

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CITY OF SEDALIA, MISSOURI

April 23, 2007



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Sedalia

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



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SECTION I

FINAL REPORT

As part of the public opinion research component of the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM•ARC conducted four focus groups in Sedalia, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Sedalia community in regard to the downtown area. The four groups included the following: 1) downtown business owners, 2) the general public, 3) building owners, and 4) the economic council.

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all four groups to the posed questions. Appendices A through D are the complete transcripts of each of the four meetings.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUPS

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

- **General Questions about Sedalia**

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

- **Downtown-Specific Questions**

05. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Sedalia is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
06. Why did you choose to locate your business downtown (or not in downtown, for other business owners)?
07. 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?
08. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what’s going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? How would you like to be communicated with regarding what is going on downtown from the City of Sedalia?

- **Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown**

09. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Sedalia. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...
 - Additional types of businesses would you like to see downtown?
 - Dining and entertainment?
 - Parks and outdoor recreation?
10. Now we would like to talk about the look and feel of downtown. Do 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 do to help your business thrive over the next few years?

B. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE GENERAL GROUPS

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

- **General Questions about Sedalia**

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

- **Downtown-Specific Questions**

05. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Sedalia 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 Sedalia? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?
07. How “user-friendly” is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for?
08. How do local residents and visitors get information about what’s going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation)?

- **Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown**

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

C. THE SEDALIA 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?**

Focus group participants were generally in consensus that Sedalia is a friendly, warm, and welcoming small town, especially because of its people. The participants expressed that Sedalia’s residents are welcoming to visitors and new residents, and that they have a great spirit of volunteerism and helping others. In addition, the groups suggested that Sedalia is a safe and friendly place to raise children. As far as the aesthetics of the town itself, the participants described it as “rustic,” and having an old-world feel to it.

Sedalia is tied very strongly to its history as a railroad hub, a cattle-driving town, a stop on the Katy Trail, and the home of Scott Joplin. The participants expressed pride in Sedalia's history and a great desire to preserve that history. It hosts an annual Scott Joplin Festival and the Missouri State Fair.

As well as being a historical city, Sedalia is not far from a crossing of major highways that make the city convenient for visitors. It is a convenient distance from Kansas City, Lake of the Ozarks, Springfield, and Columbia, and a slightly longer but still convenient distance from St. Louis.

The participants also felt strongly about Sedalia's art, citing it as surprisingly sophisticated in its art and artists. In addition to Sedalia's ties to ragtime music and Scott Joplin, the town has the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, a premier modern art museum. The symphony is renowned as well, and some participants suggested that a number of artists live or show their work in Sedalia.

The participants agreed that Sedalia is moving slowly in the right direction, especially within these last seven or eight years, and particularly because of the downtown revitalization efforts.

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

The focus groups were in consensus that the main shopping areas are Wal-Mart, Thompson Hills, and the State Fair Shopping Center. All include national chains. The participants stated that all of the shopping has moved west of downtown, closer to Highway 65, and that the convenience and prices of stores like Wal-Mart have "devastated" small business. The participants also said that, for more specialty items, residents sometimes take a trip to Kansas City, Columbia, Springfield, or even St. Louis, to shop. Downtown is considered a smaller shopping area, with just a few options. While some of the participants make an effort to shop downtown, all acknowledged that Wal-Mart and the other national chain stores "out west" in the strip malls are very popular among residents.

Downtown, some noted that there are some lower-end "flea-market" type shops, which makes downtown less attractive to potential shoppers.

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

The groups named a mix of restaurants, some downtown and some farther away in strip malls. Downtown restaurants included Malone's on Main and Ivory Grille (the restaurant in the Bothwell Hotel), as well as the smaller Maple Leaf Tea Room and Ivy Cottage. Other restaurants people mentioned included Kehde's Barbecue, Fifth Street Grill, and Applebee's. Many of the participants expressed that they would like more dining options, both for a sit-down meal and for grabbing a quick bite, and that those restaurants should stay open later, particularly during the Scott Joplin Festival and the Missouri State Fair, when there are a number of visitors in town.

Regarding other entertainment, participants said that they take visitors to the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art at State Fair Community College, the symphony, the movie theater, the Katy Trail, the Sedalia area parks, and downtown to see the architecture and walk around. There are often events at the fairgrounds, as well.

- **What kinds of recreation are popular with local residents? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in these activities in Sedalia?**

The groups generally agreed that the Sedalia area parks are wonderful, well-maintained and easily accessible. In addition to the parks, the Katy Trail runs right through Sedalia and is a popular outdoor recreation area for visitors and residents. Some participants mentioned that the gyms and the group exercise classes at State Fair Community College are open to the community, and some residents take advantage of the equipment, the tracks, and classes such as aerobics, yoga, and Pilates.

D. DOWNTOWN SEDALIA: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

The groups agreed that downtown Sedalia is moving slowly in the right direction. People are buying and renovating old downtown buildings and making an effort to revitalize downtown, and a few new restaurants are drawing residents downtown. More local residents are buying the buildings and maintaining them well. In addition, the focus groups felt that Sedalia residents have an increasing interest in revitalizing downtown.

While the participants agreed that Sedalia is moving in the right direction, they also agreed that there are a number of things in downtown Sedalia that still need a great deal of improvement. All of the groups discussed how inconvenient parking in downtown is, and many felt strongly about it. The groups also mentioned that the aesthetics need to be improved: brightening the facades of the buildings, installing brighter street lighting, re-tarring or laying bricks in the roads and sidewalks, maintaining the greenery, and having a consistent aesthetic throughout downtown.

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

The business owners chose to locate their businesses downtown because of its proximity to the courthouse, which would draw lunchtime business, as well as because of the beauty of the historic buildings. Those who did not locate their businesses downtown typically chose to put their businesses closer the highway for more visibility.

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

The participants stated that they visit downtown for some specialty shopping, for banking, for business related to the courthouse, or just to walk around. They focused their discussion most, though, on downtown's past and why residents *used to* visit downtown.

Downtown was once crowded with pedestrians on Friday and Saturday nights. Stores were open late, restaurants were open, and downtown was the premier "see and be seen" spot on these evenings. Some of the older participants remember going downtown as children and being awed by the crowd and the bustle. There were two theaters downtown, as well as much more shopping. The groups said that downtown has declined since the 70's, and even more since Wal-Mart came in.

Now, residents shop at chain stores such as Wal-Mart, JC Penney, or Kmart, for the convenience of parking right in front of the store and having everything one needs in a single place. As these chain stores have become popular, the business downtown has declined.

- **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 groups indicated that inconvenient parking, inconvenient business hours and signage and lighting, in discussing the user-friendliness of downtown.

Parking is a problem downtown: there is not enough of it, and what there is inconveniently located. While there is street parking and small lots behind some businesses, when people do find a spot, they often have to walk a few blocks before getting to their destination. The participants felt that parking may be one reason people find places like Wal-Mart more convenient—although they may walk the same distance from their parking spot at Wal-Mart to the door, they perceive it as closer because they can see Wal-Mart from their spot; downtown, people often have to park around corners or down the street from their destinations. The groups all felt that if downtown expands its shopping, restaurants, and residences, parking is an important issue that will have to be addressed.

In discussing business hours, the participants said that most downtown businesses close at 5:00 or 6:00 PM, with only a few open later. They suggest that this is not user-friendly, since anyone who works regular business hours but does not work downtown has no chance to explore or shop downtown. Some restaurants are open later, and a couple stores are open later, but for the most part, the participants feel that the businesses should be open until 8:00 or 9:00, at least when the Scott Joplin Festival or the State Fair is happening, or on weekend nights.

The groups felt that the signage and poor lighting sometimes makes it hard to get into and around downtown, especially for visitors or other people who do not already know where they are going. With the traffic and parking situation, the signage becomes even more important in helping people find things downtown with ease.

The business owners themselves, according to the groups, are friendly and welcoming, making downtown an attractive and friendly place once visitors find their way to the shops (when the shops are open).

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

Residents and visitors have accessible information about what is happening downtown, but only if they seek it out. Currently, according to the groups, there is information readily available through the Chamber of Commerce and at the Katy Depot. People who subscribe to publications that detail what is going on downtown, or people who make an effort to stop in and find out, can easily find out about all of the events, shopping, and other entertainment downtown. Word of mouth is another powerful tool, according to the focus groups.

There is not very much advertising or marketing to those who do not seek out the information, though. While a website for Sedalia downtown is being developed, there was a sense in some groups that there is no real online resource. In addition, the signs and billboards that hold the information about downtown are either business-specific or not attractive or easily readable.

The groups made suggestions about improving information and advertising about downtown, including creating an attractive, easily-readable bulletin board with events and attractions listed, advertisements for Sedalia downtown as a whole that are visible from the major highways, and a comprehensive website.

E. DOWNTOWN SEDALIA: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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

The groups addressed shopping, restaurants, theaters, and art galleries as types of businesses they would like to see downtown. They would also like to see more residents, who would patronize these businesses and give downtown a lively feel.

For shopping, focus group members were interested in seeing specialty shops such as antique stores, jewelry stores, and high-end clothing stores. Some members suggested having something as an anchor, as a destination to bring people in, such as a Macy's or a similar type of department store. All agreed that low-end flea-market-type stores are not the types of businesses that will attract visitors, but instead that they need more high-end and specialty shopping to attract both residents and visitors. These stores should stay open later into the evening, at least on weekend evenings and during special events.

The possibility of connecting the stores together came up in a few of the group discussions, creating some sort of indoor mall or walkway that ties the stores together and draws people into the stores they did not necessarily come for but might enjoy.

All the groups agreed that the downtown area needs more restaurants of different types, and that these restaurants should stay open later to draw a dinner crowd. The participants agree that restaurants such as Malone's on Main and the Ivory Grille (at the Bothwell Hotel) are excellent draws, and would like to see more restaurants of that type. In addition, they feel that a coffee shop and some quicker eateries would provide a nice balance to the sit-down restaurants.

A couple of the groups focused on art, since art and music are so important to Sedalia's identity. They suggested that a theater downtown would be nice addition, and that art galleries or art exhibits would help draw a larger and more diverse group of visitors to Sedalia. Having a focus on art might also create a cohesive and unique identity for downtown Sedalia that sets it apart from other Missouri historic downtowns.

The groups also felt that having more residents would help the downtown area a lot, since the residents could patronize the businesses, and would be around more often, making downtown feel more lived-in and less desolate.

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

The groups felt that improvements in the infrastructure would improve the look and feel of downtown. For many participants, street and sidewalk repair are priorities, as well as landscaping to beautify the streets and sidewalks. Currently, some sidewalks are cracked and the streets are inconsistently paved. Some suggested that bricks inlaid into the streets and sidewalks would give downtown Sedalia the atmosphere of its historic roots, while providing a cohesive look for the downtown area. The participants mentioned that the parks around Sedalia are so beautiful, and the downtown landscaping should be similarly attractive.

The focus groups were generally in consensus that repairs and renovations of the buildings are another priority. They discussed the difficulties facing building owners in repairing and renovating buildings, and suggested that grants and other funding opportunities should be explored to encourage more people to buy and renovate. In addition, they feel that the building codes and renovation rules should be stringent enough to ensure a high quality, but flexible enough not to discourage people from getting involved in renovation.

In the discussions, participants mentioned that, even in the renovated buildings with businesses on the ground floor, the upper floors are vacant. If they were occupied, as loft apartments or offices, the downtown area would feel livelier.

The facades were discussed as a priority in renovation, since brightening the facades would brighten the whole look and feel of downtown. Some groups mentioned that not only the facades on the main downtown streets, but the buildings all around downtown, should be redone and made brighter, as anything visible from downtown becomes part of visitors' impressions of Sedalia's downtown.

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

Infrastructure changes were of the highest priority to all of the focus groups. In all, the groups felt that a better infrastructure—building codes, sewer system renovation, grants to help fund building renovation, street repair, parking improvements, sidewalk repair—will make it possible for businesses to thrive, and will make downtown attractive to visitors and residents.

Another focus was having more retail stores and restaurants, and a bigger variety of both, downtown. If these are downtown and open later, they will make the downtown interesting and attractive to both residents and visitors.

Another major priority was establishing a coherent identity for downtown Sedalia. As a historic district, downtown should embrace and celebrate its historic and artistic roots, and the buildings, the streets, and the businesses should reflect that pride in Sedalia's history. This might include inlaying bricks in the streets while paving, in order to give downtown Sedalia an old-time feel, it might include encouraging art and music events and galleries to come downtown, and it might include creating renovation guidelines that help preserve the historic appearance of downtown while still brightening, cleaning up, and modernizing the buildings.

All of these things, according to all of the focus groups, will work towards helping downtown Sedalia become a *destination*. Downtown Sedalia is not visible from the major highways, and therefore, it needs to become better known and more of a destination for visitors. For residents, a variety of shopping and of restaurants can be a draw that will make them take the effort to come downtown. A coherent identity, and improved infrastructure and aesthetics, and more stores and restaurants, will help make downtown Sedalia a destination.

- **Business Owners: What could the City do to help your business thrive over the next few years?**

The business owners feel that loans and grants would help their businesses thrive, and having a central resource for finding out about funding opportunities would be immensely helpful. Whether by hiring a new resource person whose specific job is to find funding opportunities and make them known to business owners, or by creating a website that lists these resources, the City can help business owners by making funding more accessible.

- **General Public: What other downtowns in the area would you say Sedalia's is most like? What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* it to resemble?**

The groups mentioned a number of cities as a comparison, including the following: Parkville; Cole Kamp; Marshall; Cape Girardeau; Savannah, GA; Paducah, KY; Warrensburg; Columbia; Branson; Ottawa, KS; Downtown Kansas City; Downtown St. Louis and the old Gaslight Square district in St. Louis; Clinton; Hannibal; Eureka Springs, AR; Springfield; Omaha, NE; Wilbur, NE; and Lee's Summit.

They admired these cities for various reasons. Nearby towns that have somehow revitalized their downtowns included Parkville, Cole Camp, Marshall, Cape Girardeau, Warrensburg, Clinton, Branson, Hannibal, Springfield, Lee's Summit, and Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Larger cities that the participants felt Sedalia could learn something from were Kansas City (particularly downtown and the Plaza) and St. Louis (particularly downtown and the old Gaslight Square district). Some of the cities from other parts of the country, such as Ottawa (Kansas), Savannah, Paducah, Omaha, and Wilbur (Nebraska), have successfully revitalized their downtowns, or are revitalizing their downtowns, in ways that are admirable to the focus group participants.

F. KEY POINTS

- **Key points about the Sedalia area:**
 - ◆ Sedalia is a friendly, warm, and inviting small town with a rustic feel to it.
 - ◆ The Sedalia area is safe, and an excellent place to raise a family.
 - ◆ Sedalia is strongly tied to its history as a railroad town, a cattle-driving town, a stop on the Katy Trail, and the home of Scott Joplin.
 - ◆ Sedalia is rich in art and music, home of the Daum Museum, the Scott Joplin festival, an excellent symphony, and a number of local artists.
 - ◆ Sedalia is slowly moving in the right direction, particularly as more people focus on the revitalization efforts downtown.
 - ◆ The main shopping areas are west of Sedalia and closer to Highway 65, strip malls and chain stores such as Wal-Mart.
 - ◆ Dining options are spread throughout the area, with some new well-received restaurants downtown and a number of restaurants "out west."
 - ◆ Entertainment options are also spread throughout the Sedalia area; the Art Museum, the Katy Trail, and the fairgrounds are popular attractions.
 - ◆ The Sedalia parks are well-maintained, accessible, and in many places around town, and the facilities at State Fair Community College are excellent for exercise options.
- **Key points about downtown Sedalia in the present:**
 - ◆ Sedalia downtown is moving slowly in the right direction, with all the renovation efforts, the DREAM Initiative, and the public interest in downtown.
 - ◆ There is a lot that still needs work downtown, including parking, signage, street lighting, the facades of the building, the street paving, the sidewalks, the greenery, and the overall aesthetics.

- ◆ Business owners locate their businesses downtown because of the proximity to the courthouse and the beauty of the historic structures; those who do not locate their businesses downtown choose other locations because of more traffic and higher visibility.
 - ◆ The parking downtown is inconvenient for people, which leads them to do their shopping elsewhere.
 - ◆ The business hours of the downtown shops and restaurants are too short—they close at 5:00 or 6:00 PM, making it inconvenient for people who do not work downtown to visit, and making the downtown less interesting for visitors during the Scott Joplin festival and the State Fair.
 - ◆ The signage downtown needs to be clearer, and the lighting needs to be better, in order to make downtown more convenient.
 - ◆ The business owners downtown are friendly, and a lot of existing businesses are nice; the flea-market-type businesses are too low-end to attract people.
 - ◆ Information about what is happening downtown is accessible, but only to those who seek it out. A website, a clear and attractive bulletin board, and more advertising visible from the highway would make information about downtown available to even those who do not seek it out.
- **Key points about the future of downtown Sedalia:**
 - ◆ More shopping, restaurants, theaters, and art galleries are the types of businesses that would improve downtown.
 - ◆ High-end retail would help draw people downtown.
 - ◆ A wide variety of restaurants would help draw people downtown.
 - ◆ Businesses should be open later, particularly on weekends and during the Scott Joplin Festival and the State Fair.
 - ◆ Art galleries and music events would draw visitors as well as show residents the wealth of what they have in Sedalia.
 - ◆ More downtown residents would help revitalize downtown, patronizing these businesses and giving downtown a lively feel.
 - ◆ A better infrastructure—building codes, sewer system renovation, grants to help fund building renovation, street repair, parking improvements, sidewalk repair—will make it possible for businesses to thrive, and will make downtown attractive to visitors and residents.

- ◆ A cohesive identity for downtown Sedalia that celebrates its history will help draw visitors, and this identity should show itself through building renovation, the types of businesses, the façade repair, the streets and sidewalks, and the overall aesthetic of downtown.
- ◆ Renovations and building repair are a high priority, and the City should do what it can to make it easier for building owners to renovate buildings, therefore enticing more people to invest in and renovate downtown property.
- ◆ Downtown Sedalia should, in the future, be a *destination* for tourists and for residents. For tourists, the historic town, the shopping and antiques, and the quaint and rustic feel will be a draw; for residents, the types of shopping and the restaurants will make downtown a place they want to come to shop, eat, or just walk around.
- ◆ Having a central resource where business owners can learn about funding opportunities will help downtown businesses thrive.
- ◆ Sedalia has a lot to learn from other similar-sized downtowns that have successfully renovated their downtown areas; specifically, many of them have created a cohesive identity for their downtown area that draws visitors.

