

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CITY OF HERMANN, MISSOURI

April 26, 2007



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI (DREAM) PROGRAM SPONSORS:



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SECTION I

FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM•ARC conducted four focus groups in Hermann, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Hermann community in regard to the downtown area. The four groups included the following: 1) downtown business owners, 2) business owners, 3) newer residents, and 4) long-time residents.

Participants of each group are from a variety of backgrounds, and all have a strong interest in downtown development.

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all four groups to the posed questions. Attached are the complete transcripts of three of the meetings and notes from the fourth.

A. Questions Posed to Business Groups

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

General Questions about Hermann

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 Hermann 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/property 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. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what’s going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? How would you like to be communicated with regarding what is going on downtown from the City of Hermann?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

08. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Hermann. 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?

09. 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?
- Building repairs, renovation, upgrades?

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

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

12. 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 included in the discussion guide for these groups:

General Questions about Hermann

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 Hermann?

Downtown Specific Questions

05. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Hermann 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 Hermann? 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)?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

09. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Hermann. 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?

10. 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?
- Building repairs, renovations, 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 other downtowns in the area would you say Hermann's is most like? What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* it to resemble?

C. The Hermann Area

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

The groups described Hermann as a beautiful, scenic, river and agricultural town with a booming tourism industry. Participants stated that Hermann is a great place to raise a family, has good schools, and is a safe area. Many participants, particularly the newer residents, commented on how welcoming and friendly people in town are.

Many participants described Hermann as relaxing and quaint, but felt that Hermann is too sleepy a town. Most retail businesses and restaurants are closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, which the groups felt was a problem, since a number of tourists stay Sunday night and cannot find restaurants or shops open on Mondays.

The tourism industry is large for a town of Hermann's size. Tourists come in for the wineries and for a number of festivals, including Maifest and Oktoberfest. The tourism season begins in the spring and goes through the summer and the beginning of fall.

In addition, the groups felt that Hermann has a great community spirit—people participate in church events, take pride in Hermann's culture, participate in civic organizations, and welcome visitors. Regarding Hermann's history, Hermann residents take pride in the town's history and German heritage, both in the historic architecture and in the stories of what life in Hermann once was.

Many participants felt that Hermann is moving slowly in the right direction, particularly with the construction of the amphitheater downtown and the community's excitement about the possibilities with the DREAM initiative. Also, Hermann will soon see the opening of a new bridge that will make the city more accessible for travelers. Many of the downtown buildings have been preserved, which brings up exciting possibilities for the aesthetics of a historic downtown.

Some participants mentioned ways in which Hermann is moving in the wrong direction by moving so much out of downtown. City Hall has been moved out of downtown, as well as the post office, which many participants feel sets a negative example for the rest of Hermann, encouraging businesses to move away from downtown. A number of stores have moved out of the downtown area within the last few years, as well. In discussing

revitalization efforts, a number of the groups mentioned Hermann's high utility rates, which are making it difficult for business owners to keep their businesses within Hermann.

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

The participants referred to Hermann as a hub for some smaller towns in a 30-mile radius, stating that people come in for shopping from these towns.

The main shopping areas for residents are a few stores downtown, and a number of stores that have moved out of downtown such as Dollar General.

The groups discussed how Hermann residents go outside of Hermann for much of their shopping, to Washington, Missouri, or to St. Louis, to patronize large chains such as Lowe's, Macy's, and Wal-Mart. The older residents and business owners discussed ways they try to patronize Hermann businesses, while many of the newer residents, some from St. Louis, talked about how easy a distance St. Louis and Washington are from Hermann and admitted to going out of town for shopping and entertainment at least once a week.

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?

Focus group participants stated that there are a number of restaurants in Hermann, including a Mexican restaurant, a couple fine dining options, and some "mom and pop" type restaurants. Residents do eat at local restaurants but also go outside of Hermann fairly regularly to entertain guests.

Other entertainment options include the wineries, the downtown amphitheater, the festivals during the summer, biking and hiking, and walking down to the river. Many participants mentioned that there are no bowling alleys, movie theaters, or other typical entertainment options that kids and teenagers enjoy, so teenagers often drive to Washington, Missouri for entertainment.

As far as recreation, the participants discussed the parks in Hermann and suggested that if the parks were connected to downtown, it would make tourist access to the parks even easier. The parks are nice, well-maintained, and offer entertainment options for families, according to many participants.

D. Downtown Hermann: Describing the Present

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

The participants had mixed feelings about the direction that downtown is moving. Residents feel that the amphitheater, the focus on revitalizing downtown, and discussions about ways to make downtown more tourist- and resident-friendly are positive changes. The amphitheater, specifically, is bringing residents downtown on Friday nights for shows. The participants feel that downtown Hermann has a lot of potential, particularly because of the beauty of the historic buildings and the ease of walking around downtown.

The participants mentioned a number of negatives, as well. City Hall, the Post Office, and large staple stores such as Dollar General have moved away from downtown, leaving mostly specialty shops, tourist-focused shops, and some “low-end” shops that are perceived as undesirable. As a result, say some participants, people do not patronize downtown businesses as often as they did even a few years ago. They mentioned that a lack of adequate handicapped access and a lack of parking make it difficult for people to get around downtown. In addition, they felt that business hours were inconvenient for most people, since many businesses are closed entirely on Mondays and Tuesdays, close by 5:00 PM on weekdays, and close in the afternoon or early evening on Saturdays and Sundays.

Business Owners: Why did you choose to locate your business downtown (or not in downtown, for other business owners)?

The downtown business owners chose to locate their businesses downtown because of the beauty of the historic buildings, and the business owners not in downtown chose their locations based on proximity to the high-traffic areas and lower utility rates.

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

Local residents visit downtown for specialty shops, for shows at the new amphitheater, for the one grocery store, and to just walk around. The groups all agreed that many of the stores that have basic necessities have moved away from downtown, so they do much of their shopping for staple items outside of downtown.

Entertainment at the amphitheater is one reason Hermann residents visit downtown; the amphitheater just opened recently, and has brought a new influx of people downtown. Downtown Hermann, according to participants, used to have a Dollar General, clothing

shops, and more shopping options for residents. The downtown area also used to house City Hall and the Post Office. With all of those businesses and the headquarters for the City of Hermann having moved outside of downtown, people do not visit downtown as much as they used to even a few years ago.

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?

Downtown, according to the groups, is currently not very user-friendly. They cite business hours, signage, lighting, parking, public restrooms, handicapped access, and tourist information as problems that need addressing.

According to many participants, business hours are typically inconvenient, with businesses closing at 5:00 or 6:00 PM most days and being closed all day on Monday and Tuesday. For the tourists in particular, said many participants, these early closing times for restaurants and lack of options on Mondays and Tuesdays make Hermann seem empty. Some participants mentioned that a few restaurants sometimes close earlier than their posted business hours state, if there are no customers.

While the locations of downtown businesses are convenient, many of the groups claimed that parking is a problem, particularly during festivals. While there is a parking lot, it is not well-marked, and tourists have trouble finding it. Street parking is limited, and many of the participants mentioned driving around and waiting for someone to leave.

Signage, lighting, and information for tourists were all cited as problems for user-friendliness, as well. The participants felt that residents know where streets and businesses are, but the downtown area is difficult for tourists to navigate. They felt that signs on the corners pointing people in different directions for different businesses would help. Well-lit streets would help people find the businesses and restaurants they are looking for. The participants also mentioned that having maps and brochures available in convenient places, such as the Amtrak station, would help people navigate downtown.

The lack of public restrooms downtown, according to the groups, is a serious problem. When there are tourists in town, particularly for festivals, there are no convenient public restrooms.

Handicapped access was another issue that the groups discussed. Ramps on the sidewalks at more than just the corners would help people get around and would make downtown more user-friendly. They suggested that handicapped access would not only serve visitors with disabilities, but also families with strollers.

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

The groups stated that residents and visitors get information from radio, direct mail, the Internet, the newspaper, and the Visitor Center. A few of the groups discussed how many downtown businesses advertise separately, but there was no general awareness of an advertising or marketing campaign for downtown as a whole. A few groups also mentioned that banners or signs in the downtown area would help highlight upcoming events for residents and people who drive through town. Some participants discussed the possibility of having more of this information visible and readily available at the Amtrak station.

E. Downtown Hermann: Looking to the Future

As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Hermann. 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 focus groups agreed that the downtown area needs more shopping with greater variety, more restaurants, more art galleries and art-related stores, and more entertainment options. For shopping, participants in every group suggested clothing stores. The participants also felt that developing a more defined and well-promoted art community and opening art galleries downtown would bring in tourists.

As for entertainment, the groups agreed that a variety of restaurants, perhaps with outdoor seating and later hours, would be a positive change. The participants also felt that a movie theater, a bowling alley, and other entertainment options that would appeal to teenagers would be an asset in keeping the younger generation interested in Hermann.

Some groups felt that downtown, while unable to have any substantial parks, could be connected to the main Hermann park by an easier-to-navigate, well-marked pathway.

For all of downtown, the participants felt that creating a cohesive identity and advertising historic downtown as a whole would help draw tourists to all of these shops, restaurants, and entertainment options year-round.

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?

The groups felt that downtown, though it has beautiful historic buildings, needs improvement in its user-friendliness and in creating a cohesive appearance. They suggested that getting stores into the vacant storefronts and passing ordinances and regulations to help building owners rehab their buildings would help in improving the appearance of the buildings themselves.

A main aesthetic concern for many participants was the presence of power lines and utility lines, which are seen as “eyesores” in an otherwise attractive downtown area. All the groups suggested that burying the utility lines would create a more aesthetically pleasing downtown area.

Infrastructure was important to all the groups. Many of the groups mentioned that, while burying the utility lines, creating the infrastructure for wireless Internet access would help downtown Hermann look to the future and appeal to tourists. In addition, reconstructing the sidewalks to offer better handicapped access would help both tourists and residents get around, both the baby boomer generation and the younger generation that may have young children in strollers. Benches spread throughout downtown would also both improve the aesthetic and serve the practical function of giving people a place to sit.

Another major concern for most groups was a shortage of public restrooms downtown. According to participants, there are no convenient restrooms for visitors (especially during festivals), and there is no signage to indicate where restrooms are available. Public restrooms are a high priority for these focus groups in making downtown more user-friendly to tourists.

The participants also mentioned signage and lighting as aesthetic concerns, as well as in creating a user-friendly downtown. More signs, perhaps in a historic style, would help tourists and newer residents find businesses, restaurants, the river, the Amtrak station, the amphitheater, and other downtown attractions. Brighter lighting, also in a historic style, would help people navigate the downtown area.

Parking and transportation were other major concerns. Parking is seen as limited, and some parking areas are believed to be hard to find. The participants suggested better signage and more parking spots in the heart of downtown. As for transportation, they suggested some sort of shuttle to take people from the Amtrak station to the Katy Trail and the wineries, and back. These shuttles would make it easier for tourists who are in town for specific attractions outside downtown to come downtown if they wanted to, and rather than spending their time walking from the Amtrak station to these attractions, these tourists could spend that time walking downtown.

The groups also mentioned that, in order to make downtown more visibly easy to navigate for tourists, easy access to maps and brochures would help, both at the Amtrak station and at intervals downtown.

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

The highest priorities, and the priorities that all groups discussed, include the following: burying utility lines, getting more and better-marked public restrooms downtown, improving signage and lighting, attracting various kinds of restaurants and shops downtown, encouraging downtown businesses to stay open later and to stay open on Mondays, advertising the downtown area as a whole, improving parking and transportation, and encouraging building owners to rehab their buildings while keeping historic façades. Priorities that were expressed by a few groups include creating the infrastructure for Wi-Fi access and making downtown more handicapped accessible.

What other downtowns in the area would you say Hermann's is most like? What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* it to resemble?

The groups mentioned a number of cities as a comparison, including the following: Fredricksburg, TX; Jefferson City; Washington, MO; Greenville, SC; Gattlinburg, TN; Nashville, IN; St. Louis, MO; Columbia, MO; Savannah, GA; Lynchburg, MS, Paducah, KY, and St. Charles, MO.

In thinking about nearby cities such as Washington and Jefferson City, participants admired these cities' variety and the coherent identities. They also admired the festive atmosphere and decorations during Christmas in such cities. In other cities, they admired vibrant art communities, advertising, or the rehabilitation and use of old buildings for thriving businesses. They also admired the user-friendliness and aesthetics of these cities.

F. Key Points expressed by participants

Key points about the Hermann area:

- ◆ Hermann is a beautiful, scenic river and agricultural town with a booming tourism industry.
- ◆ Hermann is a great place to raise a family, has good schools, is very friendly, and is a safe area.
- ◆ Tourists come into Hermann for festivals, antique shopping, and the wineries.
- ◆ Most stores in Hermann are closed on Monday and Tuesday, leaving residents with not much to do on those days, and leaving visitors with the impression of Hermann that there's nothing happening.

- ◆ Residents take pride in Hermann's history and roots.
- ◆ In some ways, Hermann is moving in the right direction, with the rehabilitation of the amphitheater and the new bridge.
- ◆ In some ways, residents feel that Hermann is moving in the wrong direction, with City Hall, the Post Office, and stores like Dollar General moving outside of downtown.
- ◆ The Hermann area is a hub for many smaller surrounding towns within a 30-mile radius, and people from these towns often drive to Hermann for their general shopping needs.
- ◆ Many Hermann residents do a lot of their shopping in Washington, Missouri, and in St. Louis, at cheaper stores with more selection than the stores in Hermann.
- ◆ Hermann has a variety of restaurants spread throughout the area, as well as wineries.
- ◆ There are not many entertainment options that appeal to young people in Hermann, such as a movie theater, a bowling alley, etc.
- ◆ Many residents go outside of Hermann, to Washington or to St. Louis, for entertainment options.
- ◆ With the Katy Trail nearby, nice parks, and the river, Hermann has a lot of recreation options for people who are interested in hiking and biking.

