

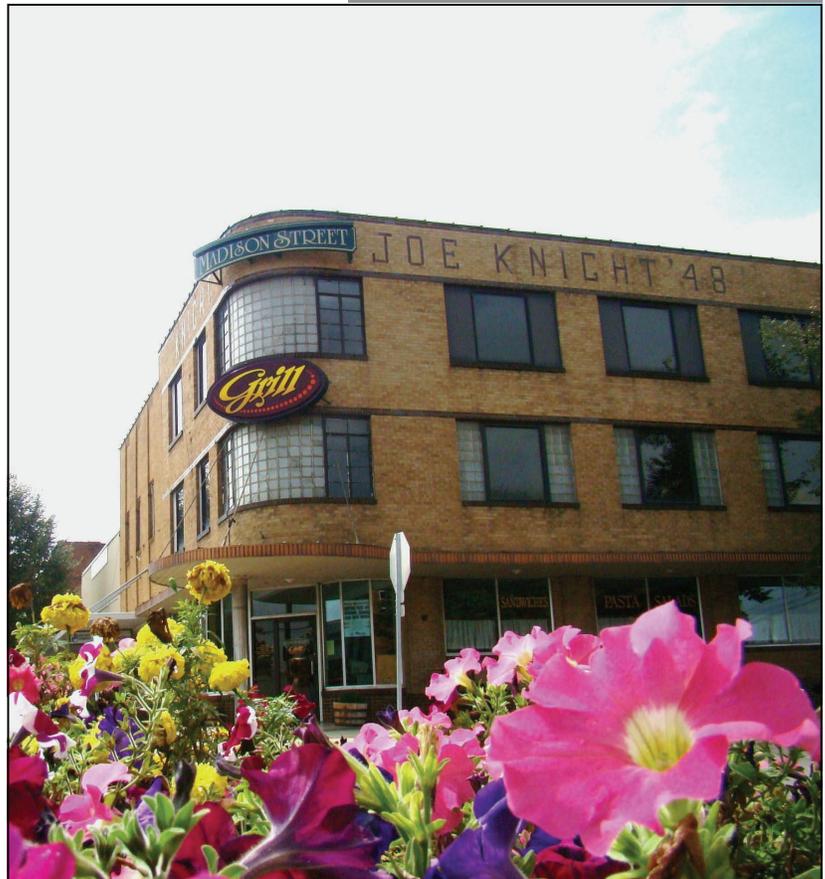
DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

OCTOBER 2009

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Lebanon, Missouri



PGAVURBANCONSULTING

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to



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

FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, a series of focus group discussions occurred in the summer of 2009. UNICOM-ARC, a subconsultant firm contracted with PGAV, Inc., conducted the four focus group meetings in Lebanon, Missouri. The purpose of these meetings was to learn about the priorities of the Lebanon community in regard to the Downtown area. The four groups included the following: 1) City Department Heads, 2) DREAM Committee, 3) Longtime Residents, and 4) Business Owners. Participants of all four groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all of the groups to the posed questions.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO BUSINESS GROUPS:

The following questions were included in the business group discussion guide. These questions were asked of group 4) Business Owners:

General Questions about Lebanon

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

Downtown Specific Questions

04. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Lebanon is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property Downtown (or not in Downtown, for other business owners)?
06. From what you hear from your customers, how “user-friendly” is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for?
07. Is there any residential living in Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more housing Downtown? What kind of housing – rental, condominiums, single family housing, etc.? Who would be the target for that housing, students, elderly, etc.?

08. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what's going on Downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? What is communication like between business (or business groups) and the City's administrator and elected officials?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

09. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for Downtown Lebanon. 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?
 - What types of dining and entertainment choices would you prefer?
 - What type of parks and outdoor recreation facilities are needed?
10. Now, we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?
- Street repair?
 - Landscaping/beautification?
 - Green space?
 - Building repairs, renovation, upgrades?
11. Of all the potential improvements we've just talked about, what do you think the highest priorities should be for the City?
12. What could the City administration or elected officials do to help your business thrive or keep your property values strong over the next few years?
13. Would you be willing to support a "special business district" in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for Downtown?

B. QUESTIONS POSED TO GENERAL GROUPS:

The following questions were included in the general groups discussion guide. These questions were asked of the following groups: 1) City Department Heads, 2) DREAM Committee, and 3) Longtime Residents

General Questions about Lebanon

01. Generally speaking, how would you describe this area to someone visiting from another city? Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?
02. What are the main shopping areas for area residents? From how far away do people come or go to do their regular shopping (groceries, household items)?

03. What about dining and entertainment options? What are popular choices for local residents? When friends or relatives visit from out of town, where do you take them?
04. What kinds of recreation are popular with local residents? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in these activities in Lebanon?

Downtown Specific Questions

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

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

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

C. THE LEBANON 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 Lebanon as a friendly and welcoming small town with excellent schools, a great sense of community, and many nearby recreational opportunities. Lebanon is off of Interstate 44 and is 50 minutes from Springfield and 25 minutes from the Lake of the Ozarks, which gives residents easy access to the amenities of those communities.

Participants generally felt that Lebanon is moving slowly in the right direction. They noted that the national economic downturn has not affected Lebanon as much as it has other communities, as Lebanon has a diversity of plants, factories, and other industry. Therefore, Lebanon is still stable economically and has opportunity for growth.

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

Lebanon residents do much of their shopping in Lebanon, primarily at Wal-Mart, as well as at chain businesses by the highway and some independent local retailers. Most of the shopping is along the highway, but the Downtown has some retail businesses.

Lebanon, as it is an employment hub for many surrounding smaller communities, is also a shopping hub. People travel to Lebanon to shop at Wal-Mart and its surrounding stores.

Residents, though, often travel to Springfield or to the Lake of the Ozarks to shop for things they cannot buy in Lebanon or things for which Lebanon does not have a wide variety. They particularly go there for men's and women's clothing, shoes, sporting goods, and other variety. Participants also mentioned that local residents shop online for a wider selection of some items. In addition, participants stated that, other than Wal-Mart, many local Lebanon businesses have 9-to-5 weekday hours only, which makes it inconvenient to shop in Lebanon.

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 Lebanon, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, fast food, casual dining, family dining, and a "higher end" dining option Downtown (Madison Street Grill). Many of the dining options are along the highway, but there are three or four restaurants Downtown that residents particularly like.

The participants overall felt that more variety in dining options would be welcome, if Lebanon could support that variety. Many visit Springfield or the Lake for a wider variety, or they combine dining with shopping trips to those areas.

For recreation and entertainment, the participants cited parks, sports, hunting, fishing, and the nearby Lake, as well as a movie theater and a few festivals. They felt, however, that options for entertainment—particularly for children, teenagers, and young professionals—are limited in Lebanon.

D. DOWNTOWN LEBANON: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

The groups generally felt that Downtown Lebanon is *not* moving in the *wrong* direction, but many felt that it was not moving at all. A few described it as “stagnant.” Some felt it was moving very slowly in the right direction, particularly with the recent addition of the Madison Street Grill, and with the openness of the community toward it and a few other local residents that serve alcoholic beverages.

Priorities for helping Downtown Lebanon move further in the right direction included adding more retail and entertainment, focusing on the aesthetics of Downtown, filling empty storefronts, repairing old buildings, improving sidewalks and lighting, improving parking, improving signage, adding public restrooms and benches, and giving business and building owners incentives and education to help them succeed.

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

Business owners in multiple groups cited low cost, tradition, and the historic architecture as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown or invested in buildings. The participants indicated, at different points in the discussion, that Downtown might be a more attractive location for businesses if the City focused on bringing retail to Downtown, providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses, and improving the aesthetics and infrastructure of Downtown.

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

Participants mentioned a number of reasons that they visit Downtown, most of them service-oriented: the post office, banks, beauty shops and barbershops, other professional offices, and a few restaurants. Lebanon has a few festivals and special events Downtown, and many residents attend and enjoy the festivals.

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?

The participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including business hours, parking, public restrooms, and signage into Downtown.

The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are a significant problem, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Many businesses are open only until 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it difficult for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. Businesses that are open on weekends are might only be open on Saturday mornings, not Saturday afternoons or Sundays, which is sometimes inconvenient for residents, and discourages the idea of Lebanon as a destination for weekend travelers.

Parking was a concern for many participants. Much of the parking is behind the buildings, and there is no easy way for people to access the buildings from the back, so people then have to walk around the block. Furthermore, store owners and employees often take all the on-street parking. Some participants explained that many people perceive parking to be a problem if they cannot find a parking spot directly in front of the store they wish to visit, even though they might be willing to walk a significant distance from a parking spot in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Participants suggested that if all of the storefronts were populated with shops and other businesses and if buildings had back entrances or mid-block alleyways, the walk from parking spot to business might seem shorter, and people may be more likely to park at the end of a block and walk.

The participants felt that the lack of restrooms is a concern for the user-friendliness of Downtown, and they suggested that a few strategically placed public restrooms would make Downtown more user-friendly for all residents and visitors.

