

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

April 14, 2008

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Kirksville, Missouri



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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



Strength, Dignity, Quality of Life
MISSOURI HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

PLANNING CONSULTANT



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SECTION I FINAL REPORT

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

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all of the groups to the posed questions. Attached are the complete transcripts of the five meetings. In all cases, names and other identifying remarks have been omitted.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUP:

The following questions were posed to the business group:

General Questions about Kirkville

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 Kirkville is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property downtown (or not in downtown, for other business owners)?
06. From what you hear from your customers, how “user-friendly” is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for? Is there a need/demand for more housing downtown?
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 Kirkville?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

08. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Kirkville. 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 posed to the general groups:

General Questions about Kirkville

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 Kirkville?

Downtown Specific Questions

05. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Kirksville 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 Kirksville? 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? Is there a need/demand for more housing downtown?
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 Kirksville. 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 downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like Kirksville to resemble?

C. THE KIRKSVILLE 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 Kirksville as a friendly small town with a strong foundation in education, healthcare, and industry. Kirksville is the home of three colleges: Truman State University (a major regional university), A.T. Still University (which has a medical school), and Moberly Area Community College. Kirksville is also the Adair County seat, and serves as a regional hub for shopping, healthcare, education, and industry.

Most participants felt that Kirksville is moving generally in the right direction, though very slowly; other participants felt that Kirksville is currently “stagnant,” but not without potential. In describing the positive directions, participants mentioned a courthouse revitalization effort, which cleaned up the aesthetics and introduced sidewalks and green space around the downtown courthouse. They also mentioned that at the last election, Kirksville passed three tax increases to support various public services, which shows a progressive spirit in Kirksville’s community. Participants tended to agree that Kirksville would move further in a positive direction if it had more small business, more shopping and other retail, and a more productive downtown.

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 main shopping area in Kirksville is on the outskirts of town, where there is a Wal-Mart, a Hy-Vee, and other chain stores. Kirksville residents are able to get all of their basic needs in Kirksville, and people from about a 60 mile radius of Kirksville come in to do their shopping. While there are some small shops downtown, the downtown area is not currently a major shopping area.

Kirksville residents and students at Truman State University often travel to Columbia, Missouri, to do luxury and clothing shopping, and sometimes go as far as St. Louis or Kansas City. The appeal of traveling to other cities, according to the participants, is to find a good selection of stylish clothing and to find a variety of stores concentrated in one place.

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

There are a number of restaurants in Kirksville, including fast food, bars, casual dining, chain restaurants, Mexican restaurants, Chinese restaurants, and a downtown coffee shop. The participants noted a lack of fine dining options in Kirksville and stated that many of them travel to restaurants in Columbia for special occasions such as anniversaries. Participants felt that a wider variety of restaurants and longer business hours for downtown restaurants would be welcome improvements.

For entertainment, Kirksville has a movie theater, a few downtown events, and a wide variety of events offered by Truman State University. Truman’s Lyceum series brings in speakers and cultural events that are open to the community, and the students have many sports, performances, and other events that the community is invited to. Downtown, events include the Red Barn arts and crafts festival and Friday Nights on the Square in the summertime.

Kirksville is also rich with outdoor recreation options. There are lakes and parks that afford opportunities for camping, fishing, hunting, boating, and a variety of other outdoor recreation possibilities.

D. DOWNTOWN KIRKSVILLE: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

Participants generally agreed that downtown Kirksville is moving slowly in the right direction, but there is a lot of unrealized potential for downtown. The recent aesthetic improvements around the downtown courthouse have included green space, sidewalk repair, and beautification. Further, the Friday Nights on the Square event during the summer has been successful in drawing people downtown.

However, according to many participants, the downtown still has a long way to go. There is discussion of removing the unsightly awnings and metal coverings from the buildings, necessitating façade repair to the older buildings. Some participants also felt that the downtown is not yet doing a good job catering to Truman students, who are located within walking distance of downtown. Also, the groups felt that new business needs to be brought downtown in order to fully revitalize it. Most importantly, according to some in the groups, the city and downtown businesses need to develop a cohesive vision for downtown and need to consistently and productively communicate with each other to make this vision a reality.

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

The business owners cited the low cost, tradition, and proximity to Truman State University as reasons for locating their businesses downtown. The participants indicated that beautification efforts and improving user-friendliness would help entice new businesses downtown.

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

The groups mentioned a few reasons that they visit downtown, including the courthouse, City Hall, the movie theater, events such as Red Barn and Friday Nights on the Square, some specific shopping, and (for students) Washington Street Java Company. Many feel that connecting the University more conveniently to the Square will increase people's visits to downtown. Another thing that would increase downtown visits, according to the participants, is expanded evening and weekend business hours for shops and restaurants.

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

Participants expressed a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including parking, business hours, increasing pedestrian-friendliness, and the cultural split between permanent residents and students.

The parking situation, as some described it, is a “perceived problem”—people believe that parking downtown is a problem, but in fact there are ample parking spaces in the Square. Participants explained that many people do not know about the “overflow” parking lots on the corners of the Square or perceive them as too far away. In addition, they brought up the issue that business owners, business employees, and apartment residents, sometimes take up all the spots along the street. Some participants mentioned that some people want to park directly in front of a store rather than walking, but they do not have to park more than a block away. Many participants felt that encouraging or requiring business owners and downtown employees to park in lots rather than in front of stores would help solve this “perceived problem.”

They suggested that taking down the awnings on the buildings would pedestrians be able to read navigational and storefront signs. In addition, improving sidewalks and streets further would help encourage students to walk around downtown more.

Business hours downtown, according to participants, are problematic, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it difficult for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. It also makes it difficult for students, who have classes during the day on weekdays, to shop downtown. The problem is compounded by the fact that chain stores such as Wal-Mart are open in the evenings and on weekends, and the malls in Columbia are also open late and on weekends.

Finally, the cultural split between students and residents is a hindrance to the user-friendliness of downtown. Students said that they often feel unwelcome or out-of-place in downtown stores or restaurants, and therefore are reluctant to come downtown even if they want to. If the downtown area had more businesses geared towards students, or even just receptive to students as customers, then students would feel more welcome and would be more likely to come downtown to shop, eat, and spend time.

For housing downtown, groups indicated that while there are some rentals available, there is a need for cleaner, more updated housing for students and others who may want to be close to the courthouse or the University.

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

Participants mentioned the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce calendar and office, the University, the Internet, and flyers in downtown restaurants as the major ways they get information about downtown business and events.

E. DOWNTOWN KIRKSVILLE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Kirksville. We’d like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What additional types of businesses would you like to see downtown? Dining and entertainment? Parks and recreation?

The participants suggested a variety of new businesses downtown, focusing on independently-owned specialty-type shops and restaurants rather than larger chains. For apparel, they suggested a men's clothing store and a shoe store. For food, they suggested a grocery store, an ice cream shop, and additional restaurants including fine dining options. In other types of businesses, they suggested art stores, a bookstore, college-focused stores, and any other specialty or niche store.

Participants felt that the downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart, J.C. Penney, or Hy-Vee, but to offer a unique experience to customers and to fill niches that major stores do not. Specifically, many groups felt that stores, restaurants, and coffee shops that appeal to college students as well as residents would be welcome additions. Many in the groups felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and incentives should be made available for business owners to improve their facilities.

Many participants mentioned that the City, the business owners, and the universities need to develop a "vision" for downtown, and have the businesses fit that vision.

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 participants all expressed that they are pleased with the beautification and improvements downtown around the courthouse—they felt that this type of beautification should extend throughout downtown. The beautification efforts, according to the participants, should focus on façade repair and building repair as the major priorities. They explained that repairing buildings will make people feel like the downtown is inhabited and thriving rather than "dilapidated."

Another major priority was to take down the large awnings on the downtown buildings, as well as to take down any of the patched-up siding and metal that covers old façades. The groups felt that the awnings and siding are not aesthetically pleasing, and make downtown feel less inviting.

Planter boxes and other greenery were also mentioned. Some suggested benches and tables, and others suggested more trees, planters, and other landscaping. Some felt that greenery makes a downtown area more attractive.

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

The groups considered attracting businesses, improving the aesthetics, improving user-friendliness, and increasing the flow of communication between different groups to be the four most important areas.

In aesthetics, the priorities were façade repair and building repair, beautifying the streets and sidewalks, and taking down awnings. In attracting business, retail stores, restaurants, college-focused niche businesses, and residential space were all priorities. In improving user-friendliness, parking and business hours were the two major issues.

Finally, the groups felt that a major priority should be to improve communication between the City, downtown business owners, and the universities. Business owners and building owners who are reluctant to change should be educated on why changing the downtown and repairing buildings would be positive, these business owners would be able to communicate their needs to the City, the universities and their students would be able to communicate their needs, and this flow of communication would help downtown Kirksville thrive.

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

The groups named the following towns as towns they admire for various reasons: Pella, Missouri; Marston, Iowa; Columbia, Missouri; Kansas City, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; Jefferson City, Missouri; Quincy, Illinois; Maryville, Missouri; Lawrence, Kansas; and Webster Groves, Missouri.

In these cities, many participants admired the cohesive look and feel and the strong sense of energy in the downtown area. Specifically in the college towns, participants admired the integration of college students and residents into the downtown area.

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

The business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, but attracting new businesses, helping people repair their buildings, and taking down the awnings were priorities.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Kirksville area:

- ◆ Kirksville is a family-friendly community with very good education, healthcare, and industry.
- ◆ Kirksville is home to 3 major colleges: a major regional university, a university with a medical school, and a community college.
- ◆ Kirksville is a hub for many smaller surrounding towns for shopping, healthcare, and employment.
- ◆ Kirksville, according to community members, is moving slowly in the right direction, though it still has a lot of unrealized potential
- ◆ The main shopping area in Kirksville is on the outskirts of town, where the Wal-Mart, Hy-Vee, Home Depot, and other chain shops are.
- ◆ People come in from about a 60 mile radius of Kirksville to do their shopping at the major chain stores.
- ◆ Kirksville residents and students often go to Columbia to do their clothing shopping, to visit malls, and for fine dining.
- ◆ Dining options in Kirksville include fast food, bars, casual dining, chain restaurants, Mexican restaurants, Chinese restaurants, and a downtown coffee shop.
- ◆ The community feels that there is a variety of dining options, but would like a wider variety of restaurants including fine dining options.
- ◆ Entertainment options in Kirksville include a movie theater, shows and events at Truman State University such as the Lyceum Series, and festivals and events such as Red Barn Arts & Crafts Festival and Friday Nights on the Square.
- ◆ Recreation options are abundant, and include camping, hunting, fishing, local parks, and recreation on the nearby lakes.

Key points about downtown Kirksville in the present:

- ◆ The community feels that downtown Kirksville is moving very slowly in the right direction—the participants cited the recent aesthetic improvements around the downtown courthouse and the event Friday Nights on the Square during the summer.
- ◆ Areas in which downtown Kirksville has yet to realize its potential include removing awnings on the buildings, catering more fully to Truman students, repairing buildings, attracting business, and increasing cooperation between interested entities.

- ◆ Business owners located their businesses downtown because of the low cost, the proximity to Truman State University, and tradition.
- ◆ Businesses may also begin to come downtown if the City has more beautification efforts, nice residential developments, and building repair.
- ◆ The community, according to the participants, visits downtown for the courthouse, City Hall, some niche shopping, bars, a few restaurants, and the downtown coffee shop.
- ◆ More people would visit downtown more often, according to the groups, if business hours were more convenient, parking in front of the stores were easier, buildings were better repaired, and students felt more welcome.
- ◆ There is a “perceived parking problem”; the community feels that parking is hard to find in the Square, which deters them from patronizing downtown businesses, even though there is ample parking in “overflow” lots. This problem is compounded by business owners and employees taking up all the parking directly in front of stores.
- ◆ Downtown business hours are inconvenient for people whose jobs have regular weekday hours and for students at Truman State University—expanded hours during the evenings and on weekends would be a welcome change.
- ◆ Expanded restaurant hours and a wider variety of restaurants would be welcome improvements.
- ◆ Local residents get information about downtown from the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce calendar, the Internet, the University, and flyers in other downtown businesses.

Key points about the future of downtown Kirkville:

- ◆ Downtown Kirkville should focus on independently-owned specialty-type shops and restaurants rather than large chains; the participants felt that downtown’s purpose is not to compete with large chains, but to offer a unique experience to customers and to cater to diverse needs and clients.
- ◆ For apparel, a men’s clothing store, a women’s clothing store, a shoe store, and other trendy clothing options catering to college students would be welcome additions downtown.
- ◆ For food, a grocery store, an ice cream shop, and additional restaurants would be welcome additions downtown.
- ◆ In other types of businesses, art and craft stores, a bookstore, college-focused shops, and any other specialty store would be welcome downtown.
- ◆ Adding nice residential space downtown would also be of help.

- ◆ Small business should be encouraged, and the City should inform potential business owners of incentives to stay in business and repair their buildings.
- ◆ More green space and landscaping, structural building repair, façade repair, and taking down the existing awnings would help beautify downtown.
- ◆ Repairing buildings and facades should be of high priority.
- ◆ The City should aim for a cohesive aesthetic in the downtown area.
- ◆ The City should aim for a cohesive vision of what downtown should be and whom it should serve.
- ◆ Business hours and solving the “perceived parking problem” are priorities in improving user-friendliness downtown.
- ◆ In additions to downtown, retail businesses, and restaurants, should be priorities.
- ◆ Kirksville can learn from a number of cities, small and large, about ways to improve the downtown area; the participants focused on downtowns that have a cohesive vision and downtowns in college towns that successfully integrate college students and residents.
- ◆ Business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, but building repair should be a priority.

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SECTION II

TIF COMMISSION DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Describe your city to me.

Friendly.

It has four very distinct seasons, which is a selling point.

There's a variety of things. It's not...we're classified as a small town, but we're not. We're at an awkward size. And we have some amenities that bigger cities don't have.

We're very safe. We have a lot of good natural resource areas, two beautiful lakes, and we're also inexpensive to live in compared to similar towns, so economically it's a good place to work. We've got a lot to offer that the larger cities do, but you kind of have to search for it when it's here. I hear a lot of people saying there's not a lot to do in small towns, and I disagree. I think we have it.

Kirkville is very unique because of the education that's available here. In terms of truly a small town, we may be the only one where you can start out in preschool and end up as a physician without leaving city limits. So we do offer a lot for a rural outstate small town. On the other hand, when you come into the community, Kirkville does not convey an air of prosperity. It's an older community. So some people don't become aware of the many things that are available.

You know, it's older... there's some towns that are older that maintain that appeal, but we don't have that. We have a block of homes or buildings like that, but not a lot. We had a period where a lot of people did rehab, in the seventies, but there's been very little since then. Like, the downtown. We did a lot of work there.

