of college students go to the café down there.

A bookstore.

Oooh, yeah.

We have a bookstore... oh, you mean like a *book* store.

Some nice sit-down restaurants.

Like an Applebee's or something.

Small boutiques, maybe. Like in Columbia. They have boutiques. Not the kind of thing that you find in a mall, but small trendy places.

An arcade or something.

Something to do that's cheap fun.

Moderator: Like what?

Like an arcade or something. Somewhere where you don't have to spend a lot of money.

Moderator: Do you go to the movie theater?

Every once in a while.

(many people talking at once; side conversations.)

Moderator: You can totally be honest.

A dance club.

There's like 800 cops down there. A few less cops.

Moderator: What do they do?

They're total douchebags. They pull people over all the time.

They're all in the wrong places. They're not where all the crime is. They're pulling normal people over.

Boutique stuff.

Yeah.

Do we have hair salons here? Something like that would be neat.

Putt putt golf.

Yeah!

Go carts!

Yeah.

Stuff like that.

Putt putt would be great.

Open late.

Yeah.

Moderator: Do you go to bars that aren't Downtown?

Most students would go to somewhere within walking distance. So they would totally go to a bar Downtown.

Moderator: Would you go places to eat?

I wouldn't mind a Jack in the Box.

Something cheap.

Yeah.

Moderator: What would you want Downtown to look like?

Stuff that's all new but still looks old-fashioned.

If it was newer but still historic.

Yeah.

A mall.

A mall would take up the whole city.

(laughter.)

Moderator: If they had more stores, would people use it?

Totally.

You have to go like an hour away to go shopping right now.

A casino would be cool.

You can't go unless you're 21.

That's not true.

In Missouri.

Yeah.

I've been into a casino before.

But you can't gamble.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Are there parks and areas to hang out?

No.

There's one, Veteran's Park.

Where is that?

All the parks here are overrun by gangbangers.

Please be serious.

It is scary, but really?

That's kind of what makes you scared of it is that park.

I go Downtown all the time, just to walk and look around.

Moderator: What businesses do you go to?

I just walk around.

A night club would be great. These bars need like a nightclub or something, for people that can go even if they're not 21... something that you wouldn't have to be 21 to get in.

Yeah.

Oh, a skating rink.

Yeah, that would be sweet.

I'd go to that.

Laser tag.

Oh, yeah.

(many people talking at once.)

If there was stuff Downtown, we'd go there.

Disco Friday at the skating rink.

That would be so fun.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What else?

An oxygen bar.

(laughter.)

What is that?

It's a bar with oxygen.

That's ridiculous.

It's good for you, too.

There's one in St. Charles.

An ice cream shop. But we already have a Baskin Robbins. It's right by Subway.

Moderator: I heard someone mention Oklahoma City. How many of you are from Missouri? Are there other downtowns that you've been to that you think, "That's what Fulton should be like"?

It just needs more stuff for kids and stuff.

I like Branson Landing. It doesn't have to be like that, as grand, but similar to Downtown Columbia where...

Columbia's got a whole lot more people.

I'm just saying, aesthetically.

I don't know, dude.

St. Charles.

Jeff City.

Jeff City's downtown isn't that big, though. There's nothing there.

Springfield downtown.

Oh, yeah. It's attractive and there's a lot to do.

Moderator: Thank you.

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SECTION V

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Charming. Very hometownish.

It's quaint, but it still has that big-city feel and small-town feel.

The main thing for me is safety. I've been spending some time in a larger city, and I don't feel very safe there. But here, it's a primarily safe environment to raise a family. I like the quaintness. I like being able to walk up and watch the parade.

You know your neighbors, and you know all their business.

(laughter.)

That's nice, back to the safety thing. If you see somebody that wouldn't normally be there, you call.

I'm relatively new, and I would say to my friends back in Kansas City, it's quaint, it's friendly, and we have better friendships here than we ever had back in Kansas City.

The pace of life is a little slower, which is nice.

I would just say all the history, too. A lot of people come here for the memorial and the museums. We have a lot of history.

I work with people who are moving into Fulton, and I like that it's manageable, I could handle it. I grew up in St. Louis, and it's too big, too busy, too much. Here, I knew my kids' teachers, I'd run into the principal at the store, you know who those people are. If you live in a large city, you might not even recognize the school principal. This is the kind of place where you can come into a meeting like this and everybody knows at least half the people in the room. Life is of a scale that can be handled.

I don't actually live in Fulton, but I own a business here. From my perspective, there's a really nice range of businesses, and the schools, the colleges, the state hospital. There's a good range of opportunity. And unlike so many towns, Fulton seems to be growing. We seem to be getting a nice variety of businesses. It's a city that has opportunity to offer.

Moderator: *Do you think Fulton is moving in the right or wrong direction?*

I'd say theoretically the right direction, but kind of at a slow pace. And I guess that's kind of what we stand for, a slower lifestyle. The change is a lot slower here.

What would the wrong direction be?

(laughter.)

What I do like about Fulton, when things like do pop up, people petition. They get the word out, and they care. There is a lot of community spirit.