SECTION II

BUSINESS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

(Name unintelligible) ...involved with the project in the (unintelligible), and the focus group has asked us to join them. Currently we're working on projects in Marshall and there are several other projects we've worked on in the community but we're going to be heavily involved in the community here, with actually a couple...Greg Rodewald, the one that's doing the school out here, is my mentor. That's kind of where I come in. So I was invited to sit in this group, just kind of represent some varying interests.

My name's Rebecca Lestrada. I have Becca's Framing and Antiques, and I also live above my business. I'd like to see more apartments available, more parking, things like that, but I love being downtown.

Nick Lestrada, Rebecca Lestrada's son. I currently go to Missouri Valley College, so I'm so-called a business owner too, but she owns the place, but I live there too. And I work there too.

My name's Laurie Ward. I'm an attorney here in town. I just last June bought two buildings on Ohio at 514 South Ohio and 512 South Ohio. We have a second and a third floor that we're looking to rehab and either put in more businesses or apartments up there, and that's my interest in it.

My name's Aaron Moreson. I represent Black and White Enterprises. My partner and I are revitalizing 412 South Ohio, also known as Store Central, right across from the courthouse. We just remodeled it and put Art Impressions in the commercial lease downstairs, and upstairs we're putting in metropolitan, loft-style apartments.

Rick Lachley, Highland Internet, service provider here in the community and actually in West Central Missouri. We own and operate two buildings, 215 and 213 South Ohio, they're kind of married together at this point. We're here to stay, and we want to see the downtown grow and be revitalized.

Debbie Lebrown, I own Maple Leaf Tea Room at 217. We're just renting the building now, but in three years, we're working to buy...

My name's Stacey Burmas. I'm director of the Scott Joplin foundation, and the only thing I own is my car.

I'm Don Harns, an attorney by profession, but a circuit judge for almost 30 years until a year or so ago, and I make suggestions, having senior status. I own nothing downtown, but I'm undoubtedly the person with the longest memory of downtown of anybody in this group or the other one. I remember quite well the downtown for approaching 70 years. I've lived here for a long time, and I can remember when there was no other business area anyplace except

downtown, and where everybody who lived in Sedalia who wanted to be interested in what was going on and see anybody came to town on Saturday night, and you couldn't get up and down the sidewalks because of all the people in town on Saturday nights, and later it went to Friday nights, then after that it of course dwindled. But I'm interested in seeing anything that will bring people into downtown, because if you can bring substantial numbers of people downtown for any reason, the rest of these empty buildings will fill up.

Andy: Well, thanks again for coming, and I want to talk a lot specifically about downtown, but before we do that, I want to ask you a little bit about Sedalia in general. We're based in St. Louis, but if you were describing Sedalia to someone that was thinking about moving here from out of town, how would you describe it? What would you say that they need to know?

I guess since I'm a foreigner, and I say it because I'm Texas-born, I'm transplanted here by the military and I decided to retire here. Sedalia's an interesting-looking place, rustic, most of the shopping was here, and some of it now has moved up... most times I go up to the City, though, because I worked in the city for 9 years. But this is kind of like a hub to me, because you can get pretty much what you want. Penny's is one of the best you can go to, and of course you've got Wal-Mart. Military people, we're kind of easy to please, so... coming downtown, though, is different. For me, with Iland, I helped Iland get started...I was a customer salesman if you will when they first started, so I went to the downtown area and fell in love with Iland and all that area down there. So for me, if someone was coming in town, I don't know what I would say to them, but I would say "rustic" would be my term.

We moved here from St. Louis about 10 years ago. It was a nice small town, it's friendly, it's small, and we fell in love with downtown. We like to travel, and every place we go, we search out the old downtown areas and see how they revamped them...

My whole family was, but I was specifically born in Sedalia, and then I moved away to Kansas City for seventeen years, and I recall coming back to town, and as the Judge has mentioned, I remember downtown as a small kid when it was really busy, when people were all over the sidewalks, and my grandfather owned a business on third street, and I think if I was to tell anybody why I like living here, it would be because in relationship to the bigger cities, it's just a more slower-paced and more relaxed environment where you can get to the things you need to shop for, even if you need to go to the city, it's what 2 hours one way and 3 hours to St. Louis, so I would just rather live here than anywhere as, as far as the pace of the society is. I would like to see more business downtown, simply because I'm a history buff, and I don't like to see the old downtown get empty.

I moved here 22 years ago, and as a single parent, the main reason why I stayed here was because it's a safe place to raise my children. You can get to know people in the community fairly easy, and I just feel that somehow if we could advertise, in a very kind way, to get the local people to quit going to the malls and start coming to our businesses downtown, because we do have a lot of shops that offer unusual things, and if we had more, I think it would help, and it would also generate out-of-town business. The Bothwell Hotel, I'm kind of catty corner from them. Every time someone from out-of-town stays there, they come to my store, they love it, they love the old buildings, and I get really positive feedback from people that visit.

I'm from a small town, Lincoln, which is about 20 miles south of here, so I have a different perspective of growing up in a smaller community, but we always felt that Sedalia was part of the same area that we grew up in, because everybody goes to Sedalia. My business is up here, and it just seems like a bigger smaller community. You run into people that you know every place, so I think it's kind of a friendly place, but I agree, get the people to come back downtown, because there's nothing unique about a Wal-Mart, there's nothing unique about a Penny's, those are nice stores, but you got to get em down to the uniqueness, because everybody goes to all the little towns, to seek out the little antique malls and stuff, where you can get all that over here. It dawned on me the other day that I haven't been in all the shops downtown, but you'll drive 30 miles to another store just to see if they've got something different.

Andy: Let's talk a little bit about the shopping. What would you say are the main shopping areas around Sedalia?

Thompson Hills, out west.

Andy: Is that a development?

It's Wal-Mart, it's like a strip mall.

Andy: Is that the main shopping area? Are there others?

Little bit of State Fair. Kmart. And of course the grocery store. They're all out west.

I think Bing's is a good example of outliving the big stores. When Wal-Mart came, everybody was afraid they were going to snuff out the little stores, and Bing's has survived, and I'd much rather go to Bing's than Wal-Mart any day.

It brings business to our town, instead of Wal-Mart, because Wal-Mart is a multimillion dollar business, so it's better to shop Bing's, Price Chopper, those places...

See, then your local store owners contribute back. Sedalia is a very giving community, I've noticed that, and that makes me feel proud to live here, too.

It does seem like the community taps into the same resources over and over again.

They do downtown, they drop people off downtown, they hit all the stores and then they don't come in and shop.

I've mentioned to numbers of people before, that if it were possible that, say, for instance, that alley between second and third, the one that has the parking lot behind it, if somehow those five or six buildings could be joined together with one merchant that would draw people, it would have to be a discount type place or something like that, that would draw people. And it has parking on both sides. If you could get the kind of business that would attract numbers of people downtown, then rippling out from that location, the other buildings would fill up by themselves.

Like an outlet store type.

I was thinking about maybe something more exclusive, like Macy's. I was up in St. Paul's MN, and they join all the buildings, and in every building you go into there's shopping. The Macy's, you have to go through all these other stores to get to Macy's, it was amazing. One of the things in this area is when you have something exclusive like that, you'll be surprised that people will go there just to look, and some will buy.

I hope I don't get things thrown at me, but I visited a place in Detroit called Trapper's Alley. What it was was an old downtown area, where the fur traders used to take their furs to trade, it was an alleyway. They enclosed that part of the downtown area into a mall, and there were escalators going on the street into the second-story windows, and you would go visit all these different specialty shops or franchises. That drew people in. It was packed every night. As big as Detroit was, it was a tourist attraction. But that was the place to go, you could get specialty shirts, jewelry, specialty food... the fact that it was enclosed and had all these oddities within that brought people down...

That's kind of what's happening down at, you have these specialty stores, you can shop for hours, anything from coins to trinkets. I love it. I always drop at least, more than I want to admit.

For me, a shopping experience, I go to Wal-Mart sometimes because I have to, but I shop at Bing's, and I don't mind wandering around in there to find the food we need for the week, but if we have to run to Wal-Mart because it's the only place we can find that or because it's four dollars cheaper than any other place, then I go out there kind of begrudging because I have to deal with all the stuff. And I'm sure it's going to beep when I go out the door, anyway.

For a variety of things, a place like Wal-Mart... when my wife sends me for a few groceries, she's always got something on the list, like a toothpaste, that you've got to walk a block for one item.

Andy: Let me ask you about dining and entertainment kinds of options. What are popular choices here in Sedalia?

Kehde's (all)

My favorite, since I've been here, and I've been here since 89. That's my favorite, still to this day.

(many people talking, mentioning lots of places)

I would say probably the more popular ones are the local owned ones, the ones that everybody's all mentioned are all locally owned, they aren't chains.

I think Starbucks is going to help a lot. Everybody likes coffee.

They should have one downtown, I'm surprised they don't have one there.

I think it's because whenever they look at the statistics, the west is where the shopping is, and they just put that new building in there. More stores going in, Hot Topic, Subway. Everyone wants to make sure they get their prime location. I think that if we do our job correctly, then property values downtown will raise, and this will expand from within instead of out west, and that's the

hot spots that the franchises will look at whenever they look to move. Hopefully, if we do our jobs right, we'll get franchises here as soon as we get the property values up.

Isn't some of it traffic-oriented as well? Traffic flows from west to south...

Whenever they fix the streets, and put that new parking in front of the courthouse, it's going to be a lot more open and easier to access. And isn't Dave Furnell putting in a big building down there... he's going to be putting in a pretty big structure, a lot of office space. That's going to be a brand new building, more the speed of a corporate franchise, they don't want to revitalize anything. If you're a corporate franchise, you're not going to spend the money to fix up a place, you're going to get into a new place.

One of the things that works against what we're doing right now is the market study that's been done. It's interesting what they say. They really identify that west corridor, they don't even talk about the eastern much, other than the need. North is nonexistent.

The town seems to have their own perception of the division of the north and the east. East thinks that they're excluded, north thinks that they don't fit in anyplace. No matter how much there is on outreach, everyone's got their own perspectives.

(many people talking)

I think Ivory Grille is great for the downtown, though. I've heard nothing but good about it, and everybody talks about it, so I think, for restaurant-wise, to answer the question, it's where to go. I know it's a little high-dollar...

We go to fifth street for lunch. There's so many lawyers right around the courthouse, that if you want to go somewhere for a quick, you can go into fifth street. It's a little pricey sometimes for lunch, but it's good.

(many people talking)

Debbie's got a good tea room. She's got the best sandwiches.

And I was surprised. We moved in without knowing much about downtown...Probably fifty percent of business is downtown lunch hour. But we have a lot of tourists come in, and I'm surprised, who are either riding Katy Trail or just staying up at the hotel and come down for lunch.

You guys have excellent sandwiches, and a lighter menu. It works great.

If we'd had the foresight that they'd had in Kansas, years ago, when shopping centers were coming in...they cleared off about six downtown blocks just off the main street, and they put a shopping center. So the shopping center is downtown. They don't have a shopping center out.

So the shopping center draws the public in? I'm from Dallas, and if you saw what happened to downtown Dallas, all the big buildings are empty. It's not funny. They have multiple shopping centers around Dallas, and that has been the problem, it has all but killed downtown Dallas. There was a move to put a skating rink in. If you know anything about Dallas, it's kind of like Detroit. That's what happened to Dallas, and they're trying to come back. There wasn't even a

place to buy a meal, because everything moved out. I think there was a Burger King, and you had to walk miles to get there.

(many people talking)

To touch on what he said, I work late at night, and it don't bother me at all. We park out in a parking lot behind the building, and I never had any fear.

(many people talking about how they feel safe)

One thing, too, I think I would like for the local people to understand... Downtown Sedalia is the heart of the city, we have the courthouse.... These things are not going to change, and we need to promote that too.

Andy: Would you say that downtown, in your perspective, moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right direction (many people agreeing)

I see so many people redoing businesses, especially upstairs, and it'll be cool when you start seeing people above their shops, or just live there.

That would add quite a few people, if you could get some of those buildings downtown as apartments.

We have the commercial building, and it's just been bought. And they're going to be putting 25, kind of cookie-cutter section 8 housing, so that's 25 apartments full. In this town, it'll be full. Before they even get done, our apartments will be full. That's just two projects, and that's already up to 29 apartments.

So with that, I could see some markets and grocery stores... Dollar general is busy. (many people talking)

One problem I do foresee is the parking. We have a hard time finding places to park, especially in the winter with the ice. You know, people need to be a little caring and understanding when you live there. It's really been hard.

I was wondering, I don't know anything about the Dollar General except that they're busy. I don't know whether they have any other branches of that business which is something bigger than just the Dollar store, other enterprises with wider range of merchandise. They're the people who stay downtown. A store like that, like I was talking about on Ohio, between the street and the parking lot, that would utilize all of those buildings, some business like that that gets people here... you're not going to get the big stores downtown, it just isn't going to happen, but some of the smaller businesses... I don't know whether there's anything like Dollar General that's located downtown, that has a branch of their business that would fit what I'm talking about.

I think it's one of those horse first or cart first... if they get all these apartments filled downtown, some business is going to come here and see that Dollar General is the only game in town, and they've got a guaranteed market down there, so they'll be some competition if they can both survive.

(many people talking, mentioning other businesses)

As far as variety goes, collectively we'll have unison. I mean, we've got a variety of stores down here already, and the more businesses that come down here, the more variety you have—you have Becca's framing, you have all sorts of shops down here, that have different things.

Specialty shops, they're good, but there's a limited number of people they'll attract.

I think we're going to get more clothing stores, outlets, back down here. I think we'll get other clothing stores, and we'll have other stores like Dollar General, and they'll carry all sorts of other items.

(many people talking, side conversations)

Andy: What is it about downtown that attracted you to the area? Why did you choose to locate your businesses or establishments downtown?

It's close to the courthouse, and it was a really cool building. I'm serious. Nobody wants to drive. You can walk right there.

The historic, the old buildings, are still there.

(many people talking about old buildings)

You should go into our courthouse. There are murals all over the third floor of the courthouse, and it's all the history of Pettis County, and if you get anybody from the area to go look at that, they're just like "wow."

(side conversations about courthouse)

I think growing up downtown as a kid, I didn't think nothing of it because I moved here when I was probably in like eighth grade, but growing up as a kid I started respecting it more everyday. I worked in a building downtown, Pearl Evans, and I redid the whole thing, and that taught me a lot of things—redid our building upstairs, helped do that. So, living downtown to me means a lot. I can drive downtown everyday, look at every building everyday, and keep doing it, and I love it. We need to redo it.

We'll do a lot better when we get our facades brighter.

Yeah.

I like to see things for kids to do more. You see a lot of kids running in the streets and what not. We need to have things for kids, keep the crime rate down, keep kids going to school. Anything to make fun for kids, and people our age too. I was a kid once too, I went to the boys and girls club, and that's downtown. It's a great place, and we need things to keep going.

Like the YMCA.

Yeah, there's a YMCA in Marshall, and it's great. Olympic-sized pool...

(side conversations, many people talking)

One of the things is they're wanting to get some sort of community center going on the west side.

Excuse me for saying this, but most of those kids, and thankfully they've got good parents that can take them to ballgames and this and that... my children grew up, and I was a single parent. After school, they had to go to boys and girls club, and that was instrumental in their lives. We have the children from the east side, north side, west, that should be in a community center here.

Judge Barnes was talking about how we should get a store downtown, and if there's some way we could get a community center somehow downtown, I don't know if there's a place for it, and it may not be practical, but if you've got matching funds out there and you could get that downtown, that could be that draw.

Andy: Let me ask you, from what you hear from your customers and clients, how user-friendly is it downtown? Is it easy to get around and park downtown?

I'd say the parking is the biggest complaint.

But it's easy to walk downtown. (many people talking about walking)

I think, from an outsider's standpoint, it's not knowing where to park. Because when you see downtown, it's so busy, you see all the cars parked on the side and everything, and it's different...most people coming in from the rural areas, when they come in, they don't know where they're going. It's taken me, and I've been here since 89, and I'm just now knowing how to park and not worry about tickets or anything. Across the street over there, there's a nice lot over there, and I usually park there.

Parallel parking... I know my spouse hates it. (Many people talking at once)

I think we need a square, a big square where people can go. You can pack parking spots in there.

(Many side conversations about parking)

There's a big lot behind our building, but it's a gravel lot, so nobody knows how to park in there. Everybody kind of mis-parks in there, and the door is right there...

You've got some buildings here that would accommodate inside parking. There are people, especially living in these buildings, who would like to have their cars off the street where it's covered and everything, maybe even locked.

That'll have to be addressed if they start getting a lot of apartments.

Half of these parking lots, all of them are packed all the time. It's no further to walk from them than it is to walk to the front door of the Wal-Mart.

(Many side conversations)

Andy: And what about business hours, location, layout of downtown? Do you find that your customers find those things to be convenient?

There are numbered streets. It's pretty easy.

(Many people agreeing)

Andy: In terms of communicating to local residents about what's going on in your business or downtown, how do you communicate with residents in the area?

Radio, newspapers, and our website.

That's probably one of the busiest websites.

Word of mouth. Our business, that's all it is. You do a good job, they come back.

(lots of talking)

People on the base, coming in and out, they hear about Iland and they find out what's going on in the area.

Well, we have a community calendar, and I-sells are popular. (Many people agreeing.) That actually helps us sell services more than anything. Yeah, I don't think we put a whole lot of advertising dollars out there, we usually do trade-outs of some sort.

The other thing would be bulletin boards coming into town. I notice because I'm on the road a lot. I live in Warrensburg, and I drive into town everyday. I happen to like Wendy's coffee, and I had forgotten there was a Wendy's here. There's a bulletin board about 6 miles out of town, and I usually know what's going on from that. From the standpoint of downtown, if I don't go to Iland or don't read the paper, I don't know what's going on down there.