When we first moved here in the mid nineties, we were looking for a 5-year-old home, and not much was built in the eighties. The eighties was a period of national recession, but also the farm economy went south.

Moderator: Do you think the city's moving in a positive direction?

Yeah!

I think it's moving in a positive direction, slowly.

Recently, we've had some large home sales. Like 4 and 500,000.

(Many people agreeing.)

The community as a whole (unintelligible)...we just passed 3 tax issues. They were all a no-tax-increase thing. One was school bonds that passed with 70%, we passed a law enforcement levy to pay for some more law enforcement, and we passed a transportation tax to pay for an alternate route to the east of the city, which was an extension of the tax we spent to four-lane the

road to the south. And all of that was outside city limits. We're really a progressive community that realizes that they need to pull together to keep us moving forward.

Moderator: Where do people do their shopping?

We do retail and groceries. Groceries definitely here, unless someone's stocking up at Sam's in Columbia.

We just had to buy an 8th grade dance dress, and that's not found in Kirkville. At least not in my daughter's eyes. Clothing for maybe some of the younger...the younger kids, we have a fair number of trips to Columbia.

Kirkville is a regional marketing center. People leave to go get some things, not that it's necessarily not available. People come from 50 or 60 miles to shop here.

I grew up in one of those outside communities, and... I grew up coming to Kirkville for dental appointments to get our braces tightened every month, to go school clothes shopping. We had district...(unintelligible)...go out to eat. I grew up in a community 50 miles from here, and I sort of have a philosophy... the reason I was late today is because my sister who owns a store in Memphis was in town today, getting both of her girls' prom dresses cleaned. She's a nurse, so she needed new nursing shoes, so she went to Missouri Scrubs to get her shoes. That's how I grew up—if we knew we were coming to Kirkville for an appointment, we'd make a list of all the other shopping. I sort of have a philosophy, because when we lived in Little Memphis, it was great to go to Kirkville and get your prom dress or your shoes or your school clothes, but I sort of get the impression in Kirkville that people here go to Columbia. And I get the impression from my friends in Columbia who go to St. Louis. And I have friends in St. Louis who go to Chicago for the weekend. I have friends in Chicago that go to New York, and New York folks fly to Paris. Even if you're from Memphis, going to Kirkville is the big thing. I think there's this philosophy of, maybe the locals can't find what they want here, but they can easily find it in Columbia. Well, the surrounding towns can't find it in their towns, but they can find it easier in Kirkville. That's just a little philosophy I've come up with in my 7 years with the Chamber.

I totally agree. My wife and I had a store on the Square, and we kind of maxed out on the population, so we moved the store to Columbia. Downtown Columbia. And they were going through the same issues we were, parking, trying to market people to shop there. Same thing. And we know people there that go to Chicago. And we're from Seattle, and everyone went to San Francisco.

And they shop online.

People still like to go shopping, though. But you're here every day, and it's a way to get out and do something different to shop somewhere else. Most everything I need is here.

I think the students like to see national chains. Because it sets an image. So when you see...

Moderator: What chains do you have?

Walgreen's.

Home Depot.

I think the shopping is terrible here. If you want just basics, you can find them, but even for sizes and colors for clothing, you go online or go to Columbia because of the variety.

There's no professional men's store left.

No. And, I think we're moving in the right direction with it, but...and Wal-Mart's a competitor, and people are trying to get another large-scale business in town, and it didn't work. It's a population issue.

Well, you see them go to a smaller town...their responses are inconsistent.

We could improve, I think. We need to project an image when applicants come and view and tour. But we have other attractions, too.

Our consultants tell us that there's a resistance from students from a metropolitan area to want to come to a rural community.

That's the same area where, when I was in Seattle, no one wanted to go to all the great universities in rural areas.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

We just had a group not too long ago with students, because I was trying to figure out if they ever go downtown, but there's so much to do on campus that they don't usually leave campus. On any given day, they have 8 to 15 events to choose from. So there's plenty on campus. We have a Lyceum series, and that's one of many things that the University offers. We really go September through April. We sometimes have Friday nights on the Square, but the students are not leaving campus basically.

But there's a fundamental reason for that. There isn't much organized entertainment in Kirkville. There's no jazz club, music club...those things are sporadic. We have a faculty member who brings in groups once a month, and we have some unique events, but other than the cinemas and a couple of nice taverns, there really isn't true entertainment venues that operate on a week-to-week basis.

I don't think there's a population to support it. We would love a jazz club, but we'd only go once or twice a month. And the local residents... I think the income level is low enough that I don't think they'd go out on a regular basis to support a full-time venue. There is plenty to do, but you do have to look for it. The University has a lot. We go to the Lyceum, and the art galleries, and concerts. It's just not going to be on the main strip. There's not a nightclub...

And in the summer, you've got the lake and the ballpark.

It's a state park.

That's the one location—every student said they leave campus to go to the lack.

When we talk about no entertainment, we're talking about music and cultural type stuff. We have an arts facility now. But if you're interested in the outdoor activities, there's a lot of hunting and fishing.

But you do have, on your campus, I see things advertised all the time. Showings, recitals...it's not the Symphony, but you can go and get some kind of stuff.

Most of it's open to the community, too. And most are free.

All you have to do is get on the website and you can see...

We also have a large older population that doesn't have Internet access. And being on campus, you have to walk. People feel like it's kind of an ordeal.

The other thing is, Kirkville is in some ways a microcosm of Missouri in terms of economic distribution. Income is not evenly distributed. We've got 40% of our kids qualified for free or reduced lunch. And then you've got a strong professional community with the hospital and the Universities, so there's a strong professional middle-class community, but we also have a substantial impoverished population. There are lots of trailers. Kirkville is pretty typical of Missouri.

I have small children, and for small children, I would not go out of town. But when we travel, when my husband has meetings, I'll take them to the aquarium, the zoo, the I-Max, that kind of thing. I don't need that kind of thing in Kirkville, but others with kids my kids' ages might see that there's not much...(noise, unintelligible.)

I just took my grandson to Quincy for the petting zoo.

(many people talking at once.)

You know, you go to Quincy to Bonkers any weekend, or go to Burlington to Fun City, you'll run into Kirkville people. People with small children...there might be people that see that there's not a lot of organized opportunities like that.

Moderator: What about dining?

There's a lot of places, but not a large variety. We have 3 or 4 Mexican restaurants...you can get burgers, Chinese, Mexican.

There's lots of places to eat, but there's very few places to dine.

(laughter.)

Where do you go for a milestone anniversary?

The lake, on the waterfront, maybe. If you want to go to a nice formal place, you'll probably...

Moderator: *I'd like to switch focus to downtown. Do you think it's moving in the right or wrong direction?*

Before you do that, I need to mention the healthcare industry.

It draws in people from all over. If you go to Wal-Mart in the afternoon, you'll see them there, and they eat here. We have surrounding communities that use healthcare. I bring my grandmas to Kirkville for doctor's appointments. But I know that people from Kirkville go to Columbia and St. Louis, too.

I've heard from a few people that in the city, you go to your doctor, where in a smaller community, you see them everywhere.

They're your neighbors.

So a lot of residents go to Columbia because you don't run into them.

My mother-in-law is from Chicago, and she's used to certain things, and looking at the hospital here, it doesn't look like what they're used to. Some of that is just a perception, if they're used to something larger.

But a friend of mine, her friend is in Kansas City. Had stents put in over there, all of this stuff, and they couldn't get it right, and he came here, and they figured out what it is. They sent him to Columbia to get a heart transplant and he had spots in his liver. They didn't figure that out in Kansas City.

Well, in healthcare, a lot of success has to do with the volume of the patients.

And there are a lot of specialties that you have to go elsewhere for. My wife had to get a colonoscopy and they found a small mass. They removed it. We had a prominent physician from elsewhere say, "Get out of town. Go to Columbia." She made the decision to stay among her friends and get the operation here. Her decision was exactly right. The people who cared for her were the people who know her. That's all part of health... we have excellent physicians here.

So, downtown.

I'll tell you, I think there isn't enough communication. I don't know how you get word to people, but people don't get the message of what we're trying to do. I also feel that the city is pulling teeth to get private business to invest in their own property.

I think part of that might be a function of the marginal economic status. They're making it, they're there, but they may not be rich. Those of us around this table have been engaged in several efforts, at least 2 architectural studies, and everyone says "amen" until it's time to do something. We just haven't been able to rally around a vision for where we want to go.

I think a lot of the resistance, or just not buying into the larger picture of what we'd like downtown to become, is a couple things. I know there's people that don't travel as far, so they haven't seen a lot of different options, and then there's not a lot of extra income, and I know financially we were doing okay but not growing. The return wasn't as large for the amount of time and effort you put in. It's hard to justify putting that money into making something just look better. I think a lot of businesses that are reluctant to put in their own money, they don't feel that improving the look of it would actually bring more people to that area. We trade in our cars, and we maintain our houses, but when it comes to businesses downtown, I don't see a maintenance program to keep them looking good.

There are some businesses working real hard to make ends meet, but there are some businesses downtown that apparently have made it. And they're the ones that put the brakes on. The ones who can't afford it say, "If I could afford it if I do something."

There's no nice way to say this...

(many people talking at once.)

...there's a lot of fussing about the inadequacy of parking, but most store owners would not think of telling their employees to park somewhere else than outside their store. We have elected officials that would rather die than ask their employees to walk a short block to accommodate citizens that are trying to come to do business at the courthouse.

(agreement.)

I don't know if you call it lack of vision, customer service, or civic engagement...there's a real strain of that in downtown.

To follow up on that, my most vivid memory, I send out emails to the downtown because at Truman it's easy to do. I kept sending emails saying "the students are coming back. Please go out your doors and weed." And I had to go down there myself with volunteers and pulling weeds. Why do I have a shovel and am pulling weeds? Why aren't the business owners out there? If nothing else, walk out your front door and make your 12 feet great.

I know that 2 stores that my mom and aunt own because they inherited the building. They don't own the store, but they own the building. If it came down to it, I could say to them that they need to suck it up and get the money out or sell the building. How many businesses around the square, do they all own their stores, or are the stores and buildings with different owners?

Most of the stores rent.

It's more than that. If you just assess who owns what, we have a better percentage of locally-owned and operated storefronts than other downtown.

If you're renting, you should have a desire to make sure your entryway looks really nice.

The sidewalk that's going to be renovated north of City Hall, there are 8 property, 5 owners. 4 operate out of their own business. Century 21 owns 3, and they're not...but at least they're local people. And that makes a big difference.

I don't see a big difference in whether it's the building owner that runs the store, or if it's a rented property... neither is putting a lot of money into the overall look. I see a lot of money spent on advertising those stores, and they may have good product, but there's no reason looking at it to entice you to go in.

I don't know if anyone would agree, but my brother-in-law who lives in Tennessee feels like it's the rural influence. They live close to a small town that's more physically attractive than Kirkville, but the upkeep isn't like suburban whatever...

(many people talking at once.)

People who grew up on a farm, you know, you're not into good looks. You're into functionality.

But there are rural towns...how many times has Centerville or Albia, Iowa been brought up? I think you're right about the pride, the thought that a Truman student might help my business out... I don't think some of them go beyond, you know, if I had a business and I could attract people by building my relations with the Universities...we can't seem to get past that.

Most college towns like us, from the college to downtown, you'd find businesses. My first impression coming in 30 years ago was that downtown looks like a dump, and I still feel like that. And students feel like that. I do think we've made some great infrastructure progress with the sidewalks and entryway and lighting, and that's a great start. And I feel sorry for the people who work so hard to improve downtown because they get criticized...I think somewhere we have to have the dream, and to think bigger. We have to think of it like the 4-lane highway here. Is our downtown important enough to our economy and our community, that we're willing to look at architects and design and find funding? I don't think business owners are going to pay for it. People who build a mall invest, and we know that people are moving away from malls to smaller shopping. We need to figure out the cost and the plan, and can you impose it on business owners? I don't think we'll ever do it one at a time.

(many people agreeing.)

There's just lots of issues. If you use public dollars for downtown, what do you say to people in other areas? But it's not going to happen one at a time. I think we need to get an easement and increase the TIF, but we need to find some mechanism to just go ahead and do it.

That's going to be met with resistance. We brainstormed an idea to try to find a way to have the city buy the easement of the facades of the buildings, and then we could fund it because it would be public property. But a majority of them said no, because they wouldn't have a say in what it looked like. They wouldn't give up ownership of the façade knowing it would be enhanced by someone else.

I see some businesses operating to sell something, and it's filthy and not attractive. There are some people whose storefronts look nice, but the ones that don't forget it.

If you live in a dumpy area, even in a housing area, you don't have as much incentive to improve your property. If you're in a nice area, you don't want to be the ugly duckling on the block. I think enhancing downtown needs to come first, and you'll get businesses to improve what they have or people that move in and do it.

The downtown does benefit from strong anchors. Most of the banks have their main branch downtown, we have the courthouse, we have City Hall, we have Truman...

Moderator: What do people come downtown for?

The cinema draws people. And it's an example of where city, county, and local businesspeople had to work together to create it. It's an example of working together to have a magnet business to draw people down.

You can get a watch battery at the jewelers downtown.

Moderator: Do people come downtown frequently?

Our students don't, obviously.

If you want to, certain government services...

License bureau.

They go to the movie theater.

(many people talking at once.)

They're not shopping downtown, though.

Certainly when nothing's open, students aren't coming.

I see students at the bars downtown.

Yeah.

If you want to go to a middle-class bar, you have to go downtown.

I agree.

Moderator: What about restaurants?

Il Spazio.

There's a pizza place.

(many people talking at once.)

Spazio is the biggest draw, I would say.

And there's two Chinese.

(many people talking at once.)

The bars are a lot easier...

Moderator: *Let's talk about the user-friendliness of downtown. How are lighting, parking, business hours, and that sort of thing?*

Downtown is not user-friendly.

The hours are limited.

The one-way streets are confusing.

The hours are business hours, and when you're used to going to the mall until 9:00 in larger cities... the concept of doing business as a retail only during office hours... I don't understand it. I mean, we open from noon to 9. Forget about the morning.

But it's a Catch-22. They want to be home with their families.

But if you want to have business, you have to stay open.

Moderator: *Do people live downtown?*

Yes.

More and more.

(many people talking at once.)

I think if you fix the buildings up, people would live there...

There's a waiting list for downtown living.

And it's a perfect senior housing option. They have healthcare, food, all within walking distance. And my other pet peeve is there's too many blinking lights. It's a distracter. It's ugly, and it's not necessary.

(side conversations.)

