

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

OCTOBER 2009

# FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY  
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Webb City, Missouri



**D·R·E·A·M**  
I N I T I A T I V E

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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## SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted four focus groups in Webb City, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Webb City community in regard to the Downtown area. The four groups included the following: 1) Mayor and City Council, 2) longtime residents, 3) Chamber of Commerce members, and 4) the Downtown Advisory Group. Participants of all four groups were drawn from a variety of backgrounds.

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

### **A. QUESTIONS POSED TO BUSINESS GROUPS:**

The following questions were included in the business group discussion guide:

#### **General Questions about Webb City**

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

#### **Downtown Specific Questions**

04. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Webb City is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property Downtown (or not in Downtown, for other business owners)?
06. From what you hear from your customers, how “user-friendly” is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for?
07. Is there any residential living in Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more housing Downtown? What kind of housing – rental, condominiums, single family housing, etc.? Who would be the target for that housing, students, elderly, etc.?
08. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what’s going on Downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? What is communication like between business (or business groups) and the City’s administrator and elected officials?

## Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

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

## **B. QUESTIONS POSED TO GENERAL GROUPS:**

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

### **General Questions about Webb City**

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

## Downtown Specific Questions

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

## Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

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

## C. THE WEBB CITY AREA

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

The groups described Webb City as a friendly and welcoming town with a good education system, a strong community spirit, excellent school sports, a well renowned farmer's market, and great access to the amenities of Joplin. These factors, according to participants, make Webb City a great place to raise a family.

Webb City is on historic Route 66, which draws a number of tourists *through* town, and participants felt that the right mix of businesses could induce those tourists to stop, shop, and dine.

Participants generally felt that Webb City is moving in the right direction and noted that, over the past few years, the Downtown has improved considerably. Some noted that the City has begun aesthetic improvements to Downtown, including lighting and sidewalks. Also, the area's population is growing, which participants see as an opportunity for more business and tourism.

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

Webb City residents do much of their everyday shopping in Webb City, particularly at Wal-Mart, but most residents travel to Joplin to shop for clothing, for a wider selection at shopping malls, and for a larger variety of things than businesses in Webb City currently offer. Participants noted that they try to shop in Webb City, especially Downtown, when they can.

In addition, participants stated that, other than Wal-Mart, many local Webb City businesses have 8-to-5 weekday hours only, which makes it inconvenient to shop in Webb City for many people. The mall in Joplin, because it stays open later, draws many Webb City residents on the weekends and in the evenings.

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

There are a number of restaurants in Webb City, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Thai, fast food, casual and family dining, and a Downtown deli. The participants overall felt that more variety in dining options, a higher-end restaurant, a microbrewery or wine garden, and some outdoor seating would be welcome. Many visit Joplin for a wider variety, or they combine dining with shopping trips to Joplin.

For recreation, the Webb City area and its region have parks and school sports, and participants noted that residents have a strong community spirit surrounding those sports.

For entertainment, the participants cited their Downtown movie theater, the new annual Springtime on Broadway festival, the Saturday Cruise Nights, and traveling to Joplin for a wider variety. Many indicated that while there are things to do in Webb City, there is a need for more entertainment, including live theater, more live music, more specialty shopping, and higher-end bars.

## D. DOWNTOWN WEBB CITY: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

The groups felt generally positive about the direction of Downtown Webb City. Participants highlighted the City's efforts to beautify Downtown and make infrastructure improvements, which include, most notably, new sidewalks and lighting.

Priorities for helping Downtown Webb City move further in the right direction included adding more retail and entertainment, focusing on the building repair and renovation, addressing problems associated with absentee building owners, improving signage and wayfinding, and offering incentives to encourage development and additional businesses Downtown.

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

Business owners cited low cost and tradition as the major reasons they located their businesses Downtown. Participants indicated, at different points in the discussion, that additional businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focused on building repair, providing tax incentives for new businesses and providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses.

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

The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit Downtown, including the Springtime on Broadway festival, banks, City Hall, the post office, other professional businesses, and some retail shopping and dining. Participants said that they typically only visit Downtown during weekday business hours, as most businesses are not open during evenings or weekends.

*How "user-friendly" is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for?*

The participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including business hours, a potential parking problem if there were more businesses, signage to direct Route 66 travelers, and pedestrian safety.

The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are a problem, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it impossible for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. The shops that are open on weekends are only open for a few hours on Saturdays. A monthly "First Friday," when businesses are open in the evening, would be a welcome change for many residents.

Parking was a concern for many participants, though others expressed that there is ample parking Downtown. Some participants explained that many people perceive parking to be a problem if they cannot find a parking spot directly in front of the store they wish to visit, even though they might be willing to walk a significant distance from a parking spot in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Participants suggested that if all of the storefronts were populated with shops and businesses, the walk from parking spot to business might seem shorter, and people may be more likely to park at the end of a block and walk. Some noted, however, that if there were more businesses, there could be a parking shortage, and they suggested paving over some of the gravel parking lots and adding signage to make it clear that those lots are for public parking.

According to participants, many Route 66 travelers get lost in Webb City, because Route 66 “jogs,” and there is not adequate signage to make that clear. They suggested that a sign warning travelers about the “jog” would help them find their way through town.

Pedestrian safety was also a concern. Because trucks and other large vehicles drive right through Downtown, residents are concerned about letting their children cross the street and walk around Downtown. Some participants suggested a highway bypass for trucks, which would reduce some of the commercial traffic Downtown.

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

The participants mentioned the local newspaper (*The Sentinel*), the Chamber of Commerce, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events. Most felt that word-of-mouth was the predominant way that they got their information and suggested that other avenues for information were not as effective.

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

There is some residential living in Downtown Webb City, and the participants felt that there would be a demand for second-story living, particularly “nicer” rentals, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated. Some participants expressed that more residences Downtown would create a bigger customer base for all of the Downtown businesses, and would also be attractive housing options for Downtown business owners.

## **E. DOWNTOWN WEBB CITY: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

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

Participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains. For retail, they suggested more men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing, a shoe store, a bookstore, a candy shop, gift shops, a five-and-dime, and art galleries and shops. For food, they suggested a grocery store, a coffee shop, a wine garden or brewpub, a bakery, and restaurants with live music, outdoor seating, and longer business hours. For entertainment, the groups suggested live

theater, live music, higher-end bars, and any other family entertainment. The retail, some participants suggested, should *not* focus on competing with Wal-Mart, but should instead focus on offering unique options for both residents and tourists with discretionary income.

Participants in one group felt that lodging should be a priority and that Webb City should have at least one hotel and one bed and breakfast to cater to Route 66 travelers who may want to stay overnight.

A few participants also suggested that the trolley be refurbished in order to provide a transportation option Downtown, reinforce the historic theme of Downtown and Route 66, and ultimately increase tourism.

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

Participants generally felt that the Downtown's purpose should not be to compete with large chain stores like the Wal-Mart in Webb City or the Home Depot, Lowe's, or the mall in Joplin; but instead to offer a unique experience to customers, offer interesting things that will make residents and tourists want to spend time Downtown, and make Webb City a historic and interesting destination. To this end, the groups felt strongly that small businesses should be encouraged, the City should crack down on absentee building owners who allow buildings to fall into disrepair, and the City should find ways to make it easier for building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.