One thing I've noticed, I came here in 1975, left for law school, and came back. In Jeff City, there wasn't a time when the daycare was open early or late enough for me and my kids. Fulton embraces shopping locally, and Fulton's embraced that people will live here from Columbia or Jeff City. We should be the best bedroom community we can be. I appreciate it, and we should embrace it. We are going to shop locally as much as possible, but we have access to this large range of communities and activities. I like that positive change. But I think we have to let go a little bit.

And we're right in the middle of Kansas City and St. Louis.

I'm always glad to get back to Fulton, though.

Moderator: Where do people go for everyday shopping?

Columbia is a big draw for people in Fulton, just because they have a larger variety of shops, several malls, and I think that draws people to Columbia.

Until all the crime. I go to St. Louis much more often than Columbia.

I want an Aldi's.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

Columbia.

I think we have a nice variety of options in Fulton to take people. We have a new bowling alley and an 8-plex cinema and a variety of restaurants to eat at.

The colleges are always offering entertainment.

We have live theater and equestrian shows at the colleges. Art openings.

I've lived in St. Louis and Columbia, and we do more in Fulton than we ever did in any of the other cities. Like this weekend, we're going to go to the play this weekend, because it's the only weekend it's going to be here. We do more living in Fulton than elsewhere.

I grew up in St. Louis and went to school in Columbia, and I find this town quite entertaining. You're never bored. There's always something being added. Whenever I have guests, they

always say, "I don't want a chain. I don't want to go somewhere I can go at home." It's a change of pace. Mom's Downtown, or the café.

We have two golf courses in town, and that's a draw for people. A lot of people come from Columbia to golf at Tanglewood. I think Fulton has a lot to offer. Even people who live in Fulton, they say they can't shop here and find stuff, but if you look, you can find everything you need—

I don't know about everything.

Almost everything.

When we first moved here, we went out to eat in Columbia or Jeff, but now, we hardly ever go out of town for it. We'll entertain my family when they come in.

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

I would say, I don't think it's going in the wrong direction, because there aren't really any buildings that are empty.

I think we're fortunate enough to have our historic district within two blocks. We have Court Street and Nickel and 5th. Like, Mexico, they have their Square, but then they have several blocks that need help.

There is a lot of turnover here, but that does show you how difficult it is to start a business.

In any town it's hard to start a business. The rate of success is low.

(many people agreeing.)

I guess from my perspective, because I'm on Bluff Street, I always have customers in from out of town, and I try to direct them to a local business to have lunch, and everyone always asks where Downtown is, and it's difficult to give directions to. It's a one-way, and I guess you can't really move it, but maybe signage, or plot reconstruction, it would be easier for people to find it.

And there'd be a lot less people going the wrong way on those one-way streets.

It's hard to give directions.

I keep one of the Chamber maps in my store.

So do I.

But it would be nice to have some signs with arrows.

I haven't noticed them.

The Downtown revitalization committee put them in about 5 years ago. They're brown and white, and they're little, and they do have arrows, and they're in every direction around Downtown. There's one on 4th Street, there's one on Market near McIntyre's.

I've lived here forever, so you know where to go, but directing someone else is hard.

I use a lot of landmarks.

Signage would be the only thing that would make the district a little bit better for strangers, especially coming from outside of Downtown.

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

We get all the complaints.

There are several complaints. They say there's not enough parking, but if your customers can't park right in front of your store, they'll drive to Columbia and walk twice as far to the mall, and it doesn't make any sense. You could just park half a block away.

There's parking in the lot across the street.

And many people don't realize that we all have lots behind our stores.

And people park right in front of their own businesses, and they come into these meetings, and they complain, and all their employees park right in front of their buildings. We have to park a block away so our customers can park in front of our stores.

And I've heard the complaint that hours are not suitable for people. Especially Saturday hours. People don't open up early enough.

It's very definitely small-town hours. Everything closes at noon on Saturday. It doesn't pay to stay open on Saturday mornings, because only 3 people might come in.

I think your business is a little different, though.

Yeah, I'm different than a store.

For people who work 9 to 5 Monday through Friday, Saturday's their only day to shop, so why would you not be open? We don't get busy until after 12:00, because they finish lunch then, and then another rush around 2:30.

And that fits with accommodating people who work out of town. Saturday is it for people who work out of town.

Or people who would drive in from St. Charles, and they don't have the opportunity to spend the money they want to spend.

I've encountered some of these bus people, and they won't speak, and I think we should force them to say hi.

You can tell city people from small-town people. They don't say hi.

We have not run into any unfriendly bus people.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

The bus people are usually at the Churchill Memorial or the car museum.

Moderator: Why did you choose to locate Downtown?

I wouldn't consider being anywhere else. I don't know. It's reasonable rent, and it's charming, and it's where I would want to shop. When I'm traveling, I love finding small-town downtowns and talking to the shop owners.

Why go to some totally different city and go to a mall which has exactly the same stores all the time?

And there's more foot traffic. On the ends of town, you're going for specific items. Whereas Downtown, you might be going to Sault's, but you might stop in somewhere else.

For me, it's just really convenient. I'm close to the banks and the closing company.

That's my reason, too. Found a building big enough, and it is close to the people that need the business we have. A lot is phoned in or electronically sent, but still.