Traffic flow is a major deterrent. And parking is a big issue. And it goes back to, and I did a study in 2004, everyone kept saying there's a lack of parking, but there were 112 empty spots in the lot just west of the bank. If you could get the 87 people that work downtown to park there, you'd have 87 more spots left for customers. But that concept, they won't do that. Parking is an issue. It's not a lack of availability. It's a misuse of parking.

People will park wherever they have to park to walk into Wal-Mart, but they drive around for the visual being able to see the business, and they won't park down the street.

(many people agreeing.)

That's a lifestyle issue. That's not a downtown...

You know, this is kind of an interesting...I'm not a proponent of this, but it's interesting that many of our students are very much into bike riding, but the minute you hit downtown, there are signs posted everywhere, "No biking." It kind of has that, "They want us to come downtown, but I can't ride my bike there."

Just the perception...

(many people agreeing.)

They shouldn't be on the sidewalks, but how do we promote it so that they can put their bikes somewhere central?

If you took out all of those posts, you could actually have a bike lane on the sidewalks.

Moderator: Let's dream a little bit about how you'd want your downtown to look? What kind of businesses do you think should be downtown?

I think an ideal thing would be a small grocery store, but I think what would make it downtown would be more of a health-food, natural grocery store. The students will be more of the target market, but just for the people...a lot of students don't have vehicles, so to go to Wal-Mart is difficult, or Hy-Vee. You've got junk food at convenience stores, but they're not grocery stores. But not being involved with campuses, I don't know, but I think it would work.

I think you'd have to add some ethnic variety.

Sugar does very well.

I'm thinking of the store that was here when we moved here. It was Gatsby's or something...

(many people talking at once.)

...It wasn't just knickknacks, but it also had soaps and...that was a successful business.

(many people agreeing.)

We really don't have a good sports store, hunting, fishing. Wal-Mart is okay, but it's not dedicated to the sports person. And as big as that is in this community.

(agreement.)

The guns, the bow-and-arrows, they're very limited.

Oh, and a bike shop.

To follow up on the grocery store, I think it would be great to have Dollar General type stuff, toilet paper and deodorant, things students need. Students don't want to go to Wal-Mart, but they have to.

I agree with that. As a working mom, if I could run in somewhere for diapers or deodorant, I'd do it.

It has to be at a fair price, though.

Exactly. But...

(side conversations.)

Both Dollar Generals are on Baltimore. It's so sad that they wouldn't think about going downtown to reach the 6000 people... but they didn't.

Some type of chain discount store that's not Wal-Mart or Target.

We used to have an ice cream shop.

(many people agreeing.)

I'm excited, with the DREAM, is to find out...I own my business downtown, and I know why some of those things don't work. A smaller business doesn't have the money to offer things at Wal-Mart prices. People will try to save money anywhere they can. If you can't compete with Wal-Mart, you can't afford the overhead. It's going to have to cater to the people that are close, which are the students. They don't right now cater to the students.

If you go to Jeff City, almost every store has a cooler with sodas and water. And there's not one place here that you can run in and get a drink.

There was a second-hand clothing store, and she put one in. And she had half a dozen people come in a day to buy a drink. That gets them in the store.

(many people agreeing.)

From a tourism standpoint, we know that the leisure travelers are antiquers. We had an awesome one downtown and it's now by the highway and it's doing a bang-up job... from a tourism standpoint, having those neat stores that don't compete with Wal-Mart, but the antiques, that's really a big...

It's got to be accessible, and downtown's not accessible.

And other than Wal-Mart, there's not a kids clothing store.

(many people agreeing.)

We used to buy athletic equipment here.

Shoe stores.

Do the business people downtown have an association where they program their downtown for business? Is there an association that plans events to bring business downtown?

My take on the downtown improvement committee is that it's full of people who want to see downtown improve, but they don't have the backing of the businesses downtown.

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

...it always brings groups of people downtown when they partner...

...there's a way to program so it benefits the businesses...

I think a regular dedicated group looking at the calendar, doing something twice a month each month, would help.

You could get people to buy into it and actually make it a habit. There used to be the great till 8 Friday nights, but after 6 months, people quit being open till 8 because they weren't immediately making money.

I think one day a week, people have trouble remembering...

It needs to be 6 days a week.

Yeah.

And Fridays are athletic nights for the schools...

Moderator: What about the look of downtown?

No weeds.

It would look clean.

Yeah!

Fresh.

No weeds.

I wish I had a picture of Cherry Hill in Columbia. If you go down Stadium and you stay on Broadway past the mall, and turn south, they built a downtown that looks like ours probably did 30 years ago. Mismatched buildings, different windows, individual stores, a courtyard, a flower garden, picnic tables...they built...

What kind of businesses do they have?

Little restaurants, professional stuff, ice cream... they built 3 sides of a square, and they have apartment complexes. It's all brand new, and it's what we have! They made it look like what we have, but we can't get it restored and looking right.

We need to get the tin off the buildings.

What's been recommended to us is to do an old town look, take the tin off and the awnings down and restore the buildings. We need to overcome the resistance, and we could if we let the city or some entity do that, if we had an honest appraisal of what's behind some of that artificial building materials, all the deterioration.

I would dream that we don't have parking and driving around the square. I'd like to see some trees, fountains, city places, so you can't drive around the square. The businesses people will raise Cain, but there comes a point when the greater good and vision has to be supported whether some people like it or not. And that's tough to do.

That's a good idea, and the easiest way to do it would be to eliminate the interior parking on the Square, and make courthouse employees park somewhere else, and bring grass and trees...

(many people agreeing at once.)

If you had people that live up above, they'd need to park there, so you could buy a block and use it for parking.

...I think the approach of downtown is what you said, is we need to make the decisions, and not everyone's going to like them. People might threaten to leave, but for the greater good of Kirkville, we might need to create the downtown for the next generation of businesses, not for the ones that are there now. That's how cities grow.

...We feel that the downtown area needs to be improved significantly in a visual and functional way, to attract more diversity in the businesses. We'd be reluctant to impose a solution, but we'd like to support a plan, support a vision...

I did meet with property owners in that block north of City Hall, and I said I'd champion having TIF pay for new awnings and façade improvement, and the response was, "But we want the canopies, and we want them to extend them to the sidewalks..." People are, come hell or high water, keeping their canopies.

I think it's a fear of change, and a fear of...once the awnings start to come down, there's a couple who are doing it...once they start to come down, the resistance will be less. Because they don't know what's behind their tin, and it may be expensive to make them look nice, it's easier to ignore the problem than have to deal with it.

I think it's an underlying problem...notwithstanding that we have a community spirit, I think the community lacks confidence. I think it's holding its breath from an economic perspective. I think they're waiting for the other shoe to drop. I do think that there is a lack of confidence.

(agreement.)

And I think because people have a rural upbringing, being in the farming community, they've seen the economy go down so fast from a bad winter or a bad fall, and that's the mentality of a lot of people here. You save for a rainy day, and you don't make those unnecessary improvements.

(side conversation on farming economics.)

Moderator: Thank you for coming.

SECTION III

NEW RESIDENTS AND STUDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *Give me a feel for Kirkville. Tell me a little about it.*

It's a really safe town, and it's quiet and...I'm from St. Louis, too, and it's much quieter, less traffic.

The reason why...my husband was raised here, and we came back here because it's a good place to raise kids. It's quiet, and safe.

I'm from St. Louis, too, and I went to school here and stayed. In St. Louis, you went down to the corner bar, but up here, everybody knows me. That's the beauty of a small town. It has everything. Not only beautiful landscape and outdoor activities, but you have the Lyceum and the college experience, a great state park and good transportation to get out for a weekend in St. Louis or Kansas City or Columbia. It's a great place to raise a family and live.

I think the education aspect is great, too, because of the University. Other smaller communities we've lived in didn't have a lot of the opportunities that Kirkville has. I think the quality of public schools here is better, too.

Moderator: *When you do your shopping, where do you go?*

From the standpoint of most college students, most everyone drives to Columbia for clothes shopping. Necessities we go to Hy-Vee and Wal-Mart. That was one issue that I considered when I looked at colleges, that I wasn't going to be able to shop anywhere. I think it's gotten better. Maurice's changed and moved and brought in more clothes. But I think that's something that could really be improved. Especially if they brought in some clothes that could attract students to the Square. It's a nice area and it's so close to campus, but there's not really any stores down there other than Java Co that attracts college and high school shoppers.

I agree. I stock up when I'm at home, and I don't do much major shopping here in Kirkville.

I buy a lot of stuff online, especially outdoor equipment. You lack a lot of that, which is surprising moving to Kirkville. I thought there'd be, like archery and a gun store, and we just got a gun store, but a lot of quality outdoor stuff you have to order through Bass Pro.

As far as gift shopping, sometimes I can find gifts here fairly easily. There's a nice place downtown, but we need more shops like that. As far as clothing, when my kids were really young, I could find stuff at Penney's or Goody's, but now there isn't a lot. We could use more clothes for younger people.

We take trips to Columbia or Quincy to buy clothes. We can't find clothing here.

Yeah, I echo all that stuff. As far as groceries, we've got a good selection... we go to Aldi's, but also Hy-Vee and Wal-Mart. From the grocery side, yeah, but as far as other stuff, we do a lot of online shopping. Or take a day trip to Columbia or St. Louis. But it is surprising that we don't have more sporting goods. I think we did years ago, but it was hard to compete with Bass Pro just an hour and a half down the highway.

We don't have arts and crafts supply or home décor. Wal-Mart has a few things, but it's really difficult to find that kind of stuff.

Scrapbooking and fabrics, people go to Columbia. I think there's a market for that here.

Moderator: What about dining? Do you eat out here?

I think there's a lot of places to eat here, and they're pretty good.

There's a good variety, but I think that now that Min's is gone, there's not a nicer place to get dressed up and go. You're limited to Il Spazio. We've lamented that we'd like to get out for a nice dinner.

I think one or two upper-end restaurants, as well as a couple different ethnic restaurants... we had an Indian restaurant for a while, but now Indian or Thai would be good.

I think there's a market for it. The sushi place is doing really well.

Part of it is the culture here. Around here it's okay to travel for an hour to go to a nice place. That's what people up here would do for fine dining. There's a lack of it, but is there enough of a market for it? We've got fast food and medium-priced places, but there really is a market for fine downtown.

Java Co downtown has done really well, and they have some different types of food, and I have trouble finding a place to sit during lunch. Another place like that would be great.

I'd also agree with fine dining, because usually we go to the Pear Tree 40 minutes away.

It's one of the only places.

(agreement.)

Only for special occasions.

And people may have cut back because of gas prices. It's part of the culture around here, that a couple couples would make a night of it. There's nothing right here, though. Everyone would go to Min's, but that's it.

In my group of friends, we go to Columbia to shop and we eat there, but it's about the shopping, not about the restaurant.

As far as for the business community, they'll do continuing medical education, and I'll try to go to a restaurant with a meeting room, and there really aren't any of those. Min's had a small one, and Il Spazio doesn't.

Our fraternity tries to find places to eat together, and the only choice we have is Mexican.

Prom's coming up, and we were looking for somewhere to go. The country club was taken by seniors, and that's the only option.

Moderator: Where do you go for entertainment?

I stay mostly on campus. Occasionally I'll go see a movie downtown, but that's mostly Saturday afternoons, but generally I stay on campus.

The movie theater, it takes a while for movies to get here, and their latest movie is a lot earlier than it is anywhere else. It's at like 9:00 or 9:25, so it's a little earlier than we would like.

The times of the movie theater don't fit an active schedule. They start at 6:00 and then at 9:00. You're eating dinner at 6:00, and 9:00 for me is a little late.

I would say that we go to the movies a lot, and then we frequent the University. They have a lot of things for the community.

Again, it's a cultural difference. When I came here from St. Louis, people who have families and kids go to games, or they travel, so in rural Missouri, life revolves around children and their sports and activities. There's the movie theater, and the fair or the rodeo here. That's where they get the stars to come out, country music. Rarely do we get a rock concert. And we've got a little bit of blues at the Round Barn Blues. But if the community isn't having an event, there isn't much to do.

It's kind of a bad time, too. Round Barn Blues is in May and in August, which doesn't work for us students.

And the Curtain Call Theater, and we'll go to Truman's plays also.

Other than that, outdoor activities. Hunting season, which doesn't work for the college students. I enjoy hunting and fishing, and we've got some good lakes here. We make more money during hunting season than we do at the Christmas season. That's really what drives local tourism. It's an unusual thing that you'd make more money that way, but it's a cultural difference as far as entertainment goes. And they have the farmer's show, and the spring Expo... is that entertainment? Maybe not in St. Louis, but in this area...

And the thousand hills state park, you can swim and hike and boat.

I think thousand hills is really used by students. Organizations will meet out there, go to picnics... we do a lot out there.

It's 5 or 6 miles from campus.

I think winter is hard, entertainment-wise. We have a lot of outdoor community activities, and then winter comes, and you lose that. You're left with the movie theater, bowling, or stuff at Truman. I don't know what a lot of families do out here, but there's not a lot of variety in the wintertime.

The farmer's market's gone, too.

The rural families are hunting, and again, it really revolves around that, but the Truman students and students that aren't in rural culture... and a lot of people have church activities on Wednesdays and on the weekends...

We have a really active K-Life chapter.

I'd say if there were other entertainment, people would go to them.

I worry about our junior high and high school students that aren't involved in sports. I just see a lot of kids, there isn't a lot other than movies and bowling and maybe skating, for that age group.

I see a lot of kids get into bad stuff because there isn't a lot else to do.

Growing up in St. Louis, you've got the Arch and museums, but how often do you go? You're still renting movies and hanging out and what not. People are doing... I mean, I don't know what St. Louis has that we don't, other than mall.

We have indoor rock-climbing and skating and pickup basketball games. I think Leisure World closed recently. I think overall, people are focusing more on that age group, and I think Kirkville is not paying as much attention to that. I volunteer at the juvenile center, and they're all like, "You go to Leisure World! That place is dangerous!" They're the ones that are in trouble, and they say there's nothing to do in town.

I always had this strange plan to open up an indoor mini-golf place that's open from like 6pm to like 2am, and just have something focused on junior high, high school kids, and college kids. Having something like that would be good for the community. But I'm poor.

Three months ago, I had a contract on a building to do that—rock climbing, mini golf, half pipe, and laser tag. And it was going to have like a teen type dance area down below, and I had a contract, but going to the bank—they just weren't real receptive of it.

That's such a good idea, though! I always see junior high kids riding bikes and skateboards around.

I was even going to do indoor paintball.

Yeah!

That would be great for the University, too. There's a lot of people that aren't 21, and you can't go to the bars, so there's not really a college hangout. Woody's at school on the weekdays, but not on the weekends. All of a sudden there's this big split between 21 and not. There needs to be something for college kids that aren't 21.