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

When asked about the look and feel of Downtown, participants indicated that building repair and renovation should be of the highest priority. Other priorities included green space, benches, and a potential "pocket park" where people could sit and eat lunch or have a snack.

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

The groups identified as the highest priorities building repair and renovation and bringing new business Downtown. There was consensus that derelict buildings and the empty storefronts create a negative impression on visitors to Downtown, and that those two improvements would move Webb City in a positive direction.

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

Business owners suggested that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, educate building owners on grants and loans to renovate and repair their buildings, crack down on absentee building owners who are not repairing their buildings, and market Downtown to residents and to potential Route 66 visitors.

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

The participants mentioned a few downtowns or city areas whose mix of businesses, aesthetics, or marketing they admired: Joplin, Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; St. James, Missouri; Neosho, Missouri; Lee's Summit, Missouri; Lynchburg, Tennessee; Parsons, Kansas; Pittsburgh, Kansas; Hardy, Arkansas; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Fort Scott, Kansas; Red Wing, Minnesota; Nashville, Illinois; and Kennebunkport, Maine.

### F. KEY POINTS

*Key points about the Webb City area:*

- ◆ Webb City is a friendly and welcoming town with a good education system, a strong community spirit, excellent school sports, a well renowned farmer's market, and great access to the amenities of Joplin.
- ◆ Webb City is on Historic Route 66, which draws a number of tourists *through* town, and participants felt that the right mix of businesses could induce those tourists to stop, shop, and dine.
- ◆ Participants felt that Webb City is moving in the right direction, particularly regarding Downtown improvements and the rise in population.
- ◆ Webb City residents do much of their everyday shopping in Webb City, particularly at Wal-Mart, but most residents travel to Joplin to shop for clothing, for the selection at the mall, and for a larger variety of things than Webb City currently provides.
- ◆ There are a number of restaurants in Webb City, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Thai, fast food, casual and family dining, and a Downtown deli.
- ◆ More variety in dining options, a higher-end restaurant, a microbrewery or wine garden, and some outdoor seating would be welcome additions to Webb City.
- ◆ Many residents visit Joplin for a wider variety of dining options, or they combine dining with shopping trips to Joplin.
- ◆ For recreation, the Webb City area and its region have parks and school sports, and the residents have a strong community spirit surrounding those sports.
- ◆ For entertainment, the participants cited their Downtown movie theater, the new annual Springtime on Broadway festival, the Saturday Cruise Nights, and traveling to Joplin for a wider variety.
- ◆ While there are a few things to do in Webb City, there is a need for more entertainment, including live theater, more live music, more specialty shopping, and higher-end bars.

*Key points about Downtown Webb City in the present:*

- ◆ The groups generally felt positive about the direction of Downtown—particularly the City’s efforts to beautify Downtown and make infrastructure improvements.
- ◆ Priorities for helping Downtown Webb City move further in the right direction included adding more retail and entertainment, focusing on the building repair and renovation, dealing with the problem of absentee building owners, improving signage and wayfinding, and finding incentives to encourage development and business Downtown.
- ◆ The business owners cited low cost and tradition as the major reasons they located their businesses Downtown.
- ◆ New businesses might be attracted Downtown in the future if the City focused on building repair, providing tax incentives for new businesses, and providing information about grants and loans to renovate old buildings and to start new businesses.
- ◆ Residents visit Downtown for the Springtime on Broadway festival, banks, City Hall, the post office, other professional businesses, and some retail shopping and dining—primarily during weekday business hours.
- ◆ Concerns about user-friendliness included business hours, a potential parking problem if more businesses opened Downtown, signage to direct Route 66 travelers, and pedestrian safety.
- ◆ The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are inconvenient for those who work regular weekday hours, and a “First Friday” type program would be a welcome addition.
- ◆ Though there is ample parking Downtown, some residents perceive a parking problem, and the participants also feel that there could be a shortage of parking if more of the buildings were occupied with businesses.
- ◆ According to participants, many Route 66 travelers get lost in Webb City, because Route 66 “jogs,” and there is not adequate signage to make that clear.
- ◆ Pedestrian safety is a concern, since trucks and commercial vehicles drive through Downtown; some residents would welcome a highway bypass for this commercial traffic.
- ◆ The participants mentioned the local newspaper (*The Sentinel*), the Chamber of Commerce, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events; word-of-mouth, however, was the primary way.
- ◆ There is some residential living in Downtown Webb City, and the participants felt that there would be a demand for second-story living, particularly nicer rentals, if the buildings could be appropriately renovated.

*Key points about the future of Downtown Webb City:*

- ◆ The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains.
- ◆ The retail should *not* focus on competing with Wal-Mart, but should instead focus on offering unique options for both residents and tourists with discretionary income.
- ◆ Downtown's purpose should not be to compete with large chain stores like Wal-Mart in Webb City or Home Depot, Lowe's, or the mall in Joplin; but rather to offer a unique experience to customers, to offer interesting things that will make residents and tourists want to spend time Downtown, and to make Webb City a historic and interesting destination.
- ◆ For retail, the participants suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, a shoe store, a bookstore, a candy shop, gift shops, a five-and-dime, and art galleries and shops.
- ◆ For food, the participants suggested a grocery store, a coffee shop, a wine garden or brewpub, a bakery, and restaurants with live music, outdoor seating, and longer business hours.
- ◆ For entertainment, the participants suggested live theater, live music, higher-end bars, and any other family entertainment.
- ◆ Other potential additions to Downtown included lodging, a refurbished trolley, and more second-story residential space.
- ◆ Small business should be encouraged, the City should crack down on absentee building owners who let their buildings fall into disrepair, and the City should find ways to make it easier for building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.
- ◆ For aesthetics, building repair and renovation were of the highest priority.
- ◆ Other aesthetic priorities included green space, benches, and a "pocket park."
- ◆ The groups agreed that the highest overall priorities for Downtown are building repair and renovation and bringing new business Downtown.
- ◆ The business owners felt that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, educate building owners on grants and loans to renovate and repair their buildings, crack down on absentee building owners who are not maintaining buildings, and market Downtown to residents and to potential Route 66 visitors.
- ◆ The participants mentioned a few downtowns or city areas whose mix of businesses, aesthetics, or marketing they admired: Joplin, Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; St. James, Missouri; Neosho, Missouri; Lee's Summit, Missouri; Lynchburg, Tennessee; Parsons, Kansas; Pittsburgh, Kansas; Hardy, Arkansas; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Fort Scott, Kansas; Red Wing, Minnesota; Nashville, Illinois; and Kennebunkport, Maine.

## SECTION II

### MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

I would say schools is...

I'm disappointed in you. I thought you'd say football.

(laughter.)

I think one of the nicest things is that it's so centrally located. It's kind of the hub of the Southwest corner, and we're the 4<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area in Missouri. We're only 150 miles from Kansas City, 269 from St. Louis, 110 miles from Tulsa... we're very centrally located, so you can go about any direction you want to, and the school systems is a good area, and we have one of the biggest scale manufacturing plants in the world. We've got some things... from 1990 to 2000, we've grown 29%, and probably another 5% since then. We've gone from about 7800 in 1985, and now we're almost 11,000. That's a pretty good growth pattern over a short span of time. That's just some of the things about WC. We just got through a 2 million dollar expansion of the library, and we just expanded our solid waste system.

All the citizens get along pretty well. We've passed several bond issues. It's a caring community.