Key points about downtown Hermann in the present:

- ◆ In some ways, downtown is moving in a positive direction: the new amphitheater, the focus on downtown revitalization, and the preservation of the buildings.
- ◆ In some ways, downtown is moving in a negative direction: City Hall and the Post Office have moved outside of downtown, many businesses are buying land and locating themselves outside of downtown, the business hours are inconvenient, and the remaining stores are mostly specialty shops and low-end shops.
- ◆ The high utility rates in downtown Hermann have driven some businesses just outside city limits.

- ◆ Downtown is currently not very user-friendly: business hours, signage, lighting, parking, public restrooms, handicapped access, and tourist information are problems that need addressing.
- ◆ People get information about downtown shops and events from direct mail, radio, the Internet, the newspaper, and the Visitor Center.
- ◆ The focus groups felt that the City should better promote downtown as a whole, in addition to the existing advertising and marketing that individual shops do.

Key points about the future of downtown Hermann:

- ◆ The downtown area needs more shopping with greater variety, more restaurants, more art galleries and art-related stores, and more entertainment options such as a movie theater, a bowling alley, etc.
- ◆ Downtown, though it has beautiful historic buildings, needs improvement in its user-friendliness and in creating a cohesive appearance.
- ◆ Major concerns included increasing the number of public restrooms, helping building owners properly rehab their buildings, encouraging businesses to come into downtown Hermann, improving business hours, and improving parking and transportation.
- ◆ The participants also suggested burying the power lines, improving the lighting and signage, putting benches and better handicapped access ramps downtown, and putting in the infrastructure for Wi-Fi access.
- ◆ For visitors, information should be made easily available to help them find their way around downtown Hermann and the rest of Hermann.
- ◆ Downtown Hermann should preserve its history and appearance while bringing in modernized technology, infrastructure, and business.

SECTION II

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Janet, and I own Strausner furniture store.

I'm Kylene, and we have the Schiller Guest Suites, and in the building, we also have tenants with two retail businesses, and we also have a guest house.

I'm Janet, and I own (noise, unintelligible) street.

I'm Pete, Pete's Plunder Antiques.

I'm Sonia, and I'm an innkeeper and office manager at Wine Valley Inn.

I'm Pam, and I am involved in a major wine company.

I'm Donna, and I have the Nestle Inn.

I'm Frank, and I have the Harbor House.

I'm Burnell, and I have a car wash downtown.

I'm John, I'm getting ready to open (unintelligible).

Moderator: As Jim suggested, we're going to talk quite a bit about downtown Hermann. Before we get to that, I'd like to ask you a little about Hermann. If you were describing this area to someone visiting from out of town, how would you describe Hermann?

You can't have dinner out on a Monday or Tuesday evening. Not much choice.

Family-oriented town. Small, quiet, quaint town.

Farming community. There's a lot of history here.

River town.

A lot of exciting things happening, building around town, of course the wineries.

A lot of progress. That's George Johnson's favorite word.

Well-preserved history.

And interesting architecture.

Strong family values, I think.

I'd say, helpful and friendly. I find that everyone's...

I think people like to come here because the community has a lot of pride and takes care of itself.

Easy to navigate.

Most of the time. (laughter.) When is it not easy to navigate? When there's roads closed.

It's internationally known.

It's internationally settled. I counted 22 countries recently that are represented here by early settlement, late settlement. Much more than just German.

And French.

And French, yeah.

The streets are, many of the streets, because there are a few, are named after philosophers and musicians.

Andy: Generally speaking, would you say Hermann is moving in the right direction or wrong direction.

Right direction.

Positive.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: Let me ask you about a couple different aspects of the city at large. What are the main shopping areas for residents here in Hermann? Where do people go to get everyday things?

In Hermann...well the shopping area, we're not one of those towns that has a town square. It's a little loose. I call it the "dog-leg" shopping. It goes Market, and then

down Fourth, down Schiller, and down First. There's a couple pockets out of town this way, over across the river. You could live in Hermann without going out of the town. Everything that we need is here, pretty much.

I agree.

The grocery store, I mean, there is a grocery store right downtown.

Yeah.

There's a convenience-type store, so the elderly and the young, and the lower-income, like you said, can shop.

(lots of talking at once.)

It's seldom that I go out of town, and sometimes you have to make do—that's part of it—but you can make do and manage.

(unintelligible) the lumber company...

Right, we have everything. We're self-sufficient. And we like it that way. We prefer it that way.

(unintelligible.)

Moderator: Would you say that Hermann is a draw for other towns in the area? Do people come here to do their shopping? Are there other areas that people go to?

The small towns will come to Hermann, the close ones, but the ones that are further out go to the bigger cities.

I read an interesting statistic that said 90% of Americans live within 15 miles of a Wal-Mart, and I take pride in that we are one of the 10% that do not. I think that Hermannites do take pride in that fact, that we are a novelty, and I think that a lot of people come to our town because we are a novelty.

With that said, I do know a group of people that do go out of town to do grocery shopping. There's that group of people, too. I see both kinds of people.

Moderator: What are some dining and entertainment options here in town? Where do you take people when they come and visit?

Well there's 20 places to eat in Hermann, and I going to shoot from the hip and say that there's at least 3 or 4 places on a given weekend during the season—we never really established the season, but it feels like it runs from Maifest to the end of Oktoberfest, it's not that cut and dry. Some communities, nothing happens until after the season starts, but Hermann isn't like that. During that time, I'd say there's always entertainment on the weekends, might be karaoke, a little band, poetry, a bluegrass band.

The coffee house... (unintelligible)

At least three or four places that have some kind of entertainment, and all the food in town is...there's a lot of choices.

The Katy Trail is a big draw.

It really is.

A lot of variety, from Mexican to German, to...

The Katy Trail should improve a lot with the bridge, I think a lot more bikes would be able to go...

I think a lot of people want to come to town and want to eat at the mom and pop restaurants, to meet the locals, to see what we do. If they stay a couple nights, they do one small place. They like to see that.

Absolutely.

(laughter.) You'll see Americans in Amsterdam eating McDonalds, what a waste...every once in a while, we get people in town who go, "Do you guys have a Hardees or Pizza Hut?" "Yeah, but why do you want to go there? You can get that back home!"

For the campers...we have camping as recreation, too, and I think that our park is one of the nicer parks, um, because it is in town, it offers the tourist who's camping that added value to the trip, because they can stop and see the sights or do genealogical research in town. The museums, go antiquing. We have great antique shops right here in town, they don't have to go to the highway, and I just think that we have a lot of creative stuff.

There's a lot of people that utilize the park for family reunions, and we have people come from all over to the park. It's really a nice park for a small town.

The safety factor is incredible in Hermann, too. Our guests really feel like they have to lock their doors, and often they'll say, "well, what do I do with my key when I check out?" and I'll say, "just leave it inside and don't lock the door, and I'll come by. I think they love that feeling of security."

We have the State Historic Societies, and the wineries...our wineries are very cordial and have great history and really a lot to offer the tourists. Very interesting... courthouse has a very interesting history, and it's really very interesting to visit, considering where it's located.

Antique businesses, I think there are 6 or 7...

I just don't know.

(lots of talking at once.)

I think there's about half a dozen places in town for antiques, and that is a travel-driver. People travel for antiques, and they stay overnight. There's enough antique business here to keep them. By the time they go through Pete's, the little malls, a couple shops... it really adds a lot to the...people go to the antique shops, they feel like they're looking into the private world of a local town, and it means a lot.

There are less variety of antique shops than there used to be, and I'm always surprised that people talk about the antiques so much, because there are 6. There used to be 17. I'm wondering what the other towns look like, because they say, "I was in Hannibal, and there's nothing there."

I just read a story in Ohio, we had two towns fairly close to where we were that were big in antique businesses and they're down to about a third the size of the antique business. So that's a national trend.

Some of these, people just sort of gave up business after a while to travel and things like that, it wasn't like it was a bad situation. Has anybody moved out of town?

Some of the antique shops in small communities, when a little mall opens up, it's those dealers that are teetering and they're not sure they want to be open or not. They drift into a mall, and we lose a storefront, we don't lose a dealer. So you'd have to say, there were once 17, but now there's 32 dealers that have a place to sell, if you look at each mall. They're small malls. People that don't...you've been to some big antique malls where there's 450 dealers, and to tell you the truth, it scares people away, especially the guy that's waiting in the car while the wife is in shopping. And if I say, "It's a five-minute mall," people say, "Yeah, come on, let's go there."

I think the antiques do bring out still a surprise. If anything should be done, maybe advertising and using the word "antique shops" instead of just "shops." There is a difference between antique dealers and the tourism group and the Chamber of Commerce that were fighting, and so the antique dealers shy away from all that, so I think in some of the advertising, they won't say "antiques." They say "shops." They can

say “antiques and specialty shops.” I find the word “antiques” missing from all Hermann advertising, because of a former disagreement, antique dealers just didn’t put up certain things...it needs to be. Use the word “antiques.”

Absolutely, “gift shops,” “specialty shops,” antique shops.”

Moderator: Let’s talk about downtown specifically. Do you feel that downtown Hermann is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Lots of empty storefronts, lots of people coming in, and I think there’s some future things, but it seems very empty on Fourth street. I think there are not many people in Hermann. Nobody parked in front of the bank, nobody parked anywhere. The streets are vacant most of the time, and it used to be a different story. I don’t know exactly what caused that. During the week (noise, unintelligible)... Market Street, it’s such a wide street, and it looks like a ghost street. Not a lot of shops, really, on Market. Shops, you know. A lot of closed buildings on Market, too. I’m just talking about the silence of town. You know, there’s only two tellers in the bank...whereas every station used to be filled. It’s just...

That’s online banking.

(many people talking at once.)

Or the Dollar General was downtown, the pool hall was downtown, and there was a lot of things people hung out for downtown.

City Hall vacated last year, and the activity on Schiller Street has been reduced quite a bit without the activity of City Hall. That building had activity Monday through Friday and a lot of times on Saturday, too.

And the post office, too. (many people talking at once.)

The Dollar General was the anchor for first street, and the bank, and the drugstore...all those were the things that comprised the shopping center, and then one day they moved out. The drugstore and the Dollar General, they drew a lot of the traffic.

When the tourists come to town, they go down there, there’s no one down there. They don’t know that there’s anything open.

People comment on how quiet the town is. They say, “Well, I’ve been here before, and it’s different...”

I had somebody tell me, a fellow that lives here in town, said, “You know, there’s no kids playing on the street, either. They’re all sitting in front of the damn computers, they’re not playing, they’re not at the park... in the summertime, you used to be able to count on having to drive more carefully because there was kids...I don’t see any kids out.

People don't let their kids out like they used to. Usually, the parents are working, and the kids are all locked up watching TV or on the computer.

I see some children—I don't live downtown—but I still see some children after school heading toward the downtown deli. I think the ice cream, the pie... some of these after-school places downtown are a draw for families, and I think that that might be one thing that we are lacking a little bit. Certainly a furniture store is going to get families downtown. But I don't see where we're social toward the family downtown as much as we need to be. In order to have vitality downtown, yes, I agree...the children, the families.

I think people want to see the community when they come to downtown, and...good point. Otherwise, we just become kind of a museum, and I don't think that's what we want Hermann to be. I liked Hermann when I lived here because of the family value I discussed earlier.

Moderator: From what you hear from your own customers, how user-friendly is downtown? You mentioned it being hard to find a restaurant on Monday and Tuesday, but what about business hours, finding your way around, parking? Do people find downtown to be user-friendly?

I think there's an issue with shops closed in the beginning of the week. We're opened on Mondays and Tuesdays, and we get a lot of people saying, "Where can we eat? What's open?"

Not much. And we're just as guilty as anybody. The main business...(unintelligible). You stand there all day and no one comes in. You don't see the locals come in your shops at all. I bet you I haven't sold a case of wine in years to locals. They just don't come in. I don't know how to get the locals to come into downtown shops.

I think it's what they're used to, too. A pattern. If I want something, I'll go over to the thrift store. It's a matter of what you're accustomed to.

When it does get busy downtown, then there's a parking problem. During tourist times, there's a bathroom problem. I've heard, they simply mostly complain about the fact that there's no parking, no place to use the bathroom, and that's something that can be solved. And I think the city could look for some properties that could be converted to parking without sacrificing a historic building. Those are things I think are really important.

Mostly the festivals, where it's almost impossible to park, but on a regular basis it's not bad. The locals are begrudging because they can't park right in front of the stores.

(unintelligible)...they put things outside of town, and now there isn't anybody downtown.

The MFA building, too, another reason maybe we're seeing less activity is because the farmers are going out of town now for feed, I guess. I guess what...were they buying their feed in town? And now they're out on highway 100, so that's just another part of the equation. Maybe some of the activity we saw in town, our banking, the grocery store at Village Market has a bank stall there, too, so...

(many people talking at once.)

The amphitheater is one of our greatest new assets downtown, for sure.

Yeah.

I think that will eventually bring some of the locals back to enjoy the town. It's going to take them a while to remember (unintelligible).

Crowds do seem to be getting larger as they went on last season and this last weekend, we just had a great crowd.

I hear a little bit of feedback from people who are trying to shop in town, they have to go to the bank, and they go down first street, and they have to go to the grocery store all the way there. There's just too much traveling, too much space. And they can just do all of that at one stop, the Dollar General, the banks...

Coming from suburbia, this is still a lot nicer.

The shopping centers are difficult for people to find. They come to town, they come across the bridge, and they go "well, here's this town." And there's a grocery store in town, but to find...they need, there is no signage in town that says, "more shopping—this way. If you want whatever..." There's no signage. And that may be something that we...there's been a couple theories over the years, like purple signs point you to wineries, and yellow signs point you to grocery stores, and that may be something we can do without a having a million signs with letters on them, just a color-coded thing and then the maps, that might be a way to get people around. We marked our maps using yellow marker to show the business district and a pink marker to show the wineries, and it makes it easy. I think that would...the traveler that doesn't know his way around.