Moderator: *Let's shift our focus to downtown. Tell me about your downtown.*

I never go there because there's not anything for me. I go to the movies, and to Java Co. But other than that, it's older shops of stuff that I don't need.

It seems like a lot of things closed down there. I go to Java Co a lot, and Hidden Treasures is really cool, but I don't feel like there's anything new I can buy on the Square. It's used, vintage-y stores. And the Farmer's Market, and the Red Barn arts and crafts festival—they could do that three times a year, and I'd be there. That's really great. But other than that, you know, I think Campbell's is down there, and there's some specialty stores, but there's nothing that you'd need to go on a regular basis for.

It's kind of like, you know you need something and you know where it is, so you go to that one place, and then you leave and just go home. It's not like the kind of place where there's a lot of...you'll see people walking, but people don't spend a lot of time down there. There's just not...

They don't window shop.

Right!

There's not a lot to do. It seemed like maybe 3 or 4 years ago, there was more. There was a specialty paper store, and there was the jewelry store, and a lot of people, when those two places were there, I thought a lot of people would just go from that shop to that shop, maybe, and bridal and formal is kind of specific, but people would go by and look at that. And then there's a haberdashery place that has some specialty gifts, so like Christmas shopping, you could actually hit 4 or 5 shops. But now, I agree, there's only a couple that I would go to, and I do try to go there first before I go out of town, but there isn't a lot to say I'm going to go on a Saturday afternoon and go shopping.

You've got Wal-Mart that offers everything. The only way to survive is to specialize, which is what they do. But they specialized in things that aren't everyday things. What brings us to downtown are the restaurants or movie theater, or courthouse. That's the dilemma. How do you create a business that will survive against a Wal-Mart?

I personally would much rather shop downtown than Wal-Mart.

I think a lot of people would.

I like walking outside and looking at different things, and have different places to eat.

I didn't think about that, but are downtown stores open Saturday mornings?

We are.

No.

With that farmer's market and people walking around, you ought to have open stuff out on the sidewalks during that time.

I know our traffic's higher during farmer's market over there, but like you said, you got to get things that Wal-Mart doesn't carry. There's a few people that might want to window shop, but most people will go in, get everything they want, and get out, so they go to Wal-Mart.

If people are going downtown for a movie and dinner, that's when shops are closed. They're not down there and say, "Oh, we can swing on in."

I kind of feel awkward going into downtown shops, because there isn't a lot of foot traffic, so as a student, I feel like I'm not supposed to be there. I know that's silly, but I think a lot of students feel that way. There's just not a lot of people downtown, and you feel weird walking to a shop where you're the only one there, and it's not necessarily geared towards the student. It's not a safety thing. It's just, I don't necessarily feel like... I really want to check out the shops, but I don't feel like they're geared towards me...

And there's one person working, and you're the only person in the store, and they just kind of watch you walk around.

I think another thing, too, is that I think that the downtown Square area could be a little more aesthetically pleasing, and I know that there's been some talk in the community about the awnings and whether they should stay or go or if there should be some sort of unity, but I mean, ultimately, I know that the Kirkville business owner really respect that they want their own right to be able to customize their business however they want, but I think there is something to be said for the unity of the storefronts. Like, I'm from Omaha, Nebraska, and we have what's called the Old Market downtown, and it's all very specialized shops, and a lot of, like, I go there all the time. It's an amazing atmosphere. I don't think I've ever bought anything there. I don't think it's geared towards me. But there's always people there. It's not like a bar scene, but there's always college students, you can walk around, there's tables outside, people are sitting, eating, people-watching, there's always musicians playing. It's just kind of like a cultural center, and I think that part of that is just, I don't know if it's because of the way that the buildings have been preserved, because it is a historical district...

We were just there over spring break, and I bought stuff!

It's kind of expensive. It's a nice area, though.

Yeah. And the buildings are old, and not all of them are super well-kept.

There are definitely dilapidated buildings.

But they're full. Every building had something in it, and there was activity around.

And, I mean, that is a bigger area, but...

Moderator: *Let's talk a little more about aesthetics. What do you think about the appearance of downtown?*

It's quaint. It's an actual downtown Square, but you have trouble knowing what's open and what's not, what's in business, what things are. I wish it was a little more streamlined. I live in St. Charles, and they have the first state capital and an old historic downtown, and they've preserved that historically. Maybe some kind of historic idea. But at least tell what the business is, if it's open, and what they do.

It's a very good point. I've lived down here, so I kind of know. If you lived in town for a long time, you know, but for someone coming new into town or someone who's not been here long, where is this located? I know it's two stores past Kirlin's, but does anyone else? Signage would go a lot further, I think. And it would give it a little more uniformity. I think the aesthetics have really come a long way. They're just putting in that brick sidewalk, and that'll help out. And the movie theater going downtown, that helped out tremendously by providing parking space during the day so that you could go to those shops, because there's nobody at the movie. That really worked out very well, and it was well thought-out, and I think the streets are pretty good going from Truman into the downtown. I think they're working on that from the Medical College into downtown, and so... I think overall it's fairly well-lit and coming along, but I think signage is a really good idea.

I would emphasize signage too, especially not even on the awnings. When you're walking along, I look into the glass, and I'm like, "what are they selling?" You kind of have to look.

I see one area that could be improved coming from Truman up Franklin Street. That would be a really good street for students and other businesses. That area doesn't seem real appealing or inviting.

Even driving up there is congested and bottlenecked.

When I said nice, I meant fairly even sidewalks. It's really not aesthetically pleasing. You could have an alley with trees or something.

It goes from a wider street to the one-way street.

I try not to drive up that way, because the streets are so bad. Especially on that S-curve, there's a giant pothole that I can't straddle. The roads are very, you know, touch-and-go. There are some that are maintained and some that are absolute rubble. Put a star by that.

Moderator: *Do you feel safe downtown?*

Yeah.

That's not an issue.

You do have to walk by that probation center.

(many people talking at once.)

They watch what they're doing when they're near that building.

Moderator: Is there housing downtown?

Yeah. Everything's a rental. But there's a lot right by campus.

That's an issue with aesthetics, too. Some buildings are rentals, and they're not kept up as well.

Our landlord took advantage of us because we were college students, and we were definitely trying to take care of the house, but he wouldn't help. I think 6-month leases would be useful. There's people that are studying abroad, and everyone's looking for a sublesser. If some people offered 6-month leases...

But that would be twice as much as your 12-month lease. Because it takes so much money to get and buy and maintain a rental... I would offer an apartment for \$300 a month, or \$600 a month for 6 months.

30 years ago, students were much less discerning. Now, we've had more and more students with higher standards, so there's a lot of people that buy into the idea of renting nice places to students, and that puts a crunch on people with older places, but they don't put as much time and effort into it. The students drive it based on their desire.

(agreement.)

It's an evolving thing that goes along, but it's driven by what people will pay.

Yeah. I have rentals, and I try to give as much as I can with what I can charge. We try to offer different things that could be useful, like an exercise room and wireless internet.

When I went to school, I lived in a lean-to, and it actually leaned. Now it's changed. It's evolving. But the reality is we have older homes that were split up, and now they're 50, 75, 100 years old, and I'm sure a lot of those people are looking to unload those places. What do you do to address those things?

That's another point. There are these beautiful old Victorian homes that are dilapidated because they're broken up into so many different apartments. It's a shame that there are these gorgeous homes that could be restored into single-family homes, and they're just dilapidated messes.

(agreement.)

I think that bleeds over to downtown. That's what people see on their way to downtown.

I think when she said dilapidated, that's what I think of when I think of downtown. Generally it feels uninhabited.

Old.

Yeah.

Some old's good, but it...

...needs to be well-maintained.

Inviting. I see a lot of homes that something happens to them, like a fire, and they never get restored. When something's dilapidated, nothing happens, because no one has the money to tear it down.

That's what I'm saying about signs. There are so many places that have gone out of business, and their sign's still up, the parking lot's still painted, and you don't know—is this closed? Nobody goes up behind them and cleans it up and takes down the signs. It could pose a potential problem.

Again, it's a small town, and what do you do? The kids have left because they've struck out for bigger and better things away from Kirkville. Say mom and dad die, they've left the house. Oh gosh, I'm down in Texas, maybe I'll try selling it. Gosh, it's been on the market for 2 years. Let's split it up into 4 apartments and rent it out, and they're not back to check it and what not. It really needs to be some type of policy, city-wide, on how do we encourage investment, developing a certain area to rehab it? It's like downtown St. Louis, but it's downtown old rural area, and who's got the money to put it in and then, to be honest with you, there's a lot of local people who don't want to live next to college students or a sorority or a fraternity... so you got a little bit of an issue there, but that's part of the reason some people think "maybe I won't renovate that downtown Victorian home." So that's part of the continuing issue, but it's one that should be better addressed by the city.

I think a lot of the yards are not very well-maintained, and it's just dirty, kind of. On my street, there's so much stuff in everyone's yards, and I think part of it is the trash policy, where you only have one can a week. People can't get rid of their stuff. It really is garbage, but they don't want to buy stickers to pay to get rid of it.

(many people talking at once.)

Especially when the students leave, they put the garbage on the side of the road, and garbage only picks up one bag a week.

And they come at 4 am on Friday morning to pick up trash, and throw things around, so it sounds like we're getting bombed. They throw the dumpsters. Every week!

Lovely.

Again, it's part of the rural vs. urban area. We're a class 3 city and county, and we have different rules than St. Louis. They can send someone a note that says, "You better cut your grass," and you can't do that here. We tried giving the county a higher status, so they could do those kinds of things. By the time we go through the rigmarole, it's 3 months. We tried to address that, but there's a lot of complications in regulations of what the city's able to do as far as enforcements. You guys probably come from nice neighborhoods, and nobody puts their trash out like that. We don't have that ability that those city governments had.

Moderator: *Let's sort of dream a little. What kind of shops would you like to see downtown?*

I would love an arts and crafts store. That would play to everyone. Students, professors, townspeople. Something with fabric and yarn and scrapbooking materials. That's a place where you could browse and just sort of look at things.

A place where I could go study but be downtown. I know Washington Street kind of has that at Java Co, but all the bookstores—maybe if they had seating and give students a kind of culture. I'd come downtown if I could get coffee and a table.

I see the med students a lot in Java Co, and I think we could use another place like that.

I'd like to see a little more variety of, not necessarily Min's nice, but a medium-nice restaurant and maybe an ice cream stores. A variety of food shops. Maybe little restaurants and an ice-cream shop and a coffee shop. We have a pizza shop, but places like Ryan's are a little bit of a turnoff on the inside. You'd get more people coming down if there were nicer places.

The Uptown Café, people like eating there.

I felt weird going in there. Everyone knows everyone there. You just feel out of place, like you're not supposed to be there. But the food was good.

We need something a little more college-friendly. We have Ryan's, but maybe more like a sports bar-type but not as focused on alcohol.

Maybe more healthy alternatives for food, with the college crowd. One of the things about Java Co is that they have healthy sandwiches.

That's a great idea.

Panera.

You've got some of these stores on highway 63 catching business driving through, but if you get that stuff downtown, you'd get more people in.

I was disappointed when the place with the antiques and newer collectibles...Lawson Hills...and it moved up to 63. I really miss that.

Yeah.

You could mill through it for hours.

A clothing store, or a drug store. Something along those lines.

A clothing store that appeals to the high school and college ages.

Yeah.

I also think it would be good. I worked at Dukum for a while, and I feel like there's a big division between the Kirkville residents and the college students. And even when we're talking here now, there's things that are either geared toward Kirkville or the college. I don't know, it might be asking a little much to try and bring those two groups of people together, but I feel like the Kirkville residents kind of resent the college students and feel like they're intruding. Because, we had regulars, and the bar was open from 8 to 1:30 everyday. We had the people that eat dinner everyday, and they'd be upset, and be like, "Well, who are these college students coming in. This is our time." I'd be like, "Okay." I mean, they liked me, so that's the only reason I probably even heard that, but I think that that's a pretty common sentiment among a lot of the shops on the Square, and that's probably why you feel awkward. It is that kind of atmosphere. I don't know how you'd fix that. I just think it's a problem.

It goes both ways, too. I hear a lot on campus, calling Kirkville residents "townies." I even had a professor ask, "How many townies are there in class?" It's not the nicest. I know, some, like the Lyceum tries to gear more towards the community, but I think even the student activities board, maybe some of their stuff could be more geared toward everyone, to kind of bridge together. There does seem like quite a division.

There are several things that I've went to on campus, stuff about alternative energy, and I felt out of place there.

We love it, though.

I do feel kind of out of place. We just kind of listened. But it's the same as how you feel going into Uptown or whatever.

(many people agreeing.)

You make a very good point. The reality is that Kirkville and the surrounding area is very segmented and clique-y area. There's actually cliques between the town.

(many people agreeing at once.)

Here, you have the extremely rich to the extremely poor, and they do come together in school, and it's very apparent who's who. The old mentality of "all those smart rich kids at the college" vs. "us out here." But even in the town, there are cliques. There's the Bass club, and there's the hunters, and the people in the medical community, people that work for the universities, people that work for the factories. It is a much different phenomenon than some people grasp. Here, when you're the football quarterback in high school, you're the quarterback for life. You could come back after 20 years and people will remember. You get people that try to escape the socioeconomic shackles, and they go away and come back, and they're always who they once were. My point is that, they are segmented out there like you can't believe. I'd like to see everybody come together, there's little interaction, because I'm here, but I wouldn't think to step up to here. Those are the things that are reality. I don't know how you overcome that.

I think there's some stuff the university could do. The Big Event, that's huge. So many students go out into the community and help. But I think they said there wasn't enough service, so if the community could give more projects...there are so many organizations on campus that want to

do service, and I think they should do a better job of bringing that to the school. College kids aren't going to go door-to-door, but they'll do it if you ask them to. For our organizations, we're reaching more to Columbia and St. Louis to do our service because it's feeling so unwelcome in Kirkville, and that's silly. Kirkville needs to do a better job of bringing things to us, because we want to be out there. We want to walk downtown and feel welcome. We want to do stuff for Kirkville. We do like it down here.

I even wonder if there are some downtown projects that the students could work on. That might give them more ownership, and they may get to know the businesses.

I made the suggestion that the city pays money to have these people come down and do design elements and look at different things and how to promote business... why wouldn't we just contact the university? There's groups that would love to do this and have passion for doing it, and it wouldn't cost anything, and have just as good or better output, because they're here in the community, they see what's going on... they walk downtown, they see it everyday. These people come in, go around a few hours, go punch it in the computer and shoot out a thing, and that's \$85,000.

And with all the scholarship stuff and work study...I think Truman could do better contracting with the city to get kids working in the city, because so many kids want a scholarship job or a work study job. They could go out to the community and be volunteering, and they'd have a lot more pride in Kirkville. It just spreads. If I like a store, my friends will all like it. I think that would really help. We have to do the hours already. I know that's giving back to Truman specifically, but if there's some negotiation that would form a partnership...