Yeah, bulletin boards are great. Especially coming from Marshall, I come in everyday. I see all different businesses on bulletin boards. This road leads right into downtown.

There was some discussion about one of those electronic signs. I don't want to see the whole downtown area blinded, but each business could put some sort of blurb on there.

Years ago, Ed (name unintelligible), for five dollars a week, he would change it and we could put the little letters on it. Right now, the sign is so small, the bushes cover it... we do need an electronic one, but I think everybody wants it an old-style design.

You can get them in any background. It doesn't have to just be a black background with red text on it.

(Lots of talking about people looking into electronic signs.)

A sign that directed traffic to us...

Especially at the stoplight.

One thing that wouldn't bring more people, necessarily, but would create a better impression, would be around the courthouse... visitors in town would say, well what's with that building across the street, it's a building that attracts attention, but pretty soon they see what a sorry looking building it is if you see around the windows...

(lots of people talking at the same time)

I think that as far as this DREAM grant goes, it's all in comparison to building new... you could build a new building, or you could revitalize an old one and get money back.

Some corporations have trouble with the older buildings. I had to do some environmental studies, bring in some folks to prove there wasn't any asbestos, what it would cost. I think it cost about five grand just to get the okay to buy the building.

From experience working with the buildings downtown, people don't get new roofs. They just slap on tar. Then we need to tear off and then replace.

There's a city code for amount of layers you can have.

They're just now enforcing that.

The other thing is that the businesses haven't been producing the profits to put it back into the building. When they develop profits, they've got other things to spend it on that doesn't have any return on it. I mean, we bought our building last June and we're going to have to tuck point and all that stuff, and you've got to get it done.

(lots of talking)

The other thing we're going to have to address is the sewer deal. Nobody knew where my sewer hooked onto anything. There wasn't a map. We had a private sewer line that hooks into somebody else's, and because the plumbers guessed the right place, they dug up in the right place.

(lots of talking about where their sewer lines are)

Andy: We've been talking about this as we've been going along, but I'd like to ask you specifically to talk about the future of downtown and what you'd like to see in terms of the direction the community needs to be going. First of all, what kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

Quality food services and entertainment.

And aesthetics when you walk down the street.

(Side conversations)

I would like to see an upscale men's and women's clothing store, jewelry stores... we'd like to come downtown and get anything we want.

A place to get a hot cup of coffee.

(Side conversations)

An old-fashioned bakery.

That goes back to the idea of expanding all the buildings together and having a shopping alley. It would be cool.

I think that's the answer to attract large numbers of people downtown, and you can't get large numbers of people regularly with specialty shops. Those people go there because that's where they're going, and when they're done they leave, and they don't stay to go elsewhere.

I think, as a small business owner, marketing is... I've got so many dollars to spend on advertising, but there could be 10 of us with small amounts, and we could all get together and, yeah we're all individuals, but do something collectively, as a team.

And we're not in competition... there's enough business for everybody.

I remember a place in Kansas City when they've done something like that. Not the plaza, but something else. They've got all these eateries in the basement of this place, you walk for hours.

That's how it was on the waterfront in St. Louis. That's how they started and brought that up. It was all crime, the Gaslight area on the Mississippi.

You wouldn't know it now.

My thought was, if you're going to do something like that, you can bring them all together with different things... we drive all the way to Kansas City for something like that. Why travel back to the west when it's all there downtown?

Bottom line—we're not going to... west is always where the traffic is, and they're going to be there...

I don't know if you guys have ever been to Cole Camp (?) at Charles, you always go there because it's great food. No matter what, if you can have something cool here, people will come. We gotta make something to make everybody come.

Well, and Cole Camp is a great example, because that's a little town.

(many people talking)

In Cole Camp, another thing they have is a winery, and a place that sells cheese.

(many side conversations about restaurants)

Little towns like that always have an annual event in their area.

(lots of people talking in side conversations at once)

Andy: What about parks or outdoor recreation? Do you think there's any place for that in the downtown area?

Absolutely. (many people agreeing)

Our parks here in town are great. They take care of the parks in Sedalia. If we ever could get a park or something in here, that would be great.

We've got a lot of parks around here, though... I think we're covered.

A little green area, though. Just a little greenery. Gazebo. Benches where you could sit and have lunch, maybe four or six picnic tables in two or three different places.

(many people talking at once)

Andy: What about the look and feel of downtown? What kind of improvements need to be made in terms of aesthetics?

The facades. I wouldn't want to see the buildings change... I don't know how many of you have been to Europe, but I'm glad I went, because they don't destroy their buildings. It's like stepping into history. People are too quick to tear down old buildings for progress... ours are 100 years old.

The buildings in Europe are twice that old at least.

They take care of their buildings.

Yes they do. They have these codes that you can't tear the building down. You can renovate them, you can gut them, but you can't tear them down. I wouldn't want to see the buildings torn down or changed structurally.

(many side conversations)

Legislatively, we've been doing it right. In order to get the state historic tax preservation grant, there are stipulations. You cannot change the windows, the trim, you have to tuck point it. They've got it covered that you cannot change anything on the outside, you can just make it brighter and cleaner. And the city has even taken steps, they'll pay back up to 5000 dollars for your façade to help out as well.

We need clean streets, clean allies, good lighting. Until we get those things...

Good sidewalks...

Good sidewalks. Just your basic things. The alley by my store, I've called a thousand times...it's just filthy. It's well-traveled because the bank is there. Several of the store owners around me have put their own lights up, because we can't get them from the city. That kind of bothers me, because we are paying taxes. And just keeping the streets cleaner, and the alleys. And the sidewalks are kind of bad.

They're redoing the streets all the way from Main to Broadway, and they're stripping it down. They're taking out the sewers and redoing it. We'll have the clean streets then...I'm sure they'll use better materials. The curbs, they're going to be doing thick tall curbs, and those'll be beautiful. Brick inlays on all the sidewalks.

(Lots of talking, unintelligible)

It's going to take time.

(lots of talking)

Andy: What do you think the biggest priorities are, the top two or three things?

Infrastructure—sidewalks and streets, parking and sewer.

The sewer plan was not a complete plan, and if you go to the city, they don't have any records of where any of those sewer lines connect.

(many side conversations about sewer)

Another thing, and a lot of people don't want to hear it, have a certain amount of inches of tar for tear-offs. Because there are buildings are falling.

And people have made comments before they fixed where the Russian building fell, is it safe to be down here? And the one in Clinton falling. It wasn't just us...

(side conversation about buildings collapsing)

He's got a point, it starts with the roof. And our roof was bad, we just repaired it. But it takes money—if you're trying to make your business happen, you don't have the kind of capital to fix buildings. I mean, I got quoted about 17,000 dollars for a tear-off, that's some money to be putting out! We've got our project covered as far as our investment, but someone who's just trying to put some maintenance... you don't want to be spending all your profits on this.

But you have to budget in money every year for your building.

This project, 90 percent of it depends on where you can get the money. We're having a hard time with local banks. Local banks didn't want to touch us, didn't want to think about downtown. I think that, as far as the whole thing goes, revolves around getting a statewide unison act trying to get all the cities together to get statewide banks. We have trust from the governor... if we could get statewide banks to throw some deals out there, better rates, we could really get this thing off the ground. Until then, we're all just struggling to figure out where all this is going to come from.

My thoughts were, I'll pay an extra half-percent interest to local banks, because they're going to give the money back to the community. That's just my thought.

If I want people to shop in my local store, I shop locally. I haven't been to a mall in 2 years.

(many people agreeing)

Andy: One last thing I wanted to ask you... What could the city or the state do to help your businesses thrive? What sorts of things could they be doing to help downtown Sedalia?

Loans. I know we get some.

Lower the taxes. Give people some sort of tax break to come in for a period of years.

Maybe give us access... make a list to get us in touch with more resource people who could help us get in touch, about grants and stuff. I think there's a lot of resources out there that are going unused, because we don't know about it or because we're afraid of the paperwork. We need, like, another Meg Liston.

She needs help.

Maybe it would be helpful to have a website, where you could go to and click on information.

For the record, we provide that.

But maybe more.

One of the things I think that'll help you, if the community sees that they have their fingers on it, I mean, I'm still learning, I'm working on my certification on developing. Greg Rodewald, I mean, that guy is a grant-writing fool, and I don't mean that disrespectfully. But I'm serious. We're working on two projects in Marshall—1.2 million to build 8 houses, and another guys 1.3 million for renovating. Any state programs, these guys know. I just went over to (name unintelligible), and there's a lady named Carla Potts, and she's awesome. She used to work with this guy named Jeff Smith. They used to call him the 500-pound gorilla because of all the tax credits. There is money out there you wouldn't believe. I'm just amazed. I had no idea. So, back to the point, these people that work in these places, they can really get things done. Pete Ramsel, acting director at MHTC, cities need to get to know who he is. There's so many different things that are going on.

So is that somebody that an individual business owner can contact?

Of course. For instance, if you go to the department of Mental Health, they have a book with all the different housing programs, and those housing programs have funding behind them. There are banks that are waiting to pounce. I know you want to deal with local, but some of these local banks can't help with millions of dollars.

Does that mean a bunch of local business owners can go together to the banks?

What I'm saying is, money that you don't have to pay back. There are grants out there.

On that aspect, there is a website, the DREAM Initiative website, but it is a little difficult and confusing.

You pointed to people who know how to utilize these guys.

You come together with professionals like that, and that's a lot of funding.

The city is, and they have brought together different meetings and different people... we need something like that for building owners. We need a committee for building owners.

That's great to get a big company to come in here and invest, but what about us small business owners who have just this little piece of pie?

The city has been helpful to me, given me information about the DREAM Initiative. I got 5000 dollars for my building, when I enquired about a permit.

I don't go to the association meetings, because I don't really own anything down there, but I'm a renter. Not many people show up to those, and I don't think that's good. Could there be, off of that, a building committee that tackles more of this more seriously, instead of talking about the parades or events.

The reason why a lot of people don't go to the meetings, they are working.

We need a grant writer. We need another Meg Liston.

We have the same problem... when people are rewarded for their efforts, they really work. She is an employee of the city, and when you talk about writing a grant, it is laborious, and when you have someone who will write the grant for you, and then you have someone else who knows how to dot those I's and cross those t's...this is one of the things I'm finding for our agency. There's only so many hours in a day and there's only so many people who can do it. We have a small pot of money, and that money I was telling you about, I don't get to touch any of it... it's all got to go into the projects. And they don't give you many operating funds, so you've got to match those dollars. There's two people you need, you need a grant writer, and you need someone who knows how to follow the laws of HUD or MHTC. If you have someone who does nothing but that, they'll make you a lot of money.

I'm excited about what's happening here. I think you guys are on the right road.

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SECTION III

GENERAL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Jo Lynn Turley, and I am the head cook at the Sedalia senior center, which is just a couple blocks off of the downtown area, and we try to stay involved in downtown. I'm also very involved in the Sacred Heart.

I'm Mary Lou Murkin, and I own a business on 4th and Clark, which is not really downtown, but I'm very interested in the downtown, and I've lived in Sedalia all my life, and want it to prosper.

Jody Manual, I work for Care Connection, which manages the Senior Center that Jo Lynn works for.

I'm John (Name unintelligible), I've been here since 2000 here in Sedalia, operate a business KFC here, which is not downtown, but I have a lot of interest in downtown, because I live very close to downtown, my kids go to school at Sacred Heart, I spend a lot of time downtown, and anything that happens downtown is going to have a positive effect on my business.

Jim Ellis, I'm ex-corps of engineers and ex-commissioner here, grew up here, so I'm definitely interested in downtown Sedalia, always have been all my life. I'd like to see it prosper, see what we can do to make that happen.

I'm Byron Madison, and we're newcomers, moving here just two years ago from Pasadena, California, and we've traveled extensively to look for a place to retire, and we found Sedalia, a Victorian house here which we're restoring, and we see a downtown that has all the potential of a world, and with the state fair, and the Scott Joplin ragtime festival, and so many things, there's just a great potential for this Ohio street and areas adjacent to really have a rebirth, so the DREAM Initiative seemed like a dream come true for this town. Being newcomers, we see a great awakening that's going to be happening here, and we look forward to ultimately participating in that.

I'm Judy Madison, the other half, and when we first came out to visit Sedalia in July 2004, we stayed at the Bothwell, and we loved the downtown, we were just fascinated by the buildings, the potential, we were a little bit concerned that it was a little down. The house that we chose, and we came here specifically for the house, and we've gotten to know a great deal of the folks here and the church, and it's just been a wonderful community. We feel there's a lot of potential, and in all the places that we've looked, this really has to grow. We're really interested and would like to do what we could.

I'm Mary Ellen Davis, and I'm a schoolteacher. I teach in Warrensburg right now, but I'm a member of Sacred Heart, and I have been for many years, and I'm a lifelong resident of Sedalia, and would love to see the downtown come back.

Andy: I want us to talk quite a bit about downtown, but I wondered if we could start by talking in more general terms about Sedalia. We're based in St. Louis, if you were talking to someone who was thinking about moving to Sedalia, what would you tell them that they'd need to know? What kind of place is it to live?

Well, we chose Sedalia, and we didn't know anybody, we didn't know anything, but our dream was to be in the Midwest, and we looked on the East Coast as well. I couldn't even begin to tell you how many different places we've been. But it's a very warm place. The people are really wonderful, they're who they are. We're from Pasadena, California, and that's a whole nother experience out there, and we're originally from Michigan. I wanted to come home, come back. The countryside, the weather, I love the temperature, the seasons, and things like that. There's just a lot.

I would echo that. The house brought us here, but the people made us stay. It has just been a great experience for us. John (name) is our next door neighbor. We've gotten to know him, and it's been great. He has the quietest children I've ever heard, or never heard. It's been great, volunteering out at the fair and the meals on wheels program, and trying to get involved in the community. Every time we drive Ohio street, we know people with businesses, and we'd like to see more businesses on Ohio. It just has all the potential, all the potential is there, so it's something that I hope the building owners...the building owners are going to have to come aboard and really get behind this. I know there are some absentee owners of buildings, but I guess that can be addressed, but it just is a charming street, and I think it would be more charming as restoration takes place, building facades, all the loft spaces available, communities would love to have that kind of space, and high-ceiling retail space. We might need a parking structure, that's been talked about. We're looking forward to it.

If I might say that when I talk to people about Sedalia, I have four children, they just graduated from Sacred Heart. One of the reasons we came to Sedalia was because of the school. I know there are a lot of problem with the school system that are hopefully going to be fixed over the next few years. We're Catholic, and we're pleased with the schools. The activities, as far as for a family, we've got incredible parks and recs department here, great leadership, beautiful parks here in Sedalia, there's always something to do for family people here, you've got the Katy trail, we spend so much time there, and it's so close to Downtown. The swimming pools, the outdoor pools, the Scott Joplin festival, these bike races in the summertime that the bike shop puts on, there are so many neat things. I'm just shocked at the lack of families that get involved in these things, because Sedalia does offer them, and it's really nice. All year round, there are things to do here. We've got great soccer fields outside of town, these new baseball things in, for us it's a dream. I plan on being here for quite a while. We have a four-year-old, so at least through high school, longer if we invest in a business here... we love it. My kids really like the community. Always something to do for a family.

Roughly 20,000 people have the symphony, that's been running for 72 consecutive years. Wonderful concerts, and kind of funny when a grant has been asked for, and the question came back, "Does the symphony perform or just hire musicians to come in?" It's an orchestra. We perform! We put on music in this city, it's quite wonderful, we have the Chorale, tremendous voices at their concerts. The music programs here are really quite wonderful. If you think of the town and what we have, it's just...we thought we might be coming to a place that is quieting down, but we're busier than we've ever been in our working lives. So I was a former museum

curator, and we have a wonderful museum, Pettis County's museum just had its grand opening. Quite wonderful displays there. I'm sure they'll need even larger spaces as people begin to give more items. So much. The Katy depot, the restoration of that, that to me was a catalyst in itself, from what we heard it was a tear-down, but the public got behind it, and what a tremendous thing. Its museum, the cultural events. Quite wonderful.

Andy: What are the main shopping areas for area residents? What are the main places that people here stop?

The Thompson Hills shopping center.

Yeah, many of the businesses, when the new centers moved out west of town, probably leave downtown.

(many conversations)

Thompson Hills.

It's a shame.

It is that, that's true, that things seem to be going west of 65, but now we need a magnet to draw people back east of 65.

Andy: What about dining and entertainment options. What are popular choices, where do you bring people when they're visiting?

We have a new restaurant, Ivory Grille, in the Bothwell Hotel. Absolutely wonderful. They've not yet been open a year, they opened in June of last year, and they've done a wonderful job. They've put really high quality food, really delightful, and they've done it all in the Joplin style, right next to the Scott Joplin ragtime gifts store. They call it Ivory Grille, but the Ivory is the piano keys. It's open for lunch and dinner. There's the country club for anyone who's there, and McGrath's restaurants, and of course a lot of other restaurants. And some of the chain restaurants that are in town. There's some great places to eat in this area.

I think also for entertainment, you've got great opportunities when the weather's nice, because the parks really are very nice here. They do a fantastic job keeping them up. For a town of this size, the movie theater here is as nice as any movie theater in Kansas City, the AMC and such up there. The movie theater, they've really put some money into this theater here in Sedalia, it's very nice for the family to be able to go to the movies. It's reasonable, it's very nice.

When you mentioned parks, John, the band concerts in the parks in the summertime are great. Delightful little park, Liberty Park, with an actual band concert, which was another great draw.

We adopted a little girl from China, and we go to a couple organizations in Warrensburg, there's a couple events out there, but our friends love coming here because of the parks here, because they're so much nicer than what's in Warrensburg. There's not just one or two here, there's a multitude. And the pools, you can spend all day at the pool and picnic outside. For a family, it's just, when the weather warms up until into the early fall, there's so many outdoor things to do.

I think we have a lot of places to go, and Liberty Center.