Good place to live.

The climate's good. You can't beat it unless you go to California.

I know some people that left California.

Low cost of living, that's important, and a lot of recreational facilities, streams and lakes and parks in close proximity, good relationships with adjoining cities like Joplin, and we will be I hope right on I-49 which will be Pines to Palms Interstate, and we're adding several new streets and intersections so we'll have access to the 249 bypass. We have plenty of industrial property, and railroad spurs, and plenty of space for industrial and residential development. We just started the process of annexing another 40 acres. We've been held back by the mine waste and debris, and that's being cleaned up, so it'll be a nice experience to leave the city rather than a scary one. Our main street has 6700 people a day going up and down. We have several buildings unfortunately that are unoccupied, but it is a high-traffic area. We have plenty of water and plenty of wastewater facilities. Expansion there.

We have an awfully good relationship between the City, the school system, and the Chamber of Commerce, which I think is important for coordinating efforts. It's a three-legged stool. We have a good relationship with Joplin and Carthage, all of it, and we communicate well with them.

Good softball, soccer, and baseball, so we bring in a lot of people into town for that. We have a 157-acre park that we're finishing up cleanup on, so we have a nice park. An amphitheater, a Mining Days building, so the park system, we have a very large park with walking trails and green space, water, so...

We have a championship football team.

We've been there how many times now?

8? 11?

**Moderator: Where do people shop? In town, or out?**

Grocery shopping, we do here. There's a Wal-Mart and a Price Cutter.

Most people shop here for groceries.

We have a great hardware store, Ace Hardware. And Walgreen's.

We have a nice farm and home store, Atwood's, out of Enid, Oklahoma, and they fill in a gap there. What we don't have is a good Home Depot or Lowe's for construction materials. We still have to go to Joplin for a 2 by 4 or something like that. One thing we have done to try to attract business is an inventory of all the vacant lots and buildings, what's available, so if we get inquiries, we can readily say, "We have space available for you."

We only have one cleaner's in town.

Two.

Oh, yeah.

Yeah.

(agreement.)

The need is for, it's kind of unfortunate that our major medical facilities are on the other side of Joplin. We have no major medical facility.

Urgent care has helped.

Yeah.

The Downtown looks a whole lot better than it looked two years ago.

The Downtown looks great, except for the vacant buildings.

We could use a grocery store Downtown, and I think we're going to have one before long.

We need a program that would stimulate business, a program to reface and redecorate Downtown to make it more attractive for people to invest. We probably need a little bit more parking, and we're working on that. We've got a half-block parking lot now. I think we need a facelift. We've started a shoeshine with the sidewalks and streetlights, and now we need a facelift of the buildings so they'll be more attractive to investors and businesses.

There's no place to buy place to buy shoes in town. The movie theater's doing great, and we have 4 restaurant's Downtown. El Patio and Bradbury and a family restaurant, so that's good, but we do need more traffic and more cooperation from the people who are in business Downtown, maybe some joint advertising. We did a Downtown open house a couple years ago, where people advertised together, and that was very successful.

Some of the buildings Downtown have been here quite a while, and one is on the historical register, the Midwest Building.

We have a building Downtown, if you walk into it, it's like walking into a Katherine Hepburn movie. It has the shops with the names on the glass, and it's got a bar, and the upper part still has the old pool table, and that would make a unique museum if it was restored.

The beauty shop, barbershop, the old Ellis building.

That one's really neat to go through. You talk about the cleaner's, and they locked the door about 15 years ago, and the clothes are still hanging there. The doctor's office up there still has the exam tables from the 50's.

And there's a huge ballroom on the top floor.

And the station we just acquired, we're renovating it for the Route 66 visitors center.

The station has new pavement, new roof, and it's clean now, so whatever we do with it from here on...we hire a Downtown person, maybe, to work on it. We used to have a great Napa Auto Parts Downtown, and that's gone now...

***Moderator: What do people go to Downtown?***

The pharmacy. A store Downtown that sells surplus. The movie theater has really been successful. The four restaurants. We have a pawn shop that seems to do pretty good. A glass shop that stays really busy. The post office, which is a couple blocks off of Main Street.

The insurance offices.

Banks.

We've got offices and lawyers and accountants.

A lot of churches, but not Downtown. Mostly on the west side of Main. Two or three blocks away. I think the churches help the restaurants Downtown, because I think that Family Restaurant does pretty well on Sundays. But businesses that are buying and selling and generating sales tax, that's what we're interested in. That's what helps us improve the City.

**Moderator:** *What types of things used to be Downtown that aren't any more?*

Hardware.

Auto Parts.

We need a good clothing store Downtown.

We had one, and we lost it.

We used to have a dime store Downtown, but they're a thing of the past. Like a Ben Franklin or something like that.

We've lost the hardware, the auto parts, the clothing and shoes, gift shops, over the last 10 years. We've added a couple restaurants, though. The pawn shop's fairly new. I don't know if that's good or bad.

It seems to have traffic.

The Cake and Bake. They sell baking supplies.

Is the exercise place open?

Yeah. And that's fairly new.

And we have two banks right Downtown.

We had a donut shop Downtown, and it was really busy, and they just wore themselves out. It was good.

A candy shop.

They still make some candy at Christmastime.

Really?

I didn't know that.

They may have stopped after \_\_\_\_\_ died. I think they still make candy canes, and I think they still have the old soda fountain counter. That would be nice. A nice soft ice cream would go pretty well, too.

We have the deli.

The deli is a historic building that was an old drugstore with a soda fountain, and that was quite old.

That one's still a good, going business.

He has a lot of traffic.

And the pharmacy and gift shop's really busy, too, so it's possible to do okay. I think the right business will do a good job Downtown. We're doing some work right now that'll get some of the through traffic off the Main Street to bypass. All the studies say that the 6700 will drop a little, but it'll come back, and it'll be people that are more interested in shopping.

***Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? Parking?***

There's ample parking now, but if we filled it up, there wouldn't be.

If we finished our parking lots and talked the merchants into parking in the lot instead of in front of their businesses, we'll be okay.

I think we have space also for green areas Downtown, when we get started on this project. It will lead people to use the parking lots. We'll have parking lots off of Main Street, within a half-block walking distance, but we need some green rest areas on the main drag, without having to tear down buildings to create that...

That lumberyard down there, he did a tremendous business, and when he relocated, he said that was a mistake. He should've stayed right where he was.

I think that property was vacant. It's on Route 66, and there's a Y down there, and we're looking to clean it up and put a small park down there, and there used to be a lumberyard.

You can't buy all that here anymore. You have to go to Joplin for a store like a Lowe's or a Home Depot.

The Downtown, we have to include a block on either side of Main Street.

And on Broadway, probably 3 blocks...

(agreement.)

We had a festival this spring, and that was really successful. We sold 78 booth spaces, and we had a carnival and 6 bands, and that was really well attended.

***Moderator: How many people came Downtown for that?***

It was probably 10,000 or 12,000 over the two days. There's some pictures of it, and the carnival was just packed. We talked them into coming, and they came without a guarantee, but they've already agreed to do it next year. I would think it was safe to say... hmm... we rented a stage, a nice stage, and we had probably 300 people watching the entertainment, and probably 3 times that many people at the carnival, and I don't know how many at the booths, and the vendors all want to come back, and all the arts and crafts people are coming back. They wouldn't come back if they hadn't done well.