(unintelligible)...

I know, a lot of college students don't know what to do for the summer, and they want to stay in Kirkville. A lot of students want to work somewhere and stay here.

I think more communication back and forth between the town and the university, even what's available that students can do or things that are happening on campus... even I have a lot of contact with college kids, and that's how I find out about these things, and otherwise I wouldn't know about it. Or I might not feel welcome. If more people know they can go there and sit in on lectures or go to plays...

I know, because I work there, and I know where to go to find that stuff.

I think more communication back and forth, that would be a big help. It would bring everyone together and form a bridge.

Right now, the only places I see the townspeople and students interact is at churches. And I think that's sad. I feel awkward when I walk into other places and I'm shunned by Kirkville.

When I came here, and I went hunting with a friend, and I went into a gun shop myself, conversation stopped. And my friend comes in, and they said, "Oh, he's with _____!" It's amazing. A lot of these places had their own crowd. College students didn't used to go to Dukum. Now it's kind of family friendly.

They're one of the few places that has kind of bridged. You get some of the older residents, and the college students...

It used to be a Kirkville local owner, and the new owner changed it. There's very few places you can mix, though. Churches, yeah, but even the churches on campus are separate. Having been in the army and stationed in Germany, after World War II, they tried to separate the communities. And in the 80s, they were trying to get that interaction. The University is self-sufficient, so you can do a lot of stuff there. They want to make sure they offer everything, but...

There's so many restaurants in town, but there's no place where students from Truman really go that it's sort of where they feel comfortable. I started going to Rosie's, and I feel like everybody's looking at me. Even where I live, they don't like teenagers. Nobody likes teenagers. There's no place that anybody really feel comfortable, and Kirkville residents don't feel comfortable on campus. But we love it! We love having you come to campus!

(many people agreeing.)

On campus, that's what we want, but in town, they're like, "Let us do our thing."

Some college towns I've been in, their downtowns have these big signs that say, "Welcome students!" There's a few businesses that do it. In Maryville, they definitely do it. And in Warrensburg. Even in Lawrence. It's, "Welcome, students!" We've tried to reach out in the first couple weeks, but that's it.

After Red Barn, after parents weekend...

I think, institutions like church...for me, it was the Bass club. As a college student, I joined the local Bass club. I met local people that way, but maybe it would be around what we're passionate about that would facilitate interaction between different groups, whether it's trains or scrapbooking or whatever. It's really easy at Truman to have all-student groups, but maybe opening it up to others, you might get some of that mixing.

I think, maybe if there were more things like Habitat for Humanity, the local chapter and the campus chapter get together and collaborate. If groups could come together like that, maybe like the Baptist Student Union and the Baptist Church, stuff like that.

Even with the junior high and high school clubs linking with the college clubs.

Yeah, I definitely think that academic clubs, that would be really good for the junior high and high school.

Moderator: Thank you for coming.

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SECTION IV

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *I wanted to ask you a few questions about Kirksville in general. How would you describe it to somebody who was thinking about moving here?*

I think it's a very friendly community.

I would say, after living in some big cities, convenient. You can get around pretty easy. It took me 3 minutes to get here.

It is convenient, but it's also family. There are any number of people, we all know each other. We have relationships. Not only are we looking out for _____ gallery, but we're looking out for the family. We're a community of families.

(agreement.)

We've lived here all our lives.

I am a little different. I was born and raised here, I moved to the city, and I moved back. This is a place we wanted to live, build a business, raise our children. It has things to offer. It has the state park, the medical center, the University. When we moved back, those were some serious things to consider. We moved from Springfield, and this was the smartest decision we've made.

I think you'll find very few communities with our educational opportunities.

You can go from kindergarten through being a physician at top schools. We're well-rooted in education. And with that, there's cultural opportunities, and good community college.

I'm not a deer hunter, but this is one of the deer hunting capitals of the country. And turkey. And geese. The outdoor stuff is just amazing.

I'll give you a slightly different twist, representing an old agricultural family. Kirksville is a rural agricultural community, and all the good things that go with it. A low crime rate, a good community, people pay attention to what's going on. When looking at Kirksville, it's primary appeal is that it's a small friendly community. It does have the state regional college and the Osteopathic school. And it's a hub for government infrastructure, with Social Security department, the youth advocacy corps, when looking at people coming in and raising a family here.

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

Some of both.

Yeah.

We just had an election. We passed three different taxes on ourselves to improve our schools, route, and sheriff's department. Communities all around us have turned down school bond issues...we're very progressive. In that, we have some wonderful citizens, who take their time to go out and educate...it was surprising that all three passed. I think that's a sign of a progressive city, when you can see the needs of the future.

That's also a downside. Everyone pretty much generally agrees with a "good thing" end goal, but we have different opinions about how to go about it. I don't think that anyone has a hard fast disagreement with the concepts, but there's a lot of discussion and diversity of what we think is important and how it should be accomplished.

Even though Kirksville has been steady on real estate prices, certainly on the factory workforce jobs, we're feeling a little of the economy downturn and the overseas movement. We didn't benefit from the huge skyrocket, so we don't suffer from the drops.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas for residents?

Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee.

People come to Kirksville to shop, from little communities.

Speaking from the news agency, Kirksville has a market share that mainly focuses in a triangle. It basically hits La Plata and expands northward into the southern part of Iowa. Most people fall into that funnel. There will be people from other communities like Brookfield and Quincy, but once you get beyond that, the way the roads are laid out, we start seeing a smaller and smaller percentage of customers from outside there. People shop at Wal-Mart, but beyond that, it becomes a specialized market, if they're going to Home Depot or something else. Otherwise, they'll go to Ottumwa, to Columbia, to St. Louis or Kansas City. This has affected the downtown where we've seen attrition of small family-owned stores. I brought with me—last time we did this type of initiative, there was at various points in time guides to the downtown business district, which listed all the businesses. We can see an attrition of about two thirds between the 1980s and today. That'll give you a difference between then and now.

(side conversations.)

Wasn't there also a downtown plan sometime, in like 2000?

Yeah. And in the 70s, there was a plan.

Moderator: What are the dining and entertainment options?

The lake.

When we have friends and children over, we focus on a family place, we take them to Pagliai's. It's locally owned, and it's unique and it's fair. There are some things you can get there that you can't get other places. There are several other adult restaurant choices. But that just seems to be the right place to go.

As a family, when we go travel, you kind of want to seek out something that's unique. That's what we need to concentrate on.

We have a Ruby Tuesday's, and it's nice to have some of those with brand recognition, but when you have company, you want to take them to the heart of your town. The Wooden Nickel is a place we go, and it's a downtown restaurant. It's a local place. It has variety for anybody, but it's family-friendly and it's not a chain.

One thing about the local ones, is they support us in the local things. If you go to the chains, they'll say "Corporate says we can't do this." Pagliai's has been wonderful. They've put up flyers for me. We support each other down here, and I think that's a real strong commitment that we have in our communities.

We go to Western's to get steaks.

It's nice to have the variety. If you've lived in other places, though, you always end up at the same places. It would be nice to have more variety, but what we have is good. And for entertainment, there's a lot of entertainment around here. There's outdoor stuff, hunting, fishing...the theater. A lot of activity around here focuses on the university activities and the school athletics and productions.

We still have a very active county fair.

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

Both.

Maybe not in any direction sometimes.

I think it's back to where everybody's trying to get in agreement about how things should be.

I have a great simile for downtown Kirksville. Anybody that's ever done redecorating, they measure everything and model stuff. But when you actually buy the furniture, nothing fits the way you thought it would. For year, we've had people sit around with maps and charts and come up with blueprints and plans, but nothing fits correctly. I think that's probably why we're spinning our wheels all the time. There's a group of people that are disgusted with what's happened and everything not moving, and there's a group of people that want change and really want to do something. The people that are making the decision seem to come from outside the community, as opposed to each individual fitting in well.

One place we've moved forward—we created a TIF district, and those monies have been spent to improve the courthouse square, and to improve the Summer on the Square program on Friday nights which is a huge success, and plans are in place for a complete streetscape from downtown to Truman and post office to A.T. Stills, so we'll have new public corridors with new sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, wayfinding signs, landscaping... those things were accomplished with input from those of us who work downtown, and many things we suggested were incorporated. We have a new water main downtown, and we've planned new sidewalks on the Square proper.

I think another factor here is that we have an age-old stigma that we're still battling, that downtown is dying. We've got new people, and somehow or the other the residents have the mentality that downtown is dying, and they don't come check it out.

Last week, I had a lady in my store, and I sell new toys. I'm starting my fifth year. I've advertised all over, newspapers and radio and Pagliai's. This woman came in, and her neighbor told her to go to Vintage Book Shop, and she didn't know where it was. And she said, "There's nothing down here. Everything's empty." There's only one building that's empty downtown, and the rest are full. But she thought everything was empty. And I had a lady come in, and her brother's a prominent doctor downtown, and her brother told her "don't bother. Half the stores are empty." People from out of town, and that's one of our big customer sources is the parents of the students. They love to come downtown. And here I have local residents that won't waste their time coming downtown. But there's not anything empty on the Square! Just that negative connotation that we're dying downtown...

Moderator: Why did you all choose to make the investment in downtown Kirkville?

I wanted to open up a used bookstore, and I think with that idea of what I wanted, I wanted an old building and an old section of town. I was very pleased with what I found. I wanted something with character, and history, and pizzazz.

I bought an existing business, so I didn't make the location choice, but if I had to, I'd stay where I am. There's nowhere else I could have as much space as I have somewhere else for the same cost.

Yeah! When I was looking at newer stuff outside of town, the rent is high and you have to pay to take care of the parking lot. It was a small building with no character... so, economically as well as visually, I want to be downtown.

Three of us have no real choice, because we've been down there more than one generation. And there's a lot of that, too.

I didn't make a decision. My mother owned the company. It had always been on the Square or a block off the Square, because the courthouse is a vital part of our business. It would be foolish to move away. It's a logical place to be located, by the banks and by the courthouse where the business is.

That's something to look at, especially when you look at the differences between 20 years ago and today. There are a lot fewer retail businesses and more service businesses like attorneys' offices and other services that relate directly to the University or the courthouse or the med school. It's no longer a retail environment, it's a service environment. While the fronts aren't necessarily empty, it's not the type of frontage that draws a casual shopper in. We'll see point-of-destination customers. They're coming in to get something specific. So they don't come downtown for clothing shopping unless they're going to a specific store, not just to wander around. We also have a different population base. It used to be that you had middle-class and upper-middle-class housing near downtown, and that's moved out. We're having urban decay. We've lost those people. And it's been replaced on the south side by college students, but we're also doing institutionalized housing and senior housing. This has also affected the business that can survive day-to-day.

Moderator: *From your experiences and your customers, how user-friendly is downtown? Is it easy for people to get around?*

I find it tough to park.

And we've got a lot of one-way streets.

The parking, since I've started here, we've got a lot of people that won't park where they're supposed to park. They want to park right in front of their businesses.

Well, especially on Saturdays... all of downtown is open, but we don't have the courthouse on Saturday, so the parking is not a problem on the weekend, but during the week it's a problem. We have poor usage of the extended parking lots. We've got tons of parking spots, but if we could just do something to motivate people to park in the extended lots. We've talked about timed parking and all sorts of stuff. We'd love to see people use the extended lots.

I think one thing that could be improved, coming in from the North or the South, I have people call me when they get to Wal-Mart. "How do I get downtown?" Well, it's easy, but there's no signs, there's no...there's nothing. Is that coming?

Yeah. It's funded with the Jefferson Street Project. They're going to color-code stuff all over town. As you get closer, you get all yellow for downtown and one color for Truman...

Something's in the works!

And, it's another thing that we know that it's coming, but none of us know what it's going to entail. We didn't have any input.

Not to go off into a segue, but there's a huge disconnect between the city administration and the property owners.

It's just not knowing...

We've been at meetings where they've said, we're going to tell you... and there's trucks tearing up my corner, and I went out and said to them, "I sat in a meeting where the city engineers said they'd tell me when this was going to happen." I thought I was supposed to know, not pull up in front of my store and have concrete trucks all over. And I was having a sale that day. I wasted my money, not knowing that the construction was going to be happening. I advertised for it and everything.

There are several businesses that have been effectively closed by construction, and we didn't know.

We know that progress comes with a price. The water main wasn't easy, but it was necessary. But it's just the communication.

I think a lot of conflict has come from no communication. It feels like they're making decisions that will cost all of us money.

I can make plans for a week if there's construction. I would do different things. I might staff it differently, advertise differently.

You're right with the communication. A specific week could kill me. I've talked to them over and over again, and begged them not to pick finals week.

I'm going to slide this back to downtown and accessibility. Downtown isn't accessible. There's a disconnect on what downtown is. Are we a retail district, a commercial district? We have an identity crisis. The streets, and the way they're laid out... we were trying to address this issue for the city to acquire property on the corners of downtown and establish parking lots. That's why we don't have parking meters. The problem became that business owners and employees and tenants began parking on the streets. We then have streets laid out in the 1850s, so they were turned into single-lane with the idea that it would create a flow pattern. There was no real design on bringing residential traffic into downtown because it already existed. When looking at this, this was the basic structure that they were trying to come up with. Currently we have two lanes of traffic in a street that's really narrow. We'd like to maximize short-term parking with angled parking. There's a decision to be made to ask "how are we best served to bring traffic downtown?" We feel that we should have a single lane of traffic rather than two lanes, and that provides for parking on the sides. It's more pedestrian-friendly, promotes a better flow of traffic and eliminates...if you can't get somebody to stop and get out of the car, you can't stay in business. The idea is, what is going to be a plan for the downtown? Will be administrative, retail, or an arterial flow path? It's a disconnect. Everything that's being done tends to support a retail environment. However, the plans so far do not take into consideration the day-to-day needs of businesses and their customers. They're taking out sidewalks to widen the streets to have two lanes of traffic. I don't want cars going 30 miles an hour down the street in front of my store. I want them going slower so they can see the windows.

How are the streets going to be different?

They're narrowing the sidewalks so there can be two lanes of traffic.

Our sidewalk is going to be narrowed 18 inches.

(many people talking at once.)

I had them show me where the edge of my sidewalk is going to be. It takes out the high curb that doesn't match the streets or the sidewalks. It's only narrowing less than a foot and a half. When it's straightened out, it widens the streets so it brings the cars in. A lane can continue to move if someone's backing out.

That's the issue of it being a double-lane.

You can continue to have a flow of traffic.

Do we want the arterial flow?

It's one block!...there's two stop lights. I see it as a better flow of traffic if it is two lanes.