Better signage in and around Downtown, according to participants, would help draw people Downtown from the highways and would help people find what they are looking for. The groups suggested signage on the Highway saying "Visit Historic Downtown Lebanon" and signage coming into Downtown saying "Historic Downtown Lebanon."

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

Participants mentioned radio, the weekly newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events. Most felt that word-of-mouth was the predominant way that they got their information, and suggested that the City could do more, as Lebanon continues to develop, to market itself and its history to potential visitors. Of concern for some participants was inadequate signage to the Chamber of Commerce office, or a central hub for information (such as maps or other regional information), which would make Lebanon easier for visitors to navigate and explore.

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

There is little residential living in Downtown Lebanon, though participants felt that there would be a demand for second-story living, particularly reasonably priced, nice rentals, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated. Some participants expressed that more residences Downtown would create a bigger customer base for all of the Downtown businesses, and would also be an attractive housing option for Downtown business owners. The groups felt that the housing would appeal to college-age students, young professionals, and empty nesters.

E. DOWNTOWN LEBANON: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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

Participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains. For retail, they suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, a shoe store, a bookstore, art galleries and shops, gift shops, a sporting goods store, and any other type of specialty shop. For food, they suggested coffee shops, an upscale grocery store, and organic foods market, a candy store, a pizzeria, a deli, a soda fountain, an ice cream store, and a variety of dining establishments. The participants would welcome restaurants with good food, later and weekend business hours, outdoor seating in the summertime, and liquor licenses (participants noted that some local residents travel to other communities to have a glass of wine or a beer with dinner). A number of participants suggested that retail should *not* focus on competing with Wal-Mart, but should instead focus on offering unique options for both residents and tourists with discretionary income.

For entertainment and recreation, participants felt that a variety of restaurants and shops with later business hours and liquor licenses would be a good start. They suggested outdoor music performances, live theater, a movie theater, festivals, and anything focused on entertaining children, teenagers, and young professionals. They also suggested a bike trail or a walking trail that will bring people Downtown. In addition, they suggested that the entertainment should be focused both on residents and on tourists.

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

Many thought that the Downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart, nor is it to compete with large chain stores in Springfield or the Lake. Rather, they suggested that Downtown should offer a unique experience to customers, both residents and tourists. To this end, the groups felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and the City should identify and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail spaces.

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

When asked about the look and feel of Downtown, participants felt that streets, sidewalks, and lighting, infrastructure improvements, building façade repair, landscaping, and green gathering spaces were all important priorities.

Some participants suggested cobblestone or stamped-stone streets, and perhaps converting a portion of the Downtown to a pedestrian mall after hours. There was also a general consensus that nicer sidewalks and theme lighting, and brighter lighting in the parking lots behind buildings, would all be welcome improvements.

Infrastructure improvements such as burying utilities underground would also improve the aesthetics of Downtown. Some participants felt that above-ground utilities are unattractive and an impediment to helping building owners fix their facades. They also mentioned that poor drainage often floods the Downtown streets, and that the sewers need to be repaired and updated.

In addition, helping building owners repair their buildings and bringing business in to occupy empty, renovated buildings would help make Downtown more bustling, populated, and aesthetically pleasing.

Regarding green space and landscaping, some suggested pocket parks with benches and gathering spaces. Some participants also felt that the current trees Downtown are not aesthetically pleasing, as they are too big and they are asymmetrical. These participants believed that symmetrical, balanced trees would help Downtown's look and feel.

The suggestions for aesthetics all focused on giving Downtown a historic and cohesive look and feel while making it still feel safe and modern.

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

The groups identified as the highest priorities filling the Downtown with retail businesses and helping building owners repair their buildings. Other priorities included aesthetic improvements, public restrooms, alleyways or back entrances to access the parking in the backs of buildings, and marketing the Downtown to tourists.

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

The business owners felt that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, help building owners upgrade the backs of the buildings.

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

The participants also mentioned a few downtowns whose mix of businesses or aesthetics they admired: Farmington, Missouri; Hermann, Missouri; Cape Girardeau, Missouri; Springfield, Missouri; Cuba, Missouri; Chillicothe, Missouri; Branson Landing in Branson, Missouri; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Tunica, Mississippi; Louisville, Kentucky; Paducah, Kentucky; Knoxville, Tennessee; Dayton, Ohio; Savannah, Georgia; Denver, Colorado; San Antonio, Texas; and Solvang, California.

F. KEY POINTS

The following lists are a summary of the key points discussed and suggested by all four Focus Groups.

Key points about the Lebanon area:

- ◆ Lebanon is a friendly and welcoming small town with excellent schools, a great sense of community, and many nearby recreational opportunities.
- ◆ Lebanon is off of Interstate 44 and is 50 minutes from Springfield and 25 minutes from the Lake of the Ozarks, which gives residents easy access to the amenities of those communities.
- ◆ Participants felt that Lebanon is moving slowly in the right direction because of its economic stability and its opportunities for growth.
- ◆ Lebanon residents do much of their shopping in Lebanon, primarily at Wal-Mart, as well as at chain businesses by the highway and some independent local retailers.
- ◆ Lebanon, as it is an employment hub for many surrounding smaller communities, is also a shopping hub.
- ◆ Residents travel to Springfield or the Lake, or shop online, for items that they cannot find in Lebanon, for a greater variety, and for longer business hours.
- ◆ There are a number of restaurants in Lebanon, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, fast food, casual dining, family dining, and a higher-end dining option Downtown (Madison Street Grill).
- ◆ Many visit Springfield or the Lake for a wider variety of dining options, or they combine dining with shopping trips to those areas.
- ◆ For recreation and entertainment, the participants cited parks, sports, hunting, fishing, and the nearby Lake, as well a movie theater and a few festivals.
- ◆ Participants felt that entertainment options—particularly for children, teenagers, and young professionals—are limited in Lebanon.

Key points about Downtown Lebanon in the present:

- ◆ Most participants felt that Downtown Lebanon is *not* moving in the *wrong* direction, but many felt that it was not moving at all.
- ◆ Some felt Downtown is moving very slowly in the right direction, particularly with the recent addition of the Madison Street Grill, and the openness of the community to it and other restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages.
- ◆ Priorities for helping Downtown Lebanon move further in the right direction included adding more retail and entertainment, making liquor licenses easier to obtain for restaurants, focusing on the aesthetics of Downtown, filling empty storefronts, repairing

old buildings, improving sidewalks and lighting, improving parking, improving signage, adding public restrooms and benches, and giving business and building owners incentives and education to help them succeed.

- ◆ Business owners in multiple groups cited low cost, tradition, and the historic architecture as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown or invested in buildings.
- ◆ New businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focused on attracting retail businesses, providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses, and improving the aesthetics and infrastructure of the Downtown.
- ◆ The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit Downtown, most of them service-oriented: the post office, banks, beauty shops and barbershops, other professional offices, a few restaurants, and a few festivals.
- ◆ The participants noted several concerns about user-friendliness, including business hours, parking, public restrooms, and signage into Downtown.
- ◆ Business hours are inconvenient for most residents, because most Downtown businesses are only open until 5:00 PM on weekdays and limited hours, if any, on weekends.
- ◆ Parking is difficult for Downtown customers because lots are behind the buildings and there no easy way to access most buildings through back entrances, so customers have to walk around the block.
- ◆ A few strategically placed public restrooms would make Downtown more user-friendly for all residents and visitors.
- ◆ Better signage in and around Downtown would help draw people Downtown from the highways and would help people find what they are looking for.
- ◆ The participants mentioned the radio, the weekly newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events.
- ◆ Signage to the Chamber of Commerce office, or a central hub for information, would make Lebanon easier for visitors to navigate and explore.
- ◆ There is little residential living in Downtown Lebanon, but the participants felt that there would be a demand for second-story living, particularly reasonably priced, “nice” rentals, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated.
- ◆ The groups felt that Downtown housing would appeal to college-age students, young professionals, Downtown business owners, and empty nesters.

Key points about the future of Downtown Lebanon:

- ◆ The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains.
- ◆ Downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart, nor is it to compete with large chain stores in Springfield or the Lake. Rather, Downtown should offer a unique experience to customers, both residents and tourists.
- ◆ For retail, suggestions included more men's, women's, and children's clothing, a shoe store, a bookstore, art galleries and shops, gift shops, a sporting goods store, and any other type of specialty shop.
- ◆ For food, they suggested coffee shops, an upscale grocery store, and organic foods market, a candy store, a pizzeria, a deli, a soda fountain, an ice cream store, and a variety of dining establishments with good food, later and weekend business hours, outdoor seating in the summertime, and liquor licenses.
- ◆ For entertainment and recreation, suggestions included outdoor music performances, live theater, a movie theater, festivals, bike and walking trails, and anything focused on entertaining both residents and tourists, and focused on children, teenagers, and young professionals.
- ◆ The participants felt that more second-story residential space would appeal to young professionals and business owners and would keep residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.
- ◆ Small business should be encouraged, and the City should find and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail spaces.
- ◆ Streets, sidewalks, and lighting, infrastructure improvements, building façade repair, landscaping, and green gathering spaces were all important aesthetic priorities.
- ◆ Aesthetic suggestions included cobblestone or stamped-stone streets, a pedestrian mall, theme lighting, brighter lighting in the behind-building parking lots, pocket parks with benches and public restrooms, and new trees.
- ◆ Infrastructure suggestions included burying utilities underground, improving drainage, renovating the sewers, and helping building owners fix the fronts and backs of their buildings.
- ◆ All of the suggestions for aesthetics and infrastructure focused on giving Downtown a historic and cohesive look and feel while making it still feel safe and modern.
- ◆ Priorities included filling the Downtown with retail businesses, helping building owners repair their buildings, aesthetic improvements, public restrooms, alleyways or back entrances to access the parking in the backs of buildings, and marketing the Downtown to tourists.