Moderator: From what you know, where do people go when they wind up in town and don't know where to go? Where do they tend to stop at?

My place. We get a lot of people who come in and want to know where the welcome center is, and it's across the street from me. They can't see it.

The three entrances to Hermann don't really have the designated sign that says "visitor center" or anything to direct...

Or parking, or...there's quite a bit of parking...but nobody knows it's there.

And the parking for the visitor center, their business is just next to it, but it's so limited.

When they're coming into town (noise, unintelligible)...but they're watching the traffic, and they just don't see it sitting there, and if they do, they can't park. It's not a very good location for it. But I don't know what to do about it.

(many people talking at once.)

I'm just wondering if the visitor center is planning to change their location or anything.

They plan to talk about that very thing, possibly, when we get the new visitors and the bridge. I know we get more traffic that way than any other direction. To have an extraordinary entrance, with a fountain and a statue of Hermann and maybe a visitor center right there where the old motel used to be...that'll help the bicyclers and the majority of the cars that come into Hermann, you'd catch most of them. They're coming in from the east, they're going to hit that intersection, too. That would be a wonderful thing to help people get around.

There's something already in the plans for taking the old fire house, in the median there blocking the intersection so that you can't make a left turn there, so I think that would be an excellent place to start.

The firehouse planned, that would be wonderful. Except blocking off the street. That would just be terrible.

(many people agreeing.)

People use it for emergency vehicles without having to go through the stop signs. I think that that...

I think the issue there was that the firehouse is right there in the median, it's kind of a blind spot for turning either direction. If the traffic increases as it crosses the bridge, it'll become more of a safety hazard.

Build a tunnel. (laughter.)

Use mirrors.

We had an antique store on the other corner, years ago. The fire house would be a wonderful visitor center.

It's one of the most historic buildings, and Charles van Ravensway's book is one of the most astounding historical books, and has so much of Hermann in it. I don't think we celebrate it enough. There are so many homes in that book, and the book is so valuable in itself and being reprinted, and, I mean, we are just an amazing town, and I think that we should just have a Charles van Ravensway day. In my opinion, we should celebrate him, along with Schiller, and Mozart, and all of the other great streets and authors and, you know. We should have a street celebration on the birthdays of the founders, and have fun in this town, and just get creative and enjoy our life here a little bit more, and that's my attitude about it.

The information in the van Ravensway...there is a new book published about houses in Hermann, and he set it up so you could walk around or drive around and find them. It's going to be published...I saw a copy. Just tells you about all the homes in the downtown historic area, and outside, and it's...

It's something that the bookstore...(many people talking at once, unintelligible.)

Moderator: Let me ask you, how do you communicate with your own customers or clients about things that are going on with your business or downtown in general? How do you get information to them?

We do radio, newspaper. Our most successful way is direct mail.

Nobody else here does anything that comes close to what you do. I don't think anybody advertises.

I'm getting ready to do an ad in Missouri Life in June. It just adds national exposure, featuring Hermann. Some other businesses did as well. And then we use our websites, and of course the tourists use the Chamber of Commerce. Sometimes (noise, unintelligible)...

Most of our advertising is online. Just links to everything.

Katy Trail, different things. Locations, that sort of thing.

Moderator: Another thing I wanted to ask you...what is it about downtown that led you to open your businesses there or invest in property in that area?

Just being in a small town, just wanting to be part of the small town.

It's pretty obvious that that First street is a good street to be on. It's just smart to go there. I like Fourth street, but it never seemed to take off or something, it seems like more businesses change. All the lawyers are on Fourth street, things like that...

(laughter.)

...but it's just not, the businesses don't. A lot of people come to town for their business. I get a lot of people in my storefront, to pick up furniture, reupholster or buy stuff. It's a shame now—fourth street is so empty.

It's different down the street...we have a good location because they can see us from downtown, but between us and where the pie shop is, it's hard to get them to come down that street.

Don't you think that with everything that's established, when tourism picks up...I think these tourists are going to fill in in no time.

I think the artists are going to start filling in.

You heard about the artist shop that's going to be next to, between Pete's and antiques...and the old pool hall, that's four or five artists together. I think more galleries and crafters and the tourist kind of...where it's handmade, and not just somebody ordered a bunch of Chinese pottery, you know.

I do think the quality is going up.

And once that happens, I think there's, we will be seeing those empty storefronts fill in.

I think there's only 2 on fourth street. There's the library and the brewery.

And the old police station.

(side conversation.)

I wasn't thinking that Fourth Street actually looked that bare, so it must be an attitude, because...

Well, the brewery doesn't look bad. It's vacant, but the windows are, the front is...

And where the JC Penney store was, that's going to be something. Don't those people have something in mind for it. It just has to happen.

I think that building looks better right now, the way it looks, exactly as it is, that would about a month ago, because it looks like it has something going on. It looks like it's ready to birth something. And to me, that looks better than...I loved Katherine's studio, but the other piece of that building didn't really appear that strong to me, and from what I've heard what's going in sounds very good. So, to me, that looks strong for Fourth Street. And your pie shop looks wonderful, and that's just exciting the whole time, with the curtains drawn, and I thought anyone who was in town would love to come back and see what's behind the curtain. So I think that kind of excitement is just what brings people back.

(many people talking at once.)

Schiller street has gotten a lot healthier. And on HH, Goody's is out, it was for sale. Fifth street, the little shop across the street is going. And the Nest or the Bird's Nest or whatever.

(side conversation.)

What's the fellow who's got a contract on City Hall going to do in there? It's in the process of being sold.

Someone had talked about apartments...

I don't know...

(side conversations about City Hall building, many people talking at once.)

A law firm would work over there.

I want to see things that make people run out of time so they have to spend the night.

Moderator: Let's talk a little bit about the future of downtown, and in what direction you think it ought to be going. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

Well, I think—we have Sophia's, which is a women's fashion store—but I think another one would be very nice, right on Schiller. And men's fashion too.

And a place where you can go if you need to get a t-shirt or a belt.

By the way, as a person who's had a clothing store down there, it's rough. I had a really cute little shop, and it appealed to a wide age group, from junior sportswear to ladies in sweaters, and it was just very difficult. It's very hard for a small clothing store in a small town. And a thousand people warned me, and I didn't listen.

I think, though, that when I go to towns, women spend money a lot.

We do.

When they're traveling.

When we travel, women now are traveling in packs. So I think a little boutique downtown would be good, more than just Sophie's.

Sophie's is a narrow market.

Women like to spend. They have gotten away from buying stuff for kids and husbands. They buy for themselves.

At least in the clothing business, it's tricky. It's very tricky, a very tricky fence to walk. You want to have the kind of clothes that everybody wants, so you try to start that, and the tourists, they want to find something very unique. Sophia's is the kind of place for that.

Perhaps Hermann should do a demographic study as to who our future customers are going to be. There's a great majority of us who are all turning 60 and over, and we're going to be a majority before very long, whose dollars that we want to bring into Hermann, I think some of the plans for downtown for the Elder Hostel is a great idea, but I personally believe that the businesses need to be considering that for Hermann's future, and for our own individuals. The ones that come in and browse, they'll say things like, "you have wonderful things, but I'm at the stage of my life where I don't want more things." However, they're looking for things for their grandchildren or...it's really hard to put your finger exactly on what it is. If we can all find something then we could just say, this is it, the light bulb would go on, and deal with that particular age group, we would all be doing quite well, perhaps not just right now, but I think that's the future of Hermann. It has the environment that people just think it's a wonderful little community, and they can't get over how wonderful it is, quiet, and they reminisce, say things like, "I love to go to my grandma's house," and they reminisce about that. Perhaps that's the direction Hermann should be going, is a reminiscence. Deal with that elder element, older clientele, people who are going to have the money and the wherewithal to come to Hermann.

That's who spends, and they don't want to bring home more stuff. They're trying to get rid of their stuff.

So maybe we should be looking at more entertainment, things to keep them entertained rather than things to sell them.

They have the theater as a new draw for that crowd, too.

A number of years ago, this was such a different world than ten years ago, with the internet and everything. A survey, it would be pretty interesting to see what would come of it. They did a survey in the 70s and one in the 80s, and it was always wonderful to read them, what came of that survey and what possible new businesses might be, what different direction...

Why don't we get a webcam and let the webcam do the survey?

You mean...?

Just put a webcam on the street and watch everybody for the entire season and see who it is.

That's a great idea.

What they buy in our shop is the strangest thing. Of course they buy wine. They buy the t-shirts with some kind of crazy thing wrote on it, and pictures, and everything else sits. There's no, you can't figure out what's going on there. But I think entertainment is correct. I think that we are at the point in our lives, and the people who are spending the money, they want to be entertained, they want to be catered to. They like to eat, they like to drink.

They want to be indulged. To eat it or drink it or share it.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

There are a number of boat experiences. I was in Charleston a week ago, and we went to the market, which was an experience. I love markets. We have been pushing for markets. There was a boat, and many many people were coming off of the ship to the market, and I mean, we have a river, we don't utilize the river at all. That's an experience.

Isn't there a part of the year that we can't navigate the river?

It was almost dry for a while.

That would be great if we could get something like that.

It would, the river, there's so many native things.

But in the season, though...you know...I don't know how you can establish something like that, something that they'd almost have to have spring to the fall and then go back...

It would be nice to have a theater, something, some kind of entertainment on a boat.

(lots of talking at once.)

We took a ride across the ferry Saturday, and you know...the ferryman told me that that area of St. Louis, there were 30 of them a few weeks ago, he said it was just their outing across the ferry to the restaurant. That is the Gasconade river. That ferry is not exquisite, the restaurant is what it is. It was packed Saturday evening. People are dying for an experience.

Yes they are. To ride the ferry.

I thought about this tour business for a long time, and there is so much to talk about, the Lewis and Clark stuff. It would be a wonderful tour. A small cruise, something, floating on the river. Going out to the Gasconade Hardware, turning round, going back, about an hour or hour and a half. I don't know if there's any way for the State of Missouri to make a public river project like that—insurance was absolutely ungodly. Every time I thought about it, I talked about insurance, and it was just.

What about the creek?

You want to cruise the creek?

(laughter.)

It is water. I mean, I'm just saying, there is the creek.

The carriage rides in Charleston, of course those are historic tours, and the way they managed that is pretty amazing too. The district only, the city only allows within the district so many carriages in the city, and there done on a lottery basis, so they're not everywhere all the time, but with our history, done very well, with a nice voice, that could be something too.

I do think that we also need a downtown shuttle bus. Our visitors come in on the train—the train is wonderful, they can get there, but they can't go out to all the wineries.

Again, you're talking insurance.

There must be some way to do it where the City could get something like that done under an umbrella, an insurance policy, and make it public transportation. Carriage-rides, small bus, whatever, it would really be lovely to have something starting at the Dierberg project downtown and go through Schiller, Fourth, Market, Fifth, Stone Hill, and back through town.

(noise, unintelligible. Many people talking at once.)

Dierberg bought the old coat building, and that's going to be a tour bus house, and the old Missouri Power lot is going to be a carriage house.

Ooh! You know some stuff! (many people agreeing, talking at once.)

And Jim bought where the old Derby station was, and parking is what he bought that for.

(many people talking at once.)

Oscar Mayer has their wiener mobile, Hermann could have their Grape Crate.

Wurst wagon!

(many people talking at once.)

Forty years ago, people came here to party. And now they're all our age, and they don't come here! They don't come here because they think it's still like it was, and they're looking for something quiet.

I'm just laughing because I have, one of my favorite people here, he's been coming to the Maifest, he's 79 years old or something and with an oxygen cart, and he still wants the same cheap brew we served before.

I do think we still have image problems. I don't think our website is good, for Hermann tourism, for the Chamber. It doesn't snap on the page like it should, it doesn't look as well-designed as it probably should for as well as we can really present ourselves, and that's one thing. I think residual parties and some of the bad press, there are so many really terrific articles that have been written about Hermann, and I think that states, you know, neighboring states, we've been written in the Wall Street Journal, I think it was. My priest from Milwaukee, the Archbishop, saw an article about Hermann, and cut it out for me. That's what Hermann should be. That's what we see about Hermann when we're far away, but locally, but St. Louisans don't see the good. I think that we need to change that up a little bit. We get a lot more good overnights from St. Louis, and I'm getting some upward-mobile mid-thirty young people, and I really like those people a lot. They're good customers...

You see a lot of that from the Katy Trail.

I like them. They're athletic, they're healthy, they plan to come back, and they're just the type of customer I'll have for years to come. They, obviously, weren't here years ago partying hard, and they don't plan to party hard—that's not their idea of coming to

Hermann. They're coming to relax and maybe go to one of the wineries, and that isn't necessarily even their reason for coming in the first place. I think we need to work on our image, getting that, and we're competing with a lot of other really upper-class wineries in the region, too.

I think what you're saying, that we have an image for fifty miles around us, they think of us as what we used to be, and I want to change that—your day trip place, or spend the night, they're afraid that it's going to be like it used to be. And I want to change that image. In Columbia, Kansas City, St. Louis, they need to know.

We've been having conversations about this, and we're taking reservations, and we hear those little phrases... "We're going to party!" I just stop it right there and say, "If that's what you want, you need to go up to the motels on the highway, because this is not the place for you. It has to be quiet around here." The first year I woke up to that situation, I lied and I said, "I'm sorry, this is an AARP weekend, and you can't come unless you're over 60 years old." Our life is pretty quiet. Every once in a while, you get a couple of goofballs, but generally we try to not cater to that.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

It's already naturally here, what you're saying. Hermann is the Carmel of Missouri. It's already there. We just have to shove it along in the same direction.