I think it's more convenient for people. Everybody has these long cars.

With the retail businesses, 18 inches might not sound like much, until you put racks or café tables out there. 6 inches can make a big difference.

Almost nobody is doing that right now.

Right now. Are we planning for right now? Are we going to not let people have sidewalk sales or café tables?

Sidewalk sales are only 4 days a year.

Well, and the sidewalk is going to get people from campus to downtown.

But when you narrow the sidewalks to increase the traffic...

(many people arguing.)

People don't walk there anyway. I don't see it a problem at all.

Moderator: I have one more question before we move into talking about the future of downtown. How do you communicate with potential customers or current customers?

E-mail. Website.

We're an end destination for a lot of people. They're coming to us because they have to have us. We're the facilitator between a borrower and a lender. We don't have to seek out customers. People are going to be going to US Bank to get a loan, so we build our relationship with US Bank. And we build relationships with the customers once they're in there. We don't do a lot of advertising.

One thing that a lot of us have done downtown is cooperative advertising. You can split a 30-second TV ad into 2 15-second ads. The same with newspaper ads. We do that with _____ around Christmas. We used to do the KDIC newsletter...that's a big goal of the KDIC, those sorts of things that we're doing, and if we can be a conduit to increase communication between the city and other entities.

I think the KDIC has done a lot to bring knowledge of downtown out. You can't individualize a business, but you can do the downtown district. And I think the Halloween event and the Christmas event...

And everybody on the KDIC would agree, though, that we've got a long way to go.

The ticker on the cable and the radio seem to see the most response.

_____ is specialty, but she's driven by the University.

Well, every time you want to have an event downtown, it does me no good. So, for me, voting on that stuff, I can't do it.

It doesn't help our businesses at all.

Well, people will walk by you.

But it doesn't do me any good.

(many people talking at once.)

But I lost the trade that I might already have had on that day.

(many people talking at once.)

Even Red Barn is bad for us.

Red Barn was great for me, because the weather was so bad that people came in to be warm.

(many people talking at once.)

And a lot of those things are on Saturdays, and we've got a lot of pickups on Saturday. You've got these girls coming in carrying dresses 3 blocks to their car. It's always bad for us. But I'm not going to complain.

They're great community events, but for businesses that are destinations, it eliminates our traffic that day.

When we owned a uniform shop, and we didn't get extra business during Red Barn, but we got people in afterwards. There's inconveniences with all these things, but we need to find the best mix.

These things aren't good for me, but they're good for Pagliai's, and other places.

Is there a tangible way for us to evaluate that? Like, when the theater went downtown, since that's more of a destination, is there a way to take a look at maybe...have we sold more stuff in that area? And when it comes to Red Barn, is there a way to evaluate that?

There's so many variables.

Other than a couple exceptions, but after Red Barn, a bunch of us agreed that it was a humongous day for us in sales.

Is it Red Barn Arts, or is it family day?

And that depends too on how far you are from the Square itself.

And it depends on how they set it up. The first year that I was open, they closed off Harrison and Franklin, so I could've gone home that day. But the next year, I told them, "You shut my business off. Couldn't you left space between a booth so people could walk through?"

Most of our businesses are Internet-driven at this point. The rare book store, or the news agency... now, the music and video store is a retail outlet, and it has a different set of dynamics, but on every function that occurs downtown, once you're off the Square, it eliminates your parking. A lot of your local customers will not even come downtown. For me, I don't care. Our income is mostly Internet-generated. But it does have a definite difference, the amount of trade you get on those days. The farther you get away from the Square, the more that affects negatively the business.

(many people talking at once.)

On Franklin, all these people coming from the University to Red Barn, they buy nothing on the way or back.

Unless they stop in to stay warm.

I think these type of functions are good for the community.

(many people talking at once.)

I agree on some of these things. People come down and look in our windows, and they learn that we're down there. And I get people early for the movies, and I get quite a bit of that. They say, "we're killing time." Great! And they end up buying something or coming back. I think any way you can get people downtown and get them to walk around...

And the traffic corridor for business is on Franklin and in the Square...

I think we need to concentrate on two things: how important it is for people who live here to shop here, and the other thing is to market ourselves in the four directions. That would be good for me. When we made the 4-lane road to Macon, I was expecting to see more, and it's finally started. We should've started advertising right away. We missed the boat on that.

(agreement.)

We should be supporting La Plata, because we have the 4-lane road, and we've got stuff here that people who come to La Plata might want to do.

I think the Green Street and Marion Street corridor should be addressed. They're addressing Jefferson Street... we need signage.

(Many people talking at once.)

...You have no idea how to get back to 63...

...We live here, and we know...

Moderator: *Let's look at the future of downtown Kirksville. What kind of businesses do you think would be good fits for downtown?*

I'd like to see retail, not offices.

Yeah.

(many people agreeing.)

We need as many retail as we can get downtown.

Specialty shops. Something that nobody else has.

I'm not sure that chain stores are the best approach. I think that family-owned businesses are more advantageous to the community as a whole. How much focus do we need to spend toward a county-wide shopping market as opposed to focusing on Kirksville only. I think it's poor long-term planning to address only the University and the med school. We need solid businesses that appeal to people all over the county.

I'd like to see some kind of a small...we are getting more and more rentals downtown. Liberty has a gorgeous downtown, but they don't have any rentals at all. They're beautiful. But that's not the dynamic that we have. We have trash in the alleys and things that come along with residents. But downtown is within walking distance for residents nearby, so maybe we need a little drugstore or a convenience store.

It sounds really great, but everything's too expensive.

But if you could combine that with something...if I just tried to sell used books, I'd be out of business by now. My firm belief is that if you don't flow with your marketplace, you lock the door.

I think the different programs could be used to encourage. Many of us have rental property downtown. If something benefited us to encourage a kind of renter, we'd encourage that kind of renter. If a renter were coming in with a certain type of business... right now, people don't want to come downtown because they feel they're overregulated and priced out of the market.

I don't think that's true.

(many people talking at once.)

You can't control what comes in. You need the ebb and flow. But what I have a problem with is, I used to live in Macon, and their downtown is nothing now. But they got into too many antique shops, too many garage sale stores, and that's happening here. That's not what we want.

(many people talking at once.)

We have it happening where it's not tasteful. There needs to be something code-wise about that. I'm seeing that starting to happen here. That really provides a good thing for the community, and we don't want to discourage it, but there needs to be a balance.

Well, our district is the cheapest place in town. It's cheaper to rent a retail spot in the Square for storage space than renting a storage unit. I think that eventually, we're going to turn that tide, and it's going to cost more to be downtown.

Well, widening the streets and making the awnings and buildings look better, people's property values will go up and the bad businesses will go out.

I think good, tasteful apartments and lofts are a plus downtown. Between A.T. Still and Truman, it's good.

(many people agreeing at once.)

And in my leases, I say that they cannot park in front of the stores. And I watch for it. So you have to have responsible landlords and tenants. People laughed when I did a 2-bedroom, 2-bath apartment... but we have to have tasteful stuff downtown.

Moderator: What are your highest priorities for the look and feel of downtown?

I'd like to see the facades be improved. I know that's expensive, but there's some that take immaculate care of their facades, and there's some in such disrepair. And people look at the bad, not the good. Just a coat of paint or something. Many people are working on theirs. But there's some that haven't been touched for years.

That might be a code thing.

If my building is next to yours and looks like hell, does that affect your business?

Yeah.

People want to drive to other towns to shop, and we have better retail stores than they do...

It took me a few months, and I rented the building, but I paid for all that paint and that awning. I pay to maintain it. To me, that's what my inside looks like is what my outside looks like. So if the building next to me looks like it's falling apart, I'm fighting it all the time.

It does reflect, but...

But you have a whole different business clientele.

I'm trying to see if there's a hole.

But you've really improved your building.

But I'm just trying to figure out...say we don't like a sign that _____ puts up, what do we do?

(many people talking at once.)

But if _____'s sign is hanging off on one chain, we need to do something about it.

Do we have any control over that?

There's city codes.

There's city codes for some of that, but not all.

(many people talking at once.)

My building's on historic register. And what nobody's looking into, having been other places, you can go to an extent where you regulate and legislate, and without fail, successes are the exception to the rule. Development becomes so expensive. The people that are left end up having to bail them out. There's a fine line for things to be self-sustaining. The buildings need to look nice, but—

We were asked what we think looks bad. These are the things I think look bad. But I don't want the government to take over our lives. But I think façade repair needs to be done downtown, and we were asked what we think needs to be done.

I've spent more money in the last few years on my building...

When looking at things like the DREAM initiative, I believe that if the municipality works on appropriate traffic flow, parking, and usability, on a friendly appearance of a community... in dealing with those issues, those businessmen that are good will follow on their own to work on their property, and those that don't do that won't be around long enough to matter.

Moderator: What should the city place a high priority on to help your businesses?

Number one is communication.

Yeah.

And parking. Down by me, parking is an issue. And when they improve the sidewalk, it'll be nicer for pedestrian traffic, but most of the kids at the University have cars, and they're going to eliminate parking by me. If there's a way between the University and the city that we communicate better on parking, that would be...

We've had issues with this, especially with the Franklin Street corridor, Pierce Street is the boundary between businesses and residents, but the City is treating all those places like the same sort of thing. There's a disconnect with the City telling us what we have to do without our input. This is the first letter I've gotten from the City in 15 years inviting me to any organization. And I want to be included!

I think that getting back to the standards that buildings should be kept to...if the codes are in place, I want to know what they are. If the tenants from across the alley have filled up my dumpster and dumped their furniture in front of my back door, I could call and let them know that there's a code violation. I don't even know what the codes are.

My husband works in city engineering, and he didn't know that sidewalks were being torn up until that morning. He needs to know! He wants to tell people who are coming in, so they can be aware of what's going on. He didn't know. And he's the City person overseeing that specific... and he was like, "I feel like I dropped the ball, but I didn't even know!" It's not just a City-to-business-owners problem. It's even within the city.

He's the only one who came to talk to me about the water main.

And _____.

They did communicate on the wildlife project.

Yeah.

Just call up there to codes.

I called the police department.

(side conversations.)

I have big bags of garbage thrown into the round concrete thing, and pizza boxes coming out the top, bags of garbage in the little trash cans downtown.

Now, I had an opposite experience with _____ than you did. They said one thing, and then did something else.

(many people talking at once.)

When it comes down to it, there's a big problem when you're dealing with City administration when they decide what they want to do, and they try it, and it doesn't work.

Sometimes it works to your advantage—

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Thank you very much.

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SECTION V

LONGTIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: If I were looking to move to Kirksville, what would you tell me about your community? Describe Kirksville to me.

I think it's a wonderful place to live. We have marvelous educational facilities. Our hospital's in the top 10.

We also have 3 state forests and 1 state park in the area, with lots of hunting and fishing.

They say people make the difference.

I think Kirksville is a wonderful place to live. But other people who haven't been here as long, and there are people who don't care for it at all, but there are also others who come back here because they like it and appreciate it.

Well, Kirksville is an old town, but we're still the hub of the area. (unintelligible)... we have adequate shopping, but now that the gas prices are up, we might have more people stay home.

People sometimes go to Des Moines, St. Louis, Columbia... but we have recreation facilities, restaurants, 2 universities, and a lot to offer people.

I think most of it's been said. It's the hub of Northeast Missouri. We have the university, a very nice recreation area, 2 lakes that are a secret to the outside world. We have a lot to offer in hunting and fishing, and people are beginning to discover that. People all over the world now know exactly...(unintelligible)

Truman is highly rated. Also, it's a county seat.

Back in the 30s, Kirksville was a place where everybody moved, and 3 or 4 or 5 counties around us would...it was the only place they could get work. So Kirksville in 1940 was 6000 people, and it began to grow, and when the war stopped, the GIs came back home, and it was a very good place to be. Still is. The problem is, we have people here who like to live here but don't want to do anything to help this town. There are a lot of people in this town who won't do anything for the town as a whole.

But I was really encouraged by the last election. It was so positive instead of negative. People voted for things.

And a larger percentage voted.

I'm a little bit afraid that we might not exactly... (unintelligible)... we're going to have a bypass on the highway...

No, it's not a bypass. It's all in Kirksville.

(many people arguing.)

I'm trying to give people...this is my home, this is my town, and I think most of the people who live here are good people, but we're getting too many young people and not quite enough older people to stay and manage.

I think there's one thing that happened when the war ended, and that's that we provided our own water supply by building two city lakes.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas for residents?

Quincy and Columbia.

Not for everyday stuff.

For groceries, we have 3 places.

How many men's clothing stores are there in Kirksville?

1, really.

How many ladies?

One

How many shoe stores?

Two

Most people have to buy their clothes out of town. I can't buy clothes here, I can't buy suits here.

We do have a super Wal-Mart. It's more than Ft. Myers had.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

Well, the lake is a good place to take out-of-towners for dinner, but they're open not as often as I'd like. We have a lot of restaurants, but we could use a lot more.

Not very long ago, in the 50s and 60s, we used to have better lunch places than area close to here. There was all kinds of places...(unintelligible)... right after the war, we'd bring them in by the drove... people from Jefferson City would come up here deliberately to get steaks. Right down here on the curve...we had a lot then that we don't have now.

But that's happening everywhere.

A really good meal is just kind of hard to come by.

(many people talking at once.)

I want Crumbles and Cream back. It was so good.

(unintelligible talking. Many people talking at once.)

We've got a really nice beginning...

...but we've had it for years...

...now they're doing good things with it. They're having classes out of there, and the choir. And they have plays and concerts at the University.

(many people agreeing at once.)

Tell them about the library.

Oh, the library is wonderful. 3 different times, the citizens voted down a tax increase for a library, but now we finally re-voted, and we have a wonderful library with marvelous programs. We need more room.

They voted down the addition.

(falling noises.)

Moderator: *Let's talk specifically about downtown. Do you feel it's moving in the right or wrong direction?*

A little bit of both.

We're kind of in a shaky stage at this point. Some people want to go one way, and some people want to go the other way, so we're at a stalemate on some things. At the same time, we're doing a lot of improvements in the downtown area. The area around the courthouse is reconstructed, and the city's changing the intersections. If you noticed getting here, there's concrete trucks, but the end result is a better downtown. We've always had a conflict with the downtown people about when to stay open, and now the awnings are a big conflict between owners and merchants renting the buildings, so we have quite a squabble going on at this point about the awnings.

And I forgot that we do have a nice restaurant, Il Spazio.

(unintelligible noises. Side conversations.)

We've just never had a real strong downtown group in several years.

But in 1980, we had it together.

Back in the 60s, that was good.

No, it was 1980.

When's the last time we did the sidewalks?

1980.

They've got to work as one. They've got to work together, or forget it.