- ◆ The business owners felt that the City could help their businesses thrive by, in addition to all other improvements, helping building owners upgrade the backs of the buildings.
- ◆ The participants admired the aesthetics and mix of businesses in the following downtowns: Farmington, Missouri; Hermann, Missouri; Cape Girardeau, Missouri; Springfield, Missouri; Cuba, Missouri; Chillicothe, Missouri; Branson Landing in Branson, Missouri; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Tunica, Mississippi; Louisville, Kentucky; Paducah, Kentucky; Knoxville, Tennessee; Dayton, Ohio; Savannah, Georgia; Denver, Colorado; San Antonio, Texas; and Solvang, California.

SECTION II

CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

The following transcript is an unedited and exact record of the meeting discussion.

Moderator: Tell me a little about your community.

We've got a lot of jobs.

We're not single-focused.

Moderator: What else is town?

The barrel manufacturers, the boat plant...

The compressors.

The cradle manufacturers, Reed Electrical... furniture, tools.

Manufacturers...

Sheet metal and furniture within 100 yards of each other.

Moderator: Where do people do their everyday shopping?

Wal-Mart.

In Lebanon.

You get a lot of things here, but if you want more of a variety, Lebanon's in a good place. You're only 15 minutes from Springfield and 30 minutes from the Lake. You can get your basic stuff here, but it's nothing to hop in your car and head to either of those.

And not far to Kansas City or St. Louis.

I lived in Houston on the south edge of town, and you were an hour away from Houston if you wanted it, and you were an hour away if you didn't want it. Small town atmosphere, but you don't have the crowds of Springfield.

You can live 15 minutes away from where you work.

Moderator: What are popular choices for dining and entertainment?

Cornerstone's.

I like doing the things that are unique to Lebanon.

The mom and pop shops.

The Lunch Box, Molly's, the West End.

Lebanon will support a good restaurant in the right location.

Applebee's is a good example of that.

Yeah.

And the upper-end ones, too... (unintelligible.)

Moderator: Would you say that Lebanon's heading in the right or wrong direction?

It's moving in the right direction. It could maybe use a little help going that direction. It's not going very fast, but I don't know if that's good or bad. I'd like to see some eating places on the North Side. There's nothing on this side of town. There have been 3 Lebanons. There's old-town Lebanon, then the railroad came in, and then Wal-Mart came in. It follows commerce and transportation corridors.

It's a natural course, like water draining.

Moderator: Do you all agree?

Are you talking about physically?

Moderator: Just generally, broadly.

Progress.

One of the things I like about this is I see buildings and factories and things in other cities derelict, and you don't have that here. They're occupied, they turn over, and that stuff tends to breed itself, empty buildings and storefronts...

Moderator: Let's focus on Downtown. Is Downtown moving in the right or wrong direction?

I don't think it's moving at all. If it is, it's the wrong direction, the discount stores, the lower-end shopping. In my way, that's how the buildings get derelict. People gets in them doesn't have the money to fix them.

Well, short term, they got in over their head real quick.

That's the migration. That's the life. How do we bring life back in the Downtown area? It's migrated out, but how do we get it back in? That transition between, you see those second-hand shops, because that's the only ones that can survive.

They're old buildings, and they need work.

We need the money back in Commercial Street.

It has to be businesses that aren't in direct competition with Wal-Mart, because they all went out, but the bank and printing, anything that wasn't in competition with Wal-Mart, did okay. They have to have a niche market to survive, and if they don't try to be in a niche, they don't do very well.

Moderator: What are the main reasons people visit Downtown?

Discount shopping and we have one restaurant.

Post office.

The banks.

There's three or four insurance agencies.

Lawyers.

Beauty shops.

There's just certain things that go, and they can't be in competition with Wal-Mart.

What used to be there, it won't come back. It's going to have to be different market share.

Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? Is there enough parking?

No. And it's not convenient.

Getting in and out is hard.

We need bathrooms and water fountains, shopping support.

For a while, they tried one-way traffic, but I think two-way is better.

I think one problem is the proximity to the railroad, because the trains come and cause congestion, and there's a lot of four-way stops. Some people just fly through there.

There's no accessing the buildings from the back.

That's where your other parking is, and you've got to walk the block to get to the front.

If they had walkways... bust each building into smaller shops, and make it like a mall.

What they did done here, _____'s office, they've got a walkway from the other side.

That would be a good place to put bathrooms. Take one of those buildings out, put bathrooms, put in a little sitting park.

Choosing which building... this is to promote the historical value of our Downtown, right?

Not necessary historical. Just to promote Downtown.

Moderator: Is it easy for people to find their way Downtown?

Yeah. We're small enough.

Yeah. You might miss it and have to turn back around.

I don't think...is there really any signage that says Downtown Lebanon?

No. Other than the age of the buildings.

A lot of cities are marketing the historic...Historic Downtown Whatever, and they market it that way.

Moberly has done the DREAM initiative, and they've done it very well. The roads they had in between their buildings...they have a lot more room. They do promote this way.

Moderator: What about business hours? Are those convenient?

Almost everything shuts down at 5.

I think there could be a nightlife part of it. It could be retail during the day and a different atmosphere at night.

The only time that Downtown gets utilized in the evening is if there's a festival.

Christmas, Thanksgiving, Hillbilly Days.

The dollar stores are open until 7 or 8.

Moderator: Do people talk about business hours?

There wasn't any long-term shots at it.

I'm not sure there's anything Downtown now that you'd care to be at.

Madison Street Grill.

That's it.

Is that Mexican restaurant still coming in down here? We had a pasta place, and I thought it was going well, but I don't know what happened to it.

Cornerstone used to be down there.

Really?

Yeah.

I'd forgotten that.

I brought this up to _____ a few times. I'm pretty impressed with the way the Branson Landing is. Parking lot, and a trolley. A lot of downtowns are trying to get away from through traffic. People that shop Downtown would walk a little ways if there was something to keep them there. But when all you have is one shop per block, you want to do your business and leave.

I've got the idea of going from Commercial to Madison on 2nd, and doing that in cobblestones, and let traffic through until 6, and afterwards, you do outdoor dining and you close off the street, and it's a pedestrian mall. I've been to Savannah, Georgia, and it was like that.

It's like that in San Antonio, the riverwalk, with all the outdoor...

I think if it could be geared toward people of all ages, children...maybe some of those fountains, where you want to go there. Maybe it's not just to shop, but just to go and hang out with your family.

Moderator: How do people get information about Downtown?

Local paper. Local radio stations.

That's one of the big problems, getting the word out.

Plus we have our website.

As far as commercial entities, there's no central place to go to find out.

Moderator: Is that the City website?

Yeah.

That's getting the word out.

We're also getting information to the rest stop.

A lot of people come here for information.

When the first Wal-Mart was in Lebanon, the Downtown was still going strong, and you used to have to walk three blocks... I mean, but there was shops to draw people down.

You also had Wal-Mart.

Yeah. But it didn't put everybody Downtown out of business. I don't know what you'd bring in now.

I don't think the Downtown is pedestrian friendly. We've got sidewalks and trees, but no benches to sit and wait for the wife.

Little park-like things would be nice. I mean, a snow-cone machine, some street vendors, hot dogs...

Moderator: What types of businesses would be a good fit for Downtown Lebanon?

A few years back, _____ took over the renovation of a building, and put the Lebanon Daily Record down there, and I think he purposely wanted to be an example Downtown, and I think that's what we need other people to do, but in my opinion, we, instead of giving incentives, Downtown Lebanon has a business district tax that makes their tax 20% higher than anywhere else. Instead of incentivizing, people if they do that, it's going to cost them a bit more. If I was a businessperson, I'm not sure that that would be a deciding factor, but people have to look at that.

That's a tax district they set up among themselves, for self-promotion.

For most businesses, it's about 20%. And they did vote it on themselves, but it would be hard to get other people to come in, invest money, and renovate.

The best part of town is Commercial and Madison with the beauty shop and the flower shop and the Madison Street Grill. It draws the most attraction. If you could get it continued on down the street...

Some of the old buildings, the newer faces are being removed, and letting the old architecture come through. They're going back to the old brick.

The Landing has a retro look.

I'd hate to lose the look down there. I'm talking about something like a Sears or a JC Penney, a little bit bigger than the store in town now, would draw a group of people. They're going to want parking, but I wouldn't want them to level a whole city block. I hope that they would either remodel or build a new older-looking building.