I think that all happens with advertising. You have to advertise to the people you want to attract. You have to identify your clientele. You know, I don't, I think more TV advertising...I see a lot of TV ads for destinations, and you can portray a nice image on a TV ad, more so than any kind of print ad or...

You can pinpoint where you want to advertise, too.

Travel channels, easy listening radio.

Well, changing the image in near towns, we can do that. Just advertise on Columbia stations, St. Louis.

Moderator: I've got a few other questions I need to ask you before we wrap up. We talked about these as we've gone along, but...what about the look and feel of downtown? Are there improvements in terms of aesthetics, street repair, sidewalks, that need to be made?

The wires.

And I do like the lights, but they're not bright enough. It's very dim. (noise, unintelligible)... they need to put a bigger wattage in them or something, but it looks almost scary to walk through there in the nighttime. It's just dim lighting.

Perhaps, rather than adding to the wattage, would be to add more and make them a little closer together, and keep the aesthetics.

I like the trees, but at the same time, they put the trees and the lights together.

Brightness is really important in talking about tourists downtown.

All the way down Fourth and Schiller and First, it looks scary. We don't think anything about it, but...

The park benches, to get that consistently throughout the historic district, too, would be real nice.

I think there might be a plan or a grant already for some of the sidewalks and street, curbs... there may be a grant for that, but they have all (noise, unintelligible), and maybe they'll get more grants.

Benches are a good idea, because people want to sit outside. That's just the way it is.

It would be nice to have planters that were consistent all through the town.

Make it unified.

And signage.

Who maintains these, because planters start out a good thing, and then...

I wouldn't be surprised if some of the businesses directly in front of the planters would volunteer.

Sometimes they get overgrown after a while.

(many people talking at once.)

There's one thing that I would like to see, and it was mentioned earlier, is the issue of not enough public restrooms. If Hermann continues to go the way it is currently, and become a major tourist destination, it needs to do something about having public restrooms. There's a total lack. If you go to any amusement park, Six Flags for example, they average about one restroom per three blocks, and that's the average. You know, our community, where do we send people when they ask for a restroom? We send them over to the Chamber of Commerce, or...

We got the restrooms down by the river, but there's no signs that tell them they're even there.

(many people talking at once.)

I think Mr. Dierberg is planning restrooms in his portion of that new train station, and down that Nutenberg corridor.

They've put a bunch in at the MFA building, the whole basement of the brewer is restrooms... they're going to be public. A whole bank in the basement of restrooms.

The Dierberg ones are going to be public.

I know there are going to be additions to the Amtrak station, public restroom, but that's two. There needs to be up Schiller, down Fourth, down Market.

Dierberg would take care of restrooms in his corridor.

We're going to have to come up with something on the other end of Market Street. I'm going back to the demographics again of the older visitor...I'm sorry, but I think it's an issue. They're our guests. We need to be supplying them with facilities that are user-friendly.

(many people talking at once.)

When the visitor center moves, they should just make that public bathrooms and brochures.

(many people talking at once.)

That would make a wonderful little rest area.

Another B and B—bath and brochures.

(laughter.)

That would be a good spot, and would anchor both ends of the town.

And then the Bloomer building, whoever's doing that, that would be another perfect spot to have a little area where they could do a couple bathrooms of each flavor. From what I'm understanding from bathrooms technology, there should be four women's bathrooms to every men's bathroom. That's what they're doing in ballparks now....

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: I have one last question for you, and again we've talked a little about this as we've gone along, but I'll ask you directly: are there other towns where you see downtowns or business districts that you think, "Boy, it would be great to see this kind of thing in Hermann"?

Jeff City. High Street. They've given up a few parking spots, and they put a bench, and planters, and trees, and just gave up a little bit. I've always admired that.

I was at Greenville, South Carolina. I just think it has the most wonderful plants downtown, for, I mean, it's not Hermann's, but it just shows that with some creativity, you can just make it work.

What does it look like?

They've taken their signage and, because they needed to make some handicapped access going up, they made things green rather than just making curb walkways, and it looks so inviting and so beautiful.

You were talking about signage. Is it possible to do something on the corner of Fourth and Schiller, on the corner of Fourth and Market, and spaced out along Schiller, that you've got those little directional signs...I used to come to the fork in the road, and they had "Topeka this way, this one this way, this one this way." If you had some kind of sign on the corner, if you had "Pie Time, this way" and down there on Fourth and Schiller, and you've got signs that list the shops and point.

(unintelligible noise)...the old brewery purchased into the program where, there was one there in front of Pete's place... (many people talking at once.)

Landmarks Commission is very specific about things in the historic district, and as a Schiller Street group, we should investigate the idea of making it look more European, and although those MODOT signs are really legible, I know what you mean...we thought that something very German-looking would be nice in the historic district. I kind of drew something out.

(many people talking at once.)

Something that is appropriate in that area but also informs them that once I've gotten to the corner, I can see what's down there.

Who knows...maybe Mr. Dierberg already has something for that idea, too.

I see, like on MASH, where they have 5000 miles here, there, the signs with different arrows, that when you got to there, you knew what was what direction.

Except, make sure they can't twist them around!

(laughter.)

Augusta does that. At every corner, there's a little sign.

You need it down there. Their streets are more confusing.

It's stretched out.

A kiosk downtown would be kind of nice. A centralized...

With a restroom.

...at the train station...

I would like, at Christmastime, for us to have more Christmas decorations. I think it draws people in. At that time of year, now, we don't really have much.

That's another town, Jeff City is nice, they outline the outside of the buildings all the way down.

And all the little trees have lights... it's a lot of work and a lot of money, but I think it would draw people...(noise, unintelligible)...you'd have some kind of reason beyond the lights, some kind of experience, some kind of old-fashioned Christmasy thing going on.

(many people talking at once.)

I think something that we mentioned, too, was an outlet. Electricity on those light poles.

Those would be city light poles.

Everybody would run a cord out there shops and plug into those!

(many people talking at once. Laughter.)

There's some kind of solar battery that we could...it would be so much fun to have...access to do things like that, but I don't know. We don't have any electrical power on the street to unify ourselves.

The shops, even when we're open, we look closed. We can be open sometimes, and nobody even knows we're there.

The shop in our building, she always has lights in the buildings.

We've got a couple activities that are going on, and decorations would be wonderful additions that time of year.

The children's lantern parade would be a time for all the shops to be open, and that could be promoted by the Hermann Arts Council.

SECTION III

BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

My name is Darryl, System Administrator at the hospital, and I've been in Hermann for a year.

My name is Tom, Stone Hill Winery, born and raised, moved back here after working in Branson for 13 years, and then Hermann 10 years.

Olin with Heritage Agency Real Estate Insurance, and we also have a small Bed and Breakfast, been here since 1982.

Stacy with Hermanhof Winery, I've lived in the area for about 3 years, and before that lived in Columbia for a while, originally from the Chicago area.

Terry, been here since 1970, Ford Dealer and I'm building some other projects.

Bryan, I'm in the insurance business and my in-laws have an antique shop and photography studio. I'm involved in a lot of different community groups in town and I just became an alderman.

Bob, printing and packaging and plant managing, born and raised in Hermann.

Bill, a bicycle shop, I've been in Hermann about 5 years now.

Chris, superintendent of schools. Lived here from 85-94 as a teacher, been gone a dozen years and back one year in this position.

Moderator: I'm going to ask you some really simple questions to facilitate discussion. My first question: I'm not very familiar with this area. How would you describe Hermann to somebody?

I think Hermann is the quintessential small town America. It's got German background, close knit community, hard-working community, and (unintelligible). We have a tendency to shun outsiders coming into our community. It's hard for somebody to come in, and, you know, we kind of got a, I've been told, a mystique about us that it's hard to let the outsider in sometimes.

More so at a business level. At the same time, our arms are open everyday to invite every consumer and customer that we want to show ourselves off to.

Yeah.

The visitor focus of our tourism and businesses is important to our base. I think essentially, with small towns in Missouri, as an agricultural based community, we have a nice blend with quite a few small to medium sized manufacturers. Our hospital, our school district, those are other important...(unintelligible) determines the business side of it. We have a strong business base. We have three banks, two or three auto dealerships, a bike riding retail store...essentially three grocery stores, a couple small shopping centers in the community, two pharmacies, two clinics.

We're kind of a regional hub, actually, for a rural region within 15 or 20 miles of Hermann...this is the hub for that area. To a certain degree, many small towns depend upon another town 30 miles out, and that's the place for employment. We could almost be self-sufficient just by employment opportunities that are here. That being said, there are a number of folks who work outside of town, but many folks come in town to work.

I want to speak in contrast to what Bob said. I don't necessarily disagree with him, but I would add that the tremendous work ethic of the town...when you say you're quintessential small town, I think it's true, but I think it's the quintessential best-of small town. I've been in enough small towns to know that poverty pockets have developed a poverty spirit, and I don't find that in Hermann. People have extremely high expectations for cultural features and life beyond just the normal, necessary economic base. High expectations of one another in terms of work ethic. Expectations to take care of yourself. The contrasting thing I would say is the closedness of the community—having been here twice may skew my view a bit, but I feel it's been very much like a hometown for us in this last year. The people here, if you're willing to put your shoulder to the wheel and be a part of the community, they embrace you.

I think with what (unintelligible) a lot of the retired folks that Olin was talking about, this regional farm community, these Germans that like status quo. They didn't like change. They're part of the ones that had the hard-line about "you're going to prove yourself before we really accept you." I think a lot of that group is starting to fade. The real hard-line Germans that were here that didn't like change, and I think we're starting to see the first round of a new Hermann.

I think one thing that sets Hermann apart from other small towns is our influx of tourism dollars. We enjoy a revenue that most small towns never tap into, so we can afford a better school system, a hospital, because we're not depending on our people in town to generate all the revenue for us. We've got people coming in from out of town generating revenue, which helps us grow that stream larger...

Tom, I agree with what you just said, but because they didn't like change, we still have our downtown. A lot of downtowns are gone because they saw this progress at the time... and we said, our downtown's okay, and that's good.

We maintain and preserve and restored our historic buildings, both commercial and residential, and they've become a terrific asset. And among those, the historic nature, we've built all of our wineries. Tradition, history. It appeals to our visitors, our tourists.

It also shows with the amount of Bed and Breakfasts we have in town. We have 50, 60 different B and B's in town, and most of those are in historic buildings, and, you know, again I think we're bringing our arms to the outside people to come here and enjoy a relaxing weekend. It's a very nice place to come and just have a nice time.

Moderator: How many wineries are in town?

Seven, within 15 or 20 miles.

We also do have some areas of concern. A preschool teacher just told me seventy percent of the three to five year olds that they have in their system meet high-risk criteria, whether low-income, single parent, health issue, whatever it may be, and there are at least two faces of Hermann, and that's going to be troubling for what's going to happen in 10, 20 years. Maybe when there is a change, are we going to have—as a business community, we've talked about, can you find a well-qualified workforce in the near future...

Most people are concerned about the bridge, it's kind of a metaphor that the old bridge that was built around 1930 was very confined and insular, and so was the town. And beginning this fall, when that comes down, and they drive in on the bridge, it kind of opens up Hermann as part of the rest of the world. We're no longer insular, and we're facing the same dynamics as most communities. And we've got some huge issues with things like rates that have been devastating for businesses, a decaying downtown exacerbated by mortgage and utility rates. Two years ago, the idea of Hermann being part of DREAM made sense, and if you compare us to Washington, Washington had a problem with their downtown, and two years ago this transition we could see was going to happen, but we're dealing with tourism. Almost everyday people come to us and ask "What's happening in Hermann? All I see is dead stores, dead shops, for sale signs." It's a huge paradigm change in this town. If you can't think of any other way, just think about that bridge. (unintelligible noise.) We're all open to all these concerns.

Moderator: Let me back up for a second. You mentioned some shopping areas. Where do people shop around here? Retail establishments? Where do you go for retail shopping?

As far as your staples, the grocery store (unintelligible).

The community has, everybody wants something that looks bigger, well over 50% of our community feels that they need to take that trip to Washington two or three times a week to do their shopping instead of supporting their community. It's the Wal-Mart thing. The fancier grocery stores, even though we got two brand new grocery stores that offer everything. You'd actually saved money if you shopped in town based on gas prices. You know, it's, we have to convince our community to shop more at home. They used to do that all the time. I don't know how to change that.

Some people say that make a full evening of it, they go to Wal-Mart, then they go out to eat, then they buy gas there sometimes. We've lost all the way around. They're a destination (noise, unintelligible).

Moderator: Where do you go for entertainment options, assuming we're not talking about retail shopping? Where do people in Hermann go to?

We have a fairly decent restaurant trade in the community. We've got a Mexican restaurant, we've got two or three mom and pop type greasy spoon places, we have two or three fine dining.

(many people talking at once.)

I think the only issue I see with the restaurants is, Hermann is sometimes not very conducive to travelers. It might be sometimes on a Sunday, a Monday or Tuesday, there might be one restaurant open. Monday you can't go out to eat, so you got customers coming in on Monday...

(many people talking at once.)

At Stone Hill, we watch that, everybody's closed on Monday and Tuesday. When there isn't traffic, it's hard to keep a restaurant open seven days a week. Okay, we'll be the only place open on Monday and Tuesday.

(noise, many people talking.)

I've had a lot of people come in for three days, and they've got to keep going to the same one, or drive down to Washington. We don't want them to do that. Promote Hermann as much as possible, but sometimes it's hard to promote it. Some of the antique shops are now open on Sunday.

(many people talking at once.)

I think that's the other thing. The winery people come from all over the world, and we have casinos, the bicycle shop. Local people make their own entertainment. We don't have what the big cities have, so we have to make do with what we have.

But there's a lot of people that walk around town, go to the parks, go to the river. I know a lot of people do that. I live on a high-traffic area for pedestrians.