And the attendance would've been larger if the weather had been better. It was outstanding, but it could've been really outstanding.

It looked like it was going to pour, and the wind was blowing.

***Moderator: What about business hours? Are they convenient?***

Not if you get the businesses that we'd like. You'd have to have longer hours to compete with, say, the hardware store or Wal-Mart. Everything closes up at 5:00 or 6:00.

The Family Restaurant stays open until 9, and Bradbury stays open until 9 on Thursdays and Friday...

The little convenience store, they're open until 10, and they're busy.

It's a little liquor store and smoke shop.

Yeah. That's relatively new, and it's been busy.

When they had, they had like... 6 saloons Downtown, way back.

And there was a Coast to Coast, and a Western Auto. Way, way back.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

*Due to a recorder malfunction, the rest of the transcript is lost. However, notes from the meeting are incorporated into the summary.*

## SECTION III

### LONG TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Great schools.

Very friendly.

Very church-oriented.

Solid small town, good values, but progressive and open.

Very conservative, but very fine to liberals like me.

(laughter.)

It feels like we're growing and getting bigger.

We're kind of trapped, but we are growing. We're just landlocked.

Maybe that's not a bad thing.

I think there is a great appreciation of our history, our heritage.

And I think that's just come about in the last few years.

Nostalgia.

Yeah.

***Moderator: Do you think things are moving in the right or wrong direction?***

I think the right direction. I see a lot of improvements Downtown, a few businesses coming in.

There's a lot of needs in our community, like sewer and roads and things like that, and not knowing how we're going to fund it all.

As far as Downtown, we're absolutely going in the right direction.

There might be some resentment about all the emphasis going to Downtown...

But it was neglected all those years.

We need to go forward with Downtown right now.

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

Wal-Mart.

I try to all I can shop Webb City.

I do too. I make an effort.

(agreement.)

I make an effort not to go to Wal-Mart.

You can't help it.

If I can get it at Walgreen's or Ace Hardware, I try to.

I hate to think about running to Joplin because of the mess of traffic.

I shop in Joplin.

I'm also conscious about wanted to support people in business here, even if it costs a little more.

If you look at the cost of gasoline, you about break even. Hardware's only 2 blocks from me.

We've got a good variety of business. As far as clothing, that's the lowest point of anything we've got. But we've got groceries, pharmaceuticals, fast food.

We do need clothing.

We do. We just got a Culver's, too.

***Moderator: Where do people dine or go for entertainment?***

There's Chatters.

And there's a nice little restaurant Downtown.

Now we have several sit-down restaurants.

I think the movie theater Downtown is a real asset, and I wish there were other entertainment venues.

I think the City is looking at the old church for a live theater. I'm getting tired of driving to Joplin, so I'd love a theater.

And the theater that you've worked with in Joplin uses lots of talent from Webb City.

The movie theater is actually an old theater.

We're in the process of improving our amphitheater here, for movies and live performances.

***Moderator: What are the reasons people visit Downtown?***

Route 66 is a big one. My business is right on Route 66, and I don't think a day goes by where I don't see people traveling Route 66... from Europe, or people on bikes. Sometimes people get lost here.

***Moderator: What about for residents?***

Banking.

Insurance.

The drugstore.

The deli.

Yeah, they draw a pretty good crowd when they have the cars down there once a month.

Yeah, that's very popular.

There's also the local newspaper Downtown, the Sentinel.

And one building on the National Register that's been restored.

Plus the fact that City Hall is Downtown.

***Moderator: What did you used to be able to do Downtown, but you miss?***

Grocery store, but we're getting one.

Yeah, next to the theater.

That would be awesome.

Yeah.

(many people agreeing.)

The mayor mentioned that the other day.

That would be a big plus.

For people that live Downtown, especially.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

Shoe store.

Office supplies. I can get a lot of that stuff, but I always need more paper and envelopes and paper clips...

***Moderator: Couple other questions about Downtown as it is now. How user-friendly is Downtown? How easy is it to find Downtown?***

I think it is.

We have a new sign.

I think a lot of our problem is that buildings are owned by people that don't use them, and they don't keep the fronts up. It could be a beautiful Downtown if you just reface or restore some of the buildings. And there's a lot that need to be gone. It's hard to do when somebody else owns them.

Main Street is a State Highway, and there's plenty of traffic.

I think it's kind of scary.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: How's parking?***

It's better than it used to be.

We could sure use more.

When the theater is full, you have to walk a ways for parking. If some off-street parking were available, if those lots could be paved, maybe... that would help.

One of the problems I had was that other people that had businesses would park on the street, and they wouldn't leave spaces for my customers. And they weren't too helpful. They were afraid they were going to have to walk a half a block.

Yeah.

I park at the bank.

I park at the gas station.

They tried parking meters years ago, and that didn't really work. They just really need to find a place off of Main Street to park people.

There is a lot back there, but it's not really marked. They've got that one, but they do need more. And for parades, there are no parking places.

If some of the back lots were paved and marked as public parking, that would do it.

But that's been a problem forever, and it's very easy to get used to. It'll give them a little exercise if they walk...

I used to see the people at \_\_\_\_\_'s park in front of \_\_\_\_\_'s.

I used to park in the lot, and the guy that worked at the bank, we'd end up in the same place. And it was like Groundhog Day, the movie.

A parking problem is a good problem. A lot of towns wish they had that problem.

Hopefully, if some of those empty buildings get businesses, it will be more of a problem, and it will be addressed.

We have a lot of vacant buildings Downtown.

***Moderator: Are business hours convenient?***

I think they're pretty much...

I'm open at night for dance instruction, but other than the café, not much is.

That Thai restaurant is open until 9:00. And the Mexican restaurant. We've got a lot of ethnic restaurants.

***Moderator: How do you get information about Downtown?***

The Sentinel, the weekly newspaper. They're very good about promoting Downtown events.

But people from Joplin, they don't see it.

If you know people from Joplin, they can get it in the Globe.

The Farmer's Market is another big draw here, and people come from Joplin.

Yeah, that's a big draw.

And the architects thought we should put it Downtown.

Was it the Lion's Club that put that thing Downtown? That was great.

Next year, it's the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of April.

I think everybody Downtown knows everybody Downtown.

People learn stuff from the Chamber. They have update e-mails.

And they'll forward stuff to the whole group.

The public library uses a website to put your news on about community events.

***Moderator: Do people live Downtown?***

We have 10 apartments, and \_\_\_\_\_ has 7... that doesn't help the parking, but...

He did the old factory, and he's doing the one next to the movie.

He's the guy that's hopefully going to...

(many people talking at once, unintelligible.)

The old upstairs are really nice.

Is it between 85 and 90 people that are Downtown residents?

That sounds about right.

They're there in the evening and gone in the daytime, so they can't shop at the businesses.

***Moderator: Do you think there's a demand for housing Downtown?***

They all seem to be filled up.

We've got a few more second-story buildings down there.

I think if you continue to build, they will come.

Do you think there'd be a market for more upscale apartments?

You'd have to have to make sure to have an elevator.

I love living where I work.

That's what I do now.

***Moderator: Let's focus on the future of Downtown. What kinds of businesses would you like to see?***

A clothing store. We had one, and we just lost it about a year ago, and I think there's a need. Shoe store.

I don't know if those things could compete with Wal-Mart.