You'd have to build some pocket parking.

There's parking in the back, but you've got to get in front, and it's out of the way.

(agreement.)

So, like, if I had a store, and I had a rear entrance, that they couldn't come in my store in the back? If I had a nice entrance in the back?

They could, but you're talking about pocket parking, and so much is owned by the phone company.

And the railroad tracks are on the other side.

The only thing is, two entrances, and you're going to have to watch twice. Lunch Box does, and two or three other ones do.

I think that it would be really neat to go into Downtown, like some lodging, like a hotel or something. Whenever I go to St. Louis, I love to stay Downtown. It's a little nicer, and closer to the Interstates, but I want to get out and walk around. That would be very beneficial.

If every block, you had a restaurant that would draw a good crowd, that people might actually be willing to wait in line, and they're taking your name down, and you could cross the road and shop.

That's the way Wal-Mart does it. You've got to walk all the way through to get to the back of the store.

Something that would be nice is loft apartments.

There's lofts available.

Not that many.

I don't think they're that nice.

Moderator: Is there a demand?

I don't know.

I don't think there's a great demand for those types of apartments. They have been tried. We have a demand for duplex and four-plex kind of stuff.

That one over Mom's Deli, that's been there for years.

There's only two or three.

Winner's has got a big open area above it, but it's not been developed.

I haven't been Downtown, besides driving, in probably 2 or 3 years. There's no reason for me to go there. I don't go to the dollar store.

You don't go down there to shop for a long time. You get out and you leave after you get what you want.

The barbershop.

The flower shop.

If you could get something there to keep people there...

We lost one of our draws with the gym. It had good traffic.

There used to be a gas station down there. And car dealerships. Firestone. Wal-Mart has grouped all those things into one place.

Moderator: Thinking about that "nighttime" Downtown, what type of dining and entertainment would be good?

Movie theater.

I think a variety of dining. Different atmospheres, and... you go down there, and if you start walking the block...

The one thing that people will drive to is a restaurant they like.

And it's less location-dependent.

_____ 's got that Italian place off north 5 highway, and it's always full. If they like the food, it doesn't matter where you put it.

We drove to Lambert's last Saturday. 60 miles down there, to get rolls thrown at you.

Another form is like an open band, you'd just have a stage. That's what they had at Branson Landing.

That takes walking. You can't have parking and a band.

I mean, closing down the Downtown, bring in the stage, and set up in one of the intersections.

Kind of like when they had the rally.

Hillbilly Days.

We do it in other times.

What about moving the farmer's market down there.

Put it on the same side as the railroad tracks.

There've been people that have had businesses that were good ideas, but they couldn't get the traffic down there.

They were one small spark...

To me, that's the only reason I would go out of my way, is to eat somewhere. Not for shopping. For food. Like you said, you'll drive to eat.

We drove to Sedalia to Katie's one time, and stopped in Jeff City on the way back for ice cream.

I don't know what it would take to get somebody with a good restaurant.

They count traffic and demographics.

It would take guts.

Like _____. He's got the Italian place and Cave now.

Or a chain restaurant that people are going to like.

But parking, again... but a Denny's or a...

What kind of atmosphere do you want? Do you want Denny's traffic Downtown? Do you want to build uniqueness?

I was in Hannibal this summer, and the people in Hannibal were proud that the only chain store or restaurant Downtown was a Subway. They're real proud that they didn't have any other chains.

In Florida, St. George Island, there's not a chain.

But these places are already drawing people down. We need something to draw them.

For something like that to survive like Madison Street, they're going to have to serve alcohol. And that's very unpopular here.

A lot...what's that grocery store that was down there? They didn't have alcohol and a big to-do over it, and they served alcohol, and they shut him down.

Wal-Mart didn't carry until 2 years ago.

Madison Street Grill, it's discreetly done.

It's a restaurant first, not a bar. And Senor Pepper's, the same thing. It's not a bar.

Moderator: So is it a community perception?

I think we're on the cusp of the Bible belt, and a lot of families retain their moral values, so when you're talking about bars and bands, it won't appeal to the locals.

The bar atmosphere never would work.

In Branson Landing, they've got Joe's Crab Shack that serves liquor, but that's also very commercialized. I'd love to have seafood here.

Moderator: What do you think the highest priorities should be in terms of the look and feel of Downtown?

I think pedestrian-friendly.

Personally, the trees don't add. I'd like to see something like the traffic lights on Elm Street. Get rid of the big high old red lights. The trees aren't symmetrical. In the fall, the doors of the stores are full of leaves. It's hard to maintain.

I love 'em.

I do too. They're pretty. But they're hard to maintain. And they're not symmetrical.

You know, it would make you wonder, if there were...if you went to an older look. It's almost like every old part of every town has fought to look modern, but if you had the old-time lights and the cobblestones...instead of looking like a hybrid menagerie, if we went toward the old look...

There's another thing about the cobblestone. It's not conducive to bicycles and skateboards. People like the looks of it, so it's hard to skateboard.

Central Bank has got plans to redo their façade to the older style. There's a lot of that already down behind the metal fronts.

We've got a lot of issues like, _____ when he had this vision, and the bricks was a good idea, but they're starting to need repair because they aren't maintained. Is it the Downtown or the city who fixes them?

I think with a sidewalk to the road to make it easy for a pedestrian, and do more like a stage between the buildings, you'd have a zero transition from the sidewalk to the road, and go with a stamped cobblestone. You'd have a defining between the road and the sidewalk.

A general cleanup. Some of the buildings that have fallen down...

(agreement.)

We did it in 88.

21 years.

But I mean, as a group, we kind of represent the people in Lebanon, and just think why you don't go down there.

Congestion.

There's nothing that draws me there.

Poor business hours. I can't shop 9 to 5.

The post office, the barbershop, the dollar store, that's about it.

I haven't been to Wal-Mart in 3 months, probably. I try.

We have to work on parking and traffic flow.

We grew up in an area where people park on their yard at their front door. People will not walk. They just want the convenience.

Moderator: What other downtowns do you admire?

One of the best examples I can think of a resurgence is Denver, where they built the new ball stadium. There's microbreweries and niche restaurants. That's one of the big draws, the microbrewery, which wouldn't stand the test here.

Cape Girardeau's got a pretty nice downtown. They, a lot of offices in the day, but the restaurants and bars and bands and stuff in the evening.

Springfield. But I'd hate to compare ourselves to Springfield, but they've done a good job to get business back in. We could model that but smaller-scale.

They're reworking their Square again.

And it's around the Square, too.

Professional office buildings. Lawyers, engineers, architects, CPAs, title companies...that would make the Downtown strip a professional strip.

I could see that before... with a nice restaurant, somebody's got to have the guts to spend 300 thousand dollars. And there's a better traffic count elsewhere.

I agree that a nice restaurant is what we need, but we need to get the investment.

(agreement.)

And it's got to be unique. Maybe a Hibachi place or something.

Maple Street Grill, it's been there for years.

That's a cool restaurant, but Buffalo doesn't have a lot of the competing stuff that we have. They're just kind of...

I see some of the businesses that would do well anywhere they're at. I struggle with the fact that a bank needs to be at Jefferson and Commercial. If you moved it, people would still bank there. Edward Jones and the menswear place, I could see the menswear place being there, but are insurance and investment going to hurt their business if they're not Downtown? Probably not. You could get somebody to turn right on that corner.

You go throughout Missouri and different states, and it's hard to compare Lebanon to any other town. A town of 10,000 is usually a bedroom town. Lebanon's got a lot of jobs and a lot of things going.

We're where everybody works. We're the biggest thing in the County.

A lot of people live elsewhere and work here.

If you're not careful, you end up with low-end businesses, drawing people that are not spending money.

That's another drawback with professional offices. They wouldn't feed each other.

We used to come up and ride bikes on Commercial because there was nobody there. It's a great place for that.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION III

DREAM COMMITTEE DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

The following transcript is an unedited and exact record of the meeting discussion.

Moderator: Tell me a little about your community.

Friendly.

I say conveniently located. Well, you're 50 miles from Springfield and 25 miles from the Lake, and we have a small-town flavor, and it's very friendly, with a heart the size of Missouri.

Good family values, good Christian values.

Interesting attitudes.

Moderator: Where do people work?

Our main industry is boat manufacturers...

Detroit metal.

The hospital and Wal-Mart.

I don't like Wal-Mart. I just detest them.

Places we have to work...we have lumberyards, because we have for this size town, we have several.

We have a thriving used-car community. 50-something licensed used car dealers.

County seat, large government facility.

Moderator: Where do people do their shopping?

The majority of the shopping would have to be done at Wal-Mart. We're not anti-Wal-Mart as a committee, Local Makes Sense... the premise of that is doing business within your community, so Wal-Mart's an important part of it, but even they don't have everything we need, so we realize people need to shop out of the area.

Moderator: Do people stay in town for groceries?

Yes.

Yeah, people don't leave for groceries.

And they'll go there for sundries.

Yeah, Wal-Mart has good pricing.

Things that we don't have...