I think that the local people here, we're very involved in our school system, and that's—entertainment for us is my son playing basketball or in a play or, I mean, everybody, aunts, uncles, grandparents, everybody comes to that.

(many people talking at once.)

With this rural community, as well, and a lot of us of certain age categories spend a lot of time on our family's country property fishing, hunting, just playing. We entertain ourselves locally.

There are many tourist things, festivals and live music at one of the wineries on the weekend, and there's now an amphitheater where you've got a show going on several times a month. So there really are quite a few entertainments opportunities.

We also have over the years, in an effort to get a new bridge (noise, unintelligible). We have hiking, biking. I think that's going to really extend for a lot of people who walk and ride bikes, the new bridge, and certainly for tourism. It's critical that anything DREAM does downtown, we're going to be reworking sidewalks on First Street in the next year. If we don't take into account handicapped, walking and bicycle traffic here... we need to address parking, should it be diagonal or parallel? There are all kinds of traffic issues once you make a lane for hiking and biking.

We really haven't been identified yet as a trail town. You've got Defiance, Rocheport, Augusta, those are great trail towns. We really haven't capitalized on that opportunity.

We had the missing link in there, so to speak. We're two miles from the trail, which, you know, you really have to have an incentive to making people come those two miles across a narrow bridge.

They've got the sign that says, "there is no designated bike lane," but bikers may claim a lane.

(side conversation.)

Two cars can't pass at the same time.

The topic of access to the Katy Trail and the pedestrian traffic due to tourism touches on something I don't think has been mentioned, and I think is admirable, is the city park facilities. The camping that's available, that's really at very modest cost and various athletic fields and pools, are a bit above what you might expect. It's not without its challenges to keep those things well-funded and maintain, but...

Along that same line, there's things that are not as apparent. The city of Hermann, the board of alderman and mayor, is working on some of the challenge with reconstruction, the sewers, the power, gas, and all that. I think the new bridge has created the impetus there, because if we do have a new power source across the Missouri river (noise, unintelligible), if we have communication lines and natural gas move back underground. Some of the infrastructure is a place where some of the DREAM initiative can help Hermann and provide funding for technical services or assistance in those sort of ways. We're redoing highway 19 for the new bridge south, but there's also some stuff we need to put underground before it or simultaneously, because we need the infrastructure downtown.

Something else we need to look at is our parking in the city. We have very poor parking, especially in the downtown areas. For people to get around, just Hermann people, it's hard enough—we constantly have businesses complaining that other businesses are parking, and back and forth. It's really a serious issue.

Moderator: I want to kind of switch to talking specifically about downtown. Let's start off with a basic question. Describe your downtown to me. Give me a feel for it.

It's about a four-block by four-block grid of the true historic, maybe five by five.

Very well-maintained.

I would think it would include First to Gutenberg or so, but also Market from the bridge to...

(many people talking at once.)

...so we, in a sense, have, instead of a town square, we have basically an L-shaped downtown with a nice mix of businesses. There's also Schiller from First to Fourth, and Fourth over to Market, it's all part of that historic downtown.

Locals would probably look at it as three different routes that people come and take, or stay around one outside edge, or the middle route of Fourth and Schiller, or there's Market to the Bridge and down First. Those are the three little zones where you're going to find the shops or businesses, and the little cross streets in between become residential or B and B's.

Moderator: What kind of shops are downtown?

Mostly antique stores. There's a grocery store.

A pharmacy.

A florist.

A couple beauty salons.

A couple restaurants, bars.

I think that Hermann has a walking town. You know, we're very condensed there, so you can walk and, the problem is finding a place to park your car. You might as well walk.

(many people talking at once.)

And I don't think the parking lot is marked very well.

(noise, unintelligible. Many people talking at once.)

The locals need to park there. Shop owners and business owners should park there, so there's more street parking for consumers, for the pharmacy or to eat lunch.

Too many shop owners park in the slot in front of their door. It's a mix of beautiful buildings, quaint shops, with about 25% eyesore properties. And there's some residential, but you've got that section on Fourth street, from Schiller to the Amphitheater, where you've got a bad area right next to the Amphitheater. Fifth street has some eyesore properties on it. It's kind of a split personality between very quaint and not very nice. Now, that's not exactly a tourist walking area, it's a little closer to First street, but it's there.

But if they go down to the Amphitheater... there's no way to get to it without seeing that.

And at other times, you do get some foot traffic.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: So, what changes have you seen in your downtown? You're describing it in the present day, but how has it changed?

I think you're losing the big stores. The diversity of the retail offerings is diminished.

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

There was a time when you could buy socks and underwear, things like that, and now that's gone. It's not that we need a great deal of diversity, but we've given up competing with Wal-Mart.

(many people talking at once.)

We have to recognize, too, this DREAM initiative is a downtown focus, and for the town of Hermann, it may not be downtown but it might be a little farther, which is really a great difficulty to get to. Our downtown is not necessarily significantly segregated from other locations.

We went from a "I'm going to walk to the grocery store," to "I have to drive."

(many people talking at once.)

Terry mentioned thinking ahead a bit in terms of a walking trail for the bridge, and Bryan said ideas that were thought ahead on in terms of infrastructure, and maybe we need to...looking at downtown to the extent that you want to appeal to the tourist trade, it would be worthwhile to consider Wi-Fi access to the folks that are down there. I know that's not able to compete with sewer infrastructure and things like that, but if you're going to be laying pipes and lines as part of anything, getting that in on the front end, I think...(unintelligible).

Another thing, too, to think about is tying in our park system to the downtown area, too. There's not really any easy way to walk from downtown to our parks. You can take the back way, but...

(noise, many people talking at once.)

We should make it accessible to the people. How do you get, it's like, well, we don't even know, tourists don't know how to walk across there to get to the park system.

(many people talking at once.)

It wouldn't be crazy to think you could develop a walking corridor (unintelligible).

The city actually has a few plans for that, that we've been kicking around for a few years, a walking trail that follows, it's just one of those financial things that we've never been able to get to the next level, and that's one of those things that I think tying the downtown to our park system would be a great plus.

We talked primarily about the main Hermann city park, and we do have some nice park buildings, but we do have some nice smaller (unintelligible)...

In between Market street, there. We don't really promote that much at all.

(Many people talking at once, side conversation.)

...the assumption was that you would have a crosswalk across Market street there, and then you'd go on Sixth Street and stay on city streets the rest of the way out to the main park. That part requires very little money. There was a fair amount of engineering dollars spent, and the city should have that data, down to where the sidewalks were to be constructed (noise, unintelligible). It was supposed to have been funded.

Does that include traffic signals on Market?

That's where it stopped, because there was no...and that was a part of the concern, whether or not to try to do that, or possibly go under the bridge. At that time, we didn't know what they were going to do out there on 100 initially. We thought they were going to raise that, and had they raised it, and then you could have...

(many people talking at once)

...underpass.

Moderator: What are the reasons that you go downtown?

(laughter, many people talking at once.)

Grocery store.

I work downtown, so I go to the bank everyday.

I go there three or four times a week, banking, other things like that.

I run to the grocery store there quite a bit. It's the easiest one for me to get to.

Restaurants.

Three or four insurance agencies are on First Street, or in that general area.

There's a mail drop downtown, so I'll just swing over there.

Moderator: So you're still downtown fairly frequently, at least once a week?

I think on First Street and Market Street, most people have to drive through there to leave town. So those are two thoroughfares.

There's the fitness center, the hospital, and that's brought a lot of traffic down Fourth Street. And other professional folks, attorneys, accountants.

Moderator: Is there anything in the past that you used to go downtown for that you go elsewhere for now?

City functions, and the post office.

There used to be a movie rental place.

Chris mentioned, you used to have a lot of retail shops—clothing, shoes, hardware, there were a lot of shops that are now gone.

City Hall.

That's a significant change—a number of retail spaces are vacant?

Moderator: How much retail is down there at all other than antique shops?

Western Auto's gone. Used to be a hardware store down there.

(many people talking at once.)

There's a florist down there, and the grocery store, the pharmacy.

(many people talking at once.)

There's a dentist down there.

You've got the shops in the junction now, that I don't know if anybody in town shops at. And they (many people talking at once)...

They're not stable retail, but they're good for gifts. They've got good selection.

There's a coffee shop right there that gets a good morning business.

(things breaking, people laughing, pounding noises.)

Moderator: How user-friendly do you think downtown is?

I think parking is an issue.

(many people agreeing, many people talking at once.)

It is, to a point (many people talking at once)...

You drive around trying to find parking, hoping someone will pull out of a spot. Honestly, the riverfront parking lot is just a block and a half off first street.

(many people talking at once.)

Not many people use that either.

For tourists, there's a significant lack of signage.

We promote ourselves individually, but we don't promote ourselves as a group.

We don't educate our employees when someone comes in and says, "Where's Stone Hill Winery?" As business people, it's partly our fault, too. Within the tourism community, we have ways to get people around, all the facilities have maps of the community or the wine trail map. It's the rest...they all stop up Market Street asking, "How do I get somewhere?" and those people don't know how to tell them.

The ones who just come driving through Hermann, you know, there's no way to stop them before downtown.

Moderator: Are the hours convenient?

No. (Many people agreeing.)

The town pretty much closes at 5 o'clock.

And the town is closed Monday and Tuesday...

Especially Monday. Some places will open on Tuesday, but there's very little open on Monday.

There's no such thing as late dining in Hermann.

That's another thing that's changed. 25 years ago, there was 13 bars and restaurants, and something was going on until 1:30 in the morning, and safety became an issue, so you don't have that anymore. You've got just a couple left downtown.

To entertain, it's tough. You'd almost have to generate your own entertainment.

We don't have the entertainment, we don't have movies, we don't have some of those entertainment things you think about in a more metropolitan area, but I think there's pluses and minuses to that.

I don't think it's unique to Hermann. I think a lot of small towns have that.

It's very difficult to generate a living income from a small shop in a small town.

As someone with a lot of teenagers in my house, the teenagers, the younger community, has a hard time with Hermann, because there's nothing for them, other than parks. Just hanging out with each other...all my kids, it's like, "Oh, can we go to Union tonight, can we go to Washington? We want to go bowling, we want to go to a movie." There's nothing to keep them here other than just hanging out with themselves. They think Hermann's boring, and going somewhere else is fun because there's activity.

(noise, unintelligible talking.)

It's one of the things that's a problem that we have with our younger community, is they start to get accustomed to going other places for things, and a lot of our young folks move away, either because of college...we don't get a whole lot of them to come back until maybe their second career or something. They may come back and take over dad's business if they're in the same field or something like that. Hermann pretty much stays status quo, same population for 50 years.

Moderator: You mentioned that you don't promote the downtown as a whole, but promote individual businesses. Does the downtown do anything to attract people to the entire downtown, like festivals or anything?

We've done a couple, two different days where we did flyers and we had like a sidewalk sale. We all really tried to do the max and show everybody where everything is, especially because we're on 100, and we get a lot of people that stop in the winery and ask where everything is. But now they can't come on 100 anymore...

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

When we had the retail shops, the clothing stores and shoe stores, things like that, I remember as a youth that there were, once a month they had sidewalk sales, and there was just a hustle and bustle of people doing things because we had those things. You keep asking what we do to promote downtown, but there's nothing to promote...

In terms of retail. I think we do a much better job of visitor-oriented shops. With retail for gifts and that sort of thing...but the stable retail, clothing, shoes, some of those things....

During our festivals and holidays like Maifest, we have a parade that goes down there. During 4th of July, we have a parade, so there is...

The amphitheater.

Yeah, and the torch light parade that goes downtown for Christmas. And then some of the other festivals like the Lion's Club sets up on the corner there, their booth, and the festivals really try to kind of spread it through all of town, but...

I think the wineries are the...a lot of people drive right into a winery.

The shops that are there, even though they classify as retail, they're more entertainment venue for the walking trade than they are a retail establishment, and by that I mean, you go down there on a Saturday or Sunday or during the week during the summer when we have tourists here...I always see tourists walking into the shops. You don't see anybody carrying a bag. You got the little knick-knacky things, and if somebody collects salt-and-pepper shakers, maybe they buy that for \$2.50, but they don't...when was the last time you saw somebody carrying a shopping bag? And that makes it hard...

(many people talking at once.)

I even participated in the punch card thing, where if you punched all the different shops and stuff like that...for the one I punched 26 cards. I had 26 people come in to have a card punched and left again. If they aren't interested in bicycling, I don't have anything for them.

The Amtrak station is downtown, too, and especially on weekends, a lot of people will take the Amtrak and come in and stay in the Bed and Breakfasts. You do see them walking through town pulling a suitcase.

(many people talking at once.)

You do have people kind of doing that, and on the weekends, a lot of people do come in on the train, especially the ones that want to go to wineries because that way they're not driving.

It's in some of these plans as well to develop a new Amtrak station with a little museum in it.

(many people talking at once.)

We have a lot of trains.

(laughter.)

Some public restrooms, we need some downtown to facilitate.

Those are in the works.

That's the need. See, a lot of this...

(people talking over each other, talking at once.)

Moderator: He mentioned "These are just dreams," and the whole point of the DREAM Initiative is to develop something for downtown. What kind of businesses would you like to see downtown?

What type of business would enhance the downtown area?

For Amtrak to function, you have to have some form of transportation. You either have to have a cab system or a trolley system, and it sounds...once they get here, they need to be able to leave, but if they can have transportation to the Stone Hill Winery and back, and they've got an hour before the train, they're going to hit the shops. But if they have to hoof it out to Stone Hill Winery...and hoof it somewhere else to eat... it's the last time they're ever going to return to Hermann, because it's a terrible experience, because there are hills. Amtrak is only going to survive long term if we have some form of transportation.

And the transportation could be limited to certain times of the day.

To the times the trains come in.

Which is sporadic.

I think downtown would be cute if it also had those specialty shops that have, like, an art shop with nice art, or another one that has clothing. When you go into those tourist...I can think of beach communities that do that, and they have, you know, cute little...