One of the major museums is right here in Pettis County, at the community college, really a tremendous contemporary art museum. It may be small, but it's right up there, it's pretty tremendous. And the Bothwell Hotel. And then the trees, absolutely beautiful all four seasons.

Y'all said the draw to fair grounds are not just the fair—they have so many activities out there, and with a developing downtown, it gives people a reason not just to come down here in the daytime, but if the downtown could be open just a tad later in the evening, you could get a little hustle and bustle down here.

Andy: Let's talk about downtown specifically. Generally speaking, is it moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

I think it's slowly moving in the right direction. I'd like to see it move faster in the right direction.

Most of the business owners are holding out downtown are really enthused, and want to be there, and want others to come and join them in adjacent buildings. And we should try to buy locally as much as possible, to participate, to go into these retailers, and it would just be great to have more. The more you have, the more people will come, and it'll just be that effect that will build.

Originally, what we'd tell people are looking at Sedalia—one thing that I think Sedalia is outstanding in is volunteer work out of the churches and civic organizations that we have, if you ask for volunteers in most any area, you'll get em, or donations to health, we have Open Door, we have a mentoring program and public schools, we started out getting 5 percent of people to be mentors to these students in need, and we've got about 45 so far, and it keeps building. Sedalia's good, I think it's outstanding, in any number of ways. Kind of going back to the prior question.

I think Sedalia's done a great job over the years at raising awareness of downtown. Since I was in high school, back then people weren't really that concerned about downtown, and now, since then, you hear about it a lot, about saving downtown and revitalizing.

I think you hear a lot about downtown, but I'm not sure...we spend a lot of time at the Scott Joplin festival, and it's interesting if you sit out there in the evening, there's a little restaurant, you can sit out there and watch the people and every shop is closed. They talk about "come shop downtown" but after 5:00, everything closes up, so you have this captive audience that is here, all these people that come from all over the country and the world, but none of the businesses stay open for them, so they're stuck either "let's go out to Wal-Mart or Applebee's." It's like there's nothing to do. You have these events, you have these people coming in, but yet the businesses won't stay open to cater to these people who are here, staying downtown, or in the area, and that's a little disappointing. In the wintertime, I remember seeing all these signs that say "shop downtown," and then we get a little snow, and then the plows plow in such a way that you can't get around downtown, and the same day in Warrensburg, they plowed it out, there's people all over, the ladies are shoveling their sidewalks, whereas here you can't get onto the sidewalks, so how are you going to shop? It's kind of a mixed message. As a businessman, I was up at 5 am making sure they were plowing my lot and they were getting us first thing, but I don't necessarily see that activity saying "we're open" or "hey please come to us." That's a little discouraging.

We need more cooperation between the city...the city needs to take a greater interest in the downtown. You're talking about moving snow. They're moving snow, and somebody ought to be working between the city and the business owners to make sure that it's done right and, you know, they can...

What little thing I saw that I just really found interesting is you would all the secretaries out there with their shovels and their high heels in Warrensburg, shoveling off the snow off the sidewalks so people can walk into the shops, and then by 2 pm, it's like, the kids are all out of school, and no kids stay home. All the kids are out and about, but yet when you come to downtown, it's like a ghost area, because you can't get out of your vehicle, you can't park anywhere, you can't walk on the sidewalk because nobody shoveled anything. It's an interesting message to send.

Andy: At that same note, what about the user-friendliness of downtown? Aside from snow, how easy is it to park or get around? What do you think about the convenience of business hours?

They could be lengthened a bit. That's easy to say when you're not a shop owner or in retail. Parking is great right now, but there's a lot of empty retail space. If every space was filled... a parking jam would be a great boon.

And there's parking off the sides...

Many of the buildings there, there's lots of parking, you just have to kind of walk in that space between some of the buildings.

It's no different than in Columbia, you have to park and walk quite a ways. I don't think that's an issue here. It's the lack of the business being open.

You need a reason to park.

Andy: Let me ask you, what are the major reasons that you come downtown?

For me, it's the specialty shops. The crafts or antiques.

Bike shops.

The massages.

(many people listing things.)

I'd like to see some kind of coffee shop.

If we had more specialty shops, antique shops, some kind of small residences...another... in the early 1960's, there were 64 bars around here. There was people all over. There was something to do.

(many people talking at once.)

There were also two movie theaters downtown at that time, that're both closed down.

And truthfully, as far as a tavern or bar is concerned, that's something that we're missing in Sedalia right now. We don't have anything for the older adults.

And looking at it from Joanne and I's standpoint, dealing with senior citizens that still get around, what you were saying about the snow and stuff, that's a major factor in whether they're going to get out. They'd much rather be dropped off at the door of Wal-Mart than walking around downtown.

The ice is treacherous. There were some wonderful stores along Ohio, and we only know this from the community and talking to folks, but there was a wonderful pharmacy, soda fountain.

(lots of people listing names of possible names.)

It was beautiful.

You could go back through the drugstore, they had the soda fountain, and you go back and they had the little booths...

Something like that would be kind of fun, the old-fashioned type theme. Bring them back.

I miss the coffeepot café.

(many side conversations, mentioning coffee, flowers, and other stores.)

I don't even know whether you need a blue-plate type restaurant. There's not even anything downtown. That sort of thing can't survive there...

I think Ivy Cottage might be as close to that...the food is wonderful, homemade pies, but it's... I guess people eat for breakfast so often, it kind of rolls to coffee and lunch, but as far as opened in the evening, I think there's the fifth street grill and Ivory Grille...

Malone's on Main.

Up on Main, but it would be great to have something in between, especially open in the evening that isn't just pizza or the higher-type dining of Ivory Grille.

It would seem, if there were more establishments open downtown in all the functions, particularly in summertime, there are a lot of things that go on at the fairground—the RV group that comes in—and one of the first places they go is the Katy Depot and downtown. And when there's no place to eat...I think it was during Scott Joplin last year, I don't remember, someone from out of town, they were staying at the Bothwell, but they couldn't find any place to eat! And that was sort of frustrating.

(many people talking at once.)

I wish they would've put Starbucks down there.

(many people agreeing, side conversations.)

I think eventually attract more business to come in...whether craft or antique or whatever.

Every time a business closes on Ohio street, and Scott Joplin's coming, we sort of cringe. When folks come in for the fair and Scott Joplin in the summer, we hope...we hear that places close.

Well, back in the old days, Friday night was the night the stores stayed open, and that was really nice.

We heard that was quite a time.

(many people agreeing, reminiscing.)

Today, if you want to get any nice clothes, you have to go to Kansas City, Columbia, or St. Louis. It left when Wal-Mart came down. I mean, they cheap cheap cheap cheap. If you want something quality, you have to go somewhere else, and that's a shame.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

Andy: What other kinds of businesses do you think would be really important in a downtown revitalization here in Sedalia?

I think you really have to have specialty...you're not really going to compete with Wal-Mart and Lowes. There is a hardware store...but it's got to really be special to draw people in, specialty for eating and retail, crafts and antiques, and an ice cream parlor would be terrific with a Coldstone Creamery or something...

...or a local ice cream parlor.

(many people talking.)

One thing that might help...in Warrensburg, we watched as they really rebuilt their lofts above the businesses... you find more professionals moving in down there ...they build these beautiful lofts that are almost as nice as what you find in downtown Kansas City, so you got professionals living there, so they want places that can be open later, and they want restaurants, and it's just different of an environment. Because of that, I think, it seems like there's a lot potential...it's something Warrensburg has been working on, and it would be nice to see Sedalia do something like that, bring some young professionals downtown, and you'll bring entrepreneurs.

We need some gourmet food.

The Ukrainians had started that, but they had some unfortunate circumstances with their building. That was a nice place, nice people, nice little store.

Start small, get bigger.

Any type of lodging... I don't know. I know that a lot of people during the Scott Joplin festival, they have to stay in the periphery.

There used to be all these hotels, all these wonderful hotels. It must have really been something in this town. The Woods Opera House, the old Homestead Restaurant...

(many people talking at once.)

That's what Sedalia needs to be again, is a destination. Antique shops, craft shops, nice restaurants, galleries...

(many people agreeing.)

And another thing... we're not going to get anywhere if these buildings keep falling down. There's going to have to be some serious money put into these buildings to stabilize them so they can be developed into lofts and this type of thing. I mean, they got...down here, pay 40 45 thousand for a building, and they say well, it's cheap and it needs tender loving care of about 300 thousand. I was in on the commission here, we helped save the Trust Building after the fire and all that, and that's been going on seven eight nine years now, and it's still sitting there, and I knew it would take a lot of money, but that...I was really interested in saving that building. But we still can't...should be saved somehow, some way. It may be useful.

The Commerce building is good for, where the old JC Penney had been years ago... the Trust Building, I don't know...

They've had some people look at it...

(side conversations about the Trust Building.)

Maybe something could be started where we could contribute small amounts for the...

(many people talking at once, unintelligible)

It's not that expensive. It's just the fixing it.

Look at Union Station in downtown Kansas City... every time you turn around you hear about these people and these people, because they can't make any money. The upkeep is just so expensive. And this is a mini version of that.

(many people talking at once. Many side conversations.)

Other communities have done things like this...

We lived in Savannah, GA for fifteen years, and they had an old theater there that—it was just a wreck—but it had been a Vaudeville theater back in the teens and twenties, and we got into that group and...they were going to raise several hundred thousand dollars. And it's a showplace. It can be done. More than one around the country...

(many people talking.)

The uptown theater has been gifted to the Scott Joplin foundation, and although it's not the year of Scott Joplin, it's a fabulous 30's theater. A group of us went through it about a year ago...damaged, yes, but they had one of the preeminent Kansas City architects design it in the mid 30s. Out in the Los Angeles area, a little town called Segundo, they have a theater and they do an old-time night at the movies, with a sing-along, slides, a comedy, and then intermission, and then they have a feature, either silent or sound, but it wouldn't be competition to the main theaters. It would be a catalyst to kind of have something like that downtown.

Something to bring us older ones downtown.

And there are electronic organs that sound so much like pipe organs, that you could put an electronic organ. But there's a lot of potential in the use of that building, not only for Scott Joplin, but other venues. I don't know about the stage, whether the stage is deep enough for Vaudeville, but it's just a lot of potential that's right here, and so...anyway, that's hopefully going to come to fruition.

The only thing is...it takes money.

The imagination, then the money.

Andy: What about the look and feel of downtown? Are there particular improvements that you all think need to be made? That could be aesthetics, landscaping, beautification, street repair...what sorts of things could really help to improve it?

Last summer, I would ride my bike or walk, and I'd be so disappointed because there'd be weeds and things growing here and there... it would be so simple. I've even thought about doing it myself.

One thing is picking up the trash on Sunday.

(Name unintelligible) was actually picking up trash on Sunday.

You look down the alley, and there are weeds.

And what's going on with the street over there...haven't they dug that up three or four times? The streets are just, they're always torn up, they're always tearing the streets up.

The backs of some of the buildings, from Osage, the backs of some of the buildings on Ohio, that's not visually appealing. They're good buildings, and they've got good businesses, but they're not very attractive.

Sometimes it just take some paint.

And trees, and weed killer. Last year, year before, right before Scott Joplin down here on second street, there were weeds growing up that high, and grass, and everything. And I come over here and raise Cain...you got Scott Joplin thing starting in a day or two, and this place looks trashy! Well, next day, they get somebody over there to clean up some of that stuff. You shouldn't have to go and complain about that. They ought to be doing it anyway, and they ought to be doing that in coordination with the Scott Joplin thing.

On a regular basis, so that it always looks nice, would be good too.

I think it's a matter of pride. We just need to have pride.

I think it's interesting. Our business is over there, and I always see people out there...there's this little area there...I always see two or three people out there working that curb over there that nobody really sees, gardening and cutting grass and trimming and putting flowers...

The parks department is in charge of those medians.

They do a nice job; I think if they put a little effort down here...

But there's nobody in charge down here...

As a park board member, I'd suggest that maybe the downtown people come and talk to us at the park board meetings and maybe get us involved in downtown.

(many people talking.)

We have our hands full—there's all kinds of things for us to do—and as people approach us with projects, we try to address each project that comes to us.

That's a good point.

You do keep the parks around here...they do a nice job of keeping them very nice.

You hit it right on the nose. It's the leadership. Mark Hewitt is awesome.

If we ever get a community center in this area, then you could put him in charge of it as opposed to the city. He knows the in and outs of the pool... You get the city involved and you'll end up with a big mess. That would be nice to see, maybe close to downtown.

They had a trout tournament Saturday, at the lagoon, and I drove by, and there was lots of people there, fishing, and Mark came over to my shop and he bought the coolest awards...he said "I want them to think these are special."

It's a nice tradition. I look at the buildings, because I love antique and historic building, and I think of the cornice work that could go back, and the aluminum coming off...

(laughter... many people talking.)

Today, fiberglass moldings and so forth, you wouldn't have to do anything in stone...so much could be done for these buildings if they just put a little into repairing the windows and molds...the Commerce building, it could be molded.

(side conversations about Commerce Building)

And of course, the old side of the Missouri Pacific Station... even if they put a roof on it, it would be nice. It's dreadful by comparison with, say, the Katy Depot. If something were done with it there...fortunately, we still have another little while, but that's really charming between St. Louis and Kansas City on the train.

And that Depot is an eyesore. Kids from Warrensburg say "Oh my gosh, what's wrong with your train depot?"

It's one of the worst stations in the United States.

It should be a top priority.

And that's downtown, right at the head of the street, right at the head of Ohio Street.

Getting off at that station, when you look at the back row of buildings down there, it's horrible.

They received a considerable amount of money...what happened?

(many side conversations about train depot.)

It could be charming, even if that building had a roof with a big overhang...

(many side conversations about train depot.)

The cornice work and so forth, to give it the look, some buildings, they've done a really nice job. We do have, from the Victorian into the modern buildings, and it's a fine mix. As the town progressed...

Streetlights could be a little bit more...

Over at, we drove out through Ottawa, Kansas.

We drove through all the little towns so we could see how they looked.

And Ottawa has a little courthouse, and the street lighting was charming, really a retro type lighting, almost Victorian retro, and really aesthetically very nice.

The sidewalks were maintained, and there were no weeds, and it looked very lovely.

But I know they're supposed to be working on Ohio street's sidewalks and streets. I'd like to see all the brick sidewalks and streets back.

(many side conversations about successful remodeling projects.)

Now, do most of the businesses own the buildings they're in, or do they rent, or do some of them own and rent? I just use this as an example...our church, the Episcopalian Church, you can see over the last couple years how we've just really done a lot of work on the exterior and the interior. If the individual businesses down here would just put forth some of the effort... you walk around downtown, and it looks strange, the buildings all...you have something kind of nice here, something kind of trashy here, it's a very odd mixture. There's not much consistency.

There shouldn't be any absentee landlords downtown. I know there are several of them in this town.

I don't want to put them on the spot, but I don't know how they're going to grow their business if they can't take care of the property.

Why own a building that's falling down? That's what a lot of places think.

I really can't complain too much, because I take care of my building, but I have a run-down greenhouse.

It's a wonderful building, though.

(Many people agreeing, side conversations.)

The only people who would come, you have some local people, but you have no visibility. You have to have some visibility.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

You're going to have to get some money coming in here from somewhere else. I get upset with all these folks around Sedalia, they won't support something unless it's a chain...that's part of Sedalia's problem. We have a lot of people there that don't care, that won't spend any money here. If you're going to have a vibrant downtown, you're going to have to get some people with money coming in here to spend, and Sedalia's not going to do that.

I think that the difficulty is trying to get to the townspeople. We need to somehow bring them into this...I say we because apparently it's been that way a long time, so maybe all of us can...I'm from a very small town, even smaller than Sedalia, and they got that way for a while...it's up and down. I do know you have to spend money to make money. Make it a destination, and bring these people in. They'll spend money, and then more people...maybe the townspeople might feel like "we better spend here too."

Andy: Just a couple more questions we haven't covered as we've gone through our conversation, although we've touched on them. What other downtowns would you say that Sedalia is a lot like, and what downtowns that you know of would you most like it to resemble?

I went to Hannibal—my wife is from there—they have kind of two downtown. They have the run-down, beat-up one that no one goes to, but they also have the Mark Twain downtown. They really have a lot of businesses, mostly antique shops, but they're well kept up, it looks nice...it's a destination place. They come there, and really they have their Mark Twain days for only a short time, but yet they capitalize...Mark Twain is probably more known than Scott Joplin, but music is something that anyone can enjoy, and if you have a little more music...when they have the musicians out there, it's so beautiful. If they did more with music...we don't have a famous author, but we have somebody who brought something just as wonderful. If you get a little bit of that mixture, too. When our church put on a concert, they played it as it was originally played, and it was almost like a classical piece—I had never heard a ragtime played like that before, and it was just lovely. Music touches everyone. Why they don't go after that a little bit more, that aspect, I...I use that because I've recently been to Hannibal, and it's interesting to see what they have done down there.

I would like to it to look like a storybook town. When you go to these Western towns, and Lexington.

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

Even Cole Camp, it's small, but...

And even Warsaw, that's a nice, clean little downtown.

Even Clinton, Missouri has cleaned up a lot, and they've had the same type of shift. Wal-Mart took all the businesses to the other side of town, yet Clinton has continued...the downtown fought, and they've kept...they've had some building issues like we've had here, but they have still...you go down there, and it's a busy little area there. They do the big fourth of July. We had the parade recently here, and they one or two races...you have all these people coming down, and five minutes later it's over.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

All the shops were closed.

People didn't have anywhere to go after it was all over with.

It needs to be a town that you could take a day trip to, and eat and shop.

A destination town. But you look at the buildings along the south side of Main, east of Ohio, and people are starting to really do some nice things with those buildings. I don't know if they're retail or what...

(side conversations.)

There's some really great painting, and people will get the idea that you can go right around the corner. And the photographs are around, you can see what Ohio Street was. There are a series of wonderful books.

That's what we'd like it to look like.

(many people agreeing.)

A lot of postcards were done of this town. People would know what to do with those facades.

It's getting the businesses in.

And getting people to come from the outside. But all of us would have to get behind that shopping and eating locally. A deli of some kind.