Pricing, as far as our sundries and our groceries, it depends on the consumer. I cross-shop. I'm going to get the best thing for my dollar, and I'm not going to drive 15 miles to save a quarter, but what I will say is I do coupon, but again, I'm in my mid-50's. I appreciate the value of a dollar, and when you get close to retirement, you look at things differently. When I shop, sometimes I do it all at Wal-Mart, or I'll go to Aldi's here in town, that gives us a good value. We have local stores that are out of Springfield, so I'll shop with those also. I think there's a lot of people in this town that do the same thing.

Moderator: What can't you get here?

Ladies' clothes.

A man's tux, a man's suit.

We have one men's store.

Shoes.

The more stores...

The lack of variety will drive people out. If I want to take my wife for shoe shopping, there's very limited choices here.

We don't have a variety in retail.

We have one new clothing...the VF mall, and it has some casual, and one Dress Barn.

But they are so limited.

And we have one Downtown. There's about 3 places for ladies' clothes, and only one boutique in town.

And she just opened in the past 8 months.

But we do have Maurice's in the new mall. So it may be growing. Men's, you have VF for casual and Wal-Mart, and one men's store.

That's it.

Now, your Dollar General, they offer some clothing, but limited.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

You almost have to leave here for entertainment.

Oh, for sure. One movie gallery.

If you're active in your church or family, you have that, but you have to leave Lebanon otherwise.

I don't think the YMCA will fill the void.

People go to the Lake and Springfield.

For the art and for culture. Theater at MSU.

Moderator: What about dining?

We have several fast food, and there's a new restaurant being built in the new Lowe's properties. And there's a new franchise coming in from Texas.

Texas Lucy's will not exist in Lebanon.

Why?

Oh, trust me.

The girls wear panties and chaps, the servers. And they serve alcohol, which will be an issue. Very few serve alcohol. The church groups have been very strong in minimizing alcohol in town.

You've got to look at the age group that lives here. We've got more seniors who disapprove of alcohol. And if you want to have a drink, I won't judge you, but the seniors, they don't appreciate alcohol being served if they choose to go out and it. It's my choice if I want to have a drink before dinner.

I don't see you and I having a cocktail before dinner, and an older couple objecting. They're picturing someone falling down drunk. If we're not making a scene, it shouldn't affect it.

It's a shame if they keep business from coming into town.

I believe that's part of it. We have some now, which is a big change. When we moved here, there was nowhere you could get a drink.

We've got a Mexican restaurant, and they serve liquor. There are about 4 places that serve liquor.

I don't know that you have to leave town for dinner. If you want Thai or something unusual, you could.

You wouldn't have to, but if you want something Asian, sushi...you can't get it here.

I don't know.

A good Mexican restaurant. But I think we have a good one.

Is there such a thing in Missouri? That's not fair, because I'm from LA.

Moderator: What do people do for recreation?

We have races, fishing, trains.

Fishing, hunting, auto racing.

Softball, volleyball at the civic center. Little league.

Going to garage sales.

We have a concert association with 6 performances a year. There is bowling; there was a square dance club. I think there still is. That's about it. We said movie theater.

That is limited.

And nothing for teenagers. But we wonder why the kids get in trouble. Have you ever seen them in there cruising? From McDonald's to the car wash. I feel sorry for them.

Moderator: Let's talk about Downtown. Do you think over the past few years, Downtown's moving in a positive or negative direction?

Stale.

Stagnant. I agree.

The only thing that I have seen in the 10 years I've lived here is there has been some storefronts updated, and there have been... a new restaurant... and some stores have moved a few window displays and locations. One business moved from north of town Downtown. But everything else has stayed the same.

We have a plethora of used stores and haircare.

And consignment shops.

And in the 9 years I've been here, that hasn't changed. The flavor of the stores hasn't changed. There are more beauty shops, but they're still beauty shops. Used clothing. Dollar General has been there. Family Dollar also. They've been here since I have. And there is no...there has been nothing that I've seen showing a resurgence or an esprit-de-corps Downtown. Individuals, yes, but Downtown as a whole, no.

There's one loft up there. What's the draw?

Cheap rent. And property owners treat it that way. I don't want to sound negative, but the property owners don't care as long as they get rent.

Moderator: Why do people visit Downtown?

They have a very nice restaurant.

To eat.

Very good biscuits and gravy.

Beauty shop, post office, Madison Street Grill.

Traditions. That's a nice gift shop.

There are half a dozen businesses down there that we would frequent. I love Dryer's, they're nice wonderful people, but I don't find shoes that appeal to me there.

They carry Born, and that's an expensive shoe.

Moderator: What did you used to do Downtown that you can't anymore?

I've been here 10 years, and nothing.

If anything, it has improved. The new restaurant.

The new restaurant's the only thing open in the evening.

It's not a place to stroll. There's no reason to be down there.

You've got a beauty shop. You don't go there in the evening.

Even Home Traditions, they don't stay open. Magnolia Place doesn't stay open. It's somewhere for me to go through, but nothing's open.

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

Not convenient to their customer base. Not at all... I think at least in the summer months, they should be open on Thursday or Friday night and invite the public down there. Put some musicians and some ice cream vendors. Do something every week to invite us to come take a stroll.

In the strip mall, we worked until 9 pm. It's feasible.

I agree with staying open at least 'til 7.

The restaurant is open until 9. Like I say, I contended with Maurice's, JC Penney, and I was open on Sunday from 10 to 10. I was at work 12 or 14 hours a day for 7 weeks.

Here, you don't have that. 5, and I've worked long enough.

I know what it's like to be there.

Moderator: What about parking?

If DREAM initiative does nothing else but turn Jefferson into a non-parking pedestrian mall, it would improve Downtown.

You need parking and restrooms. It's not fair to businesses to have to clean up after people that come in off the street. If you have good parking and restrooms...

We have parking behind, and we have to dress up that side of the building. I agree. It's a parking lot—put planters in it, make it look nice. Put rear entrances on the building, and get rid of the parking on Commercial.

Moderator: So no parking on Commercial?

Depending on how far we can go. All the way from Washington to Madison.

You need something central. That would be the most logical for parking. It won't seem like you parked on one end.

We have parking lots on both sides of Jefferson. If we do them both...

You're going to have to balance them. And have handicapped facilities.

Close off the parking, because it's one lane, it's backup style parking, and some customers come in for one store for a couple hours and tie it up.

You'll have to have some parking up from for handicapped people.

Not if they have back entrances.

Well...

This is a *dream*. Dream big.

If they can't park at the front door, they get upset.

Moderator: Is it easy to find Downtown?

No. We need a "Welcome to Historic Downtown Lebanon" sign. We have no reason for the Highway 5 traffic to stop in Downtown Lebanon. It's one narrow street, and the only building that looks nice is the Daily Record.

And Home Traditions looks nice.

All-Star Gas.

Madison Street looks good. We've got some. But if you're coming down Jefferson, you'll just keep on going.

Moderator: Is there some source where visitors and residents get information about Downtown?

The library used to have it, but not anymore. The only place is the civic center.

Or here at the Chamber.

I haven't seen a sign that says "Information may be gathered at the Civic Center or the Chamber of Commerce."

I didn't even know the welcome center had moved.

Moderator: So there's nothing that promotes Downtown as a whole?

No, we don't have anything.

No, we do not have.

Moderator: You said there was a loft Downtown. Is there much residential living?

There's two.

(agreement.)

I believe that there's living over Norman's. I think somebody told me there was a flat there. Very few.

Moderator: Would there be interest in it?

Price would be a key.

That and, I don't know, I just watched a show and somebody paid 780 thousand to live in a 2-bedroom condo in downtown Portland.

We just went back to Farmington, and we love it.

I don't think we have an anchor Downtown. Urban residents like something to do, a play or something.

I would consider a loft.

I don't know if I would, because there's nothing to do there. Other than one restaurant, and I can't eat there every night.

Moderator: Who would be the target?

In my opinion, it would be 45 to 60.

Empty nesters.

Moderator: Since this is the DREAM project, let's focus on the future of Downtown. Do you see it as a visitor mecca or a place for residents?

Can't it be both? I would think both. My vision, dream, is somewhere.... I'm an empty nester, but give me a reason for me and my wife to go for a stroll. Somewhere to go. Put an ice cream cone down there or café lattes or something like that, but have a diversity of product to pull people off the highway.

I agree. Lebanon is home to my husband and I, and to see Lebanon grow, it seems to be more of manufacturing, industry, and a lot of people through the years have went out of the area to shop, and that has been a cause of concern for the way it is now, but I think what we have here to offer is a beginning, and we need to use the resources we have to compound on it. Right now, with the economic turndown, it's going to be hard to create in this environment, but I think in a couple years, people will see a change. I agree, though, insomuch as that we need more retail, more restaurants, we need to gather what we have and compound, and create this environment to prosper and grow, and I think we will.

The DREAM initiative has 3 years before we do anything, because we're planning.

I'd like to see us focus on our youth. Between 18 and 21 years old, have nothing to do in this town. If it isn't football season, what are they supposed to do? The Y could help with some of that.