This is what I've always said...if one guy stays open until 5 another person stays open until 9, people just go to Wal-Mart. They can't remember when things are open. It's consistency. Our merchants have fought tooth and nail about consistency. We've never been able to get our independent thinkers to come together.

Moderator: Why do people go downtown?

City hall.

Lunch.

My business is downtown.

We still have some really good businesses downtown. We've just got too many vacancies. And maybe some of the businesses don't have a lot of draw. We've got vacancies all over. We need more stability, good businesses.

Our business is a 91 year old family business, and it's difficult when you're open from 7 to 5 to get excited about staying open longer when people don't come downtown at night. Wal-Mart and other large businesses have changed people's shopping habits, and we've lost some of the businesses downtown, shoe stores and dress shops that were family businesses, they've died off.

Our downtown suffered a great deal because of our loss of an industrial park... (unintelligible)...we need to do something. If we don't have merchandise for the 7000 boys and girls who come here for college. They can't buy clothes. We need to come together to buy a package of stores, ladies and men's clothes, shoes...

Maybe the state could help.

I think you're on the right track. We need to find out what businesses we want.

We don't need any eating places. But an industrial park... the city has to deal with that. But I remember in... (unintelligible noise)...we got awnings all over...Kirksville's got some really nice old buildings. I'm confident that if you took an old building and made it look nice, you could get people to come in.

The worst thing we've done is put these ugly fronts on beautiful old brick.

Bingo! I know what it was like in the 1930s.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: *I wanted to ask you about how user-friendly downtown is. Parking, navigation? Can people find their way around?*

Yeah.

I think so.

I think it's up to the merchants to help out. We had somebody downtown asking about other businesses, and if we could share more of that, that would be helpful.

And if the employees and the bosses wouldn't park in front of their stores, then the customers would have a place to park.

(agreement.)

I'm the worst offender. I have 32 apartments, and people park downtown. And the merchants there have employees that park all day. I think we haven't done a good job of designing parking that suits people.... (unintelligible)...they don't want to walk a block.

We've got off-square parking a block away on any corner, and rarely are those filled. We also have the congestion of the county court, and the jurors. It's almost impossible to park on those days.

They're discussed a 2-hour limit on parking downtown. At least for a length of time so that the employees can't park.

I'm going to ask this as a question. How many parking spots would you think would be full and empty downtown?

Ours is pretty well filled. City Hall, the police.

Has the city taken it's place? We've got a whole block of parking here, and usually there's about 3 trucks on it...

(many people talking at once. Unintelligible.)

Maybe it all boils down to getting the merchants to make the parking available and to agree on things.

Where do you put the cars who don't park over there? (unintelligible)...

The merchants are good about not parking in front of their own store.

(unintelligible noise.)

It may change with the gas prices...

You could put several cars...the people who do work downtown have to have a place too. I think we could do it.

How are we going to do it?

The city could put in little parking lot, and designate who gets to park where with tags or something. People do that back in the alleys.

Moderator: How accessible is downtown? Is it easy for people to get around on foot?

Yes.

It's excellent.

There are some problems.

But they're working on it.

We have a curb height problem, but they're taking care of it. That is in the process. That wasn't good, but it's coming along. And all of our curbing now has handicap access. That will be up to date.

We haven't talked about one thing downtown. On Fridays in the summers, there are concerts, and they're very well-attended. People have said, "Why don't we have shopping that same night?" But people come for the concert and leave. I don't think they'd stay to shop. But I think it probably helps the food area downtown.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: What about housing? Is there a demand for more?

There's not very many apartments.

There really isn't adequate buildings downtown. They're old, and most of them... (unintelligible)

(many people talking at once.)

A fair percentage of upstairs has been converted to student housing, but there's no handicap accessible stuff, so there's only young students and young people, but as far as housing for older people, you don't have anything close.

And poor elevator systems.

(many people talking at once.)

...as far as having an area for older people, for senior citizens, we do not have anything downtown.

And back when we did, there were downtown grocery stores.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations on senior housing. Unintelligible noises.)

Senior citizen housing is entirely different than just housing.

We have one right off of downtown at the hospital.

It's never been real successful. Never gotten off the ground.

If we're lucky...we're really on track now for a VA 200-bed hospital.

(many people registering surprise.)

...there is an opportunity for us to make parking lots. Tear out some old buildings and everyone can park there. But that's just something it can be. But if you've got something that you think might go...(unintelligible)

We managed to get the 4-lane highway...

(laughter.)

Moderator: *Let's change direction. How do people get information about what's going on downtown?*

They don't find out about stuff.

They're publicized by the radio and the Chamber.

The Friday night concerts are pretty well advertised.

The Chamber keeps a calendar in print and online. The problem is getting one calendar together, too.

People are getting used to the idea of that calendar.

I've been getting Missouri Life for 100 years, and there was never anything about Kirkville in it, but they finally got it in there.

If it was the conservation department, they showed our forest, and they put other stuff on other maps.

We've got kind of a hodgepodge as far as the media is concerned.

If you read my letter in the Index last week, but I sent a letter to the Daily Express, too, but they didn't print it. That's typical.

We have these little town things.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations about the newspaper.)

Moderator: What I want to spend the rest of the time on is the future of downtown. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

I know that Stone Creations was a great business. College students wanted to go there, and their circumstances put them out of business. It was jewelry, crafts, gifts.

We need something different and unique that will draw people.

We need a women's dress shop and a shoe store.

A drugstore.

I can remember when we had a lot downtown.

I told everybody that it was only after I got married that I knew you had to pay for gasoline.

(laughter.)

We need something unique. A lot of smaller successful communities have antiques and wineries. We need kind of a theme for downtown. We need a gimmick.

We named ourselves a number of things. City lights and country air. Main Street. Old Town.

Last fall we did a wine tour of Missouri, and we did St. Charles and followed the river all the way. They brought in a lot of craftsmen and shops and filled up practically every buildings.

They didn't have a lot of population, but it draws people.

Il Spazio has a brewery, but the beer wasn't very good, but that didn't draw anybody.

Moderator: What about additional dining or entertainment?

We don't need more fast food, that's for sure. I don't think you can blindly say we need a steakhouse or this or that. What you need to do is say, "we'd like to have a nice restaurant." We need nice restaurants. But you have to be careful... (unintelligible)

(agreement.)

(unintelligible, mumbling.)

I do know that towns where people go together to do something for the town that they live in... if you get 1000 people in the Square in Kirksville, you're going to get something done.

We work together as a town pretty darn well. As a city, we do well. We passed 3 tax extensions in tough times.

It's one of the most positive things in the last 2 years. We passed 3 bond issues at the same time. We had more people vote than before, too. They predicted around 2500, and it was around 4000. Maybe people are starting to get interested.

I think that's right. I really think that's...

(people talking at the same time.)

My dad was in politics for 26 years, and he always asked people who were complaining, "Did you vote in the last election?"

(many people talking at once.)

You may have read my quote in that magazine in Kansas City, and I said that I was complaining about something and my husband said, "What have you done to help?" I changed my ways.

Moderator: What are the priorities of improving the look and feel of downtown?

I was chairman of the Main Street program, and we tried to find something that would replace the awnings. We worked on it a lot. But we never did find something. We wanted to see if there was something we could suggest to the merchants that could make these look better. If we could find something that would definitely improve downtown, perhaps with some grants or something.

I think we need to do more than just the awnings.

(agreement.)

They had plants on each corner, but nobody kept them up!

Yeah. In Arizona, if you had a dog, you better have a bag. But here, people just let their dogs go wherever.

We need to enforce that law.

Yeah. It is on the books.

Yeah, it is.

I've never seen anybody enforce it. They try to do nice flowers, but they're trashed.

(agreement.)

We plant our own plantings and go out everyday, but unfortunately most of the merchants don't do that.

(agreement.)

My first job out of the army in 1945, I went to work for _____. I came to work 15 minutes early and cleaned up the sidewalk and cleaned the floor...people don't even consider sweeping sidewalks here.

(many people talking at once.)

3 or 4 years ago, through some money, we hired (unintelligible) to clean all the alleys, and that fund just ran out, but during the time it made a big difference. Nobody takes responsibility for cleaning the downtown area.

(agreement.)

By having somebody, and you just need to get that cooperation.

I have to tell you one funny story that I just thought of. When Min's was there, they had a tree and it was dying, but Min took it out and replanted it... he said "a healthy tree in front of a business is bad news."

Moderator: What about green space or parks downtown?

I hope we keep up, and there are programs that they have...

I'm not sure, but the new construction has kind of ripped out the planters, but I hope they keep those. But who's going to do the work for it?

Too bad we couldn't get money for the shelter workshop to do it.

We are a tree city.

Tree city.

Tree city.

(many people talking at once. Unintelligible.)

There is a tree committee that the city has, but it's not active.

We have 355 backyards.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Finally, thinking about other cities you've been to, which downtown would you like to see Kirksville emulate in one way or another?

Pella.

My old town, Marston, Iowa has beautiful planters, and the city waters them all the time.

I'd like to see a downtown with something in every building, and then worry about planters.

(agreement.)

You could bring a little grocery store in. Or drugstore or something.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Any other downtowns?

I like Webster Groves. I've been there so often. They have pretty plantings and the stores look good.

There's one there on the river in Iowa. Neat town. Fort Myerson, maybe? Nice downtown walkways...

(unintelligible)...

Moderator: Thank you very much.

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SECTION VI

CITY OFFICIALS AND ADMINISTRATORS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Tell me a little bit about Kirksville as a whole.

It's a college town.

It's an agricultural area.

I would amend that college town statement, by saying it doesn't have much of that atmosphere.

But we do have 3 colleges, so they add to a lot of the commerce and what goes on here. They're here.

It would be stable without them.

It would certainly be different. I would say that there is more town and gown separation than a lot of people think. I don't see it, but I think there is a significant percentage of people that have experienced a town and gown separation, on both ends.

Best whitetail in the United States.

We do have a lot of people that come from around the United States to take advantage of that.

(many people talking at once.)

I would say that, since it's my job to promote Kirksville, it's an easy community to sell. We've got the two economic pillars of education and healthcare. And there is a significant town-gown dynamic, but it's not a problem. It's there, but it's not a problem. It contributes to the community, and it's a community where people make the difference. We have really strong community leadership.

And it's just good people.

(agreement.)

It's very much a family type community. I really enjoy Kirksville because it is kind of rural, but I've been in big cities, and I like rural better. It's more family-friendly, but there's a Home Depot down the street. It doesn't have as much as a big city, and it's a problem for some of the college students, but Kirksville has enough that it's a great town. Great town.

With the university, we have so many entertainment opportunities with music and drama...

My wife and I just went to an orchestra thing a couple weekends ago, and a town this size anywhere else wouldn't have that kind of thing.

There are very few communities that have the small-town atmosphere but the larger offerings from higher education of diversity and culture. It's pretty unique.

We're also a church community, and the churches open their doors to groups to meet and have events and that sort of thing.

Because of Truman's Lyceum series, that's about the most major cultural thing. Chinese acrobats, symphonies, ballets... besides the Red Barn arts and crafts, the Lyceum is the main cultural thing we have. It's an excellent way... for parents and others to see...

Moderator: Where do most people work?

Most people work here or nearby.

There's a much larger number of people who come in to Kirksville to work than those who leave. It's a destination, it's a hub, for about an 8-county area.

In the last 15 years, I'd say three-quarters of the people who worked with me come from other communities.

Moderator: Where do you do your shopping?

Most of what we need is here in Kirksville. I can stay here for several months, and it's got everything I need. But there are times when you might want to shop at Best Buy or some clothing stores. In our day of technology, a lot of people get on the Internet. Most of what I need, I know, is right here in Kirksville.

Most everyday things are here, but if you want quality menswear, you have to go out of town.

The Internet is altering that, I think. I find myself going to the Internet rather than going to Columbia or St. Louis.

(many people talking at once.)

There's just certain things you can't get over here. People still want face-to-face honest dealings, so people do travel to deal with people face-to-face. You can get some stuff over the Internet, but there's definitely things... a guy wants to buy a gun, he's probably going to Kansas City.

(many people agreeing.)

The guys are going to want to pick the gun up.

I drive a Honda, and we don't have a Honda dealer here. People will repair it, but if they feel like they can't, they'll send me to a dealer. As a woman, I appreciate that honesty.

Moderator: What else do you have to go out of town for?

I believe it's a misperception, but people do go out of Kirksville for healthcare. We don't have invasive cardiac capabilities, so there are medical needs we don't have here... I think that some people go out just in general for healthcare, but there are things that people have to go out for.

Our hospital was just recognized in the top 100 rural hospitals in the country, and it is a shame that people feel we don't have good healthcare.

_____ just did a focus group on this very issue, and we had representatives of the healthcare industry, and we operated on the premise that healthcare dollars are leaving the community. But wherever you are, you think there's better healthcare elsewhere. But...there's little that you really can do...it's a difficult problem, more complicated... there's little that you can do to counter that other than education and public awareness. But there is excellent healthcare here.

Do you think that because as a community we have a lot of retirees, do you think that their needs are wider and that our hospital doesn't provide diverse specialties, so they tend to go out of town?

I think the healthcare community here does really good job with senior citizens. You get into problems where you just don't have enough volume. Intense cardiac is one of those things. I think it's more of a volume thing than anything else. But the healthcare here does a really good job with senior citizens.

A.T. Stills has a focus on that.

I think that the hospital, they're working with partnerships with several Columbia specialists, and that's a real smart move.

Moderator: Is there enough dining in town? Do you leave to eat out?

The problem there would be that the next closest city that's bigger than us is 65 miles away.

Moderator: So people basically stay here?

I think there's a significant number of restaurants until you get into the higher end.

(many people talking at once.)

If you want to take your wife somewhere real nice, you might go to Columbia or Kansas City.

There's a lot of fast food here, but if I'm going to go out to eat, Ponderosa, Country Kitchen, there's a few places. But if you're from a big city, good grief, I mean, you've got Chili's and Applebee's where you can eat in big cities, so an outsider coming in from a bigger city... if this job thing works out to where this company comes in, it would be nice to have a few more nicer restaurants with a little more variety. I pastor in the community, and we get special speakers, and you can't take somebody to a nice place. It's not like you're going to drive 60 miles.

Fuel prices are so.

We've lost the upper-end private restaurants...Patterson's, Salamander, (other names unintelligible). We have lost some of the better private dining. We've gained Ruby Tuesday's.

Ruby Tuesday's has done very well.

There's an opportunity for more chains like that.

(many people talking at once.)

We also have a restaurant where the food isn't gourmet, but the setting is beautiful.

Moderator: What sort of recreation do people do?

Eat, work, and hunt.

Fish.

We do have 2 nice lakes. The Hazel Creek is one of the best lakes up here, and people come in for the fishing.