A couple of restaurants will draw, because if you get people who go during lunch and they see other things, they'll come back. I've noticed in Warrensburg...it's not like there's a lot of shopping, but there are a few restaurants, and they're good enough that you see people down there during the day walking around. It's got all college kids. Everybody says it's because of the university, but you don't really see college kids walking around until after dark, because of the bars.

(many people talking at once.)

We've got to promote this.

People are looking to get out of the city and go to little towns like this. We talk to people in Kansas City all the time, they know Sedalia, they come down to the state fair...people do like to get out. I think when you live in the city, you want to find different things to do. Let's take a little day trip to Sedalia. Little antique stores, restaurants. You could get some draw from Kansas City. We're centrally located, an hour from Columbia, an hour from Kansas City, an hour and a half from Springfield and Lake of the Ozarks, we're the perfect geographic area.

I think Jim mentioned one of the key points, and that's promotion. I'm not familiar with all the foundations and boards and things, but I'm going to use Scott Joplin as an example. We find that stuff not really advertise that much... I say "give me some posters, I'll drive to Marshall and all around..." and they say, "We don't really have any." I'm trying to get across togetherness...we have the Scott Joplin and the Katy Depot and the symphony...people need to work together. I'd like to see the downtown—Thompson Hills is out there, and they have things that downtown isn't going to have, and downtown will have things that Thompson Hills won't. Downtown needs to work as a team instead of separating it out, everybody working with their own agenda...

I think Judy makes a good point, too. You don't see a lot of local people at these things, especially the Scott Joplin festival, and they don't really promote it all that much locally. You don't hear about it on the radio. When you watch the Kansas City TV stations, they're always promoting some event an hour out. I don't know if there's a PR disconnect or something...also, as Judy said, the posters they do give you are so complicated...it's like a billboard. It's got to be simple. People are going to walk by it, it's so complex-looking. There's just not a lot of...we come down here every year, and you see a lot of people from outside of Sedalia, but you don't see many Sedalians.

That's been going on for years. My mother would want to come down to the Scott Joplin, and she'd ask "Where are the locals?"

I bring my kids down there, and they love it. They have a blast.

(side conversations.)

Another thing, too, here, although he's been dead a number of years, Jack Oakie is from here. They could do a Jack Oakie film festival... he was really, he was really quite good at what he did. Although he wasn't here that many years, but he was born here, and his whole family...but even that is a festival of his films, for even a long weekend. I don't know if that would be a draw or not.

Nostalgia is coming back.

(side conversations about his house.)

We walk downtown. You see us walking, and we walk downtown. We're always looking around... what's going on? Nothing.

Andy: We've covered all the questions that I've got on my list here. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you think the city ought to be hearing about as we move forward, or any comments about questions we've covered earlier?

Do you think that you've got some pretty good input...I know you have several meetings going.

What have you heard?

What did they talk about that we haven't covered?

Andy: I've heard a lot of the same kinds of issues. The bottom line seems to be that there's a lot of potential, which you can see just walking around downtown. There's clearly just a world of potential there, and it's a matter of establishing some priorities and figuring out what those key things are that need to be done. This is kind of the first step, getting public input.

We have to have promotion, but it's not going to do any good to promote it if we don't back it up. There's nothing worse than disappointing people, letting em down.

If we can accomplish one thing, they can see there's progress.

When you have festivities downtown, the Friday night thing, during that period...you adjust your hours, you stay open later. I don't know how it works down here, but if there's a committee or something who can say, "Okay, the Scott Joplin festival's coming up, let's do this. Let's maybe try this year 8 o'clock." It's not that late! It's still light at that time of the year. Say, "Let's try it this year, see how it goes..."

We just need more specialty shops. There's not a whole lot to stay open. What is there?

Photography studios.

Lawyers.

It would have to be restaurants and antique shops, specialty shops, would have to be open with retail businesses.

I know it's easier said than done, but the restaurants that are open need to be prepared. Sometimes it takes an hour to get a hamburger. You can only serve so many people.

That's a whole nother issue.

You're not going to move that many people in and out if every table's taking up just an hour just to get their food, they'll be there another half hour or 45 minutes.

We just sit there and enjoy ourselves the whole time.

(many people agreeing.)

But another thing, we got to thinking, out in Monrovia, a little area, they close the streets and do a farmer's market once a week. Round the courthouse.

I thought that was over here by the Katy Trail.

I heard that they tried something, but it was...

(many people talking at once.)

I guess they were doing that everyday. What we're suggesting is Sunday, once a week. Start about 4:00, 4:30, or 5:00, block off the street, and then the vendors are in the middle and they bring their own setups and everything, but then you have some music, and you have some dancing, you have food for sale, it's just a real fun kind of thing. It may start off small, but...(mumbling).

Montrose does their Oktoberfest, they close the streets.

That sounds like fun.

It is a lot of fun.

(many people talking at once.)

Outdoor movies, and big screens, and I think they have drinks...

They do that in Savannah, they have it every Saturday. They get all the craftspeople and artists people with everything, farmer's market.

(many people talking at once about art and artists.)

You know Columbia, it's a lot bigger, but they have a fabulous farmer's market on Saturdays.

I think that's great.

(many people talking at once.)

Art in the park is really great, too. But they have that, Liberty Center has something like Fourth of July out in the parking lot of Wal-Mart.

That used to be downtown.

That's something that should be downtown.

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

Now we've just got to get something to happen.

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SECTION IV

BUILDING OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Pam, Bodyworks day spa, Sedalia downtown board of directors.

Danny Van Dyne, Liquor Locker, I'm the president, downtown here.

Roberta Meyers, (name unintelligible), Sedalia downtown board of directors.

I'm Charlotte, and I have Perice Gibbs, and I'm a member CBCD board.

I'm Jack, I have Grant Motor Company, I'm on the CBCD Board.

I'm Bob, and I'm a member of downtown development, and I have an office building downtown.

I'm Doug... I'm a board member of CBCD, and the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, and I have a studio, I'm an artist, and I have a studio.

I'm Rod, I'm with the County Commission. The courthouse is here downtown, and I'm on the the CBCD board.

I'm David, I'm on the CBCD board, and I have a building down on Main Street.

I'm George, I'm on the CBCD board, and I own CWE architects and Fifth street (unintelligible), and they're both downtown.

Sharon: I'm going to start off with a basic question. This is my first time ever to Sedalia. To kind of start off broad, describe this area to me. Most of you have lived here for a while. Tell me a little bit about the town as a whole.

(noise...talking unintelligible, side conversations, people coming in)

Mary McLaughlin, Mclaughlin brothers furniture company.

Michelle, Swords family pharmacy.

It's pretty much a blue-collar town. We have some really nice houses outside of town, and that really is a big brain drain, as far as city government. Upward-mobile people live in Walnut Hills. Some really nice housing areas in town, we have some...the town's kind of split between the blue-collar east side of town and the maybe not quite so blue-collar west side... now it's more and more being infiltrated all over. The annual income is pretty level, pretty low... I'm saying this as I write grants all the time, and this is the kind of stuff my grant writer feeds me. Anyone else?

We're basically a railroad town, and we're dependent on the Missouri Pacific shops and Katy shops, and we've been in business for 127 years, and our fortune would rise and fall when people were unemployed, so we've had to learn to ride the crest. We'd have to kind of learn how to make it through this. I think they did a story on Sedalia, and the statistic was that we were the second hardest hit town during the depression. On top of that, let me just say, though, given all of that, there's just a wonderful spirit here in Sedalia, it's a very generous community. You know, everybody around this table is not only involved in business, they do multiple other things for the church, community projects, if you need to raise money for something, it's usually just there. And you know, I was away for many years before I came back, in comparison with having lived in Boston, DC, and Chicago, and down in the South, there's a lot of vitality in a community like this, there's a lot of ability to network. There's a lot of hidden wealth here, the man that has his money under the mattress that worked for the railroad or worked for the telephone company, and they are capable of giving. They leave a bequest to the college... we had a person who helped to fund construction out of the college. You have pockets of great, unusual people, characters...There's not great wealth of minerals...we don't have oil wells or a great river or anything, but we have good farmland. We very much are supporting our businesses, the rural community.

I think Sedalia's an economic hub. Kansas City is nearby, Columbia, Springfield. A lot of people come and shop.

It's predominantly still agriculture.

A lot of family farms that have been in families for generations.

(lots of talking at once)

There is a good mix. I think one of the telling things about Sedalia, though, is the population has remained 20,000 for a hundred years.

We're also at a unique location, at the junction of highway 50 and 65, which is ideal for capturing traffic. We're also about 15 miles from I-70, and I think we need to do more with capturing that customer and keeping them in town. Unfortunately, we're losing one of the best people, Wheel Inn, which got a lot of people to stop... it's a drive in. A lot of people on their way are stopping, but we're not getting them all the way down here. That's one of the things I think that we need to pursue a little bit more.

We're also the home of the Missouri State Fair each spring.

Back what Mary said, we're an old town that was built on the railroad, and our workforce was low-income, and Doug said it was transitioned here right after the turn of the nineteenth century, and we've kind of kept the next two generations...people came in and are still here, and the mentality is still here. The fact that railroad (noise...unintelligible), the railroad we have coming through town.

We haven't done much to address that as a kind of front door, we've kind of turned our backs on it. We're only in very recent years starting to really address that with the Depot and the area, the streets. There's a Depot that was built and then, probably, two and a half million dollars all said and done. It's taken about five years, been about a five-year project, and it's close to coming to fruition.

It's also been a drain on us, too. I mean, I keep saying, in my lifetime, will I ever see this thing? Because the Union Pacific just left, one day they just walked out, and it was just the disgrace... you think people shouldn't be able to leave stuff like that. There was still schedules and papers, and we had winos and drunks and graffiti on the wall. Just even getting it to the point where the floor was halfway clean, or the bathrooms, the door to the bathroom...it's taken years (noise, unintelligible), so there's been a lot of projects that we've had to do to try to...I think when the Depot gets finished, we'll have a little more energy and time and resources to...and hopefully...it's almost like a white elephant. I feel like it's taken a lot out of all of us just physically, you know... we have a lot of involvement in these things.

(Lots of talking.)

We have some unique... (unintelligible, more noise).

Sharon: Do you get a lot of people coming through the Katy Trail that stop?

Yes.

The contemporary art museum gets about 26,000 people a year, mostly (noise, unintelligible). Tourism on a more national level with the museum, the museum advertises nationally.

On the front page of the Art and Leisure in the New York Times.

There was a feature article in April three years ago about the museum.

We have an outstanding community college.

I think someone mentioned our proximity to everything, lake of the Ozarks, Truman Lake.

Sharon: Do you think this area, would you say that it's moving in the right direction or the wrong direction? I'm referring to Sedalia as a whole right now.

I think there's a lot of potential but (noise, unintelligible).

I think it's always headed in the right direction, it's just kind of slow.

A step forward, half a step back.

A big thing just happened. We just passed a bill to build a new high school, and that's really big, because there's been repeated elections, seven eight times, and that's the first time...you said you were involved with increasing salaries with that election...and so I think that's a big, big positive. Another big positive, I think, is the city government having a consulting firm come in to look at wages and that kind of thing, compare those to other towns, and city government has implemented that. So there's lots and lots of wages being increased across the board, and I think that's an incredible positive thing. We have a very progressive group of people right now, and we haven't have that for the forty years I've been here.

Something else we have is the enhanced enterprise, which the corridor, across the whole county, which includes the highway corridor. (noise, unintelligible). We may a power plant here before too long, if the community accepts it.

You know, there's kind of a thing about Sedalia, you kind of love it. It grows on people and you can be traveling and go to Europe or Chicago or New York, and you usually run into somebody from Sedalia, or somebody that's mother lived there. My sister lives in Corona Del Mar, and she went into a little shop, and something came up about Sedalia, and he said "my brother lives in Sedalia, and I have a jewelry store in Columbia..." I mean, he'd been there so long, there were people out in California were all from here. You remember the book, The Long Ohio Street, it's about our history. A lot of progressive things were done. I gave it to my son, who hadn't...who only knew Sedalia through me talking about it, even when we didn't live here, to the point where he...when he read it, he said, "Mom, I had no idea it was such a rich history here." So we've attracted...the woman that wrote the book and bought a building and spent eight years researching this book...and now (name unintelligible) is writing a new book, and she grew up here, she grew up here. She was working at Marian labs, and she decided to come back here, she's in like her forties. They're excited about rehabbing this, there's a lot of potential, there's kind of a good feeling among a lot of us about what we can become and what we've been, and we feel kind of poised and ready to take the next step.

We have the Scott Joplin festival...(noise, unintelligible)...known nationally. I was in Colorado back in January, just carrying on a conversation with somebody on the ski slopes, and they had visited our community several times.

Sharon: Let me switch a little bit to shopping. Where do people go shopping in Sedalia? Where are the main areas?

(many people talking at once)

Kansas City.

Columbia.

Springfield.

Branson.

(many people talking at once.)

It seems that the air force base, which used to be in Cape Girardeau, did all their trading in Sedalia. It seems now that Lee's Summit is their place of choice. Lee's Summit, things are growing together, and they seem to put their money where they have the big name stores and that's the big preference at the base, that we've been trying to address.

Sharon: So other than the Wal-Mart, there's not really areas in here that people come to do their shopping?

There's stores.

There's Sedalia downtown.

We're not dead yet!

There's still things happening.

(many people talking at once.)

It's nothing like it was 15 years ago. A lot of that retail has disappeared, not only from downtown but from the whole town. There's a couple strip malls, that have a few stores and shops.

State Fair shopping center, Thompson Hills shopping center.

Sharon: Why have shops disappeared?

When Wal-Mart moved in 20 years ago, it devastated downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

The four-lane highway, all the way into Kansas City now, and at the Summit which is only a half an our away from Warrensburg you have built up shopping centers now that at one time were only tiny strip malls.

And we don't have a lot of the big name stores. We still have JC Penney and...

Yeah...

(laughter. Lots of talking)

We don't have Circuit City and...

Or a Staples.

We have Lowe's. We have some of the big chain stores, but...

We just didn't get a Starbucks. Most towns have one in every corner.

We have about every fast food...

(lots of talking.)

Sharon: That was my next question. What about dining and entertainment options?

We don't have a Ruby Tuesday's or a Chili's. We have an Applebee's.

Downtown? It better be downtown!

We have eight very good downtown restaurant, and I stretched it a little bit...the Maple Leaf Tea Room, another Tea Room, Eddie's which is another drive-in, Coach's.

I think that restaurants...we have a lot of business from Marshall, and they come to Sedalia just to eat because there's no place in Marshall to eat.

(lots of talking, unintelligible)

Finally we do have places, selection.

Sharon: So, we've been talking about Sedalia as a whole, and now I want to focus more specifically on downtown. What changes have you seen downtown?

I think the biggest change in the downtown is over the last 10 years, we've done 36 façade refacings, historically. That has been, I think, the single most positive thing that's happened in the downtown for many years, since Wal-Mart coming in...but it seems like everytime we do a new façade, there's another façade that goes bad on us. But the big thing I think that's finally starting to happen, and it's still isn't here universally, is that there is beginning to be an awareness of historic preservation, how important it is, it's certainly not universal. But it's been a long hard battle. So people are starting to take pride in the architecture downtown, because it's wonderful, and anybody that has any background in architecture can't hardly believe it. It's maybe the best preserved of any community our size in this state, don't you think?

Somewhat. It's also got that unique aspect of having it butchered in the thirties. There were four- and five-story buildings that are now two. It's kind of an odd architecture.

Sharon: What else do you see going on downtown that you're proud of?

I think it's great that people here own buildings and invest in downtown, and have redone thing. So the fact that you have people who want to put their money here, make an investment, and they're not going to do that unless they have a love for it or want to do it. It's not going to be immediately rewarding.

That's one of the biggest changes. I remember when I started working downtown, when you did have a problem, they didn't live in town. Now people in town are buying the buildings, they have their own shopping, and they live upstairs. It's not out-of-town absentees slum lords.

We have a lot more residential downtown.

There's a lot more than there used to be. It used to be single-story offices, or a receptionist who lived across the street, your doctor, once they let these second-story things go... a couple people really wanted to redo the upstairs and run the flower shop downstairs. It had been let go so badly, but if you kept it up, it's not as bad. We're sort of suffering from that. They really deteriorated.

They're sucking rent off the plot and never put a dime back in the buildings.

I'd occasionally go through some of those old apartments, back in the late seventies, and there was stuff... there was still (noise, unintelligible) and plates on the table. And this was seventy-six or so.

So we need a whole nother group of people just like this, three times as many, that have a love for this and want to make an investment and really care about it, because we have a committed group of people here in this room.

Main street, first block east, it's probably...very well-populated. I got more people living in that block than I do in my neighborhood. But there's a lot of people moving in there. And when you're down there, there'll be a lot more people living around the corner. The influx of population.

We're building some buildings that have apartments upstairs.

Sharon: Is that a goal, to try to get more residents?

Yes. (many people agreeing)

More traffic, more people walking.

My song and dance about it, that's all well and good and that's what I want, but we've got to have in place these things about trash and parking, you know, because...we're having the problems now with even just (noise, unintelligible) so you get residents who are renting.

Sharon: What kind of problems?

The parking, and whose trash dumpster is whose, or somebody's dumpster takes up a parking space because there's nowhere designated, or there's transformers in somebody's way, it's just on and on. Some people are living in apartments where the kids are hanging out the windows, and there's beer bottles down in the traffic, and that's not how we want our city presented.

Is there a temp for the city government that's working to make it easier to redo those. Aren't some of those problems kind of being solved because you're calling attention to those?

Not yet.

(lots of people talking at once.)

How about electric, plumbing, isn't that more accessible than it was ten years ago?

They're still working on it.

That's one of the thing that the city administrator needs to understand. To rehab these old buildings, you have to look at them as different than new construction. In the 70s, 80s, and 90s, if you did a building, you had to bring it up to code, and it's almost impossible to do that. Can you address that, George?

There are codes in place now for historic buildings. We'll get there. Every code's always had an exception for historic buildings, but nobody ever wanted to give them the exception. It's all about liability.

Something like the Fox Theater, which is next to our property, has just deteriorated, and nobody's doing anything, and you practically had to have a heart attack in front of it to get anybody to pay attention to you.