18, they should be going to college. We have colleges here, 2 year colleges, Drury and the Technical Center and MSU. I would like to see more adult education offered here from colleges.

That would be great.

This driving to MSU is for the birds. I would like 4-year school offered here. Why can we not have that?

I want to go back to the kids. The kids don't have anything to keep them out of trouble.

But that starts at home.

But if you keep them home forever, they don't know how to handle society. They still have to have something to do. They have more energy than I do.

Moderator: What would you like to see Downtown?

Boutique shopping.

With modest prices.

A coffee shop. Coffees and teas of the world.

Starbucks.

I would love to see our bakery expand and become a coffee place.

An organic bakery goods store. But they say people like fattening foods.

_____’s very much in favor of it.

The farmer’s market, which we have only on Saturday... in the evenings, all these businesses are closed, so we’d like to have extended hours on at least a couple days for those who work until 5. Maybe a farmer’s market mid-week from 3 to 7. A bookstore, a coffee shop.

A bookstore would be wonderful. We’re talking about Downtown. That would be something to attract people Downtown.

We have a Bible bookstore, but a general one.

More restaurants. I think you need a blend of upscale and family. Not everybody will go eat rich food everyday.

I like your idea of an organic restaurant...but you want to open one?

The bookstore, the off-campus college...

Running shoes, sports apparel. Even though they opened that Hibbit’s.

Downtown could use a fishing, hunting, canoeing, sporting goods store.

A UPS store.

A computer café might be nice.

You can get wireless at the library.

But you can’t get a cup of coffee.

You can. And you can bring it in.

We have a library, but for this little town, we should pat ourselves on the back.

Moderator: What aesthetic changes would you make?

The streets, sidewalks, lighting, flowers.

The trees are just too big. I think cobblestones. In Washington, Missouri, there's all red cobblestone. Just do that.

In Farmington, I couldn't believe it.

When people come by on 5, you've got 30 seconds to catch their eye.

Doll it up. Because a woman, that's what you sell to. You need to draw the women. But there's got to be something for men. How about a sporting goods store?

(agreement.)

We need new facades on the building. We need a theme. I don't care if it's an old west town or a Midwest farming town, come up with some kind of a theme for the front and back of the buildings.

In the other cities that have been a part of this, the face of the buildings, are they of different materials?

I would assume they would be different.

If you use cobblestone on the street, it's very attractive. But it's expensive. You can only do so much.

I'm going at least two blocks, but maybe a third block.

Past the paper and past Madison to the next one, right?

Yeah. To Commerce Bank.

Moderator: What about the lighting?

It needs some theme lighting.

(side conversations.)

I would do the streets, the sidewalks, the lighting, the landscaping.

And the building facades.

Moderator: One last question. Are there other downtowns that you think Lebanon should look like?

Savannah, Georgia. They used artwork to decorate the downtown. Springfield, Missouri.

I haven't been to Downtown Springfield.

They have a brewery.

A microbrewery would bring young people.

Farmington. Sikeston had a very small renovation area. I believe it was DREAM. Cuba, I think they had one up there...

Solang, California is a Dutch village. They've got windmills, and it's very pretty.

We have a diverse group of people that drive through here.

We have Hermann and the German community up there.

Whether we target them to stop by here...

(agreement.)

Knoxville, Tennessee is one.

Would it work here?

Yes. Uh, they had the World's Fair in '82, and to revitalize it, they had to do something, and they spent millions of dollars, and they turned houses into townhouses, and it's unbelievable what they did.

Moderator: Well, that's really my last question, unless there's anything else. Thank you very much.

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SESSION IV

LONG TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

The following transcript is an unedited and exact record of the meeting discussion.

Moderator: Tell me a little about your community.

Some of the best schools, best hospital, churches, and the friendliest people in Missouri.

Lebanon has always seemed to have been economically...the dips and bounces don't affect us as deeply. We're slower to react, and we're enough varied in our industries. It doesn't all go down or up at once. So it's always been steady.

Moderator: Where do people work?

Plants, there's 4 or 5 boat plants, one manufacturer that supports those, two electrical equipment manufacturers, Detroit Tool metal products, two divisions of it, Machine Tool and Dye for sheet metal and products like that, lot of retail, tourist, federal employees out of Fort Leonard Wood.

Used car business, auto detailers. They buy cars in the cities from dealers there, detail them, and sell them here. Tourism is big. Thousands of people spend their vacation in this County, and we get to live here. We've got such diversity. You go around the state, and people can't believe what Laclede County has.

The civic center is a resource that we're trying to get more heavily used.

We also have a furniture manufacturer that ships all over the United States, and they have had no downturn.

Largest whiskey barrel manufacturer in the world.

Good hunting and fishing. Interstate, railroad.

Us hillbillies that live here don't realize the hunting and fishing that brings people here.

Lake of the Ozarks is 30 miles away.

Branson's 90.

Fort Wood's 30.

Lot of agriculture around too. A lot of farmers, and a lot of two-job farmers. They farm in their spare time on weekends. That's not their full income.

There are more mama cows within 100 miles of Springfield than any place else in the US, and here a few years ago, Lebanon ranked 9 for manufacturing jobs in the State.

The people of our county are can-do people. We raised 2 and a half million to build the new library. We paid for the building, reconstructed, we have a Route 66 museum in it... we paid it off in 4 or 5 years. No money borrowed, no tax increase, just donations.

The Route 66 connection is something we're in the process of emphasizing and expanding. When my daughter was in the high school choir in 89, we raised 60,000 dollars to send those kids to England to perform. They did bake sales and suppers and plays and car washes, but people dug deep and did a lot.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas? Do people stay in town?

No.

It's an unusual mix. We are not a big city, but our pull factor runs between 1.2 and 1.6. We are seen as a...because of our highways, a lot of people come here to shop.

Living here, I can tell you this...more people come to Lebanon, Missouri to shop from Springfield, Waynesville, St. Roberts, all around. They come to shop at all Wal-Mart, and all these other places have one.

I think the only thing we're really lacking is high-end shopping, clothing, but you can find almost anything else you want here. We have furniture, groceries, a movie theater, there's lots of places to eat, and we're getting more high-end restaurants. The only thing I could not find was a dress to go to a wedding.

One of the bad things of Lebanon is we're 50 miles from Springfield, and that's good and bad. You can find anything in Springfield. I lived in Houston for 3 years, and you couldn't get across Houston in an hour.

I see the retail slightly improving, too. You can name several places that have come in the last 2 or 3 years that have really enhanced our retail.

The VF mall there, a lot of people patronize that.

We've got, at Shepherd Hills, 90% of our customers living 90 miles away or further.

I understand we have a new store coming in?

There's a new barbecue place.

Is it Goody's?

Dickie's, the barbecue place.

It's Goody's.

Good.

Moderator: Do people stay in town to eat?

People do drive outside of town, but we're doing good, and Madison Grill has really helped this community.

There's 4 eating places Downtown.

And that new Mexican place is going to be neat.

Do we really have what it takes to draw people into our Downtown area to shop? They either come to the VF outlet or your store, and I think the Downtown area is missing. When we moved here, there was lots of shops Downtown. There was a Lee jeans store, until the Lee Company put in an outlet store, and those little stores went by the wayside. Wal-Mart has taken a lot from Downtown. You can think back and remember the little operations.

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

I don't think its negative... Laclede County is a very aggressive community, and the industry here had to be courted, and they're here, but there's been such an impact on Downtown merchants with bigger retailers that it's made a struggle for the Downtown merchants.

There are 2 Downtown that are regionally known. The jewelry store and Norman's Bridal. I've known of people coming from Springfield and St. Louis to Norman's.

I know folks from Branson who drive for that.

The Downtown used to be on the wives tour, and it still might be. They can't hardly get 'em out of the stores Downtown.

Our Downtown is suffering from the same thing that any small Downtown is. Wal-Mart, we like their sales tax revenue, but they put a lot of people out of business. If retailers play their own game, they can succeed.

We're lacking the mom and pop stores we had in the 50's and 60's. There isn't a dress shop Downtown. We have several nice gift shops, eating establishments, beauty shops, our banking, but we need more retailing Downtown. We haven't a drugstore anymore where you can go and get a soda and a lunch, so it would be nice if we had a sundries shop.

I have a comment at Wal-Mart. I had a customer who said he didn't go to Wal-Mart at all.

That's universal, too.

On a personal level, I don't go to Wal-Mart unless I have to. There are a lot of places to get stuff. But the parking and the walking... Wal-Mart is so carefully planned out.

We man the welcome center, so we get people, what are they looking for? Time and again, they're looking for a non-chain restaurant, a non-chain place to shop. They say, "I can eat at Ruby Tuesday's in St. Louis."

Moderator: What kinds of things do you do Downtown?

Post office.

Get my hair cut.

Yeah, barbershop.

The bank.

The beauty shop.

I love the Lunch Box, the little café.

He has the best hamburgers.

I go Downtown every day. I eat in a restaurant Downtown every day. The fast food business along the interstate has hampered his walk-in traffic. There's two restaurants Downtown, and I guess they get by okay, but you can drive by his restaurant at noon, and there'll be half a dozen cars in front. But if you go by Applebee's, there's 20 cars. The big ones have come in here and taken away from the little guys, whatever it is. To get, really what should've happened is some of these outside, large companies should've come Downtown, but that's not where it's at. It's along the Interstate.