And there's something, too, about walking to get your lunch, or calling your neighbor to pick up a sandwich for you.

(laughter.)

You can lock the door and put a sign up if you're going to be out unexpectedly.

(side conversations.)

I think we all have a vested interest in each of our lives, too. If any of us go out of business, that's going to do damage to every other business, because that's one less thing to draw people to our district.

We are kind of like a family, and we have a lot of support.

And if you're having a rough day, and you need to vent to someone...

(laughter.)

My big issue with the Downtown and Fulton in general is planning and zoning. My neighborhood fought the Walgreens, but my hope is that Walgreens will be the last big box store in the core of Fulton. It destroys the character of our town. I hope that Fulton develops a zoning ordinance to stop that. And our plan has business 54 going through the core of Fulton, and that would just ruin Fulton. I'd like to see a zoning designation that maintains a certain type of atmosphere, and no big box stores in the core of Fulton.

What happens when you have a big box store who may be relocating to a different part of town?

There is rumor that Wal-Mart will leave, and everybody wants to be by Wal-Mart. They all want to be by Wal-Mart.

And if they want to move, whatever, but then you're left with this huge vacant building.

Every small town has a vacant Wal-Mart building. I was just in England this summer, and they don't have those kinds of things. No one just abandons a building.

We have that with the old Hardee's building.

The City should really encourage businesses to reside in the buildings that are there. There is a lot of that kind of thing, and you can look at any small town, and there's a huge Wal-Mart over here and an empty one over there.

Mexico had a Wal-Mart, and then rebuilt a huge new Wal-Mart, which made the shopping path of people completely different.

Wal-Mart is hard on small towns, and you just don't see that same thing in cities. Unless the governments protect their small towns against it, there's no hope. Hermann has refused to let them come in. And that's a charming town, and they've got bigger businesses, but they don't have a Wal-Mart that completely takes over. I mean, look at what used to be Downtown here, and now. They can't compete. The drugstores are probably suffering. Wal-Mart offers a lot, but we also suffer for it.

They do employ a lot of people, but how many of those individuals would have, perhaps, opened up their own businesses.

You're fighting a losing battle. As long as people value cheap and quick, there will be a Wal-Mart. 40 years ago, small town downtowns had a dress shop and a shoe store and a hardware store, and the ones that survived, they redefined downtown. Downtown isn't your everyday survival shopping. It is a destination. It isn't for a quart of milk and band-aids.

I think also service—the pharmacies, I've talked to so many people that have shunned the big stores because of the level of service. The local pharmacies will do research about Medicare. And the pharmacist here will come in on the weekend if someone needs a prescription.

I think that's something that people don't value it anymore.

They don't value it until they don't get it, and then they're pissed. They don't think ahead of time that they maybe shouldn't go to Wal-Mart because down the road, the local pharmacies will be there.

I realize that West Lake's is a big chain store, but they know my name, and they know what I need, and they'll carry it to my car if it's heavy, or they'll say, "Take it and see if it's what you need." You can't do that at Home Depot.

Moderator: Is there residential living Downtown?

Some.

I actually have plans to live Downtown eventually.

There's some. Not a huge number. Maybe a third to a half of the buildings might have...

Probably a third.

Typically rentals.

Moderator: Is there a need or demand for more or different housing Downtown?

I can speak to this, because when I went looking for somewhere to live, I wanted to live Downtown. You're close to everything, it's cute, it's quaint, whether it be loft or apartment style. I couldn't find much that was to rent that my parents felt was safe enough for me to live in, or somewhere that I would say could accommodate the space I needed. I wanted to live Downtown, but my options were limited.

My impression is that what's Downtown are old, small apartments.

Yeah. A lot of students live Downtown.

It's not a place you live.

But I wanted to. It's a single gal's dream. More options.

Not too close to the park.

(laughter.)

Then you hit another snag if you have a lot of apartments Downtown with parking. Where do you park? I wouldn't want a resident to be parked in front of my store.

My nephew lived there, and he kept asking if he could park in my parking lot, but there isn't anywhere.

That might open up a revenue stream for someone.

You have to consider what kind of person the current apartments bring in.

They're not the quality we're looking for Downtown.

If you have apartments Downtown, they have to be nice. Now, they're dives. And that's not good for Downtown business.

People that would walk down their stairs and buy shoes or gifts. I don't want to say spenders, but sort of. Somebody that's going to come downstairs and shop, and purchase things that aren't Wal-Mart.

Moderator: From your perspective, how do you communicate with your clients or customers? Advertising and that sort of thing.

I have an email list. Newspapers. Radio.

We do Downtown things together. Events.

We pool our funds whenever we have large events to advertise them.

The Chamber helps a lot.

I think the web is something that everyone's starting to realize is a big, cheap source of advertisement. We strive on it enormously. We use the web like no other.

I have a website, and I've done targeted emails where there are links to the website where people can purchase things, but people will come in afterwards.

I think Facebook might be beneficial.

Yeah.

I have my own personal page and one for the store, and I've created events, and I mean, you're just automatically reaching however many friends you have. It's a different group. My email list are people that came into the store, but Facebook kind of snowballs, and some of them are people that haven't ever been in my store.