It almost became a health hazard.

It deteriorated, and all the buildings around it.

So I said one day, this is not fair. If we're going to be marked down for not having a light in the exit sign, and you're not going to do anything to the building next to us that's been like this for 30 years, there's pigeons and mold and flies and everything, and the windows are broken. I just don't know what it took to get people to...whether it's just a political thing, so it sort of came to a head and they're kind of taking care of it. It should not have been on the property owner next door to be the one to have the city do something about it. And I remember somebody coming from the lake a couple years ago about wanting to invest in a building, and they asked, how easy is it to get things done and fixed, and we were kind of honest with them, and we never saw em again.

It goes from either you have inspectors that...in the past, they just turned their heads and let anything go, including not doing anything when they should to then, they come in, and you're caught in a catch-22. I can remember when I started getting involved, and I was like, this needs to be addressed, and they said, "Don't even start because then they'll come in and make you get rid of the asbestos, and they'll come into my building..." I wanted to do right by our building, but sometimes you're caught. There has to be some different rules with historic buildings, but you're sick of seeing everybody getting away with doing nothing or botched jobs...

Or allowing unoccupied buildings to sit and deteriorate. The man died in the Clinton. I used that as a talking point, we had a building collapse. Two guys ran out of it, and two guys ran out of it. What is it going to take for somebody to take some action? I think maybe they're more tuned into us now than...

The problem has been, and still is, that from the city's standpoint as a building official, they have no recourse to tell somebody who applies for a permit to do anything. That's when they hammer them. The only recourse is when it's dangerous, and their only recourse then is to tear it down.

I looked at one of the codes, and just sort of threw a fit one day, and they were like "lock her up." I said, "I want to see the code," and the code was on an empty building, and "it must be free of litter on the outside and inside." And I was like, "you had it."

Their recourse is then, okay, declare it a dangerous building and tear it down, and that's a whole other problem.

How do people...?

They tear it down.

They've kind of changed it. Now the city's going in and fixing... and they did pass the changes.

Sharon: You said that you've been fixing a lot of the facades, do you have a feeling it's in the right direction?

CBCD has a funding program where we allow \$5000 toward the funding of renovation, match dollar for dollar, on renovating facades, but in order to qualify for that money, you have to follow certain guidelines. That's had a real impact downtown. It's created some political problems too, because people haven't followed it, and they're upset...they have to jump through some hoops, and if they're not willing to jump through hoops, they're not going to get their dollars. There's 35 facades, in a period of maybe 10 years...less than that...7 years, maybe. So that's had an impact, you know.

Sharon: Let me change topics slightly. Why did you choose to locate your business downtown? I know this is different for everybody, but why did you pick downtown?

Well, I bought my building in 1981. I was the first one in the community to ever renovate a historic structure. I really loved the building. It was edgy as hell to buy it, it was an edgy area, but it's the same old story you have with artists living in the blighted area. Over a period of 26 years, it's gradually come back. Now it's one of the nicest blocks in town. It was a part of town that people didn't go. I think that historically that was the red light district, and I think that, you know, in Victorian times that people didn't go to main street. Women didn't go down on Main Street. And it was pretty edgy. It was the closest area to the black part of town, there was a tough area, there were bars along the area down there, you know. I bought the building because it was cheap and it had incredible possibilities, and I could see that historically it was wonderful. It was built in 1871, it had a façade on it. I immediately put about 40,000 dollars into it, and it was a big gamble, but it served me well. I've been in that building for 26 years.

My particular business is where I located it because most of the work I do is not in Sedalia anymore. I decided it was time to put my money where my mouth was. I've been interested in downtown Sedalia since I was in college.

And I don't rely on Sedalia for my income. It's not a gallery, it's just a private building, it's just a workplace for me.

I started down here in the early seventies, and I've been pretty well involved with downtown ever since, and invested. I believe in the buildings we've bought. It was 78 when I started my own office downtown. Primarily, our relationship to the courthouse, the business that I have requires us to get to the courthouse, and a lot of our clients are downtown too. The major banks were downtown where all the attorneys and stuff are, so it was natural to stay with your clients in close proximity to the courthouse... we basically bought a building that we were already renting and stayed in it.

Sharon: What about other people that do business in Sedalia? Why are you staying downtown?

We own our building. We've been here since 1880 and thought probably in the 50s and 60s, we looked at several sites out west, and made a decision as a family to keep our investment downtown and bring business in. A conscious decision to stay down here.

Kind of gets under your skin...it's in your blood.

I don't own. I'm in a local US Bank branch, and I have noticed it's grown, you know. Because of the businesses. Most banks have moved out, so we've really picked up business from that. I grew up near it so I love the area too. As far as having a building, I don't, but I have an interest in downtown. It's my livelihood.

(side conversation)

Lots of reasons the bank has grown. A lot were moving out, but with the evolution from Mercantile to... my branch was a savings and loan, and now it's a full-service bank, that makes a huge difference. And we have a lot of things to offer, so I think it's a combination of a lot of things to why it's grown, but it definitely has.

That's one thing that's really changed a lot, too, is the tax district has been in place since the early 80s, and as those banks left, our revenue fell drastically. Now it's, what, about... 35 and I know that, not too long ago, 15 years ago, it was about 80,000 a year, and before that there was as much as 150,000. So we've gone from...big change.

We had enough to build a parking lot across the street from City Hall and on the east side of Ohio Street... it was a lot of money.

I think nostalgia is a strong reason for businesses coming downtown. For me, I mean, the love of downtown was instilled from my childhood, and although my family didn't own a building downtown, although my family found Garth's Drive In which is at the head of downtown, it was just such a part of life to be downtown. It's a nostalgia thing. You have to work that.

Sharon: For those of you who have customers that come down here, as opposed to being located anywhere else, do they feel it's user-friendly? Do you hear complaints about parking or anything else?

I think the biggest issue is parking. I think it's the biggest issue.

You know, we have several number or artists that come through the museum and patrons, and if I have much to do with it, I always put them up in an old historic downtown hotel. From either coast, it's scary as hell, they *love* being downtown. They love the old historic downtown. But it is a little different. It is a whole different scenario for these people, because there's not much happening at night and...they like the ambiance.

Having that hotel is great.

And the hotel restaurant is really lovely now, it's nice. And they just kind of see it in a better light, too. It's nice. For someone staying there in the hotel, it's really handy—there's a pharmacy across the street, there's your place, which I hate to see it leave the downtown. I'm sure you probably get business from people staying in the hotel.

We even have a room in the hotel where we actually do clients.

Sharon: Are you moving?

We are moving. The reason is twofold. The cost and, secondly, parking. Not just parking for our customers, but we have on many days 15 people working in the business, and just to find 15 spaces within a 3 or 4 block area that's not on-street parking. I don't allow my employees to park on the street. Sometimes to find those 15 spaces is just insane, and because our business has grown so quickly...we're a destination. People don't just happen in, they're coming to us, and they come in for some of the other business. We've just grown so much in downtown, downtown has been so good for us, that we have now outgrown the infrastructure that's available to us downtown. But we would have foregone that if we would have been able to purchase the building we're in. We'd have come up with some idea to do some valet parking or something.

Sharon: Anyone else?

Making it a destination, that's really the key to success downtown, because the drop-by traffic doesn't exist. You have to have a reason for people to come downtown. I'm across the street, and my business has been there for 70 years, and it's a car dealership, the last one downtown, and for a long time, we were a destination. Then people started buying cars on impulse, which seems like a strange thing, but they do. And so, we still have a destination for service, but we've moved our sales out on the highway, where we have 10,000 cars a day that go by, and so I'm unhappy about that. I like being downtown. But people still come downtown for service, because they have to. They don't have an option.

You say, you noticed a marked difference?

Yeah. We have five times as many people come in and look at cars as we did down there, simply because of the volume of people driving back and forth. You cannot create that kind of traffic across the street over here. It's not going to happen. We don't have a major highway in front of us. But the destinations we have downtown are the places that draw traffic. The drugstore, the furniture store, the hotel, Charlotte's down there, the restaurant...those are the kind of places that draw people downtown because it's the only one there is. And that's important. Too often I think we get downtown people who have a business, but they don't have a business plan. They say, "I like this, and I want to do such-and-such, so I'll put it downtown." They haven't really thought out, "Does anyone else like this thing?" That's a problem. So we have more turnover than we should, and as we get the destination points, which it's great to come downtown at night now, because all where the restaurant and the hotel are, there are cars. I was in Columbia last night—and it's not fair to compare this—but last night in Columbia at 7:30, you couldn't find a place to park downtown, because they have destinations. They have places that people want to go, that are unique to that location, and that's what we really need to focus on. Right now, we have some destinations, and we have some service-oriented places like

lawyers and offices and stuff like that that cater to the courthouse and that general environment. But if we can figure out how to add more destinations, that's really key. That's the other part of fixing the buildings. It's kind of synergistic. If you like enough to get somebody in that has a real idea that'll work.

Part of the turnover goes back to the dilapidated...if you don't have much of a building to rent, you're not going to rent it for much. You get a business in there that says, "we're going to do this downtown because the rent is cheap," that's why we've had the influx...for a while it seemed like everyone was opening a used clothing store or flea market, which is exactly the kind of business we don't need, we don't need a poverty-level business. That goes hand-in-hand with fixing the buildings. Better buildings will get higher rent, and you'll have a better tenant that's going to have more success in business.

The cake lady would be an example of a business... she's down on Main Street. There's a lot of special orders and caters, and it's really developed. It's unique and so we need to get a hold of something like that, and we want to keep them. We want to make sure things work and they're happy and things like that.

Sharon: So how do you communicate to your customers that you are a destination? How do you get people to come downtown? How do you now, and what would be the best way to do that?

Advertising and word of mouth. That's worked for us.

But what we want is to make the downtown as a whole a destination.

(many people agreeing.)

I don't think you can spend enough money on advertising to create a destination. You actually have to have one. We can all talk about it, and paint pretty pictures, but a few people get there and it doesn't exist, then you can't manufacture that.

And I think that might be one of the biggest problems still existing. We do have some destinations, but we don't have a central identity. When people do come to, for instance, Body Works... you do have used clothing place next to a very nice shop, or a lawyer's office. If we're wanting to attract more upscale kinds of business, we need to establish an identity not only for attracting businesses, but attracting renters of these buildings also, because Pam's right. If they think that's it's cheap rent, and they're around for a couple months, that's kind of going in and out, in and out of a building. I also think that, when you look at main street, you look at Ohio, you look at the whole corridor, we're probably stronger right now than we have been for a very long time also.

I've been here thirty years, and from the very affluent—flowers and lockets and all the very nice—(noise, unintelligible) and now it's building back, but it's not yet where we want it to be.

Sharon: So Main Street's the best you've seen in a while.

Oh, yes. (many people agreeing.)

Yes, you do have to have something when they get there, but I spend a tremendous amount on advertising. 5-7 percent.

When I came back in 89, I was horrified because there was grass growing in the cracks of the sidewalk all around the courthouse, and I wrote this letter to the commissioners, and I never in all my growing up years... when that courthouse, on veterans day or there's something, we could have Steven Spielberg come in here, because it's almost poetic. The sun is shining, the band is playing, we have the governor coming or something, and the veterans. It's like a movie set.

It's classic middle America.

And I remember that as a little girl, and then when I saw this grass, I was just...I went on this absolute tirade. I said, "This can't be! We can't have this!" I mean, it's a wonder anybody spoke to me after that. I probably made enemies all over town. And I went up there, and I said, "Come down and look at this!" I said, "Don't you see! You never have a second chance to make a first impression. Don't you see what this says?" Several of the commissioners said, well I don't even see that. They used to have the landscaping and they don't do that anymore, they just kind of let that go. Lately, though, the last couple years, somebody's been out there planting flowers. A lot of it is little things like that.

(many people talking. Side conversation.)

Sometimes that's what it takes... to say something. When you live and work and breathe and play all in the same area, you don't notice.

I think that's a big negative about Sedalia, is that there's very little influx of people outside of Sedalia.

You've got to look at it as if you've never seen it before.

Maybe in recent years, there's been more and more of an influx, maybe because of business and industry, but it's been stagnant for a hundred years, and really inbred. I think most of the people that live in this community are from this community. Sitting here at the table, who was born here?

(laughter)

You weren't born here? I wasn't either. But...two of us. And that, in a sense, is a negative simply because... I'm viewed as an outside insider, but I think when you do have these influxes, whatever causes that, it does bring a whole new viewpoint to things. I think that's what this community has lacked for a long, long period of time. When I was saying about, what I was trying to say, is that those people that are in our community, that live here, have moved outside of the inner city, to the suburban areas. So it's been kind of a brain drain, too, because those people can't serve on boards, they can't be in elected office, because they live outside city limits. That's been a real negative. And the town has been real reluctant to annex any of those areas. So the town has just stagnated, it's been 20,000 people for 110 years.

I think safety is an issue that we need to address in the future. People can go to the Wal-Mart or a mall situation, a strip mall, and have a relative level of comfort and safety there, and we need to get to where they feel that when they come downtown—I remember when I was a kid, on Saturday evenings, everybody just walked down the street, and you had such a comfort level that you could meet and greet people. There's some crime downtown, not so much big crime, but little things that go behind the back door, really drives customers away. And we see a little bit of that, behind our building. There's things that go on every once in a while at our place, we see them in the alley, looking for things. That's everywhere, but we've got to put them in line.

We put a gate across the alley, all of Liberty Center, we all got together...

When you live down here, you see a lot more, and you hear a lot more.

Sharon: My final section that I want to talk about...the city is developing a master plan, and a big part of why we're doing these groups is to get your input, so that what's in this master plan is what's important to all of you. So I want to hear a little bit about what you would like to see. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

We all understand that we can be realistic, or we can dream, and that would be kind of a waste of time.

Sharon: You could do a little of both.

I think we need another nice restaurant or two downtown. And I think what's going to happen when we have more residential living downtown, then you'll have a customer base for more restaurants. And I don't mean fourteen, I mean we could stand one more nice, sit-down restaurant downtown. And that brings another group of people downtown.

I think we need a really neat coffee shop that's open until 9 o'clock in the evening or so, so that when we get the walkers downtown, they have a starting point or an end point to have a refreshment before or after...and then, of course, I think we need boutique-type stores, upscale dress shops, upscale stationery stores, upscale chocolate shops, the kinds of things you would see maybe in an exclusive beachy area or something.

We had a soda fountain back then. How many did we used to have?

It should stay open til 9 as well.

Sharon: What time does everything close down here?

5, 6, or maybe 7. (many people talking, agreeing.)

Most of the businesses, it's 5 o'clock.

(many people talking, side conversation.)

The music store is really a destination. Instruments...

Sharon: What other types of businesses would you like to see downtown?

A cell phone company. Go down, pick out your phone. If you could come downtown to do it...they wouldn't need a large building.

I think cell phones are kind of an impulse thing...you drive by, think, "I'm getting tired of this phone..."

But as people start living down here, they wouldn't have to drive out west, they could go down the road. I hear a lot that they want a bakery or donut shop.

(many people agreeing)

I think those are the types of practical, common sense types of businesses that we need. We'd all love to have more upscale stores, but we won't have a huge influx of out-of-town people shopping here because it's too close to go to Columbia. A bakery. We do have a wonderful cake lady, who does a lot of specialty cakes, but I don't think she does anything other than that. We need breads, we need practical kinds of things.

So the people don't run out west to get that stuff.

That's something that both the east side and the west side would frequent, as a business. And I think we all have to keep coming back to what our population base is, and what we have to work with. And if we could get three upscale women's clothing stores, it would be fabulous.

We used to have that.

It would be wonderful.

One unique store that we've lost is the Ukrainian store. When people would come in, particularly artists that would come in with me, we'd drive by there, and they wanted to stop. "What is this place? A Ukrainian grocery store?" They loved it. They had a selection of candies from Europe. That was a real loss. Losing Pam, and losing the Ukrainian restaurant...those will be a real loss. Those are the kinds of businesses you need to attract, and certainly a bakery. And hope that Panera doesn't open up out west somewhere, which they probably will.

We also have the old uptown theater that has been recently deeded to the city, whatever, that is going to be something wonderful to attract, I hope throughout the year...we do have another theater in town for live productions all year round. At certain times of the year, we attract people. And George has a business right there, which can bring people in, eating and socializing before and after, but that's about the only place they can go other than a more formal sit-down at the hotel. Like Pam was saying, there's no coffee shop, something where these people have a chance to do something besides a formal dinner.

Sharon: Is there any other entertainment you'd like to see?

There's a new place that appeals to the young crowd, Malone's on Main. It's kind of a dance club, and it really serves a purpose. I don't think there's been a dance club here for a long time.

He did a nice job, and he's very selective of who comes in the door.

Does that create any kind of street ambiance in the evenings?

It's packed. And you know, we've had a lot of problems with other bars over there, and there are no beer bottles on the streets or the parking lots...I don't know if Malone's staff is picking up stuff, or if the kids are just being that conscious of not littering. I have a feeling it's probably the staff making sure, in order to keep a good name. Juanita's had her windows broken out twice from the other place, and there were lots of broken beer bottles every morning, and that just isn't happening down there. So, wonderful addition for us.

Sharon: Let's talk a little bit about the look and feel of downtown. What do you think needs to be done like street repair, landscaping, beautification, to revitalize downtown?

One of the problems with creating a look is that you need to exercise control over the look of the buildings, the advertising, the facades, etc. So you have that on the one hand, and on the other hand, and you have people saying, "Well it's *my* building, and I should be able to do what I want with it."

I kind of feel like that about my building.

You have opposing forces about it then. Are we going to establish a look, or are we going to deal with whatever happens?

But I think you can have—in Springfield, when they revitalized downtown...clean, safe, and friendly. It may not sound like much, but that's a lot.

That would certainly be a good start.

And the friendliness...we get that all the time. All of us here go out of our way to help.

Sharon: Anything else?

I always felt like we need to have better access to downtown, whether it be signage, ways to get in and get out. Currently we have basically Broadway there...you know, we really need to develop a north-south corridor that will bring more traffic directly to us, more so than trying to filter...making it a lot more easier to get to. We got a nice corridor to the north, but it doesn't really bring much into the north.