Like Gattlinburg, Tennessee.

Jackson Hole.

The stores that aren't just antiques, but they're specialty towards, you know... I went to one down in, like, Eureka Springs. One had like a frog store, and everything was frogs.

There's one in Washington.

Some really cute shops like that, so people, you know, go in and see those and go, "Oh, there's more shopping than just antique stores." The antique stores is more to look at. I don't see people buying stuff.

We're kind of at the point where the consumer comes in and don't quite see a critical mass to make them happy, to say, "Hey, this is a great place with all these little shops," the businesses don't see enough critical mass to invest, or when they do, that's why we have storefronts closed three or four days a week, because those guys are working other jobs. It's like, which comes first, chicken or the egg, consumers or the businesses.

I think we need to do a little bit more...can we promote them to come when we want them to come? Tours, groups like that, so all of a sudden you have five busloads.

You see this with developing Elder Hostels right now, they're in the process of bringing in a lot of people, for a whole week.

I think we do good with the festivals...you have events for these people to go to, and as they stroll through them...

We have lots of little festivals. There's something going on about every month, or sometimes more—we have a nice mix of festivals.

And if we want to promote Hermann, do we promote it for Wednesday, Thursday, so they come on those days instead of on Monday, Tuesday, when everybody's closed.

We went through this period where I served on the tourism board for a while, where we pushed the community on festivals, but the actual tourism business community can't survive on 10 days a year, and our philosophy was we needed to promote Hermann 365 days a year and start to build a critical mass throughout the week, every weekend, all year long. We haven't quite accomplished that yet. We're trying.

But it's still, obviously, (noise, unintelligible)...the churches and some of those nonprofits really benefit from a festival, but you can't run lodging, food service, anything six weekends a year...the other thing we're reaching not just a town, and if you deal with something like electric rates, and if someone has a grocery store paying \$2500 a month for electric outside the city limit, and someone inside city limits with same square footage is paying \$11000, same shops within a couple miles of one another, that becomes a huge issues. Lodging in city limits pays 3% tourism tax, and outside city limits doesn't.

That 3% becomes significant, too. There's the whole issue of trying to develop things in such a way that seems like it always benefits the region, even though the region doesn't participate or pay for a lot of things they get.

Moderator: Are there other kinds of dining or entertainment options that you'd like to see downtown?

We need to figure out how to use technology to somehow communicate to the businesses when we have overnight guests, and try to figure this out. It should be possible. Sunday is consistently our third busiest day for stay over guests, and we can have fifty or sixty couples staying in town on a Sunday night, and have virtually no place for them to eat, no shops open Monday, even though it's our third busiest night consistently, week after week, month after month.

Even the restaurants close Sunday nights at 5:00.

It's just ironic that...

Just to comment on what you said, up at Red Barn, the reason they're closed on Sunday is maybe they have the traffic, but nobody buys on Sunday. They're open on Monday, and they have more business on Monday than they could ever have on Sunday. We could be open on Sunday and see a lot of traffic, but the sales aren't there.

Sunday's kind of a slow day. Even the festivals no longer carry through a lot of Sunday.

But for some reason, people buy on Mondays.

Moderator: Let's talk for a second about aesthetics. Are there things you think need to look different, like streets or lighting.

I tell you what, we probably have one of the prettiest... you wouldn't believe how nice our town was. Somebody might have their idea of aesthetics, but we've got the old lights...

(many people talking at once.)

...over the last couple years, trying to develop the process, one of the things we're talking about if we get some of these funds, is to remove all the nasty power lines from the street, all this needs to be done when they build the new roads—we don't want to tear up a road two years later to bury all this stuff. We had a push four years ago when they did the old-time streetlights, and plant some trees on some of the main corridors—Bradford pears—and things to dress the street up. Our buildings, the historic federalist looking buildings give our community a really pretty look, and for the most part, they're not in disrepair. There's a few eyesore spots, but...if we could finish cleaning up everything else in terms of the power lines, the storm sewers, and sidewalks...

....consistency.

(many people talking at once.)

The sidewalks are patched...

(many people talking at once.)

We need them to be consistent.

We talked about this before, the sidewalks need to be the most handicapped-accessible...we're small enough that our sidewalks are in poor enough shapes, that if that were a major goal...there was a time where the city would not put a handicapped-accessible curb. That's how backward...and if we now make that a priority, every nickel we spend here becomes handicapped-accessible...the baby boom generation has more handicapped per capita than any other generation that's ever hit, and this is a huge surge that's coming on the scene.

And another thing I didn't even realize until a couple weeks ago, when I was up in Washington DC, was that handicapped accessibility also equals stroller accessibility. That's a whole nother aspect to it. It's something that has to be done, and it scares me when I keep hearing that we're going to be redoing First Street, because there's all kinds of issues that need to be addressed.

I think, too, halfway down First Street on the south side, I think there needs to be some sort of handicapped accessible down there.

That whole block needs it. The corners are right now, but that's a long stretch, just to get across, especially if you want to go down to the river or go to the parking lot.

Any of the things that we've done in the last ten years, Hermann has tried to do top notch. When we redid the riverfront, when the amphitheater went in...we've got hotspots of neat facilities. We need to catch up everything that's in between to create a total zone.

Moderator: Anything else aesthetically? Is there enough light?

Yes.

They've had to, the nice new ones they put up, they had to put a lot of the old ones back to get enough light down there. I guess when they planned for it, they didn't plan enough of em to replace all.

Moderator: Do you have any lofts or apartments above the buildings? Do you think there should more residential spaces?

There's people who live above the businesses.

(many people talking at once.)

There needs to be signage. Those are some aesthetics, in terms of not only facilities, directions and directional type signs, but I think we could enhance the banner program that we have, we have the nice new old-fashioned-looking streetlights, but we really only have about one or two sets of banners, and maybe usage of that should be expanded to feature a festival or feature something about the town or...

You could even put on the banner what shops are along that street or something like that.

I think maybe on the street level, or sidewalks, we don't have much for sitting. There's no sitting stations.

There's no place to gather, really.

(many people talking at once.)

Downtown Deli has a couple benches where people sit and eat ice cream.

The flower places have a few benches...

I'm talking about more, if was planned out and incorporated when we redo the sidewalks, create some sitting stations for tourists or kids or anybody when they're walking.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Is there any green space down there to put some of those areas?

There is, but we're not promoting them.

Moderator: Are there other downtowns that you've visited that you think, "I wish Hermann had something like that"?

I like the riverfront in Washington, much improved over what we have as far as boat-launching, piers to bring boat traffic in, you know, ours is very difficult...(unintelligible.)

Washington has piers that go out into the water, and they're on tracks along the hillsides, so that as rivers go up and down, the pier is always straight, it's always level.

(many people talking at once.)

Greenville has a good place for shops and also for ground transportation.

The Chicago area—I went to Naperville. It's old buildings, old houses that have been very restored with a lot of cool restaurants and cute shops. Tons of people walking. They've revitalized their riverfront area.

(many people talking at once.)

The difference of those towns to this is that they have a critical mass of people, and Hermann and hour and fifteen minutes away from people. Old St. Charles has a beautiful downtown historic district.

(noise, many people talking at once.)

Like, five years ago, St. Charles, man, their downtown just lit up and exploded...even the person that lived there shopped there a lot (unintelligible).

We really have to look at not just the downtown area, but all of our town. Part of it lies on getting more patronage from our residents, is one conversation. What can we do to increase patronage, provide additional opportunities for tourists that are already coming, and what can we do as a business community to support other businesses within the community. Getting our services from one another and that type of thing. I think as part of the DREAM initiative, we need to be sure we're addressing those different needs.

I'm not sure we've got a unified voice out there. If I came in not knowing anything about Hermann, where would I go?

(laughter, unintelligible, many people talking.)

So there's nothing, and if you drive in Hermann certain areas, you don't really know where to stop. We need to get that information out...

(many people talking at once.)

...and something after hours, some kind of an open information booth, with information, and doesn't have to be manned.

I could have like a track, you know, where you hit a button...

Or brochures and maps or something. I know I've been in gas stations or stores where people come in from out of town, they just want a place to stop, and they don't really know...

The map of Hermann in the trains station—is there one?

I don't think so.

They need on posted on the wall or something.

(many people talking at once.)

Along with educating the workers, like Jim was talking about, and having some information available 24/7 would go a long way to helping our visitors that come into town when the visitor center isn't open or they don't know where it is.

The new train station that's planned on the books has a mini-center for unmanned type of stuff.

We do need some sort of taxi system. I know that even in Sedalia, when you ride into their station, there was a taxi that pulled up. Anywhere I wanted to go, he'd go, and give suggestions of what to do, and...

(chairs moving, noise.)

Transportation is a big factor in talking about a DREAM destination. We really enjoyed Savannah, Georgia last summer. They have a terrific trolley system. They have the same lack of parking, but the system helps with it. If we could emulate that type system, it would be good. When we went to Lynchburg, Mississippi, they had Wi-Fi in their downtown, so if you put that infrastructure, whether we can really afford to do that, but if you put the infrastructure in for that while you're putting in water, sewers, storm sewers, sidewalks...

We've focus a lot of our thoughts on the tourist industry, but we're losing a lot of our local people, like our kids. We really need to put our thinking caps on about that. I've been hearing comments from lot of local people, and we need something for them from the DREAM initiative. It's been almost 6, 7 months, you know, and the signs are up, but I'm telling you, the people that're here, they're hard-headed Germans, and I'm one of em, but I listen a lot to what they're saying, and it's gotta be something that you can...I know the local people are already looking at....

They're wondering when it's going to happen.

We've gotta do the sidewalks and the street down there...(unintelligible).

(many people talking at once.)

Well, the other thing too that I think happens is, like Terry said, is we get these people in for the festivals, but the local people run those festivals, but locals don't attend that. We do this stuff, but really when the festivals and all that, everybody's like they don't want to go where the tourists is, locals don't go into the wineries. I have a lot of B and B people that come in and buy wine, but just to kind of stock up, but there has to be the things for the local people to do that are separate from just festivals or from the tourist kind of events, because we don't go to those things.

Another thing that's key for our community, downtown or not, we have to create additional opportunities for good paying jobs. There are a lot of 8, 10 dollar an hour paying jobs in Hermann, but there aren't a lot of 15 an hour jobs. You used to be able to have a good life working 10 bucks an hour jobs because you bought a house 15, 20 years ago for \$35, 000. Now, housing is higher in Hermann than it is in a lot of the other areas. Each of us in this room are making considerably more money than the average person in Hermann, (unintelligible), and we...how many opportunities are there in Hermann for somebody to make \$40,000 a year? Not many. Much less more than that. And that's one thing we really need to look at too, is what kind of businesses out there pay that kind of wage? Living expenses are going up to where you better be making \$40,000 a year, but those jobs, I don't see many of them now or on the horizon.

I see a lot of, right on the edge of the metropolitan sprawl, people keep moving further and further out of the city, Washington has gone through that experience, and seeing our land prices here, people are wanting to move further out, and as that happens, I see, you know, maybe things like more doctor's offices and lawyers, people like that, instead of driving back in the city, having those type of facilities out in our type of community. You'll see wages go up with those type of situations, but that's not going to happen overnight, that's a ten-year change.

How much discretionary income ability do our residents have? To have more entertainment and restaurants and that kind of thing? It's tough.

I think you have a point there, because my weekend people that work on weekends for me, most of those people all have full-time jobs during the week, and they use the weekend work to put in their savings account, or their extra fun money, or their Christmas fund, because their full-time jobs are what's paying the regular bills. They come and work on Saturday for me to get that extra income. Even people working full-time aren't making a lot of money.

Moderator: Thank you very much for coming

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SECTION IV

NEWER RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Phyllis Craig, been here nine years in August, and have a one-room B and B on West Third Street.

Bruce Catchum, a site administrator at Deutchheim State Historic Site, and I've been here about five and a half years.

Rebecca Reidiger, I'm an interior designer, my husband and I have been here four and a half years.

Jo Hundson, we just moved here in December, we're starting a pie shop on Fourth and Schiller. Moved from Cincinnati.

Sandy Bosco, my husband and I build houses, been here three and a half years.

Dan Wilson, retired, been out here full-time for about a year and a half and been coming out here for almost six years.

Marsha Nigro, we have Spirit Hill Guest House, and we've owned it for seven years but just moved here permanently in September.

Gary Liebmann, Marsha's husband, and besides the guest house, I own Peerless Food Service Design, and pretty-much a one-man consulting operation.

Dave Rollings, the Lutheran pastor of the church up on Highway 100, I've been serving there two years in June, and we moved here December of this year. I commuted from St. Louis before that, 18 months in between.

Moderator: I'm going to start with a broad question. I've been to Hermann once or twice in the past, but let's say that I'm thinking about moving to Hermann. What would you tell me about the community? Give me a feel for this community.

It has historic architecture, and the scenic landscape, would be a couple things that I would emphasize as being important attributes of the town.

It's a beautiful place to live. It's been voted the most beautiful town in Missouri, and it's true. When we first saw the view from our house, we had no intention of moving here, but it looked like the countryside in Italy, so we bought the house.

I think it's a good place to raise a family.

Very safe. Good to get away from the hustle of the city. Our blood pressure goes down, and we can go to the bank, the post office, and about four other places in the time that back in St. Louis County would take me to go to one place. Here I can get it all done, go back home, and do my gardening or sit and watch the eagles fly.

You have a meeting at 6:30, and you can leave home at 6:27, and you're there.

My husband and I walk all the time. We can walk to the stores, the restaurants, and we walk almost everyday and just take in the beauty.

We left the garage door open when we left one weekend, and it was still open when we came back and nothing was missing.

The bank that we've dealt with, I've experienced nothing but good, I mean, you go in, they know who you are... and being from northern Virginia, we used to wait for days and weeks just getting information together, but we usually can do it within about 45 minutes to an hour here.