Moderator: What's communication like between business owners and the City?

I think the Chamber does that for us.

When they were getting ready to put the new pipes in, they called all of us, and they had a meeting, and they spent a lot of time telling us that the streets will be torn up, and that some of us may have to get new pipes...

That was after the Nickel Street fiasco.

They even came to my office to help prepare me. I was pleased with the communication, because I then knew what to expect.

When they redid Nickel Street, we had the workers using our walls as a bathroom, and I had a customer fall into a trench that was there for months, and one customer was hit in the head with something from the construction site. So they did better the next time. They answered the problems very well, and they brought the one guy in to apologize. I'm assuming that Court Street didn't have those issues. There was a real lack of planning. The sidewalks didn't accommodate wheelchairs and the building across the street, they didn't put in a handicapped ramp, and they came in a few weeks later, they jack hammered the whole sidewalk out again. I'm assuming they did better later. That was like five years ago.

Fulton's small. If you've got a complaint, you know who to call.

There have been a few safety issues. Some theft and that kind of thing, that all along our street, almost everybody got hit but us. I think they're stepping up security to not have to deal with what Columbia is now. I think they're doing better with that than some of the bigger towns. Four times this month, I had a little note in the door saying they've checked our security at night. And they'll send an officer over to your place to walk you outside to your car if you want. I see the law enforcement now all the time. They're really working to prevent problems. I don't really know that we've had a huge amount of that.

Moderator: Let's look to the future of Downtown Fulton. What sorts of businesses would be a good fit for Downtown Fulton?

One thing we constantly hear is that there's no place to buy clothes in town, both men's and women's.

Boutique-type stores.

We hear that.

I do know, for the record, I do love the trees Downtown. I think they make Downtown very quaint. They smell bad in the spring, the Bradford Pears, but they're beautiful.

They're full of birds.

But do we want a bare, concrete jungle Downtown, or actual trees beautifying the Downtown? The trees shade the merchandise and protect it from the sun. It has been suggested that we will be cutting down all the trees to unify the Downtown.

Oh, no!

I love the trees.

I think they add to the atmosphere Downtown. I was in Naples, Florida, and they have trees. That's the way I'd like to see Fulton, where you can walk along from one store to another.

In Columbia, they're trying to make living centers that look like Downtown areas, and here we have the actual Downtown, the original Downtown. We just need to take care of it. And also, I think downtowns have an identity of being very expensive places to shop, when in fact we're not. We're being very competitive. We still have that mentality, though.

I'd like to see, you know, those alleyways, a lot of people don't know they're there. There are these cute little alleyways...

The one behind us isn't maintained. That should be the City's job. When they redid their parking lot back there, they didn't redo the alley back there.

Is it private, though? Is it owned by someone else?

I think they're quaint, and I don't think people know they're there, and then the back door entrances, I was always afraid to go in because I thought it was the wrong door.

I think the alleyways were a little more aesthetically pleasing...

Some of them are nice.

I think something, too, like in Columbia, their little district, they kind of take those weird shady areas like alleyways and add sculptures and little gardens and little cute walkways. Put sculptures around businesses. Let's utilize the greatness and character we have, and get some student artwork.

I wish they'd bury utilities on Nickel Street.

They may have a plan for it.

They buried cable when they came in, but they didn't bury the utilities then.

Moderator: Are there other things about the look and feel of Downtown that ought to be priorities?

I do wish that we all had, not uniform, but I wish we all had awnings. I think they add quaintness, and if it's raining, your customers have protection up and down the street.

I don't think they'd have to be uniform.

And I think the trash cans are ugly. Like in St. Charles, the trash receptacles are planters as well, so they're beautiful. That's the other thing. I've been frustrated with the City's response to the planters Downtown. I think they should replace the planters so they're throughout the area, and they should be maintained by the Park and Rec department. They shouldn't be the responsibility of the merchants to maintain them. But now, there's only like three planters left.

That's the one thing, I mean, we always have a little bit of vandalism, and they should be planters that are high on the building or something that can't be destroyed.

That design, narrow at the bottom, wasn't the right thing.

We had one stolen.

Really?

The one in front of Central Bank, I think. Or Cornerstone.

Has the street always been one-way?

When cars were smaller, it was easier. It used to be.

Has anybody ever thought about making it back to two?

I've heard more people say to block it off and not have any cars at all.

That would be cool.

That would be horrible.

But they'd have to have a garage or something.

With our parking lot, they did all this landscaping, and nobody maintains it, and it's too much for one business to maintain.

And they never communicated that they wanted us to maintain it.

That's another problem. People who let their dogs go wherever, in the planters.

All of those are going to remain problems if law enforcement doesn't deal with that. Somebody needs to be walking or on a bicycle.

I do wish that the street on Court was even, where the pipes are now, there's a huge dip right in front of the tax shop. You could lose a small family in there.

A lot of people complain about the bricks, but if they could just fix them...

They've either not hired proper contractors or not enforced it. On Nickel Street, they leveled everything to start with, and they must have been running out of time, because they were just slapping on bricks.

They obviously didn't know what they were doing.