If you don't know where you're going, there's nothing that really says.

You really have only one major north-south corridor, 65 highway, and then you get over—Ohio's a short one, but there's no way to bring that corridor in. We really need a corridor to bring people to the downtown, to make it more accessible to them instead of having to wait for a left-

hand turn to get off Broadway. I always thought the signage, the streets, the turn lanes, will help to get traffic flowing. The only way we're going to get more people is to have an increased traffic flow, not trucks or anything, but just make it easier for people.

John Simmons brought up, in our CBCD meeting last time, the most astute thing that I've ever heard. We've talked about signage, but the streetscape there at the corner of Broadway, across from Food-for-Less, doesn't say "this is downtown." There's a building there on the corner, and if that building would join with those other buildings and we continue that streetscape with old-time kinds of buildings...you can't do anything with the church, but...that is the death of downtown. There's nothing that architecturally says, "This is downtown." Downtown should buy that lot and build streetscape that looks like a downtown. That's the most astute thing I've heard in 15 years of sitting on this board. If you had two-story buildings went all the way, people would start seeing that corridor.

Sharon: Out of everything we've talked about, if you had to pick the one thing the city needs to do to start the revitalization process, the most important thing, what would that be?

The streetscape. That's part of the DREAM Initiative. It was in place, and we've been working on it, but now the DREAM Initiative is going to have an impact.

Tie it in with the Amtrak Depot. That little bit of streetscape is going to be there, then extend that south of Ohio street.

Unfortunately, it's not going to be tied in from the Depot to that corner.

(lots of talking.)

That will create a little bit of a front door there, when you're coming in from the north side, because now the street will look a bit different, new sidewalks, brick inlaid in the intersections, 18 inches of brick along the edge of the curb and the beginning of the...so you start getting a nice look. Unfortunately, there's some terrible buildings along there, but maybe that will be incentive for people to buy those buildings or do something with them.

Going back to what Mary said, about it being clean, safe, and friendly. If the lighting was better, the streets were cleaner...

We just had a fit when those lights were out for months...

Well, and the low-level lights are nice, and they create an ambiance, but they need to fill in with more of those. And they need to repair the stoplights. We have really unique stoplights downtown, but the city doesn't like them to be working. So that's a problem. But I think the streetscape, if we totally redo the whole streetscape in the whole district, in that whole corridor, (noise, unintelligible) it would make a difference. Then you go back and fill with seeding and lighting and signage and stuff. And you create a real visual impact that says, "This place is different than any place else in town."

This administration has done more as far than anyone before.

Remember the street cleaning...

If there was anything...I would still like to see them...to come to some setting on the buildings, with the inspectors and...like we were talking earlier...that is a real problem. If anybody who's working on their building, make sure they're following rules. There's people that aren't. There's no consistency.

(many people agreeing.)

As many of those rules are prohibitive for anyone, they might not invest in a building. With all of the damage that we've had, there are many people that just walked away, because they couldn't afford to fix em with the existing ordinances.

If there's some way they can develop some buildings, or have some funds available, for business incubations buildings...businesses that come in so (noise, unintelligible) people who are on the edge about doing something would have some kind of investment...sometimes you need to offer something that will lend to good-quality clients.

And in Warrensburg, they have to submit a business plan and be selected, and that's a good thing.

For financing, you mean?

For...they have an incubator spot, and they have a year to work in that spot, and within that year they have to take another permanent building or...it's really cool how they have that incubator spot. It's a spot, it's right next to the main street office down there, and it's been several different things, and I'm not sure that any of them have taken off, but they've been some really cool businesses.

And are the banks supportive of that?

I don't know.

The banks need to get behind these investments. It's a pride issue, too. We've got to keep talking out where we are, why we love it, what the advantages are, so that the bankers and all will think...well, hey! People are investing.

That wouldn't be hard to organize, because you can sort of see the banks...you'd have to buy a building, and you'd have to fix it up, but if you could talk to banks and just financing that, and maybe CBCD or somebody pays the interest, and then fronts the remodeling or reconstruction costs, uh, and then that makes that business or building, it gives the bank potential to have that building sold, and they financed that. You could...

It's a win-win.

I think that could be so...

(many people agreeing.)

You could develop an artificially low rent for the business, then you make them develop a business plan, then you have a group that says "yeah this looks good. Now you have to do this." That helps their odds of success.

And banks really like to see a business plan. Especially if you start a business, it's difficult for banks to work with startup businesses. It'll be nice to have that year.

There are buildings downtown, we're not talking about 100,000 buildings. You start with 25, 30 thousand dollar buildings...

(lots of talking.)

You have to love it, and you have to have, you know, that's what our buildings that we're redoing now, for years I heard, we need to get businesses down here, and the reality is there were buildings that didn't have working bathrooms. They would rent buildings and have to go next door to go to the bathroom. That's our goal, is...yet...everybody down here, when they redo their building, it's for their business, which is ideal, but there weren't that many buildings that are for rent. We stuck our neck out...and hopefully get a nice restaurant, or a nice clothing store, because the building's done right, but good grief. You know, and I don't know with this plan, if it has to be, depending on who owns it and who has it done...my husband does most of the work...if you have to deal with, it's, you couldn't do it.

(side conversation.)

TLC and tons of loose cash.

(laughter and lots of talking.)

A parking garage would be nice, too, along with a little bus or trolley that ran up and down the street that dropped you off at the corner.

That is one of the future dreams that our groups are talking about, because that's a problem.

Sharon: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you'd like to address?

How about the big apartment complex in the Commerce Building? Is that going to have an impact? It's going to be low-income housing, right?

We hope a positive impact.

It's on hold right now.

It's my understanding that they've got the storefronts...you have that. Sorry to lose that. In the heart of what we're trying to do...I wish there were some way to rewrite some of that and make it work.

My understanding of it is based on the event that they get a grant next October, so they're just sitting on it, so it's probably not designed entirely...they probably have a preliminary diagram.

But they've told us that the funding they're going after, they won't have shops downstairs.

But they will have the corner spaces like a community room or something.

They want to eventually turn it into luxury apartments.

(more talk about the Commerce Building, plans and speculations.)

Thank you.

SECTION V

ECONOMIC COUNCIL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

My name is Linda, and I have been in Sedalia for about two and a half years.

My name is Pete, and I have lived in Sedalia off and on since 1950. I graduated here, moved to Kansas City for 16 years, and came back about 20 years ago.

Rob. I've been here about 13 years.

John. I've been here since 1947.

My name is Debbie, and I'm a lifelong resident.

John. I've been here a little over 5 years.

My name's Diane. I don't live here in town, but I've worked here for 24 years. I do property management for housing properties.

Sharon: My first question is a very broad question, just to start. Like I said, I've never been to Sedalia before. Tell me a little bit about your community. Give me a feel, if I were thinking about moving here, for your community.

It's very pleasant. It's a blue-ribbon community. It's very involved with giving. We have a group of community leaders that have come together to develop a blue-ribbon plan, community strategic plan, which we refer to as the blue-ribbon vision. Five, six basic things that the community holds in very high regard: education, healthcare, economic development, arts and recreation, social services, and local government. That sets a broad theme, but it's a very diverse community in terms of its economic base. Large manufacturing.

Good place to raise a family. Easy access to major metropolitan areas. Obviously, we're kind of buffered for that, and we've struggled with our community and our schools. My kids and my grandkids have been in our great Catholic system. Things are looking positive, the environment is positive, the community as a whole is great. We've had an increasing older population, but there are younger families working with various schools and hospitals.

I think the giving was a key point too, because anytime there's any kind of local drive or raising money to help someone out, the community comes forward. United Way meets their goal or surpasses it. All those types of fundraising drives.

Sedalia's a very warm community, and it has a lot of longevity as far as people, their children, their grandchildren. Sedalia as a whole is very old and inviting to newcomers, and getting them involved and making them feel welcome.

I think also that we have a direct connection with our past. I don't think that people who have lived here for any time want to forget from where we came, because we were the queen city of the prairies. We have a lot of organizations that have worked to restore our train depots, put museums in...a lot of hard work has gone into remembering the past. This was a railroad town, and a cattle town, and we have the Scott Joplin festival every year, which bring tons of people in from all over the world. And we've got a great past, and a great future ahead of us by bringing that past along with us. We don't want to forget that, in the architecture or anything else.

You can tell we're all locals, because we didn't mention the state fair.

Tourism...The fairgrounds usually has activity. It's a great venue for people who come into Sedalia.

Those venues are kind of broad-based, too. Livestock shows and sales and major camping rallies and sport tournaments and concerts and auto racing and festivals.

We have State Fair Community College, which has been a huge point of growth.

It's a great little college.

Our museum out there, the Daum Museum, I don't know if you know about it or not. Modern Art. It's really, it's been getting write-ups all over the country, from the New York Times on down. That's in State Fair Community College's campus.

What's the student base?

About 4000. Maybe a little higher now.

I think that's another example, when we talk about a giving community, because much of the improvements there have happened because of local donations and endowments. And the Daum Museum is another one of those. An art collector, and connected with an art instructor at the college, and a couple years later he came back and said, "Impressive museum for anywhere, because I've gotten to travel around to art museums now, and it's a very impressive museum."

You don't expect it, smack dab in the Midwest.

I would be amiss if I didn't mention healthcare. (laughter.) We have a remarkable regional hospital, which is the second-largest employer in the region. We use some of the most incredible technology that you've ever seen in a hospital this size, and I think we need more physicians, because the region is aging, and there's a lot of growth in Benton County where there's no hospital, and that's part of the biggest challenge and concern for the future, is can we recruit enough providers to serve this region. There's a lot of very positive things that are happening in healthcare, so it's always convenient to have a local hospital that's comprehensive and broad. We don't do neurosurgery and those kinds of things or a trauma center, but we do all of the basic general care kinds of things. A very committed group of physicians, 23 different specialties, and they're all very committed to this region.

One of the things that's overlooked but we all know it's there is, Sedalia is really a transportation hub. It started many many years ago with the railroad, and it's continued on, and we now have two expressways which cross. One goes to the interstate, and the other one is right in between Kansas City and St. Louis, but because of it being such a great transportation base, having a main line to the Union Pacific Railroad, it allows us an opportunity to recruit manufacturing. Having that transportation and distribution center...rail is a huge factor, and having a main line is very important to recruiting and retaining companies.

That kind of ties into my comments, because early on, Sedalia established itself as a market center because of the railroads, and there was initiative to actually come south of Georgetown, buy the land, create the town, build a railroad. That same philosophy has stayed, being aggressive and trying to get what we want. The construction of the railroad ended in the Civil War, and that's when we became a regional market center, and it was because of the railroad that we could become an industrial center. That philosophy ties back to...we have a very strong effort to attract and retain industry, manufacturing and technology.

The work force is very strong. Good work ethics, that's a lot of things that attracts communities.

That's very important for the community to continue, in terms of maintaining and growing the regional market center position as well as...

Work ethic is probably important no matter what profession or sector a company may be in...whatever it is, everything requires good work ethic. The work ethics in Pettis County, Sedalia are really second-to-none.

Sharon: What are the main shopping areas in the area?

Probably West 50.

Sharon: Could you tell me, what are the different areas people would go to shop?

Thompson Hills.

State Fair.

It has JC Penney, Sears.

Sedalia Book and Toys. They've managed to stay in business with the competition.

But Wal-Mart's right out there too, which is why...

Lowe's is just west of that.

65 is the other direction.

It certainly didn't used to be that way, because downtown used to be that way. Downtown was the hub when I was a little girl growing up. All the stores were open on Friday night, and we had a lot more restaurants downtown at the time, we had a restaurant, you could sit there and watch the trains come through, load and unload. I can remember walking back through town with my grandparents, and all stores would be open, shoe stores... we quite a few individual stores, three or four jewelry stores, it was really great.

There's a little strip mall east of here.

Everything has moved toward the southwest, though. The move seems to be north to southwest.

Sharon: Do people come downtown to shop anymore?

I do.

There's not much retail down there.

Mostly attorneys and antique shops.

Service-type businesses.

Specialty shops.

We had two movie houses down here, and they're both closed now. We have seen a little resurgence in the downtown area also, with a great restaurant in the old Bothwell Hotel now. It's great to come down on Friday and Saturday night and see people walking around. Lot of people are going in now to these old buildings, real estate, and redo them, put some lofts upstairs. This was before. I think it's wonderful.

Sharon: How long would you say you've seen the resurgence?

Really about the last 7 or 8 years. There's some buildings down on Main Street they've redone. You know, I don't know, it's really lovely to be able to come down here and see a little more activity going on.

We do have a really nice furniture store.

Been here since the 1800's.

There's art activity too, the performing arts, the visual arts, art galleries.

Sharon: What about dining and entertainment options? I know you've mentioned a few, but where do you go?

Kehde's Barbecue, it's a wonderful place.

Applebee's. Country Club.

Everything's spread out all over, they're west, they're all over.

Has anybody been to Parkville, Missouri? I was just there this weekend, I'd never been there. It is *awesome*. I thought immediately, this would be great if Sedalia downtown could do what they've done. It's just incredible. It's a whole city, it's got restaurants and bars and little shops. I was just thinking of that this weekend.

Cape Girardeau is a really nice town.

(many people talking at once.)

I'd highly recommend Parkville. That just reminded me of what a downtown could be in an older community.

Sharon: Are there recreation areas around here?

Fitness centers.

We have very fine parks.

Great parks. (many people agreeing.)

They're located in different geographic areas of the community. They're all well-maintained, and the city has behind the parks, the people have been supportive. They've done special things to the parks, and they're well-utilized.

Good rec programs, soccer and baseball...

Liberty park is one of the prettiest city parks I've ever seen. Pretty-looking, beautiful stone bridge, wonderful rose garden.

Very nice swimming pools.

The fairgrounds, we talked about recreations with the fairgrounds. We're so close to everything, and there's a lot of regional activity, from Arrow Rock to Cole Camp, all these little towns that differ in activities that people participate in.

Different fall festivals. We have a lot of German communities around, Cole Camp, Concordia.

The college offers a lot of nice programs, a walking center, a track, a multipurpose building, and it's really open to the community. It's really wonderful to have. The college is truly a community college. And there are a lot of exercising opportunities, yoga, Pilates, things like that, as well as crafting pottery and arts and all that. The college is really a nice center to have.

We're 30 minutes from a major recreational area, and the Land of the Ozarks are right there.

Sharon: Let's turn our conversation to downtown a little bit. You talked about, years ago when you were younger, this was thriving, and you've seen a little resurgence. Do you think downtown is moving in a positive direction or a negative direction?

There's no retail to draw someone on a regular basis.

Limited parking.

There are lot of under-utilized lots, and I think that we don't promote them very well.

And people would rather park right in front of buildings.

People have a problem not seeing their destinations when they park. They'll park at Wal-Mart and walk for three hours because they can see the front door, but they won't park around a corner downtown because they can't see the front door. But parking is an issue.

It has a lot to do, probably, with the people that own property. It's something that's, I don't know what it takes to get over that.

When you have offices, you're going to have a lot of parking.

Specifically at meetings at the courthouse...the courthouse is a big draw for the people that use it, but it creates a problem, because a lot of people have to get in and out. It creates a problem. There's parking for the people that work there, but others.

My first impressions were, it's kind of run down, and you see a lot of homemade signs that just don't look very professional. It just sort of looks homemade. And there's just a lot of stores that sell stuff that...

Some of them are flea market type more than antiques.

Some of the aesthetics were my first impression. You know, people don't realize when you come into town, they see and hear things. I was downtown during the Scott Joplin festival, and one of the things I noticed is that the corners, the curbs, were broken away and not repaired. Black tar through the street, and I just remember thinking, if that was just old brick, it would just be wonderful. Either pave over the whole thing, or...I'm sitting there, and somebody was upset because just a week before, the Christmas decorations had been taken down. And the festival's in June. That was my first impression. Sometimes I think it's very difficult in having been in that field, I know at one time, I know it's very difficult with absentee owners, when the windows aren't cleaned and the place isn't painted...getting those absentee owners to feel the pride that the people have that all of them are in their establishment. That was my first impression.

The courthouse is beautiful. And I was also impressed with the little outdoor restaurant thing. And that year, they had the little carriage ride things, and I thought that was cool. They really do a lot of great things for a festival. Show a piano in and start playing in the middle of the, you know.

They need to have more festival type... we have Scott Joplin, which is a limited time. We have a wonderful downtown for many more festivals. We have some left lanes. You know, we could have some pretty neat stuff.

Downtown used to have a fall festival.

We'd need volunteers. Churches are great.

We have a great Christmas parade, probably one of the largest in Central Missouri.

Chamber of Commerce is located downtown, great depot.

I like the lights, the streetlights. They're old-fashioned, and you could just build so much there...it kind of reminds me of the old lights that you would have at Christmastime. You could do a lot with the aesthetics and enhance what is really unique about downtown.

Sharon: What are the major reasons you visit downtown?

Hotel Bothwell and the courthouse.

Ivory Grille.

My wife has a business downtown.

I work downtown, mornings.

It really is a nice place to take a stroll, it really is. I like to walk there in the evening.

(many people talking at once.)

We've got great old churches in the downtown area, we've got a beautiful Carnegie library, one of the prettiest in the state. We have a Catholic church, gorgeous building. The State Trust, the Liberty Center. We've got great architecture down here.

I drive downtown on my way home from work, just to see the downtown. It is attractive. I live on the west side of town. I take Ohio down to 3rd street.

Streetlights haven't been here that many years. 6, 7, 8 years ago, maybe.

(side conversation. Many people talking at once.)

Actually, Main Street has a lot of...

Malone's on Main.

Doug, Ed Gerard, and somebody bought the new one. Pearl Evans. All those buildings have been restored, or in restoration.

Art-related stuff.

We haven't mentioned the banking downtown. And attorney's offices.

The Bothwell Hotel is just absolutely fabulous. When we have one of our events, we always try and use the Bothwell, because it's just got wonderful aesthetics.

(many people agreeing.)

It's a very good first impression. People are wonderful. Whenever people come in, we put them there.

Sharon: Do you come downtown for dinner regularly?