Grocery store.

The pet food store does well down there.

They do do well.

I've always said they ought to take Downtown and do some sort of outside sidewalk mall... those empty buildings, even if they rent out the first 30 feet of it, and if they would let the front part be used, we've got an excellent area for outlet stores.

Years ago, \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to do that. That was her dream.

That way, you could fill all the empty buildings, and you'd have a variety of everything—clothing, shoes, tools, whatever,

Being on Route 66 would help that.

That's one of the first things we need to do. At the other meetings, they talked about making a brick outline with a big emblem in the middle of the street, and line each side of it with white brick, like a path, run it clear through the City. The thing in the middle of Broadway and Main would attract more attention and more tourists. I'll even help lay the brick.

We had two fellas stop by yesterday, wanting to know which way to go...

They seem to get lost right there.

We don't have a lot of signs. There's nothing that says you have to jog.

I think promoting that would draw a lot of people.

We ought to have a map of Route 66 in our area to hand out to people.

You know, the old Elks building, that's an eyesore to me.

There's another building available for apartments.

(many people talking at once, side conversations.)

...there used to be dances in that building...

...kind of hate to see those big open rooms cut into apartments...

***Moderator: What about dining and entertainment options?***

A theater.

A sit-down restaurant, a good, decent restaurant.

Something a little fancier than the buffet. Something that isn't quite as plain.

A bakery would be nice. Coffee shop. A bookstore.

Yeah, a bookstore and coffee shop.

The building that was the bakery is one of the most in need of something...

I think it's going to fall into the alley.

A candy shop.

Them boys know how to make candy.

They make the candy, and it's neat.

What a draw that would be.

If we could get them to reopen that...

That would be good.

There's 3 movies, and I knew a guy who'd buy a whole loaf of bread and go and sit and watch all 3 movies and eat it.

I used to watch all 3 movies.

***Moderator: Any other businesses? No? What about the look and feel of Downtown? What sorts of things should be priorities for improvements?***

To me, it's the basic empty storefronts.

The sidewalks and lights have been redone. I think it's just the storefronts.

I can remember the Neosho Square 5 years ago, and it was pretty run down, and now it's all renovated.

I think until you fix the front, people won't rent them.

There's a store on the west side of the Square in Neosho, a gift store, and it's part of the DREAM renovation. They stayed with the old theme.

It's beautiful.

It is.

I think our sidewalks and our lights look real nice.

Are they going to go further?

That's what I understood. They're going to go one block until the highway, and I told one of the councilmen, "Why don't you put it up to the highway?"

And the new street signs are really nice.

And we've got trees.

I got a lilac tree. I requested one, and I got it.

There's different trees.

When they started the tree thing, they cut a hole in my sidewalk, and then they didn't give me a tree. They filled the hole up with dirt. And then they concreted over it. I thought, "I guess I don't get a tree." It wouldn't even hurt to step a block sideways with the sidewalks and lights.

(agreement.)

There's all kinds of things...if I had my way, I'd never get in a car. I'd love everything right there. Any kind of small business. But they can't compete with Wal-Mart.

It's not like the old days with neighborhood groceries.

And we'd like to have our neighborhood lumberyard back.

I never understood why he moved.

He wanted to get with the big boys, and he just couldn't compete.

It's much easier than driving all the way out to Lowe's or Home Depot.

And the hardware store, too...I bet we go there everyday.

We had the lumberyard and the hardware store, and we were there everyday. We couldn't have renovated our building now, without it.

How about a day spa? Manicure, pedicure.

Barbershop.

Yeah.

You've got Paper and Roll, and Gordon's...

We need a barbershop instead of a beauty shop.

Have both.

(side conversations.)

***Moderator: What about green space or parks?***

Yes. You know, when they did those picnic tables, my clients had so much fun. They said, "We need tables on Main Street."

Or at least some benches.

That's why we had Springtime on Broadway, to raise money for the benches. We're planning on it.

You could put a little park in there if you tore down one of the buildings.

With a fountain.

We used to have a Christmas tree Downtown. People used to knock it down.

Well, there were all kinds of bar Downtown?

Why can't we have a bar that does Karaoke?

(side conversations, anecdotes about people in town.)

***Moderator: Are there other cities you've been to where the downtowns are good models?***

Like Neosho, a lot of towns have the Square, and we don't have that.

I went to Lee's Summit for a wedding, and it's absolutely gorgeous. They put down concrete for the streets. Right now, our sidewalks look great, but there's parts that aren't redone. Lee's Summit has concrete streets, and the lights, and flowers, and it's clean, and it's just absolutely beautiful. They've got the Amtrak station, and their downtown is nice.

That's a nice town. I grew up in Lee's Summit, and Webb City now reminds me of Lee's Summit then.

I could just visualize our streets looking like that.

Red Wing, Minnesota.

If we get the right shops, we could get all that traffic to stop and spend some money here.

We went to Nashville, Illinois, and that was absolutely great. They had three live theaters and all these little shops.

Eureka Springs...it's artsy.

Yes, art studios.

The thing is, not trying to compete with Wal-Mart, but specialty stuff.

Like Kennebunkport, Maine. Just small shops.

That's the way New Orleans is.

A lot of tourist places have built a modern older town—

Like Estes Park

—and you can walk the streets.

Columbia is great. There are lots of bookstores, which appeals to me, and lots of unique type restaurants and art stores and such.

I'd say, we've got the traffic, but if we could just get the stuff in the windows...

We've got some great buildings to restore, and it would look great if it were cleaned up.

What do you know about the ownership of the empty or derelict buildings?

I don't know.

(speculation about who owns what in Webb City.)

...he just bought the buildings, and he has good intentions, but he just needs financing.

Maybe he can be helped by the DREAM money. Kind of help them get started.

Look at that old building up in Joplin. That's a monster.

Some of the apartments they've redone over there, they're nice.

They've got tenants for that building lined up, though. It's one of those things. Build it, and they'll come.

A little off subject, but two blocks off South Main, we've got a wonderful library. That's a big asset to the City.

***Moderator: Anything else?***

I'd really love to see... originally, the trolley used to come through, and if that could happen again... it would have to be motorized, but I think that would be a huge draw.

If we could concrete that street, we could lay track in there.

That would just solve a lot, and it would be such a draw.

(agreement.)

There are grants out there for public transportation, and that's under that category.

You could just put the tracks in the cement streets.

I've always imagined them going down the hill, going to Penn Street, to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, to Main Street, and then across the street.

That would be a big draw. We used to be the headquarters for the trolley cars.

Our park's looking good, too.

*Moderator: Thank you very much.*

## SECTION IV

### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

The school system is our best asset, I think.

If your kids are athletically inclined...

It's a friendly community. Friday nights, you'll see everybody down at the football fields. You'll see people wearing Webb City shirts, and there's a lot of spirit here in this town.

I think it's a growing area, too. And the cleanup is going to make a big difference, and the cost of living's cheap here, and it's right in the middle of the country, and we're going to have I-44 and I-49 intersect here.

***Moderator: Where do people work?***

Carthage, Joplin...we're so close to so much... Webb City people work in Webb City and the surrounding areas, but people from surrounding areas also work in Webb City.

I live outside of Carthage and go over to Joplin and then come to Webb City...it's just like one big area.

***Moderator: Where do people shop?***

We need a lumberyard.