Why the City allowed that, I don't know. They had the opportunity to stop that. In anything they do, they have to think ahead. Like installing handicapped ramps after they put the sidewalks back together. They need someone following up, inspecting, and making sure things are done right.

The parking lot behind our businesses, we have two handicapped accessible parking spots, but there's no way to get from those spots to a building.

That's exactly the thing. Like coming to tear down light poles because they forgot about allowing for wheelchairs and strollers.

But when problems are addressed... like with our store, whoever it was, didn't bother to contact FedEx or anything, and they redid our back parking lot and couldn't allow for a FedEx truck. And when the City was approached with this, they said, "The plans have already been drawn."

They obviously don't want to maintain a Downtown.

Moderator: Do you think there's room for green space, walking spaces, etc.?

We want Parks and Rec to maintain the planters.

Yeah.

And a little more green space.

And keep the trees, but do something about the birds.

At another meeting, at 11:00, they said that if we wanted the trees to be kept in front of the businesses, the City won't maintain that tree for you. If you choose to get them cut down, they'll take care of that, but they won't help you maintain that tree.

Moderator: What else could the City do to help your businesses thrive?

Like we've said all along, keep up the appearance of Downtown and make people want to come.

And plan improvements well, and listen to the people it's going to affect. My 80-year-old boss could see that a UPS truck wasn't going to fit on any of the loading docks.

I'd be interested in seeing the other DREAM towns and seeing how this initiative benefited them.

(side conversations about the DREAM project.)

Moderator: Just one more question. The program sponsors wanted to know what your thoughts are on a special business district in which a sales tax would be collected that would be designated for Downtown services.

So, increasing tax for a specific part of town?

No.

I don't think so.

I don't think... I think it would be detrimental to Downtown right now.

And you're going to collect sales tax money, and who's to say it'll go Downtown.

People won't understand it, and they'll go to Columbia instead.

You're talking about a City-wide tax?

I think it would just cause problems between the businesses.

Yeah.

(unanimous agreement that an additional sales tax is a bad idea.)

I think a better idea would be to give the historic district a tax break to encourage people to come down and spend more money.

I think it's a different clientele than Wal-Mart. Moser's isn't Downtown, but it's a very different atmosphere than a Wal-Mart. I think the Wal-Mart vs. our Downtown, the businesses are gone now.

Yeah, it is shifting. It has shifted. And I like seeing the businesses down there. I like the foot traffic. People may go to a business of some type and then go eat lunch or go shopping.

I do that.

Yeah.

Going to the bank, the tellers all know your name. There's something very safe about that.

I don't think a tax is a good idea.

No.

I don't think the merchants Downtown have depended on government to take care of them. When there's money involved, it goes to the big businesses. We wouldn't get it anyway.

I'd love to see the City use our businesses. For printing, maybe.

Maybe the City could give their local printer an advantage.

And you do great work.

You really can't depend on government to look after you. Our business depends on making the customer happy. If you correct your mistakes, customer relations, just doing what is necessary.

That's one of the best things we have going for us, is service.

Yes.

(agreement.)

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION VI

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

I think it's a friendly community. Some people think there's a few around here that are stuck up, but they've moved on.

I'd echo that as a new person.

Same.

I grew up in the Army, and I've never been as welcome anywhere as I am here.

We're very centrally located, near Columbia, Jeff City, Kansas City, and St. Louis.

There's a variety of things that you can do culturally. We have part of the Berlin Wall and museums and art and history, and people are more than happy to tell you about, and to be able to be in a small community but have all this available... gives you something to do when you have out-of-towners.

There are people who leave their homes unlocked, leave their keys in the car... but that's the kind of community that... we're not perfect, but we're pretty good place to be. The other positive side is that the community is moderate and very recession-proof. Our core businesses aren't manufacturing businesses and some of the ones that are are inversely... the factory does well when there's a recession, like buying chips when people are eating at home. We're very sheltered, even though we have exposure to international people of fame, like Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

And David Cook.

We've got the hospital and the correction center and two very prominent universities.

We have 1000 students on our campus, and it's very diverse.

Moderator: *Where do people work?*

My husband works at the power plant.

Some commute to Columbia and Jeff City.

But there are quite a few jobs here.

Moderator: Does it feel like a college town?

No.

I don't think it does at all.

Maybe at Wal-Mart is where I notice it the most.

You're close to a grocery store and Wal-Mart within 10 minutes anywhere in Fulton.

I sponsored an Afghan couple, and they've been in Fulton for a year and a half, and they just got their first car. Their kids are in school, fluent in English. They'd walk to Wal-Mart every day, walk Downtown...

Moderator: Where do people do most of their retail shopping?

Groceries, here.

Yeah.

Depends.

Clothing, out of town.

I buy so much stuff at Cato's.

Business professional clothes, we don't have an outlet for that.

Wal-Mart.

(laughter.)

We're conveniently close with Columbia and Jefferson City, and they offer such a wide variety, and you shop and work it in with dinner and entertainment. We've got good choices in restaurants here right now, but shopping is limited. The south end is trying to develop. We have a new 8-screen theater and a new bowling alley. Those have been good improvements.

A new senior center.

Yeah.