(agreement.)

How did the closing of 127 bridge affect you?

It hurt us about 50%.

If you can't get off conveniently, you're not going to go there.

We put up billboards that led people around, but we took a 50% hit.

Lebanon has followed transportation historically. Where it was before, then the railroad, now the Interstate.

The business, retail is going to follow where the traffic is. If they can't get the traffic down there, they're going to move. How are we going to get the traffic back Downtown?

(agreement.)

People don't want Downtown. And McDonald's, they get a huge percentage off of 44.

At Steak & Shake, it's hard to get to it, but they're visible from I-44.

All of our fast food is in that 1 block between the Interstate and Elm.

And I think we'll see a change when the 5-lane gets done.

I don't think we've lost all of it, but I did a little research on the coming of Route 66 to Lebanon. There were two prominent businessmen that convinced the highway department that they could bring 66 through Lebanon. They got them to come down here and take a ride. The problem was getting from Lebanon to Rolla, and they showed 'em how they could do it, and that's how they got 66 to Lebanon, and we've been growing ever since.

The hatchery, they ship live birds everywhere. I forgot to mention that.

We had a person at the welcome center asking about the hatchery.

(side conversations.)

Moderator: Let's talk about the user-friendliness of Downtown. How's signage? Is it easy to find Downtown?

There's not a lot that differentiates it from Madison or 2nd or 3rd or 4th. As you come up and down on 5, there's not.

I think one of the thing that hurts Downtown is the hours they select. I know a fella with a men's clothing store, and he even closes before 5! He asked me, "Why does everybody go to Wal-Mart?" They're always open. Downtown on Saturday used to be a big trade, and now a lot of them close up at noon.

We do 50% of our business from noon Friday to Sunday closing time.

Two of the little restaurants are open until 2:00 6 days a week.

We've got a little drive-in for a good cone.

Moderator: How are business hours?

It's a vicious cycle, because there's not enough stuff to do Downtown, so the people that do try to stay open don't have enough critical mass to stay open. I said what I did about Madison Grill because it's an evening high-end place, and it gives people a reason to come Downtown in the evening. I think that's what Downtown needs is to find their own identity. So many communities do the First Friday events, where they have all the stores open, free food, something just to get people to come to your door.

Lack of restrooms is another problem Downtown.

The parking, there's parking behind the stores, but you've got to walk around the block to get to the store.

My husband, when he redesigned those, he made it so you can get through.

The people that own the stores park in front of the building.

Having served on the Downtown Business District for years, the jealousy between the merchants Downtown stopped you from doing anything. They didn't cooperate. I don't know whether that has improved or not. I know the Daily Record tried to get them to work together. But all the old-timers are gone.

We've got a beauty shop and jewelry store, and the merchants park in front.

I've tried to be a peacemaker between the two, and...

They're both just being stubborn.

I don't know how you'd cure that.

Two-hour parking.

But we've tried that. If there is an ordinance, getting it enforced is something else.

We put those parking lots behind the buildings, and we striped loading zone areas, and we had one very established business that would park his truck in the loading zone when Dollar General brought their truck to town.

Both of the dollar stores do a good business.

When Family Dollar came to town, they forced Dollar General into longer hours, and Family Dollar has cut back, but Dollar General kept the hours.

They even built another store by Wal-Mart.

See, we had a problem with Dollar General employees wanting to park in front and not wanting to walk around, and one of the other businesses came and discussed it, and there again, if you can't get people to cooperate, we landowners can only do so much. There's got to be cooperation. They just didn't think it was safe to walk after dark, and they didn't want to go out the back door because of security.

They do go into the front door and lock the store, and then they park their car in back.

It's improved a lot.

Those parking lots are now lit up pretty well.

The biggest feud that I had to settle was that Dollar General was putting trash in _____'s parking lot...we couldn't figure out how that stuff would come from Dollar General's dumpster. I don't know how to get them all to work together.

And customers can sense that, and they don't want any part of it.

(agreement.)

We cooperated with a couple businesses, and instead of trying to act like they're not over there, tell customers about them. We all do much better.

(agreement.)

If one place doesn't have it, a lot of times, they'll say, "I was over at Wal-Mart last night, and I think they have that." It used to be jealousy, but we fought that continuously.

(side conversations.)

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

Radio, paper, gossip.

Word of mouth.

And no matter what they do, they get in trouble. The car show last Friday stirred up the biggest stink you ever saw.

I thought it was very nice. I was really glad that we got that here, and I hope they come back, because for an hour or two, you could really enjoy yourself. And the fella at Madison Street Grill went over the top with it.

The Downtown needs a niche of its own. They need to be historic in nature. You're never, never going to return the Downtown to what it was in the 50's. It needs a niche of its own, to stand by itself. They should not try to compete with Wal-Mart and the box stores. They need a niche. Either historic, there's all kinds of things. It needs an overall theme that runs all the way through.

Moderator: Is there a lot of Downtown living?

Virtually none.

Three or four.

Moderator: Would there be an interest in it?

I don't know.

All those buildings are pretty old.

They fixed up a couple that are pretty nice, though.

It could be done, but it would take a lot of money.

You go on down the street, and the beauty shop has an apartment. They fixed 'em up, but a lot of them are for the people that own the building.

There are a few more.

(agreement.)

That could be interesting condos.

Loft apartments and unique shops on the lower level, little specialty shops. The one positive thing would be service. When you go to the box companies, you do not get service. And people will pay more for the merchandise if the service is there. Knowing where the merchandise is, helping you find it, and being willing to give you time. You don't get that with the box people.

The lofts so far have just been developed.

What about handicapped? Is that a problem?

Would they make you do it if you redo it?

It depends.

There's lots of different options.

I see the biggest problem to Downtown apartments as parking.

It would have to be a rear exit, and that would solve the security problem...

As far as the parking in front is concerned, my opinion, the biggest enemy to that is the store owners and their employees.

Moderator: Let's focus on the future of Downtown. How do you envision it? Is it for tourists or residents? What's your vision?

I think the draw would be for the tourists, because that's just my opinion, because there's already a mindset to the large retail outlets, and I don't know what we could do differently in what we're selling to draw local people Downtown.

If you do it for the tourists, you'll pick up locals.

I agree with that. The amazing thing about our Downtown...

It can't be all antiques.

I think antique stores are kind of struggling now anyway.

There's too many flea markets.

And eBay.

That has the tendency to degrade a Downtown.

The Downtown has too much junk right now.

Nothing wrong with that...that one clothing store there, on the corner next to the parlor, been there forever, if you've ever took clothes down there, you get them back. The ones that do that, there's some pretty good shopping. But on the other side of the street... but one of the best things we've got going is that free store. Long ago, they tried awful hard to get that metal building, and they need to move.

Moderator: What's a free store?

A church-run, low-income place. It's like Goodwill, but it's free.

The thing that really sets them apart, they appreciate your stuff.

I go to the free store.

If we were going to do something in this community to help, we need to find them a store on Commercial Street. They're a tremendous fire hazard right now. They need to be in their own building.

...It's another thing to cause people to be Downtown.

You've got to get the traffic.

Whether it's the people that's donating the stuff or the people benefiting, you get people Downtown.

It's hard to park over there right now.

(agreement.)

Do they pay any rent?

Moderator: So you're seeing your Downtown for visitors?

I'll disagree. Being in the tourist business, there's 12 months in the year, and it's hard to make it when you don't have customers in the wintertime. I would go the other track, of trying to have an attraction for locals to come down and spend time, and then the tourist is the gravy that comes in. You've got to have customers every day, and the tourist trade is very cyclical.

And fickle, and seasonal.

I would give the locals a reason to come Downtown.

And that would bring tourists back, too. I like the idea of local.

Everybody follows a crowd. Half the restaurants I eat at, I judge by the number of cars in the lot.

My reasons are sentimental, too.

Our Downtown has a very good history. There is a lot of nostalgia, and the magnetic well, the hotels that used to be Downtown, there's a lot of nostalgia that could be built on.

We used to have a sidewalk sale twice a year, and we just had one, and it was very small, but there's no women's clothing store Downtown. Used to, that was a big deal. I know we're talking about Downtown, but the Downtown merchants have done a lot of it to their self.

Commercial and Jefferson, there used to be a hand-drawn water well down there, and the newspaper office used to be a Ford Dealership, and they redid the streets down there, and it's all got torn up over the years. A lot of the old stores, the Madison Grill, has burned twice, and that's been rebuilt. Across the street... all kinds of that type of stuff.

There used to be a service station, and a donut shop.

Moderator: Let's talk a little about what kinds of businesses should be Downtown?

I have a question. Recently we've had Hillbilly Days, and I'm wondering how the businesses reacted to that. There's none of them here. Was there a large benefit from all those people being Downtown?

It brings people into the community.

There was an antique car race that stopped over here, and there was gads of people down on Main Street, but did they go in the store?

My grandson and I had lunch at Lunch Box.