We're adding lumber.

Really?

Yeah. And a garden center.

Good.

And we have Wal-Mart.

I know.

We only have one other grocery store.

We need a K-Mart.

We need a grocery store.

(many people talking at once.)

Our Webb City Wal-Mart is about half the size it should be. You almost always have to go to Joplin to get what you're looking for.

Or Carthage.

I only go to Carthage about once every six months.

**Moderator: Do people just not find everything you need here?**

It's so crowded at Wal-Mart, and they don't have the best stuff, so you pretty much have to go elsewhere.

Selection is limited. But we do have a good mall in Joplin.

We need some specialty shops here.

Yes.

**Moderator: Are there people that get all of their retail here?**

That's not possible.

You can only buy shoes at Wal-Mart.

There probably are people that use Wal-Mart, and that's it.

But not the kids, and they spend money.

Wal-Mart did a number on our community. We lost almost all of our shops.

I can't compete selling Cardinal t-shirts.

I would like for us to focus on home-owned businesses rather than chain stores. There are clothes stores and shoe stores, those kind of things.

**Moderator: Are other areas glaring in their absence in Webb City?**

Gift shops.

Any kind of specialty shop would be well received here. Arts and crafts.

I think Lil' Rascals brings a lot of people to that corner.

It's a kids' store.

Nice kids' clothes.

And it's been in such a bad location, that I think this is going to be great for it.

The food industry is doing well here.

We need a hotel bad! Nowhere to spend the night in this town! And there's no campgrounds or anything. And we're on Route 66 and everything. It would be great.

(many people talking at once.)

An RV campground, something where people could stop and spend the night. Paul McCartney came through here last year, and there was nowhere for him to stop. You know, he came with his new girlfriend. He stopped in Tulsa. But not here.

***Moderator: Where else to people go shop?***

Joplin.

Springfield's not that far.

Rogers.

We're very well located. We're very centrally located.

Yeah.

If we could get a big outlet mall between Carthage and Webb City...

There you go.

***Moderator: Let's talk about dining. Do you think there's enough dining?***

Not enough quality dining.

We have fast food.

We have Mexican now.

There's only two sit-down restaurants here.

Chatters and the Mexican place.

And Granny's.

(many people talking at once.)

Are Del Rio's Webb City?

They are.

**Moderator: What types are missing?**

Steakhouse.

Italian.

Fish.

Seafood would be nice.

Italian, German.

Just a nice dining restaurant. I don't think it would matter.

**Moderator: What do people do for fun?**

Go to each other's houses.

We don't even have a swimming pool in town.

My grandkids go to Lamar for the water park.

Go to Longhorn.

(laughter.)

Cruise Nights. There's Cruise Nights.

What else is there?

We have a movie theater, and it's very nice.

Yeah, that's nice.

Their hours are very limited...

(many people talking at once.)

I'd say it's a real strong family place. There's a lot with the school. Kids walking with the school, going to a movie during the day.

We have the deli down there, and it's a big draw.

The high school football games, you'll see 2 to 4 thousand people.

That's true.

Good soccer and softball and baseball, too.

***Moderator: Let's focus on Downtown. Do you think Downtown is headed in the right or wrong direction?***

Positive. The best I've seen it look.

Except for those nightlights are horrible.

They changed them to the bright ones.

You can see up there, but you cannot see the street.

But it's so bright.

I don't know who put them up, but somebody was really not thinking.

(many people talking at once.)

In Joplin, it's all updated, but I don't see that it's bringing a lot of new business Downtown.

The art walk on Fridays, there are thousands of people out just milling around. But the festival the Lion's Club had here in Webb City, it keeps growing.

The events are great. But is it actually bringing business Downtown?

The art walk does.

But I mean permanent business.

One of our problems is that the ownership of the buildings Downtown, there's an unwillingness to sell and the investors live out of state. In Joplin, people are turning the buildings into apartments, but here, people are unwilling to sell their places.

Some of the buildings are all apartments now here.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

That's another thing. We don't have a furniture store. And a jewelry store.

There's 6 of them over at the mall.

The worst problem about bringing business to town is, will people frequent them, or will they just go to Wal-Mart? It takes more effort. Is it worth bringing in the businesses...

If it's a specialty store that have things that Wal-Mart doesn't...

We have a bit of a specialty store, and I get people from Lamar and Jasper, but as far as someone from Joplin walking in and asking me for a letter jacket, I've never had anyone. Nobody else will come down for something like that. We don't open on Saturdays because it's not worth my time to be open in Downtown Webb City on Saturdays.

You've got to be open when people can shop.

Everybody wants something, but will they patronize it?

Or will they afford it?

Often, in this part of the country, that is the problem.

I think at times, but I think service can separate a small, independent store from Wal-Mart. People are willing to pay for that.

***Moderator: What else is positive about Downtown?***

The look. They've redone the sidewalks.

There's lots of room for improvement from individual buildings, but the out-of-town owners don't care, and it shows. They're going to be dilapidated. They're beautiful old buildings.

***Moderator: What's the vacancy rate?***

A lot.

Over 50 percent.

Yeah.

(side conversations.)

In the 9 years we've been here, the business district has been larger and the Downtown run down, but now, that ship is turning. With the new streetlights and sidewalks, and with the new festival, things are turning. We're focusing on Downtown, and I think more people are going to come Downtown.

There's no way I could put my business anywhere but Downtown, because rent is so reasonable.

***Moderator: That's my next question, actually. For those of you who own a business Downtown, why Downtown?***

Rent. I can't afford to put it anywhere else.

It was there when I came into it, so that's where it is.

Ours has been there since the 50's.

We've bought a couple of buildings Downtown, and we're using them for office space, and I think we need more retail.

It's slowly turning into a loft apartment district, and I think they're a great idea, but I don't see much parking, and I know folks that live in lofts, and they wouldn't be there if it weren't for parking.

They have a parking lot.

Indoor?

No, other than one. But there are outdoor lots. And I think the City bought some parking.

***Moderator: Is there enough parking Downtown?***

No, there isn't.

I have a friend who works at the Sentinel, and she parks on Main, and it's hard to back out of the spaces.

I've never had trouble finding a parking space, and this is a good movie going on.

It's not hard to find a spot, but if we had retail, it would be.

(many people talking at once.)

Being from St. Louis, I don't think you'll find it much traffic here.

(laughter.)

Parking and making it safer, they've talked about making a bypass for the school and for truck traffic. It's so tight right now, and the diesel fumes go through Downtown.

And then there's Webb Street.

If there were a way to funnel some of that traffic, the commercial traffic. If they could move the truck route, that would help in safety. Those dump trucks and concrete trucks are always in there.

(agreement.)

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

There's nothing down there...

The deli and the pharmacy.

And they close at 6:00. And Saturdays 'til noon.

And the pet store.

They seem to do a pretty good business.

***Moderator: So is Downtown dead on Saturdays?***

Oh, yeah.

Completely dead.

The cigarette and liquor store is open.

(laughter, many people talking at once.)

I think the quality of housing Downtown...that's the problem with part of it. Some of those buildings are not nice.

***Moderator: Who lives Downtown?***

They're apartments above the businesses, mostly.

In the 500 range?

For those lofts.

There was a 4-bedroom apartment advertised in that new building.

What was it going for?

I don't know.

(many people talking at once.)

They're fairly...most of them are 300 and under.