People come to the lake for like a weekend. There's cabins, and from May to September, those cabins are pretty booked. People will make a whole week of it sometimes. There's swimming, boating...

Would you agree that the lake is less utilized by us than the outsiders?

Yes.

We take it for granted and we just don't use it.

The campgrounds are full almost every day of the summer.

(many people talking at once.)

...we go 100 miles to go somewhere else.

(laughter.)

We also about 10,000 acres of underutilized conservation lands.

We've got a great city parks system here. It's neighborhood-based community parks. Great parks. There's all kinds of recreation available beyond hunting and fishing. There's all kinds of sports and... and there's a whole menu...

Country clubs.

La Plata's golf course is nice. And we've got Frisbee golf. That was really something where I think, A.T. Still students got together and put in Frisbee golf in one of our local parks, last fall.

Wow.

Yeah.

There were so many people coming in.

(many people talking at once. Unintelligible.)

There's an annual air show, antique car shows, a whole series of community events such as the Red Barn Festival, Blues Festival, 4th of July parade, Friday evenings at the courthouse. It really is sort of part of what I think is unique about Kirkville, that we have a self-dependency. I think that's a result of the location over the years, and being the central location in Northern Missouri but also being far from major cities. We have an independent attitude. We look to ourselves to solve problems.

Our greatest strength is our independent spirit. And it's our greatest weakness...

(laughter.)

Some of that probably has been necessitated over the years by the location.

Moderator: *Let's talk about your downtown specifically. Do you feel it's headed in a positive or negative direction?*

I think it's at a standstill.

I think a lot of energy...there's been a lot of people who put a lot of energy into downtown, not just even dollars. People trying to meet with people, trying to get...I think there's the perception that the downtown is kind of, where the life of the city was years ago. Preserving that downtown and that spirit behind it...but right now, I've talked to some of the owners downtown... I would like to see a vision painted for some of them, but I don't know. Some of them might...would they take hold of it? That's kinda...

I think downtown is cyclical. At one time, all of the stores were there. Drugstores, grocery stores. People still refer to the old Penney's and so on. Then we had some very viable shops downtown, small independent shops. And still some larger people occupy some buildings. If I had to characterize downtown, I would say underutilized. There's a lot more potential. There's buildings that are empty and are poorly used.

It's in the hands of the property owners, and some are forward-thinking, but others want progress but when that progress involves money, they're not in favor of progress. They're in favor of the city or the county spending money, but when it comes to them putting those dollars in, the money's not there. You just don't have that commitment. They'd rather say, the status quo is as it is.

I would agree with both of you. There's great potential, but the vision is not there.

You need more than vision, though. You need leadership. The downtown, when you compare it to other county seats, the downtown's pretty viable. There are very few unoccupied buildings. And really, they have done a reasonably good job of responding to the enormous changes that Wal-Mart brings. Having said that, I personally don't see the downtown going in any direction. I don't see it moving forward or backward. I think status quo is right on target, as your assessment. And there's an issue now regarding the awnings, and the city council will have to deal with that issue, but that's just a glitch on the overall radar screen. I think the downtown is viable, and it's doing better than other downtowns, but it's pretty stagnant.

One problem is, structurally you've got real problems. Buildings that, no matter how much façade work we do, they're still decaying buildings. And I don't have a solution for that one.

I think we do have some solution with what you've done around the courthouse. That is the hub of the downtown.

That's a really nice improvement, too. Beautification and parking around the courthouse.

I feel like the courthouse is the structure of the downtown, and that's where this thing should originate from. Start there...

We've got a little bit of the DREAM initiative going there, too, because we've got the grant to figure out what the courthouse needs, and that's going to help. The merchants won't participate much in the courthouse improvement, but the courthouse is going to stand alone.

It might shed light to the others, though, if the courthouse looks good. That's the major point, is that courthouse.

You mentioned the condition of the buildings. One property owner I talked to, he has this siding on the side of the building, and you talk about taking the canopy down, and we talked about taking the siding off because the architecture is probably beautiful. He said he was scared to see what it looked like behind the siding. And that's a part of what the downtown property owners think. They will run into problems that could be 10s of thousands of dollars, and it could put them out of business.

I have a question about the courthouse. Wasn't part of this last tax issue supposed to go to this?

No. The voters said they wanted it for law enforcement. But we'll put the tax into law enforcement, and the other money toward the courthouse.

What happened in Macon and Clinton is that buildings fell down. The unreinforced structures that could fall down.

When the theater block came down, the buildings on the end were the stable anchors, and when we took them out, the whole block fell down.

In the 60s, a building literally fell down...we've got buildings downtown where if you take a building next door away...

I hear you, but every little county seat has that same problem. I bet you that problem is much larger than we think.

The siding went up all those years ago for a reason. And people didn't fix the buildings, they hid the problems.

The west side of the square, did that burn?

No. One building did, but the rest were demolished.

Moderator: What do you go downtown to do?

I shop, eat, go to the movies.

Bars and restaurants and movies.

The only thing downtown the college kids go to is the coffee shop.

(many people talking at once.)

And the bars.

I think that's a key, too. I'm not sure _____ didn't have one aspect of it right. He said, "We're not utilizing the customers that we have." Washington Street Java and Pagliai's has a strong business, and the sushi place. The college students are bringing a need to this town that we don't do a good job serving.

You said earlier that some of the businesses downtown had figured out how to compete with Wal-Mart. I don't think they have. The shops close at 5, even on Fridays when people are downtown.

True. I've experienced that. In the evenings, nothing's open. I would shop, but instead I'm going to go home. I've gone around and talked to downtown people, but they've been able to compete because of their long-standing customer base. That's why they don't want the canopies to come down. I don't think a younger generation really cares—they just want a place that has stuff and is open in the evenings. Someone else mentioned the university students using the Java Company. I just had a speaker come to town, and he wanted to get on the Internet. KDIC wanted 5 dollars, and the only place he could find was the Java Company, and he sat down there and checked his email. But, that's what he needed to do. With the college and everything, I could see college students sitting down there and getting on the Net. There's some small things we could do like wireless to attract those customers.

We have a population of 17,000, and we don't have a donut shop.

And we don't have a good ice cream place.

Java Company.

Moderator: What about parking downtown. Is that a problem?

There's a perception.

And the problems that do exist are driven by the owners. They and their staff take up the parking spots.

There have been a couple efforts where the downtown want to take on this parking issue, and they learn really fast that it's easier to take on smoking than parking.

(laughter.)

We have angled parking on 4 sides of the Square. That was fine when it was done, but it does not accommodate today's 4-door pickup trucks. There's a problem with owners parking in front of their own shops. Our municipal lots are never full, and they're perceived to be too far away, but they are much closer than walking halfway down the Wal-Mart lot.

I think the perception thing is a good way of saying it. It's the same thing on campus, too. I think it's what you're used to.

Plus, there are a lot of apartments downtown in the buildings, and they don't have parking places.

On the Square?

Yeah.

Moderator: That was actually my next question. Is there more need for housing downtown?

You said a donut shop, and I think I see as a need downtown a small store that sells bread, milk, that sort of thing. It would be for those people who live down there and for others.

The only way I see that could work downtown is if you could rotate things on your shelves. If you could work in conjunction with Hy-Vee who could rotate those groceries...

That's a good idea.

There is that little Quik-shop by campus.

(many people talking at once.)

The University also has 3 convenience stores.

But they only cater to the student population.

To me, the housing question downtown is a chicken and egg sort of thing. If downtown is more revitalized, it'll be more attractive, and yes, more housing would be great.

We thought we'd have someone who'd come in and take over our hotel, on the southwest side of the Square. They were going to come in and turn it into apartments.

It's actually a historical hotel. A lot of people from the railroad would stay there. Harry S. Truman actually stayed there. And it's just vacant now.

It's only been vacant 4 years, maybe.

And it's had some dollars spent on it.

That's where Rotary used to meet, and you could take people there for lunch...

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: *Let's shift to downtown in the future. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?*

A linen shop.

Shoe stores.

Yeah.

Ladies' shoes.

A bookstore. A place where people could sit and read.

A hobby shop, a fabric shop...that's something that, every time we go through Columbia, "Can we go to Hobby Lobby?" says my wife.

We need 1 wing of the Columbia mall. Downtown is not going to be able to compete with Wal-Mart, but if you don't like clothing from Wal-Mart or J.C. Penney...and there's no hobby shop or linen shop. We do have a haberdashery.

(many people talking at once.)

What we need is a variety of shops... we had Stone Creations, which was great. We've got two jewelry stores.

We lost the antique mall, and I think antique stores would be good.

We need almost...

(many people talking at once.)

...places that have stuff that you can't buy nowhere else. I go to antique stores to buy some of that stuff. In my opinion too, the main goal is to give someone a tax incentive to start something on the South end. For this thing to stay alive, there needs to be some sorts of incentives around the Square.

And it's about a variety of shops and an energy that would be produced. They wouldn't close at 5:00 at night. It would attract both the town and the people from the University.

(many people talking at once.)

Pagliai's does a great job with the University. And Java. But, you know, when you talk about opportunities downtown, the close proximity to the colleges means that a number of things could add to the eclectic air of the downtown.

When I moved here 4 years ago, I was coming from Lawrence, Kansas, and I could go to a store at 10:00 at night there, and I move here and everything's shut down at 5:00, and it was hard to go anywhere and do any type of shopping. For students that go to classes all day long, it would be nice if they could walk downtown and go to Hallmark at 7:00 at night or buy clothes.

Most business owners will tell you they tried that for a whole summer and they gave up.

(many people agreeing at once.)

I think it may take time. Just to do it for a summer... anything takes time. A lot of students may not realize they're open past whenever. I think it's something that you may have to stick with for a while.

And it may be a seasonal thing too. In the summer, when people are walking downtown, stay open.

And if you only have 1 or 2 business owners willing to stay open...but if everybody stayed open until 7:00, you could walk from store to store. But people need to work together.

There is a downtown association.

But not everyone's willing to be part of it.

Is it not as active as it was?

Well, that's where we need help and ideas. I go to Jefferson City, and the sidewalks are clean, and there are planters. Who takes care of those things?

The city does.

I don't think so.

(many people talking at once.)

...by the courthouse, they've added some signs... you'd almost need something to keep people milling around.

Take out all the weeds so you can see Still statue.

From a city standpoint, there's a fear. We've put all this money on sidewalks around the courthouse, and we ran into a roadblock with the awnings, and we're asking ourselves, "Are we going to keep dumping money into this when no one wants to cooperate with this?" You're going to have a really nice courthouse, and there's not going to be shops. "Do we want to put money into our downtown, when we've got business owners who are just not willing to play ball?" I agree that we need leadership, but you can lead a horse to water... I'm interested in what DREAM can do to help make them want to drink.

We've got a strong core of leadership here, but I don't know...I don't see that strong leadership emerging in the downtown group, for some reason.

I know that some of the KDIC people feel like there's a faction that does not want to move, and they want things to stay the same. It's difficult for that core group...the others don't come. It is a problem.

I think it's a problem, and I think some of that core group...we've had studies done about revitalizing downtown, and the downtown business owners, some wanted to do it and some didn't. And here we have DREAM again, and I think the city will be involved again and try to facilitate, and the city's coming off as the bad guy. I don't know that the city...I think a better way to do it, instead of talking to all the business owners as one, we almost have to give them the pitch and go to individual key businesses and let the DREAM people pitch to them individually.

Will there be a focus group possibility of downtown businesses?

Moderator: Yeah, we already had one.

I talked to _____ today, and I asked her about the meeting this afternoon, and one of the people in another group was a downtown business owner, and he said he wasn't going to show up. There are some business owners that want, that begged, "we want the recommendations of the DREAM." I sat on the TIF, and we brought them in. We have a small group that really wants this, but we've got so many people just set in stone, not wanting change.

The pessimist in me says that this scenario from the 90s happened in the 70s. That scenario started in the early 70s and has just deteriorated. I wish there were a good answer, but I don't see one. You've got a lot of absentee building owners, and you've got some business owners that have established businesses that are set. And you've got the new ones that can't afford to spend.

I've talked to some of the new ones, and they want to step out and make a little bit of investment and attract people in. Some of them are beating their heads against a wall.

We have a good-news-bad-news situation. We haven't experienced a significant crisis, but the bad news is that the crisis is what's helped other communities to get behind an effort like this. If we could come up with something that would serve in place of that crisis to get everyone going... I think these people would come to the table if there was an economic crisis.

There's an old story that a tornado went through a campus, and the president sends out a guy to assess the damage, and the guy comes back and says, "We need about \$40 million in capital improvements."

(laughter.)

Ever since this whole thing started with the canopies, why in the world did they agree to put them up in the first place?

There were only 3 or 4 main property owners.

People have to work together and get behind this. When somebody goes, "we're going to do something," they can set an example and get people behind them.

Will that be enough? The ones that are willing to do it? If we do something as a starting point...

I think that, another thing might be...maybe there needs to be another person, another group, to get a vision for downtown. Say, "we don't own anything downtown, but we're going to pay 10% more than what these buildings are worth, we're going to buy them out, and we're going to show people what can be done." Someone that might want to cater to the university might want to invest.

And enrollment could be more at Truman. Right now, it's more than 5000.

But part of that is...they made the commitment to a 16-to-one student-teacher ratio. Increasing enrollment is a real dilemma.

But they do play a major role.

The bad news is also the good news here. Truman commissioned a study to figure out how to get more enrollment, and Truman's facing some of the same challenges as other universities, but one of their unique challenges is their isolation here. They interviewed students, and students come up here, they look at Kirkville, and they don't feel it's an attractive college town where they want to spend 4 years. So what we're doing here is happening there, too. Committees, student groups, want to contribute to Kirkville and add to the community. There is a real energy. It's like a perfect storm, perhaps.

We've had several students tell us that their first year was miserable, getting adjusted to Kirkville. After that, they loved it. Once they get used to it, they really love it.

And parents love it, because they feel their kids are safer here. They see it as a low-risk community.

And you were asking earlier about which stores we would like. Someone needs to go to the university and ask students what they would want. Once again, maybe we're missing something. Most of us may not use the wi-fi at the Java Company, but that's really important to university students. Maybe there's something that the students would love to have downtown.

_____ is such an entrepreneur, and he does medical scrubs and shoes and all that. We need people who can find a niche.

All you have to do is travel to other college towns, and see what they're doing, and ask yourself, "why aren't we doing that?" Their streets are lined with shops that are for college students, open late, and it's pedestrian and bike friendly... even if students don't have a lot of money, they still want to go outside and hang out and eat some ice cream. If we have that sort of atmosphere, it would go a long way...

(unintelligible side conversations...)

Moderator: *I appreciate you all coming today. Thank you very much.*