I think Hillbilly Days didn't start until late in the evening, and most of the stores were closed by the time it started. I didn't go this year because of the heat.

Do they charge taxes at Hillbilly Days?

When we do Relay for Life, one year, it'll be Dallas County...

Do you think having Hillbilly Days more than one evening would help Downtown?

I remember, I think it was Family Dollar stayed open, and I asked the manager, and they said they'll never be open at night like that. He said "They robbed us blind." He said they weren't prepared, and people would come in, and they couldn't control the crowd... that was one of the complaints I heard with these big things Downtown.

What is there for the tourists, outside of a couple gift shops?

I don't know what the ladies from Fort Leonard Wood fell so much in love with.

The gift shops.

Moderator: What other kind of stores?

Now that we've got Home Traditions, that will be interesting.

And we've got the Bible bookstore.

I don't know what kind of business would attract people.

You've got to have somebody who knows how to run that business, and he's got to have the capital to do that.

That's the problem. Some of the problems, like that building, it'll cost more to make it usable than to buy it.

Is there any kind of funding? Is there any help that they can get from the state? That would be a major expenditure to try to do that. I've been in town and seen it, but I don't know where the money comes from.

Moderator: Would you like to see more restaurants?

A soda fountain.

A coffee shop. An ice cream parlor. Every time I go to Columbia, I stop by Jeff City.

You don't want a tenant to go in a month or two and then be gone.

What we lost, and it's my fault... I had a lot for a theater, but they moved out of town.

A theater would be a draw Downtown.

His lot wasn't big enough. They're expanding.

We had the 2 theaters Downtown.

There's been four or five people down where Aldi's is, too, that weren't very successful. I think the tenant has got a lot to do with it. The way they run a place. That ice cream place.

I don't know what product people want.

Look at the bakery. You've got a certain amount of high school kids year after year. The sophomores, they've got a trend of kids that go there every morning before school.

Moderator: What do you want your Downtown to look like?

What I think needs to be changed is, if there's any money to help the City and property owners to clean up the railroad side of the business district. When you get to Commercial Street, it don't look that bad, but when you cross the tracks, it's looks like slug. I think that that would be, to me, first and probably second would be redoing Commercial Street.

Those trees, are they a problem? They look like it.

They're not consistently sized and shaped.

Bury the utilities, too.

Something else we need to do, we need to get our storm drainage taken care of.

Our infrastructure needs worked on, and if we clean up the back of the buildings, maybe it would be like when the new street went into town.

You talk about those trees... replace those with gaslights.

We need new lights down there.

The gaslights would be dim enough but close enough to provide illumination, and they'd fit with the nostalgia theme of that.

We need to come up with some ideas of products and so forth to woo people, but there's other things we need to work on. I kept putting off my awning because I thought they'd come up with a good idea and money for it.

Something kind of consistent.

(agreement.)

What would be wrong with having some public picnic areas, where some of those vacant buildings have burned? To clean that area up—it doesn't look good, where the old Western Auto was.

Bathrooms.

Yeah.

You haven't addressed the restrooms yet.

Who owns that building?

Where's that at?

The old Western Auto.

(side conversations about who owns the building.)

When you turned off of 129 not long ago, the first thing you saw was the back alley look, and it was the ugliest, disgusting sight that you wouldn't think this was any kind of town, but either _____ or _____ has changed all that, and they've made it look good. Whether the alleyway along the tracks and the back of the buildings could be upgraded, I don't know.

I don't think you're going to be... _____ and I have newer buildings, but if I had an old building, I don't know how much I'd want to spend to fix it up.

I have rental properties also, and if I put a deck on the back because a renter wants it, I have to raise the rent. If she spends \$100,000 to clean up the back of the building, the money's got to come from somewhere.

And then our taxes go up.

We should probably deal with the overhead power. That would clean a lot up.

What can be done, though?

Put them underground.

Get those poles and wires out of there. Let time take care of the rest of it.

Are those owned by the railroad or the City?

City owns everything.

The railroad's very difficult to work with.

There's a fence down there, that's the property line now.

What happened to our railroad that they were going to track through here?

It withered and died on the vine.

We need to take the old factory, make the bottom of it a depot, and have the loft apartments upstairs. The water and sewer in Downtown needs to be worked on. In 1982, that was the cheapest line, and it's beginning to bite us.

The City has reinforced Central Bank three times.

(many people talking at once.)

In the first thing on this DREAM initiative, they talked about the infrastructure, redo your storm and sewer lines, and that was part of it.

Yes.

The street has too much of a crown in it.

You can't get to the post office.

Moderator: *Have you been to other downtowns that you think, "That's what I want Lebanon to look like"?*

High Street in Jeff City is one of them.

I'll tell you, Tunica...if you go into Tunica, they've done some good in their Downtown area, they've fixed up a nice park area.

If you haven't been to Tulsa, they have turned 11th street into an arts community, and I'm shocked at what they've done. You couldn't find a place to park.

Dayton, Ohio, they have vegetation along the street, and the buildings have been cleaned up, and there's a lot of arts, the banks are still there, they have a community center, there's a lot of loft apartments.

Chillicothe, have they done that? And Clinton. Clinton had done some of that work there already. We're right in the middle, as far as size.

Springfield. Springfield's downtown. I think they all have something in common. There is a draw for casual killing time, and once you start getting people, commercial will follow.

They run the ballpark in Denver that way. These little niche cafés and microbrewers all around that, and restaurants, and live bands.

If you go to Louisville, Kentucky, from the riverfront on back, it's for young people. Not for people my age.

What do you think about Springfield?

I don't know the economics of it, but seeing businesses coming back in...

There's two things they've done a lot of is restaurants and bars. You don't see many clothing or shoe stores. It's just to eat and walk around and get drunk.

They've got the big movie theater that's gone in down there, and the ballpark, so it's...the Square itself is still struggling, but you start seeing life, and each little piece... restaurants that serve alcohol is one of the things that built Springfield up.

They've had so much trouble with shootings and stabbings, and they say the restaurants are hurting.

We did use Springfield when we built Elm Street, and we figured out that the green island in the middle of the road got killed by the exhaust.

Moderator: *Thank you very much.*

SECTION V

BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION NOTES

Due to a recorder malfunction, a verbatim transcript is not available for the Business Owners group discussion. The following summary is based on the moderator's notes from this session.

Question: *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?*

- Friendly people, friendly place
- Close-knit
- Welcoming
- Lots of industry
- Lots of boating
- Lots of auto
- Recession proof

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

- South of town
- Wal-Mart
- Could any of these businesses be drawn Downtown?

Question: *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?*

- Lots of restaurants
- Three restaurants Downtown

Question: *Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Lebanon is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?*

- "Two steps forward, one step back"
- Downtown becoming more service than retail
- Lots of turnover in storefronts
- Many vacancies downtown
- Lack of training for entrepreneurial
- Very hard to succeed if not a chain store or restaurant

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

- One of best historic Downtowns (“nostalgia,” “atmosphere”)
- Relatively low rent makes Downtown attractive
- Want to support the Downtown area
- Visibility
- Central location
- Camaraderie with other Downtown businesses (“businesses feed off of one another”)
- Walking distance to vendors and services, which increases productivity (“almost everything I need to run my business is right nearby”)

Question: 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?

- Don’t advertise
- Lack of signage on interstate
- Local residents “used to spend the day downtown,” but no longer do.
- Need better retail mix, not second-hand stores
- Buses should come Downtown
- Central location
- Downtown not easily visible from main thoroughfare through town.
- Used to have one-way streets, and there was some debate over whether one- or two-way streets were better for retail.
- Need better signage
- Perception of not enough parking – lots in rear of buildings built for employees, though they still park on the street

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

- Chamber of Commerce (email)
- Enchanted Christmas—event
- Hillbilly Days
- Challenge to keep businesses open and attract customers during special events

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

- Need people living Downtown
- Rental property or condos might be attractive

Question: *As you know, the City is in the process of developing a master plan for Downtown Lebanon. 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?*

- Restaurants like the Catfish House
- Plenty of parking at night
- Upscale kitchen store/organic foods
- Gourmet market
- Men's stores
- Dress shops
- Shoe stores
- Candy store
- Bookstore
- Things open at night—restaurants and entertainment
- Sizeable market who wants step up from Wal-Mart and service: "How can I help you?" vs. "What do you want?"
- Pizzeria
- "Panera-type" place
- Deli
- Destination
- Have bakery
- "People want something to do"
- Historic hotel or bed and breakfast
- Eureka Springs—haunted hotel
- Something akin to businesses and atmosphere found on Branson Landing

Question: *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?*

- Unappealing parking lots
- Streets need to be swept more often
- Not attractive area to walk
- Downtown not well lit, doesn't feel secure, especially in alleys
- Backs of stores need to be more attractive
- Utility wires—need to be buried
- Needs better curb appeal—front and back of buildings
- The look of Business Rt.66 might be something for Downtown to copy.
- Common area—Downtown park. More benches.

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

- Upgrade backs of buildings
- "Who are we trying to be?" Need to answer this question to make decisions about the future of Downtown.