An awesome walking trail.

Which is nice and just gets nicer.

Gets longer.

Moderator: Do you find that Fulton has everything you need?

I think you'll find all the basic needs, and Columbia and Jeff City is just 30 minutes away.

I have teenage boys, and you can't buy clothes in town for teenage boys.

All basic needs except for clothes are covered.

There's Cato's and Maurice's Downtown, but that's it.

And Gidley's shoes.

But there's no men's.

And even our athletic store doesn't always have the right fit for shoes.

And they're all next to Wal-Mart. The Downtown area's been going through quite a bit for the last 10 or 15 years.

I think we're the typical small town that has lost their Downtown because of Wal-Mart.

We're not as bad as a lot of communities. We have some good, viable businesses Downtown, but they're not necessity type shops.

Moderator: Do people dine in town?

Some. People are eating more in town here.

New places are open.

I would give us a B-.

It would depend on what you were doing. If you're not getting clothing here, people will go shopping in Columbia and eat over there.

(agreement.)

What we have is good, but I don't think we have as much variety.

We don't have a lot of the national chains. They're all unique.

What we have is nice, but there's not enough of it.

I don't think we have any fine dining.

Beks is our nicest restaurant in town.

That's pretty close to fine. Slightly...

(laughter.)

We have some oriental restaurants, but we don't have specialty restaurants. No high-end Italian or German or a sushi place.

Moderator: What do people do for entertainment?

Go to a play. Actually, there's competing plays tonight. The colleges provide plays, concerts, and the Callaway Arts Council does concerts and plays all year.

We got pretty good support from the community for sporting events.

And the movie theater and the bowling alley.

Special events. Street fair, and whatever.

That's Downtown.

The Art and Jazz festival. The Celia vigil.

Is that entertainment?

I find it entertaining.

I think there's a lot of lectures with the colleges. There's something all the time. We've got 2 major lectures this week.

The Chamber does a really good job of putting the word out. You can easily find out.

The Chamber newsletter with the schedule of events is packed with things all month long. There's the universities and the Lighthouse Theater with musicians from Branson and Nashville and a local group. If you like country music and dancing, there's a couple places that provide that on weekends.

The place with the mechanical bull.

(laughter.)

Actually, it's pretty nice.

When I first came to Westminster, the rap was that there's nothing to do in Fulton, and we're not hearing that anymore. The colleges are doing that, but so is Fulton. And there's more going on Downtown, too.

The Post Office and the Tap Room—they're hot these days.

Those are all local bars.

Moderator: *Let's turn our attention to Downtown. Do you feel that Downtown is moving in a positive or negative direction?*

There's clearly a shift and a change. There is still clearly retail effort. We have a few empty buildings, but... there's things going into most of them. So, there's clearly an effort to have a viable retail space Downtown. But we lose basics.

Since we have moved down there, I've tried to be a part of the group, and we don't have a good Downtown business association. They don't work together enough. And the biggest drawback I see is the hours. At 12 on Saturday, the town's dead.

And 5 on weekdays.

(agreement.)

You can't get the two drugstores to stay open later, and the jewelry store closes in the summer time, and they just, they do their own thing. I grew up with my dad in a Downtown business, and they stayed until 6 and 7 at night. Maybe it's a change in times. But they don't cooperate to get people Downtown.

The Tap Room, for example, they whack at the hours. They're opening at 6 in the evening now. The same thing happens to the retail business. The only thing I can see that will positively affect that is a nightly event that's bringing people Downtown, and that's where the theater will come in.

And, you're right, because if you go to Downtown Columbia, you can go shopping after you get off work, but I know what it's like to run a small business, and you have to figure out where your hours are and whether you can afford extra help. It's not realistic for most people to shop during the day, and Saturdays, I don't do mornings. Saturday afternoon would be great.

Vision Arts is open on Wednesday, and if Downtown did just one evening and publicized it...

You'd have to stay away from a weekend, too. People are so scattered. I had three things I could do Saturday and I had to make a choice.

I've seen people waiting at Beks for dinner, and there's nothing to do. When we do get the theater running, we can't have hundreds of people walking the streets wondering what to do. That can really hurt the Downtown businesses.

People eat at Beks, and they're peering into the windows that are dark.

We've got several restaurants for the lunch group, and there's a big gap until dinner.

(side conversations.)

Moderator: *Do people use Downtown daily or weekly?*

Only daily for the men drinking coffee. It's either all at Mom's, or people going to the Courthouse.

That addresses another issue. Parking would be nice. More.

We have a perception of a lack of parking Downtown.

There's plenty of parking Downtown.

I think it's a mentality thing. They'll park 5 miles away to go to Wal-Mart, but they won't park behind a building and walk around the corner.

(noise, unintelligible conversation.)

We have a lack of parking for the businesses, for the people that work in town. We either have to feed the meter every two hours... if we can put them elsewhere that would be great. That's always been a problem.

Moderator: So are the parking lots well signed, or do they know about them?

If there isn't a front row parking right in front of the store, people think, "No parking."

Our back lot has plenty of spots. I think it's a perception. It sometimes cracks me up because they'll walk a mile in the Wal-Mart parking lot.