Which is not good for Downtown.

Yeah.

I think that's the perception. We use the word "loft," but really, here, it's, "let's make open, easy, cheap apartments."

I get a lot of people wanting to rent apartments from me.

***Moderator: Is there interest in Downtown living?***

Apparently.

I'd say there is. College aged and people out of college.

It's cheaper rent here.

The school system's nice, too.

I've had people stop and ask me to buy my house before.

(side conversations.)

***Moderator: How does Downtown get promoted and advertised?***

When they had the festival, it was my understanding that some of the businesses weren't allowed to put stuff out on the street or open their doors...?

They had to pay for a booth if they wanted to use the street, but they opened their doors.

But customers had a hard time getting in.

Webb City used to have an annual festival, and it ended, and our new mayor has a Downtown focus, and the Lion's Club was formed, and we just had Springtime on Broadway, a weekend where anybody could have craft tables, and there was live entertainment, and people are planning to come back for it. The entertainment was really well received.

There were like 10,000 people.

A lot. I think they made about \$4000 for Downtown beautification, and it took the place of the other annual festival we had. The focus is back in Downtown. We've got growing pains, obviously.

***Moderator: Will that be yearly?***

Yeah.

They've already sold spots.

And the carnival's coming back.

The problem with the fall festival that we had was that it was in the park, and you couldn't see the other people.

There wasn't any parking for this festival, though.

And they should golf-cart people.

We do have our farmer's market.

(multiple conversations, unintelligible.)

**Moderator:** *Let's focus on the future of Downtown. What kinds of businesses would you like to see? How do you envision it? As a retail center?*

As a retail center.

Yeah, retail.

If the stores would fix their storefronts up, and there were some flowers and trees, we could have a cute place where people would stop. It would be more inviting if everybody was on the same page with getting the Downtown to look nice. The City went a long way with the sidewalks and streetlights, and I was hoping it would encourage people to fix up their buildings. I want to fix up mine, but I don't know if there's funding available. We need to get that information out to people.

We just created this as a historic district, and that's just been done in the last month, so with that, we can get some additional funding.

There's restrictions, but that's good.

That is good. The Historical Society has some say, but that brings some funding that we couldn't get before. We're finding what's out there.

(agreement.)

Webb City is smack dab on Route 66. We have that window of opportunity, and if we miss it...

Do we want to be a tourist destination?

Well, Route 66 already is. When I was in Ireland, I saw an ad for Joplin, Missouri. It's a big thing. People love to drive Route 66, and if we have a hotel and shops, people would stop here. And restaurants.

Now they just stop because they're lost.

I met some bikers from France, and they stopped by, and they couldn't figure out how the hell to get out of our city. Once you hit Webb City, between Webb City and Galena, you're completely lost.

The Historic Route 66 signs got stolen.

There are new signs that are going to help. Route 66 is cool, you know.

I grew up in Carterville on Route 66, and they never did anything.

You go to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and you can buy whatever you want. Here, you go to Wal-Mart. But Route 66, where do you get that stuff?

I'd like to see it like Eureka Springs. It's just a cool town. You can shop and walk around and eat dinner.

(many people talking at once.)

We need a bed and breakfast in town.

We have an airport that's non-functioning. I don't know anybody that uses it.

My brother flies out of there, out of Joplin, to California.

Somebody must be using it, or we wouldn't have gotten the new building... but they have to go to Joplin just to find a room to sleep. So a hotel or bed and breakfast...

(many people talking at once.)

**Moderator: What other types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?**

I'd say specialty retail and service, and then residential on the upper floors.

I think that sums it up perfectly.

Like an Oasis number two, like a massage and...

(laughter.)

There was talk of running the trolley on the weekends...that would be cool. You could advertise the soda fountain and a trolley. We have a soda fountain, and we have Route 66. The trolley would be great.

A little store like down in Neosho.

Purses, jewelry, clothing, gift items, art, anything that's a specialty item.

How do you get it? Everybody has to move in at once.

You have to build critical mass.

Until they're all there...

I don't know if the City can offer tax breaks as an incentive, but...

People aren't spending money.

We're in this position because we haven't improved the infrastructure with our taxes.

Just get them here, and then you get sales tax.

What made your family build the hardware store?

Because we're from Webb City.

We couldn't afford it when we first started out, and we made our money elsewhere, and we came back, and I'd rather be Downtown, but Ace would never have allowed it.

People do drive Downtown.

We had a bakery.

A Ben Franklin.

A donut shop and bakery would be great.

She wants Dean and Deluca's.

(laughter.)

A coffee shop.

We need like a Starbucks-style place.

***Moderator: Would you like to see any restaurants Downtown?***

Yes.

We need quality restaurants.

If you put in a place like the old Meyer's Inn...

We have a new Thai restaurant.

Are they any good?

Does the City have an ordinance about liquor licenses?

It can't be within a certain number of feet from the church.

I've talked to \_\_\_\_\_ at the Red Onion, and he's worried about traffic, and he tells me, "You should come Downtown." They own like 3 take-away restaurants.

***Moderator: What about recreation?***

Karaoke at the Longhorn.

(laughter.)

The baseball and tennis and soccer, that all comes out to the park, which is more appropriate for it.

Doesn't the Y have the American Legion building?

We need a gym.

***Moderator: What about entertainment?***

Before you moved away, in Springfield, you could go to a bar and listen to different bands. It was really nice.

Have you been to the new art gallery in Joplin? It's really nice. A sports bar in one building, and a wine shop, and an art gallery.

And pool tables and stuff. And the art gallery had some gorgeous art.

We don't want to be a bar district, but...

Another movie theater... maybe for old classic movies.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: Let's talk about the look and feel of Downtown. What improvements would you make?***

Have the buildings that are falling down fixed up.

The problem is, I think our mayor wants it like in the 50's, and that's neon, but you've got to agree on a theme. Maybe the historic society would help control that. I could see the 50's with Route 66, but I like the old original buildings.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: What else?***

Green space. Trees and grass.

A little sitting park wouldn't be a bad idea.

(agreement.)

***Moderator: Are the streets good?***

Yeah, they're pretty good now.

The City has talked about bypassing the commercial traffic.

If they put the bypass through, that'll direct traffic a different way...

How do you get this, no matter how we dream? How do you get these businesses in here all at one time? We've talked about putting a restaurant Downtown...

For a restaurant, all you've got to have is good food.

(agreement.)

There's a couple really nice buildings that would be great.

For a new business, it would take a long time.

I eat at a good new restaurant, and the first thing I do is call people to tell them about it. When Chatters opened up, word of mouth flew. For a specialty shop, it's a whole different story. You've got to offer some reason to come in en masse.

You don't go into specialty shops on a weekly basis. We mourn the fact they're gone, but we can't support them... it'll be one at a time... if Lil' Rascals, they do great business, but she could make it...

And the beauty school, when does it open? You've got a lot of students frequenting that. I guess if you have someone strong that comes in there, it can grow.

(side conversations.)

It's mostly offices Downtown. We don't need more office buildings.

We need shops.

***Moderator: What other downtowns do you admire?***

Eureka Springs.

I don't even remember the names of a lot of them.

Lynchburg, Tennessee was adorable.

St. James. It's a very pretty town. And they have the winery.

We're going to have to make alcohol.

(laughter.)

They have a private foundation that takes care of that.