Yeah. A couple times a month.

More for lunch. We come for lunch. Ivory Grille, or Ivy Cottage.

Malone's on Main. Maple Leaf Tea Room.

We've named everything, I think!

(laughter.)

Sharon: So maybe lunch more than dinner?

The only dinner is Ivory Grille.

And the 5th Street Tavern. Have a margarita, and a sandwich. And I think that's what we need more of. We need more reasons to come down here after hours, as well as during the daytime too. And we've got some great framing shops and little art shops and...

Liberty Arts Center.

I come downtown for the shoe repairman. I had forgot about that!

(side conversation about shoe repairman.)

Sharon: As she talked about earlier, is there anything you used to come downtown for that you don't anymore?

Jewelry. Beautiful dress shops. Shoe shops. Menswear. Sedalia was a hub. It was a destination for people in Marshall and Warsaw, Syracuse, Otterville, they'd come here and spend the day, and shop. Everything was downtown. Two theaters.

Six trains going east, six trains going west at one time.

Sharon: When did this change?

70's, 80's. Probably 70's.

And the lake traffic going straight through on the west edge of town is what pulled people. Like, the Wal-Mart on the west edge of town. Coming from Kansas City on 50 and turning on 65.

Sharon: How user-friendly do you think downtown is? We've talked about parking, but other things?

Sidewalks are somewhat irregular in some places.

(agreement.)

But I think that when you're walking...

Sharon: Is it safe?

Oh, yes.

I think there's a perception that at night, it's not safe. But I think that's not true.

I think that Gaylord's Paradise is closed now, and that helps. They may not have been dangerous—they just gave you that impression. They just hung around in the street.

(many people talking.)

Yeah, there's quite a few people that live downtown, live upstairs over their businesses.

I think if there's anything that's not safe, it's probably the traffic on third street, from sixth to Broadway. It's hazardous. But other than that, I mean...

I don't think safety is an issue at all.

Sharon: Are the business hours convenient?

(many people talking.)

Diane was talking about the furniture store on Thursday night til 8, but I think they've been the only one's that have stayed open. They're trying to get some of the people to stay open on Thursday evenings, but that didn't go over well. There weren't enough people. There are a lot of offices downtown. Retail is just not going to thrive at night... But when there's a festival, like Scott Joplin, it's alive.

We stay open til 8 o'clock just certain times, like during the festival, because we're interested. My business is downtown. I have an open business by the highway, too. And I'm downtown sometimes, and I have the lights on, and people come in.

Sharon: Is it easy for people to find downtown? What do you think about the signage?

You know, the sign off of highway on Broadway could be maintained a little better. The flowers and the shrubbery. It gets a little shabby... I think it's lit up, very well lit.

On that corner, at Broadway and Ohio, there is not a building there that says "This is Historic Downtown Sedalia." Right there where you turn. It's that corner...

I personally had a hard time finding it.

It doesn't give you a good vision of downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

You can see the hotel Bothwell and... (noise, unintelligible.) Well, there's a big green MODOT sign that says "Historic Downtown" a couple blocks before you turn.

The school district owns a lot of the property, and it's kind of hodgepodge, not well maintained.

Sharon: In what respect?

It's just the track, they use it as a practice field...it would just be very attractive...it's kind of a hodgepodge of driveway right there where the intersection going to downtown is...it's not really inviting.

It doesn't say "Historic" right there.

The buildings we own are not very...they were built in the 20's, and from an architectural standpoint...

There's that apartment building that's empty...

Some buildings are boarded up.

That's a negative thing. All those things are...

(many people talking. Side conversation.)

... there's asbestos in the basement, which any old building's going to have. It's not as big a problem, but word got around that it was. We got somebody looking at it now. We're trying to get the lien set aside, which they've agreed to. We're going to turn it into apartments.

I talked to a guy...he said that he was working on trying to get something in, and I said, as I see it with that building, if you turned it into a parking square, you could park. He led me to believe that maybe he owned it.

Sharon: Where do residents get information about downtown? Is information prevalent about the businesses here? Do you get any information about downtown?

The Sedalia Downtown Development. I get their newsletter.

Meg does a good job.

You bet.

She does a good job of getting the word out. And downtown Sedalia has members that are not just of downtown businesses, so the newsletter she sends out monthly to these people who join and contribute basically, so she's good about doing that. She's been working on getting a website. We do not have a website. But unfortunately the Depot project has taken more of her time, the grants, so...through the chamber, does she give you all stuff?

St. Patrick's Day celebration, Christmas Parade...

Any downtown event goes on there...

Sharon: So do you think people in Sedalia are aware of everything going on downtown?

If they want to be. I think, through the Chamber, I think the Chamber has a plethora...you can make a stop over there and find out all kinds of stuff, but you have to want to do that. It's all out there. I think it's pretty accessible.

I think that the Depot Store do a good job cross-referencing any other good stuff.

We have a staff member who serves on the (noise, unintelligible) for that purpose, to exchange information and support each other.

Are you aware of the Depot? The Katy Depot? It's a historic Depot on the Missouri-Kansas railroad, and Debbie is the administrator, and during her time frame, it's been restored, and it's a beautiful building. It's one of those cases with location location location...the Depot, fortunately, they were able to improve other places in the area...

It's about four blocks from downtown? Six? And, yeah, I mean, between here and there, there's not a whole lot.

That's maybe one of the things that's kind of difficult. The downtown area perimeters, the housing, just needs some rehab. I know when we had our Sedalia showcase, and we had a bus, it was very difficult to get to the beautiful Depot, to show the Depot without going through...there was no way to get there and show the beautiful...We spent two days looking for the right route to take.

A lot of the houses were built by people, they built them themselves. There were shops, and they built their own houses. So that's what they kind of look like, little cottages.

If they aren't that, they're real big older homes that you can tell were incredible at one time...they got apartments now, stairs running from three and a half stories up.

We are taking issue, to rezone some of those areas, reverse them back to single family homes.

The Katy Trail runs through. We're the only area that has the equestrian part of the trail.

We're the largest community outside of St. Charles with the Katy Trail.

Sharon: Do you get a lot of people who stop on that? Are there businesses built up around there?

People stop, but no, no businesses.

Two trailheads in Sedalia, by the Depot and out by the Fairgrounds. There are some commercial properties that have attempted...tried it for a while. It's somewhat surprising, because we've got restaurants and bicycle services around the trail.

You see, now that the weather's improving, these people come in on the trail and stay at the Bothwell Hotel.

From Colorado...specifically Florida...

Sharon: You know about the DREAM project, that Sedalia's trying to develop this plan for downtown. That's part of why we're doing these groups. If we could talk about some things you would like to see or ways you'd like the downtown to go these next two years...what kind of businesses do you think should be downtown to help revitalize downtown?

Restaurants and theaters and things that would draw people back after 5 o'clock too. Like Parkville.

One of the things that I think sometimes, if you get a focus or a theme, and you see a lot of activity in thriving communities when they have some sort of theme that they follow to their history that draws people to them. I mean, this is a much larger, but in Omaha, they have the old market. In Lincoln, Nebraska, they have the hay market. It just creates an aura of "I want to be there," you know, it's just, you can't, you don't want it to be a shopping center. You want it to be a destination, with its own charismatic aura. That's just my opinion.

There's discussion taking place about connecting downtown with the art movement, the Contemporary Art Museum, that could very well fit into what you're talking about. Galleries and...

There's got to be a unique draw.

I mean, the first Fridays are just wonderful in Kansas City. They have the artists in the galleries, there with their displays in the evenings. That's just, it's just...Sedalia is just so full of unbelievable artists of immense variety, it's astounding to see it in a community this size. I don't think that people really realize it, but I think they're starting to. I think that's a great thing to build a sustaining...and...have an art gallery...

Art, and arts activities...

I think that's great, that vision is wonderful...I think we need more things to bring people down through the week, business-wise. I'd like to see some retailers take a chance on Sedalia, and I think if we had better parking, that they would. I think parking has been a main concern for a lot of things. I always think of Eureka Springs, Arkansas. It's one of those places, you're four and a

half hours away, it's a beautiful town with lots of art and lots of things that bring people down there. That's the kind of thing I'd like to see, because we have beautiful buildings. Of course Hot Springs is old, with the old racetrack, but Eureka Springs.

(side conversation.)

We could maybe have some Bed and Breakfasts. The hotel's nice, but maybe smaller rooms you could rent or...

Part of the problem has been that the city wouldn't allow B and B's, zoning-wise. The old Paris House, several years ago, was sold to a gentleman who had every intention of putting in a B and B, and the neighbors said no, we don't want that. And he had enough street parking and everything else.

(many people talking at once.)

And the streets could have the white lights.

(many people talking at once.)

...to make it so it's affordable for the businesses.

The buildings have to be in shape.

You have to meet all these building codes, which is good, but they have to be a little flexible about that. We want to make sure the buildings are safe, that's the biggest issue. We had resistance for about a year after the (name unintelligible) building fell. It was really detrimental for us. I didn't talk about it with a lot of people.

And now you go downtown, to me it appears dark.

(many people agreeing.)

So that's why I thought white lights, or outline the buildings with lights, or...it just appears dark at night, and dark to me is gloomy.

(many people talking at once.)

Part of that, too, was that two blocks the lights weren't working for a long time.

Yeah, when that building went down, that was horrible.

It seemed very dark.

That thing was down three years.

(side conversation.)

Sharon: Are there any businesses you haven't talked about that you'd like downtown?

Starbucks.

Specialty-type stores. Boutiques.

Something has to come first.

But what? What needs to be first?

A good barbecue.

It could be people, in terms of residential. You get residents, and those stores have to be provided somewhere, so it's a matter of convenience—do you think they'll drive somewhere to Starbucks, or will they stay in that area?

I'd like to see some concerts on the courthouse lawn in the evenings, in the summertime maybe once or twice a month, to bring people around. Let them mill around. Have a wine bar across the street or something.

(side conversation.)

They could move the concerts to the courthouse and get people back in the habit of coming down here.

You'd have to have parking. People won't be able to come unless they come in a horse and carriage!

Sharon: What about the feel of downtown?

That's what people really want to talk about, is the feel.

Sharon: What about the look and the setting?

We've done a good job in brief moments. We'll spend the money every now and then, and replace the lights, and the next thing, there'll be something that needs to be replaced... if it's on Main Street, half a block away from downtown...they spent a lot of money replacing our handicapped access, and that lasted for a couple years, and a year or two later, I'm watching people pour concrete that doesn't match what they did two years ago. Nothing is consistent. Some of these places, you talk about this ambiance that's so great, and it's because there is consistency. People like to resist these rules, but if you just step back and look at it, if everything screams for attention, nothing gets it. But if you get a scheme and you actually enforce it, everyone benefits from it. But you have to stay the course, and focus.

And that's something downtown, downtown Sedalia does not have set rules, "This is what your sign needs to be in compliance with."

Every successful downtown has that.

And we're working on one.

And they make people uncomfortable at times, and people get mad, but you can't focus on...I don't care who it is that gets mad...but you gotta think of the whole, think long-term, and, you mentioned what has to come first...I think we have spent enough money in the last dozen years down here to have made a whole bunch more strides than what we've actually done. You mention Bothwell, they've done an excellent job there, and George Hester has done a couple buildings that spurred a couple others, and a couple buildings by the courthouse. You mentioned a lack of lights. It would help if the top three floors actually had a light on. Even with streetlights, when the top three floors are dead, you perceive that it's a false front.

Even if it's built up, it seems like it's downtrodden.

It's...Marshall improved their square, in my opinion, by making it a one-way, and they've got hidden parking. I'm sure that's come up in town... and people are like, "you'll lose business if traffic only goes one way," but none of that ever pans out. It's everything, from getting more parking...we've done some calculations at the courthouse, and we can double the parking there with no more space by just changing the parking configuration and getting people to drive differently. People also resist pedestrian malls, but I don't think we need a lot of cars on Ohio. But you mention that in Sedalia, you're almost run out of the city. So, it's hard to sell those things, but I do think...

I mentioned two years ago that I thought it would be kind of cool if the businesses agreed to have indoor access, so you could go from business to business. We did that in Columbia downtown. And an indoor mall, on one level...the problem that was posed to me that I didn't think of is, not everyone's a retail. So you're going to go from retail business into a lawyer's office into a newspaper. But I think if you could get them to open up, you would draw, because if I went into this business, I'll meander into another one. Your idea on the lights was very true, because even though I said it seems dark, I love the streetlights. It's just got that old, it's got a presence. And I love those, but they also are lower to the ground and they're not as...but yet, I wouldn't want to take those out, but I would want to add to your idea of getting something up, to make it look more festive all the time.

And you need that same downtown group telling businesses who have lights out...Christmas lights look worse and worse every year. Several people kept them up for a long time. You have to have some homeowners organization, or something.

Part of the problem, just like the ordinances, too, a big problem has been the out-of-town property owners resist any kind of direction with regard to their property. They don't care. Now, I think that there's more local ownership now. That is turning the tide, and so, there's been some positive change there, which is why we're working now on trying to put together some ordinances on signs.

(unintelligible talking.)

Shouldn't there be like a set planning and zoning rules and regs, specifically for downtown, and some of them more stringent, but some of them more lenient, and then maybe finding some matching funds, if you put some money into it or match it to help you upgrade that building and get it so, something to give initiative to do something.

The sewer and the water lines...you have all those to get done, too.

California, Missouri did something a few years ago. That might be worth a drive from some folks from Sedalia. They did a matching funds thing, a tax credit through the state, and if you put in a dollar, you get a dollar worth of tax credit. And they cleaned up that downtown, put in beautiful mood lights. They really pushed that down there, and it really made a difference in the downtown area.

(many people talking at once.)

...it's not continuous. You could qualify, but in between you and, I lose the last building, but...it skips, because there's a half block there that's not a contributing building yet.

What happens is, the more buildings we lose, it's puts us in a negative situation with the historic district taxes...and even with the DREAM Initiative.

I don't think it hurts DREAM, but any historic tax credit...

You have an empty facility, an empty building downtown, you have to give an incentive, something, to get them to want to invest in it. An empty building, an out-of-town investor is going to have to be given something in some way to give them the initiative to fix it up and make it usable, to put lofts up, or someone new to purchase it to do that, but there's got to be something to give them the initiative to do it, and that's what needs to be created, along with some special stringencies and leniencies. There should be a special one for the district, not just the main street of downtown, but the area surrounding it, and housing could be a part of that.

Most of these buildings down here are going to cost you as much to redo as building new. Or more.

(many people talking at once.)

Look at St. Louis. I mean, there's some very attractive new condos that have the same feel.

Well, there are going to be some of those buildings...

And people move to em. If you could build, I mean...not all of it, but just...

I know what you're saying.

I would think in the same incentive basis, you could make incentive for people to build down here. When was the last time something was built down here?

Whatever new goes in should look historic.

(many people agreeing emphatically.)

You have to find a theme. And the idea of arts is excellent.

We have plenty of history to pull from from several angles.

And that's where the rules should get stringent.

It could be wide enough that it's arts, music, trails...

There's a whole handful of that Sedalia heritage, and one thing we do have that we didn't mention is the Heritage Trail that was created to link the two trailheads of the Katy Trail for the rich people...to create the Trail Riders to get off the trail and into town, and it goes through two historic districts, which is downtown and the Missouri State Fairgrounds. Somehow, that concept of you're on the Heritage Trail, and you're part of this community's heritage when you're downtown. One thing that brings me into the community and keeps me there longer is the historic signage or other heritage interpretation. Sometimes you see that as a bronze plaque on hotels, or...we were in Denver this past week, and another thing I've seen imbedded in sidewalks, one of them was describing Denver, and you find yourself standing there reading that, and you're spending more time, and that's going to keep you there...so somehow or other, I'd like to see connecting with...helping tell that heritage.

Because we have a story to tell.

Ohio Street could offer a lot of insights to how to identify those themes, not just totally art, but art should be a large part of that, because not only ragtime, but Liberty Center...

And everything is art, a form of art...all, you know...

Sharon: I have one last question as we're winding down on time. Are there other areas or communities that you've visited that you think Sedalia's downtown should look like. Are there any that you haven't mentioned already?

(Name unintelligible) They have those big murals, have you ever seen those, on highway 65. They have these huge murals.

I went to one community, I can't remember where it was, but they had taken a huge oak and made a mural—they had carved out the front of a train. It was absolutely awesome. And they had a water well, and you could hear it in that train...it wasn't a fountain, but you could hear it. In front of it was just for chlorine, and you would stand and look at this, and they had like...just the front of the train, it was coming right at you. It was just awesome. I thought, we have real heritage here, and it would be so cool if...and that's part of the arts. I wish we could have that. Lee's Summit's is very pretty, really nice downtown, and I was driving through there recently, Saturday evening, and I was amazed at the number...lot of restaurants, they had playground equipment, and it was kind of enticing families where kids can wear themselves out playing in the fountains.

Wilbur, Nebraska. Check festival. Every sign out front has the check theme all the way through the entire community. They have a three-day festival, a little tiny community, and they close the entire town off, and there's thousands of people.

I've never been there, but Paducah, Kentucky. My friend works in the hospitals down there...

Isn't that where the arts group was going to tour?

They're on the river, and they built this big band show, and they have concerts in the park every summer. They've apparently done a nice job with tearing down old downtown houses and building new stuff that looks old.

Sharon: Is there anything else?

(side conversations.)

Talking about, I think families, their idle time is important, and to find a destination for a day trip or weekend trip, we could focus on family.

Going back to that theme thing, and Branson, not necessarily what they have done, but what they're planning on doing. They go to Branson, but they don't necessarily come downtown. But now that they've built this development, now there's two reasons to go to Branson. They've had some planning meetings, and now they're going to try to capture visitors, create kind of a museum experience, and they're trying to come up with that...trying to sell the community, the theme that downtown was initially established around, with characters in costume, and have sort of a built-in tour experience, from one business to another, but it's from the storytelling, and I know we're a long way from that, but...it's just some more fuel for the thought of coming up with a theme, whether it's the cattle drive days or the railroad boom or the art, but once you have that theme, I think that will be the motivating factor for a lot of creativity.

Sharon: Thank you very much.

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