They have to go to Wal-Mart, though.

Yeah, I guess it's not a necessity.

Moderator: What is Downtown used for?

Drugs and banking.

Moderator: Are most of the banks Downtown?

All the good ones.

Moderator: Where's the good food?

Throughout the county.

We've got 4 restaurants Downtown, I think.

Yeah, Beks and Arris's and Mom's...

Post Office.

There's probably 5 or 6.

The Downtown has a lot of special, unique features that we don't capitalize on. If you want convenience, you go to a mall. There's specialty stores Downtown, and people like old brick streets, and they like the old stuff... I don't know how to do it, but there needs to be some guidance in the Downtown business district for people to be open until 7 and preserve the architecture of their building... the things you draw people to is kind of starting to slip away. Redoing the old theater, that's a huge step in the right direction. Taking a historic building and covering it with stucco or aluminum, that's a huge mistake. You can see that at a mall.

Moderator: What else about the look and feel?

We have a major problem with the streets. They put a water line down, and they didn't put it down right, and the bricks are off, so it's really hurt us.

I was on Laclede's Landing in St. Louis, and our streets look smooth as silk compared to theirs.

Its 5 miles an hour at Laclede's Landing.

But it's almost that bad in front of our place. I drive on the left side of the street. This Court Street business is really bad.

And it's not an easy fix.

It's not.

Moderator: You mentioned the look of buildings. Is that a problem throughout Downtown?

There's some that should probably be condemned. Not many, but some.

I think the entry to the Downtown is fun, too, and Court Street is beautiful.

Very pretty.

Wonderfully pretty.

But very few know to come that way.

So what changed, though, that Court Street... you go on Nickel or any side street, and... is it pride?

Back in the early 80's, things were pretty rough, and _____ bought up everything he could get his hands on, and he single-handedly did a huge boost.

Tried to bring back the flavor...

Tore off the aluminum and put them back the way he thought they ought to look.

And _____'s doing that with Beks.

A lot of these buildings are 100, 110 years old. And people are trying to restore them but keep the integrity that was still there. But there are a few buildings that haven't had major uplifting. The repairs are pretty isolated in about a 2-block area.

And there are some buildings on 5th street that have a lot of potential.

And one of the things here, that's going to be converted into a roundabout, so that'll be a different approach. That will eliminate the bottleneck with the two bridges.

I think that's unique for Fulton.

I think it's going to be a nightmare.

Luckily, we don't have city buses.

Moderator: How's the signage and navigation?

I think the signage is pretty decent, as a whole. You can find most things.

I don't know how you'd change it, but you could drive through Fulton, and say, "Fulton has no Downtown." They miss the sign...

I don't know a way to change it...

(agreement.)

The look of Downtown needs to overflow to your entire side of the street.

The parking lot, it would be nice if it was in the other direction...

How do you clean up one building to turn it into a jail? They made it look like a modern building. The B&B folks in Hannibal built a new theater to look like the old buildings.

We need to have restrictions... we need to have something. We don't need to have bright green... that fits in *horribly*.

The banks are the worst offenders.

The Callaway Bank is the ugliest building.

They won an award for that architecture.

Moderator: How's lighting?

It's easy to get around. And it's not unsafe.

I don't know. Sometimes on Wednesday nights... the Baptist Church youth group is starting to look pretty motley...

There were two teenagers laying in the middle of the street at 5. I thought, "What are you doing?"

(laughter.)

How long ago was it when the City put up those light fixtures?

10 years.

That was something that they did to try to change the appearance.

(positive murmuring.)

Moderator: Is there residential living Downtown?

Some.

Some that are really nice...

And some that are a little wild.

(agreement.)

I lived there in college, and we lived there for a year before we realized that the jail had a perfect view of us. One of our girlfriends made us put in a curtain.

Moderator: Do you think there would be interest in more residential space Downtown?

I think mostly students.

It wouldn't hurt to have it improved.

I don't think you'd get young professionals, though. I think improving what we have, but if we grow anymore, we're going to have to build more apartments close to campus.

It's convenient for students, and they like the uniqueness, and they can walk to either college. It's convenient.

I think that quality of some of the Downtown... (noise, unintelligible.)

It's cost-prohibitive, because you have to bring it up to code.

A lot of those upper levels are just storage.

Moderator: *Let's talk about the future of Downtown. Are there additional businesses that you would like to see Downtown?*

I think everything that we mentioned. We have Columbia as a model of a happening downtown district.

We need entertainment, and we need major renovations to bring it up to snuff. From a practical standpoint, from a programming standpoint, we can put entertainment in, rehearsal facility, in the theater. We could bring 2 to 3 hundred people consistently Downtown a few times a week, and the shops will open, because people will be shopping. The restaurants will do well. If you have the foot traffic, we'll have hot dog stands.

I'd like to see some boutique clothing stores. A place to get a suit for my husband. The college kids wear high-end clothing, but they aren't going to shop here. There are some places to get a little bit of high-end clothing for the 40 to 70 age range, but something that a guy could... a place to buy a sweater as a gift for a man. And restaurants that are open past 2:00.

Several years ago, we had a JC Penney's Downtown, which offered a good variety. We have a Sears on the end of town...