You go in the bank, and they trust you. We've lived in California and Oregon, and there's nothing you can do without two or three forms of ID, and you walk in here, and it's just like the old times.

You can't walk down the street without running into somebody. That's good and bad, but that's mostly good.

Being from Cincinnati, you don't speak or look at people. The first Saturday we were in town, people are saying, "Hello," and I'm turning around to see who they're talking to. It's a great feeling to walk down the street. We'd always planned on moving to Tennessee or something like that, and his aunt had a family reunion here a couple years ago, and when we came, I just absolutely fell in love. Just the atmosphere of the town...

(side conversation.)

My husband and I found it on the Internet. We were living on the coast, and we wanted to come to the Midwest, and I did a search for "Historic town on a river in Missouri" or something, and we flew in a couple times...we were just buying it for an investment. But we saw it and we decided to move, within 6 months from the time we moved here.

It's affordable.

Well... not my house!

(laughter.)

The friends in St. Louis we've seen recently have asked, "How is it in Hermann?" and they said, "We're thinking of moving out of St. Louis," and we sent the realtor websites, and hope they come down.

(many people talking at once about housing prices.)

There's so much uniqueness here. Our house is one of those, it was owned by my husband's aunt, it's one of those "be careful what you wish for" deals. I've always wanted a Victorian house, and now we call it the money pit. There's nothing cheap about it. God love Aunt Laura, she was 98 when she died, and she hadn't spent any more that she absolutely had to to keep a leaky roof over her head.

Renting is cheap here, too. My rent's \$300 a month, and my combined utility bills for electric, gas, water, and trash, are rarely over \$100.

Where do you live?

(Laughter. Many people talking at once.)

It's just me. I can live very cheaply here. There's a lot of rental properties like that in town for single people. And then also, medical services are good here. Excellent here, really. There's, for a small town to have a place where you can get your eyes checked, you know, several dentists to choose from, and good doctors...I've never lived any other small community where all that was available.

Speaking of medical, I'm not sure it's the greatest services, but it certainly is efficient, and if you have a real issue when you walk in, they take you right in over here, and often you're the only patient. One time they had to fly me by helicopter out of here...so I realized, it's not that far away from St. Louis. It's about a 15-20 minute helicopter ride.

The time you normally would spend in a waiting room, by that time, you're through...

(laughter.)

...I took my son to the emergency room here, and before I filled out the paperwork, the doctor was there, had seen him, and was finished.

And they're great doctors.

They move you through quick—that’s what really nice about it. You actually see an MD, and the registered nurses, we’ve met several of them, and they’ve all been decent people.

They act like human beings. It’s really nice.

They do blood tests, and within half an hour they got the results back. If you go to a big hospital in a big city, it’s two hours before they take the blood, and it’s three hours before they get the test results back.

Well, the nursing homes, too, are excellent here. We were talking to a friend in St. Louis who said, “Oh, Hermann, that’s where my father is in the nursing home. We searched all the nursing homes locally and the best one we could find was in Hermann.” So even though they live in St. Louis, he’s out here, and they come out and visit him.

I have been told by the people in the nursing home that they literally treat the people like they’re human beings. One drawback that I find with Hermann is that they don’t really have a shoe store anymore.

You can’t get everything you need.

You cannot get everything you need...

I’ve already gotten my 30 pair of shoes, so therefore, I can’t put anymore unless I throw some out.

Women are different.

I have a child who likes to go to the mall.

That is a big drawback for me.

You have to actually make a list so that when you go into the city, it’s more stressful that it was when you lived there, because you have this list of all this stuff to get from there.

Washington is evolving so fast that everything we tend to need is there.

We just came from St. Louis looking at restaurant equipment.

(many people talking at once.)

The longer we're out here, the more we realize, "We don't need that. We can go another week without that." So now I find that rather than going in two or three times a week as I did when we first came out here, we'll go a couple weeks before we go back in. I think even the people who live out here and have lived here for a long time that grew up here, they look forward to going into somewhere...it's just a part of the life here. Gas prices, of course, that hurts us a little bit because it costs a little bit more, but especially if you combine it with other activities, it becomes an excursion and an opportunity to go out and do something and a little time away from your rock.

I do miss the grocery stores, though. It's really so sad not to be able to get fresh fish except catfish, and good cheeses, and special foods, it's just...

A cheese shop is coming.

Yes, I'll just hold on...

The schools are good, the Catholic school and the public school.

One thing we really love about it is all the activities, all the festivals and the free concerts on Friday and Saturday night at the amphitheater—they do Broadway-type shows in the theater—and there's a lot of activities, and almost monthly, there's a fest.

The one thing that keeps me sane is the high school band.

There is a huge artistic population here. The entire spectrum of artists you can find here. And I think that they are not promoted as much as they should be.

(many people talking at once.)

The amphitheater is a fantastic addition since most of us came out here. At the time it went up I looked at it, and even in New England, people would be envious of the amphitheater we have here. And people use it. This last Friday night, most of us were probably there. It was a wonderful evening, it was about an hour and twenty minutes of jazz, and it's free.

(many people agreeing.)

A lot of the things you can do here in Hermann really don't stress your budget. You can eat out for less than 10 bucks per person if you want to.

Less than 5, if you go to the right places.

You get a nice hot breakfast.

And we've got Texas barbecue, so life is good.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: You started to talk about this a little bit, but my next question is: where do you go shopping? Tell me a little bit about all the shopping. Where do you do your shopping around here?

I go to Columbia or St. Louis.

I do, too. I go to the Mid-Rivers mall or downtown.

Wentzville, O'Fallon, Warrenton.

You can go to the outlet mall.

I do a lot of catalog shopping.

The Internet is wonderful.

We do shop in town as much as we can.

(many people talking at once.)

Pamida is like a little a mini, mini, mini Wal-Mart. Like a general store.

(many people talking at once.)

That would not be what I would consider clothing, but you can cover your body.

The nearest area that would have most of that stuff would be over in Washington, I think.

Wentzville's the closest.

But there's not really much in Wentzville.

Washington.

(many people talking at once about stores in Washington.)

When we lived in St. Louis County, it usually took us 20 to 30 minutes to drive to the store we wanted to go to in order to do our shopping. From here it takes another 15 or 20 minutes to get to that same store. So it really doesn't matter. I just have to sort of

schedule it, you know. And the interim things can all be done right here in town. If you run out of—I don't want to use any particular examples, but most things you can pick up something to get by if you need it. If you're doing heavy shopping like Sam's for food or Macy's for special clothes, or that special one that everybody loves where they have the shoppers for you...

Nordstrom's.

...Nordstrom's. You can get there, and it takes you a little longer, but it took me fairly long even where we lived with traffic. My favorite shop happens to be in Clayton. Well, if I went to Clayton at the wrong time of the day or in the afternoon, it could take me half an hour.

I think the lack of traffic is...we get frustrated if we have more than three cars on the street.

And when we do go and spend the same length of time driving to the store we would have when we lived in the city, the time we're spending is more pleasant because we're taking 94 or 100, and we're doing this pretty drive, and it's wooded and it's lovely.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

Give me an eight-lane freeway. These two-lane roads scare me.

It's just more interesting driving.

(side conversation.)

Moderator: What about your dining and entertainment options? Do you stay in Hermann, or do you go elsewhere?

Netflix.

(agreement.)

I don't find much to do in Hermann, for entertainment, that appeals to me.

The town shuts down at 5:30.

(many people agreeing.)

On my days off, I usually leave.

And Mondays. Nothing to do!

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

There are a lot of restaurants in town, an amazing variety for such a small town, I think. And there's always Mexican food. There's fine dining and there's extremely casual dining, there's not a whole lot to choose from, but there's a variety of types of food.

We don't eat out nearly as much as we did when we were working. When we were working, we would eat out five or six times a week, and now it's two or three, and at least one of those times will be outside of Hermann, but the other two will be here.

That's true for us, too. We eat at home a lot more.

(many people talking at once, laughing. Side conversation.)

Moderator: Let's talk specifically about downtown.

(wild laughter.)

Moderator: I don't know if that answers my question or now. My question is, do you think downtown is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?

More recently, the higher the utilities got, the more people closing.

I think the city has set the example for this by moving out of downtown.

City Hall.

That was a shame.

It was nice to be able to walk over.

It was sort of convenient to know that you could literally walk to City Hall. Course, I needed to ride back up the hill.

There's a lot of potential there, especially if, well, there's, I was thinking about this meeting, and walking up and down Main Street and looking at the building, and there's two or three buildings that have unusual looking facades on them, and if the downtown area had, if those were changed and the historic fronts were restored on those, and maybe you had period windows and things like that in some of those stores, you could have a really neat kind of small town feel to that downtown area.

I get the feeling, I like some of the buildings but I don't like all of them. I get the feeling that the downtown has been abandoned by the City, and that it's left the B and B's and guest houses and antique shops and a few restaurants, and the business of the city is going to move out.

There's only one grocery store, and that's Sav-A-Lot.

Well, they built the post office out of downtown.

And the grocery store, and the Dollar General.

As a man from a historic background, I see those as good things, because, for example, when you had a Dollar General with that big sign on Main Street, or there's still a payday loan place and things like that, that just makes me cringe. Here you have these nice historic buildings and you've got some big ugly sign out front of a place.

Well, stop a minute, Bruce. What goes on in the building can be almost anything. The outside can be controlled by other means, so that it would have an appearance that would be attractive. So you can have most anything going on inside as long as the exteriors have an appeal to them.

(many people agreeing.)

And Hermann has never had a comprehensive...have they?

Yes they do. They have an ordinance. We passed an ordinance when I was on planning.

They adhere to it downtown?

Yes they do.

Whatever it is, it's not enough to implement to answer your kind of question.

What you're saying is true. There's too many of the same kinds of businesses throughout the town.

There's too many vacancies.

There's three or four hairdressers, fine, but vacancies to me is the largest problem. And some of them, they're not maintained either, and then the buildings start looking bad, and I don't know if the citations are coming out, but just a couple weeks ago, I heard that in St. Louis, everybody was invited to an artist relocation seminar in Paducah, Kentucky,

and they were trying to lure artists out of St. Louis to Paducah. All I heard was that was happening. I heard they pay the moving expenses or help get people into co-ops or something like that. Whatever it is, it sounds like, this is a smart town! When we have B and B guests, the wineries are the big draw, but where are the antique stores? Well, there are a few, and one art store just opened up, a gallery of three different artists. When we go to small towns, when there's a thriving art community, it is the reason we went to Jerome in Arizona recently, which we'd been to 20 years ago and thought nothing was happening, but we heard it was coming and did more and more and more, and wow, we did a lot of shopping and bought things and it was just a really good time, walking street after street, galleries and small jewelry stores...

Have you ever been to Nashville, Indiana. Beautiful little town, they've got about 250 artists, and a population of 700.

Wow!

How did they do that?

Good question. Which goes back to my first comment about the artists in this community are not promoted.

Yeah. That's why the new gallery is a wonderful thing, a good first step, and that filled an empty spot on First Street, right in the historic district, so that will be really good for visitors to have an alternative to shop at other than just antique shops.

Also, getting back to the buildings within the city of Hermann, in the downtown area because that's what you're focusing on...I'm on the landmarks committee, and what I'm seeing when people come in for different requests and oftentimes it's for demolition of a building, and we have to say yay or nay, but we, as a town, a city, as far as I know, we cannot make a building owner maintain a property. They will let it deteriorate til it falls down around their ears, and then there is no alternative except to tear it down, and I think that the city needs to focus on doing something downtown.

(unintelligible, people talking.)

I think that's very hard, though, in any community...

I don't think so, because there are other communities that do it.

...Hard to do it. We lived in a historic neighborhood in St. Louis, and there was a property that was just falling down, and it just took years to get anything done about it.

Yeah, it does take some perseverance.

It would be great to have some rules....

I think the difficult part of that is the trailer park, the trailer parks have turned into pure trash. Everybody's aunts and uncles and cousins, and they have a very hard time because they don't want to come down on their aunts and uncles and cousins, I think they don't want to hurt somebody, but they sure do let some of those get nasty.

The Hermann-nots are beginning to outnumber the Hermannites.

(laughter.)

Moderator: How often do you go downtown?

All the time!

Several times a day.

Most of us live downtown or near it.

(laughter, lots of talking at once.)

I guess the library counts as downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

And there's Hermann Lumber.

Moderator: So let me rephrase that question.

(wild laughter.)

Moderator: As opposed to just driving though to your house, how often do you shop or spend money downtown? Anything, restaurants, shops, anything. How often do you spend money on a downtown business?

Four or five times a week.

(agreement from one or two people.)

Not at all, unless it's the pharmacy.

I dropped quite a bit of money in Hermann last year, too. I know my neighbors dropped quite a bit of money in Hermann, too. If you live here, you tend to use some of the local merchants.

And we try to do it, too.

A thousand dollars a month is not unusual for some people.

A thousand dollars a month to do what?

Shopping.

In Hermann?

Repairs, lumber, food, all that.

(many people talking at once.)

And you want the lumber store to be there, because if it wasn't there it would be disastrous.

For small things it's good, but sadly, for us building houses, we can't afford to shop there. It's three times the price of Home Depot, Lowes.

Moderator: Are there things that, even in the time you've been here, that used to be downtown that are closed now that you have to go elsewhere for?

The grocery store.

Shoe store.

(many people talking about the grocery store.)

There was a Western Auto, a shoe store...

There was a dress shop of some sort on Market for a short time.

There was a jewelry store that's out of business.

(many people talking at once.)

There's an interesting story here where the grocery store we're referring to, they bought property just out of town, and then the city annexed that part of town, and I guess it was patting them on the back and working together, eventually, so the city brought in the sewer and water and gas and whatever, but they really chose the land just outside of town. There's other controversies going on now, too.