A variety store, dime store kind of thing... would be good, but most of those aren't willing to maneuver around the space restrictions that they'd have in the buildings.

Well, you can't hardly compete with Wal-Mart.

No. It needs to be specialty. That's where it's going to make its money.

A music store. To be able to buy music in town.

The biggest untapped market for retail is the students. And when their parents come in. If there were more restaurants and clothing stores and music stores... they go to Columbia to buy that stuff now. And they can walk Downtown.

You've got all that influx of students, and you've got people coming into town—alumni, parents. It would be nice to be able to have a variety of shops Downtown that weren't just antiques. They're great, but I'm not that into them, and the younger set isn't into them. Even a retro, vintage shop—those are huge hits. But how do you draw those businesses in and get the word out? Retail's hard.

Moderator: *What about the look of Downtown? Streets, I got.*

They just need to put more effort into it.

If you could've seen the guys out there. They weren't paying any attention.

You start at one end and go this way, and then if it didn't fit in the middle, they just smashed the bricks and shoved them in.

Generally, the look is good. I would like to see a little more uniform 1890's look. If they're not going to go back to that look like China Palace and Shelter Insurance, then build it so it can be covered effectively. Fulton would be a wonderful 1910 film location. If we found a certain timeframe, we could lure some people in that would want to shoot some of those buildings. We'd have some stunning buildings.

I would like to see Downtown Court Street overflow onto the neighboring streets so that that feel... what's the difference between Court and Nickels? It would be nice to see that overflow onto Nickels.

Has Court Street ever gone both ways?

Yeah.

It used to be a 4-lane.

If you're on Business 54, you miss Downtown.

Or if it went the opposite way.

They've talked about two-way recently.

I can't park on the left side parallel. It's too hard.

They've talked about angled parking.

I'd like to see our old buildings stay old-looking, and anything that goes into remodeling, they'd have to follow some type of plan. Taylor's Jewelry, he remodeled 35 years ago, but China Palace, that should've never happened.

Are there no restrictions?

No. There's nothing.

You know, obviously with redoing the theater, we're looking at bringing it back to what it was, but in order to do that, we're going to open a can of worms.

What do you mean a can of worms?

If we pull the metal off the building, what's behind there?

If we had some of the examples of the churches, if someone decided to cover their churches with stucco, it would be horrible. We almost need to protect what we have and take steps forward to get to a vision on what we want as a community. When people at the north and south end of town retail-wise, we can't do it.

The Downtown is getting left out. The strip mall out west and the north and south... the City's bought 3 more buildings Downtown, and I don't know what their plans are.

They're very capable of building a building that's not going to fit in.

The things that are north and south are in Columbia and Jeff. The Downtown is going to draw people only for its uniqueness.

It's got to be a destination.

A Norman Rockwell feeling.

If there were rules, then anybody coming in would know the guidelines up front.

A lot of it is not an individual. It's a corporation.

Moderator: What about green space or landscaping or fountains?

Yeah. We have a tree situation that needs to be coordinated. I have people coming into the museum that don't see the signs for 2-hour parking.

Moderator: So the trees are overgrown?

Yeah.

Overall maintenance.

And they have a bird problem.

Just keeping them maintained. One of them beats the window of the Chamber.

We don't have any art or sculptures.

We have the two alleys by the theater that we'd like to do something with.

We've got a student who's working with the City about trying to connect the campus and the Downtown through 5th Street or 7th Street, put some artwork along that area, get people going to and fro.

It'd be nice to just clean the sidewalks out. It would be nice to have a pedestrian community. But that's not coming back for a while. Where everybody walks to and from Downtown.

Moderator: Other than Columbia, are there other downtowns that you admire?

I have a home in Buford, South Carolina, and it's about our size, and it has a waterfront that's to die for. It went through the same thing, and they became a destination by having lots of funky restaurants and bars and watering holes, jazz and all that kind of stuff.

One day I'll have one of those places.

Springfield, Missouri... they've had a lot of troubles.

I was kind of impressed with downtown Boonville. They've done a nice job with the river and the casino.

It's a mixed bag for them, but it overall has to be good, like the new plant has been for us.

That's dead.

It died today.

Oh, really?

They're withdrawing.

(side conversations.)

Moderator: Would the businesses support a special business district with additional sales tax?

No.

I would've thought that people would've made a big deal about the transportation district, and they haven't said a word about it.

I bought a fridge out at Sears, and I couldn't believe the sales tax.

I don't think the general population notices.

Probably, if they voted on it, they'd say no, but if there was a TIF district and it wasn't forever...

I went to Kohl's in Jeff City, and they have an extra percent tax for that development for 10 years or something...

23 is the max for a TIF. Look at Bass Pro, and that's the highest area in Columbia, but it doesn't keep people away from Bass Pro.

If you had a good anchor of some sort to draw people.

(many people talking at once.)

There's a lot of optimism in Fulton. There's two developments out of Columbia that have been working a lot in Fulton. We have a Walgreen's. The Downtown's being ignored, but people are seeing a lot of potential in this town...

Right now the cost is better Downtown than in those other areas.

Moderator: Thank you very much.