There's not a place to build a grocery store within what we consider the downtown area

(many people talking at once.)

Where the store was, they couldn't build a larger building, because it's in the flood plain. And now that building sits empty. They're going to have to get special dispensation in order to open anything there because of the flooding. All the flat land is in the flood plain. The amphitheater is in the flood plain.

(many people talking at once.)

That structure had to be a certain height about the water. And all that surrounding area has all been bought out, all flood plain, can't use it.

Did there used to be homes in there, and because of the floods they're gone?

I don't think there are any homes that are gone...

There were lots of businesses.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

They had a UPS and mail center. It didn't last long.

(many people talking at once.)

One of our regular excursions out of town is to go to movies. You've got to drive at least 20 miles to get to the nearest movie theater, and that's up in Warrenton, or you've got to go to Washington which is 32 miles or something, and you look, and we do miss that. In St. Louis, when we lived there, you had your choice of all kinds of theaters and specialty theaters, and that's a big drawback.

I think for the kids, if you're not into sports in Hermann, then there really is nothing for the kids to do. There's no bowling alley, there's no movie theater.

We have a theater, but they don't allow kids.

It's not a movie theater.

It used to be—it was built as a movie theater—but it...long story...it's just live theater.

And another drawback is they have some drug problems. Just found out this week the other day that there was a crack house over on Second Street. Obviously, the police have no impact.

(side conversation about crack house or meth house.)

There's something people always say about small towns, that there's nothing for the kids to do. I grew up in a small town, and I guess there was nothing to do, but we had a good time anyway. We rode bicycles...

I don't know that our kids and—I've been through this before—and Laurel loves Hermann, but she...

We made our own fun.

(many people talking at once.)

Kids these days don't do that anymore.

Our son, we'd come here after he was about 13, and he just said, "Oh, that's too boring there." He didn't know any of the local kids either.

In our gym, we've been working on that. We've been trying to get the skater kids off the street, and we got over 30, they come over to skate and play tag over in that building...they have a ball.

Moderator: How user-friendly is downtown?

I walk, so everything's easy. When people drive, parking...

If you need to find a parking place, you can always find a parking space. Sometimes you might have to go a half block.

Moderator: So parking is not a problem?

No.

(many people agreeing.)

Only during festivals.

Well, we don't drive or go downtown when there's a festival.

Locals just stay out of downtown during festivals.

I made the mistake of going downtown during Oktoberfest last year. I just hopped in the car and ran down, and I wanted to get to Sav-A-Lot, and I forgot, and I just ran down there, parked, got out, ran in the store, and all of a sudden I heard these huge bangs against the plate-glass windows, and I looked over at the store manager, and he said, "Oh, we get that every night during Oktoberfest." I walked out there, and there was another couple I know, and I said, "You know, we're in the wrong place tonight." At that point, all kinds of things...

(many people talking at once.)

They were wrestling, and people were getting thrown up against the windows. They were fighting. They don't control the crowds.

(many people talking at once.)

I lived in New Orleans, and they controlled the crowds, and it's much bigger. They had horses. And the police chiefs here are accessible, and we could get things accomplished to improve the city. We need to step forward, even the newcomers.

I'm not sure we answered your question.

Moderator: You've talked a little bit about hours. Is that a problem downtown?

I have a question for you. When you work at home, what kind of day on Saturday do you have? If you have a plumbing problem, would it happen before two o'clock?

(wild laughter.)

The only place in town we can get parts is Hermann Lumber, and it closes at 2 o'clock on Saturday.

(side conversations, laughter.)

When we moved here, we had the old Victorian, it was falling apart, and we needed something, and everything was closed and we didn't know anything, and I walked down there, and somebody we had just seen at church that Sunday took us to their house and he happened to have one of those parts.

The first time I voiced that, the long-time residents said, "Oh, that's an improvement. It used to be noon."

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

When we were going back and forth doing a little research, you couldn't necessarily depend on the restaurants being open when they said they would be.

(laughter, many people agreeing.)

The B and B owners tell us to go to these places, and you walk to the door, and they weren't busy so they 'd decided to close.

We tried to finish our house, and unfortunately we were about to put the outside material in November, and it got delayed because the man who was going to install it hadn't gotten his gear yet. That was something to get used to.

(many people talking at once.)

Finding confident craftsman, there's no such thing in Hermann.

Oh, there is too.

I disagree with you. And there are still some contractors who don't really do it right. Thank god there are building codes.

(side conversation about people who are craftsmen.)

I still use my craftsman from St. Louis. They're cheaper, they do it right, and they pick up the materials they need on their way out here.

That's a real problem.

I think the shopping area downtown, a lot of those shops close at 5, and I know that a lot of the visitors to the area would be happy if they'd stay open longer on weekends.

And it's such a shame that we have B and B visitors, and if they stay Sunday night, everything is closed on Monday, and these poor people walking around...

There are a very few businesses open on Mondays...

The best thing to do for Hermann would be to stretch the weekend, to have events on Fridays and things on Mondays, that's the easiest way to increase it, but unless we can get shops open and get things for people to do on Mondays, that's not going to happen.

But you have to realize that most of these places are owned by a person, and if it's going to be open, they have to be there.

But it seems to me that maybe if they could do Tuesday or Wednesday instead of Monday—I don't know why it has to be Monday that everyone's closed. If it was Tuesday, there'd be something for those Monday tourists. And they might find that they get more business on Mondays than they would on Tuesdays.

One of the shops downtown, she was trying to keep her shop open on Monday, and was hoping that Finding Time would also stay open on Monday...

(side conversations.)

I think you're right, though. Unless they would do something to cause an event to extend from the weekend, there's no way you can get a group of stores to stay open, and one store isn't going to stay open.

It has to be all coordinated, and promote it to people so that people come in and reward them for staying open.

That's the day I usually go out to do stuff, and I think, "Can't do it."

That's when you go to St. Louis.

Moderator: This DREAM project is to revitalize downtown. What are some businesses you would like to see downtown that are not there?

A fabric store.

(many people talking at once.)

Clothing.

There is a female clothing store in the new coffee shop.

It's expensive. I'm not going there.

Having an art community would be really great, because people will go, they'll make a whole trip just to go buy art.

So much that you go to buy nowadays is made in China, and when I go somewhere, I look for locally made stuff.

(people agreeing.)

That can cost a hundred dollars a sweater.

Yeah.

Yeah, but if it's locally made and you can't buy it in the next town, it's well worth it.

But most of the people that come into Hermann from the surrounding area are going to shop in these local stores, they're people that don't have money, they're not wealthy. They're not going to buy a hundred dollar sweater.

There are people coming in now to the B and B's who do have money. There are higher-end B and B's, and those people, if we want them to come back, we have to have some higher-end shops. I think we need a variety of price ranges.

I doubt that a local shop could survive only on what they get from B and B and from tourists.

So you need not just a variety of shops, but a variety of merchandise and price ranges in each shop.

I think fresh food, you guys mentioned fresh fish, is so wonderful. Herbs and things.

In order to keep that going, we would all have to make a concentrated effort to shop there. I think there are a lot of people in Hermann that want those foods, but we're all so trained to go to the cities to buy them that we don't even think of looking here.

I hounded Village Market until they started having whole grain pasta.

And they're good about that. You request things at the grocery store, and they'll try to get it in for you. They're really good about it.

Let's face it, folks, we're in the Midwest. You ain't gonna get fresh fish.

You do get fresh fish flown into all the major urban areas. It's just a matter of getting it from St. Louis or Kansas City. But somebody has to buy that fish.

Even if they had a fresh fish day...if we all knew the fresh fish comes on Thursday, we could all go and buy it on Thursday.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

Entertaining, yeah. I'd like to see a movie theater, a bowling alley, even a pool hall. Anything that the kids could do. I even thought that what would be really great would be a miniature golf thing and the little racecars. Those are fun! Just don't build it next to my house.

(laughter.)

How about dances? I love to dance, and I don't want to go to a smoky bar. We can do that here, we have places that can hold dances. Not like the ones that do, but really like a Friday night dance.

One of the attractions to Hermann is the fact that it doesn't have all of these things, and though that's a real hardship on the young people, there needs to be a way to provide this stuff while at the same time not ruining the character of the town and the values that we cherish when coming out here. Trying to put in high-end things, it might require some real sharp visioning by somebody with some big pockets to come in to do it, because I don't think we have anybody currently in town that would be able to carry through something like that from beginning to end, but if you had even a small run where you could go in and you knew that these eight stores or something in a small area, and they might all be connected and under one ownership, but they would be the outlet center for a region which is really 30 miles in almost any direction to get to the nearest thing, and in many cases it'd be 60 miles. I don't want to see a Target or Lowe's, I don't want to see those here—Hermann won't be the same at all, it'll be suburbs surrounding it.

If you think about downtown, if you think about the space that's down there, if the preservation issue is paramount, then there isn't room to put much of anything else in there. The only empty space I can think of is the Sav-A-Lot parking lot, and the next newest building is the auto parts store across the street, so if preservation's your first issue, that's the only flat section in the whole town is Schiller down towards the creek, so now what are you going to do?

Not new buildings, but fill the vacancies.

(many people talking at once.)

Use the resources that are in the downtown area. That sure would accommodate a lot of the things that we would like to see, like a bowling alley or a theater.

Personally, I'd like to see those things where there's already things, where there are new things being developed, and leave the old part of the town old, leave it historic.

It's not a museum, though. We've got to live in it.

But fill it up with things that would be conducive to that environment.

The historic nature of the community is a large asset. Preserving that courthouse is important.

(many people agreeing. Side conversations.)

The new brewery, on the inside, it's as sophisticated as anything you'll find anywhere else...

But they don't serve food. They only serve beer.

I'm not saying because of *what* they're doing, but I'm saying how they've done it, inside the shell without destroying the exterior. The façade still has historic character.

And a microbrewery fits.

You could put a Wal-Mart in one of those buildings down there, and it would be horrific.

If you get somebody who's going for small but high-quality shops, there's somebody out there that could do this, but we could probably...

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: So, tell us a little bit about the aesthetics of downtown. Is it well-lit? Are the streets well-maintained?

It used to be well-lit, and they improved it by taking away most of the lighting. It's got a nicer character, a feel, but you can't see.

Yeah, you can.

I think that if they put all the utility lines underground, that would greatly improve the aesthetics.

(many people talking at once.)

If they had some sort of cohesive color scheme that they could talk everybody into using...

You're saying like, awnings being the same color?

(many people talking at once.)

You're saying, make downtown have a certain look to it? I'm not suggesting this for here. Preserve the heritage we've got.

Paint is paint.

You said that the underground utilities is part of the DREAM initiative? That's great.

That's fantastic.

Burying everything in the downtown area.

(side conversations.)

One of the things we're dealing with is the courthouse building. The access is horrid. Is there any way of improving the parking?

Absolutely.

(side conversation about local politics.)

Moderator: Are there some other cities that you've visited that are similar to Hermann, or have a downtown that you can aspire to? Are their cities whose downtowns you like?

Fredricksburg, Texas, which is another German community. Beautiful shopping, historic.

(background conversations.)

One of the problems that Hermann has is that Route 100 goes right through that first street, and when you have that much traffic in a small town, it takes away from that coziness.

We do have Schiller, which is kind of...

(many people talking at once.)

Outdoor dining.

(many people talking at once.)

You know, I'm thinking, I'm sitting on the corner of Market and Fourth Street, and I'm eating my dinner, and an eighteen-wheeler drives by.

(many people talking at once.)

You don't have to sit outside, but the people who want to should have that privilege and not be restricted because of an ordinance.

What that does then is, all the traffic that's driving through town will see the ambiance of the town, and will think, "I want to come back here sometime."

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

If you're going to do it, set rules about clearance, whatever it needs to be.

(many people arguing about outdoor dining.)

SECTION V

LONG-TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION NOTES

Because of a malfunction with recording equipment, a transcript of this group is not available. In lieu of a transcript, the following points are drawn from notes taken during the meeting.

General Questions about Hermann

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?

- Beautiful area
- Safe
- Good schools
- No traffic problems
- Lots of churches
- Culture has always been important to residents
- Lots of active civic organizations
- Residents have worked to protect historic character of town
 - When prohibition hit, the town went into an economic downturn that lasted until the 1960's. That's the reason that the historic character of downtown was preserved – there just wasn't money available to spend on it for several decades.
- The location (on rail/river/highways) has helped make the town what it is
- Hard to find a city of this size that has so much to offer for visitors
- There was a general consensus that the city is moving in the right direction, there was some enthusiasm for the planning efforts underway
- There was considerable discussion about utility rates, which have apparently skyrocketed recently – many participants saw these rates as a disincentive for businesses or residents to locate in Hermann.

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

- West on Highway 100
- South on Highway 19 there are new stores opening
- Downtown for specialty shops

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?

- The Vintage (restaurant in Stone Hill Winery)
- Antique shopping
- Visiting wineries

Downtown Specific Questions

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

- Mixed – there are nice shops there, but they are not open enough hours to cater to shoppers
- Don't have the kinds of murals and painted walls that one would see in the past.

What are the major reasons you visit downtown? How often do you visit downtown Hermann? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?

- Specialty shops
- Other day-to-day shopping has mostly moved elsewhere

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?

- Business hours are not convenient
- There are some accessibility issues
- Not enough public restrooms
- Parking is not adequate

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

- Local newspaper
- Web sites
- Radio
- Visitor center

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Hermann. 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?

- Clothing stores
- Restaurant with German food
- Movie theatre (though some doubted town was large enough to support one)
- Arts/culture-related shops and galleries

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, building repairs, renovations, upgrades?

- Sidewalks are in good shape
- Streets need work, though with the new bridge and some other efforts, streets are getting better
- Power lines are unattractive downtown
- Make it look like it did in the 1940's and 50's.
- Upper City Park needs to be connected to downtown

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