Fort Scott.

And Parsons. They were a Kansas DREAM-type deal, and they've made their downtown really nice. It's beautiful.

There's some radio stations that do humor things. They were making fun of our "city of flags" thing. Somebody needs to educate people about what it means.

(many people talking at once.)

In the early 80's, when I was in college in Columbia, the mall pulled everything from downtown. Downtown really started to die. And in the past few years, it's totally changed. They have festivals, and every Thursday night they bring people downtown.

I think that festival is going to do a whole lot for promoting Downtown.

I think a microbrewery would be neat.

I don't think you could do it.

If somebody wants to take the chance, that's a big chance.

The population has almost doubled in the past 5 years.

And now we have a college crowd.

Yeah.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: Thank you very much.***

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## SECTION V

### DOWNTOWN ADVISORY GROUP DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Great school system.

That says it all.

It prepared my kids to be competitive in Ivy League schools and right up there.

We moved here because it seemed to be a family community.

Fast-growing.

Yeah.

Not outrageously fast, though. A good pace of growth.

More so in the last dozen years.

Except for Downtown.

The growth is all north, right?

It's almost the surrounding area. Joplin has 45,000 people. The people that are driving through Webb City have grown, and how to you get them to want to stop. The dip didn't work.

(laughter.)

Got a lot of history.

History of mining, industrial, some tourism because of Route 66, obviously, and we're very interested in developing that theme. The City's interested, the citizens are interested...we've got a good cooperation level between government, Chamber of Commerce, and school system.

Beautiful library.

We have some people with vision, and the library's a good example of that.

(agreement.)

It looked like a project I didn't think would ever happen, but it did.

***Moderator: What are the main shopping areas?***

Wal-Mart

(laughter.)

Wal-Mart.

I do a lot at Food-for-Less, myself.

(laughter.)

Where do we shop?

Not particularly Downtown.

We do have an awesome farmer's market.

Yeah.

I think our market mentored over 15 markets this year, in Missouri and Kansas.

We could be called the little town that could. We do some pretty exceptional things for the size we are.

***Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?***

We have a movie theater, and it was jammed this weekend. They're doing a great job down there.

We've got the movie theater, and we have the Cruise Night that's a recurring festival...

The note on the movie theater is that it's restored from the past. It's not the typical Cineplex. It features one-run...

Relatively current releases, though.

And it's so much cheaper. It's really family-friendly.

I think we can characterize some of our activities as our school systems' extracurriculars...

Parks have lots of potential.

I see a lot of use of the walking trail and bike trail.

There's activities for kids in the summer, like baseball and soccer camps, and parks. Nice ball fields and soccer fields.

***Moderator: Do you feel Webb City's moving in the right or wrong direction?***

Right direction.

Downtown has some things going in the right direction, but in terms of business occupancy, it's been a slow downhill trek, wouldn't you say?

\_\_\_\_\_ moved his chiropractic office because of parking.

But your gym is a lovely feature, and it gets a lot of traffic.

We have great gym members. It's not a powerhouse. It's a family touch.

Very convenient.

We've had some progressive growth in restaurants. We have 2 Thai restaurants, we have Culver's, which opened their first Route 66 store here, and Mexican, and the family restaurant, and Chatters, and the deli.

We do have some nice variety.

A blend of family-owned and chain.

We have a skating rink.

We also have commercial development where Quizno's and all that is, and it's beginning to fill. We've got a beauty school coming in. That's big-time. We're getting some deserved attention for the effort in that development.

***Moderator: Why do people come Downtown?***

They drive *through* Downtown.

Absolutely.

And Cardinal Scales.

You do have major employer off of Main Street, some commercial business, banking, obviously... we just did the Springtime on Broadway...special events that bring people Downtown...

Do we have an increasing number of loft living?

The big addition was back in the 80's, and we've had some added since then. I wouldn't call them lofts...

Downtown living, let's put it that way.

Yeah, there's an increase.

The hardware store is being converted to housing. We do have a little burst in residence Downtown. We used to have maybe 30 or 40 houses Downtown, and we probably have more, now.

***Moderator: Is that mostly rental?***

Rental.

Is a batting cage going into \_\_\_\_\_'s old building?

I think something's happening.

I saw the sign up, but no activity.

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

The bakery Downtown.

Shopping.

There was a candy store with a fountain, a shoe store, a five-and-dime.

A grocery store. There are limited services Downtown. We had clothing stores, furniture stores.

A jewelry store.

We're really down to the drugstore and limited retail.

And nothing in the evenings.

The rest is just services and eating.

And the discount store.

It's closing.

It's closing?

It's a unique building.

Big R's?

Yeah.

That would be a great place to have an old-time five-and-dime.

There used to be a dime store.

It was a Ben Franklin.

Boy, this is ancient.

(side conversations, unintelligible.)

**Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? How about finding your way to Downtown?**

Now with the signs up, it's getting better.

From the highway, there's a big arrow that says Downtown Webb City.

Anyone with Route 66 coming in from the East, there's going to be more of a welcome.

When I had that gift store, \_\_\_\_\_ who lives two blocks away said, "I didn't know you had a gift shop. I didn't know we had a Downtown?" I find that, at the market, if I don't constantly remind people we exist, they forget. They have to see it in the paper and the radio, otherwise people just forget.

If they don't have a specific need to come down here, they're not going to come.

Yeah, but you have to keep it in their minds, so when they're having lunch with their pals, they'll remember it's there and think maybe they should check it out.

If a person says they've gone shopping in Webb City, they're thinking of the strip. Same with eating places.

Yeah, and we've got all these restaurants, but unless people think about Downtown Webb City, they're not going to come down here.

**Moderator: What about parking?**

Oh, there's never enough parking. I mean, you hope to have a parking problem, right?

Yes and no. People sometimes take the path of least resistance, and if they have trouble parking, they're less likely to come down.

That will depend on the business, though. Restaurant has a problem, and the theater... the law office doesn't.

However, if loft dwelling continues to increase, and those people are...

Those people are, by code, supposed to have their own designated parking space. That came in about 10 years ago.

The other thing you'll find, talking about parking lots off Main Street, if you'll look at Joplin, when they put those parking lots to the west and east of Main Street, they had tons of parking, but people didn't like to park there. They'll park clear at the end of Wal-Mart's parking lot, but they won't walk Downtown.

***Moderator: Is there a perception that there's limited parking?***

Yes.

I think that when recruiting businesses, that would be an issue.

And behind the buildings, too.

If we had all the storefronts full, we'd have a massive parking problem.

So parking problems are a good thing to have.

The City's trying to address that by parking one block off the Main.

It's a 64-dollar question as to whether parking off Main will help anything. We have retail go in and out on a regular basis, and because they don't sustain the business flow, they go out. Business comes in, draws traffic, but not enough traffic... it's a continuing cycle.

Another issue is employee parking, and are they using customer space? How do you be careful not to create a parking wasteland? If we take down buildings and create these big open spaces, people don't want to walk through that stuff.

***Moderator: What about business hours?***

Except for the theater and the diner... they've brought in some nighttime activity.

More is needed, but there's noticeable activity.

We have a dance studio here that's pretty consistently busy, and you come down there at night, and there's a lot of traffic on that corner.

I don't ever feel like Main Street's deserted. There's enough parking, and maybe that's the lofts, but you don't feel like it's a deserted town.

My daughter would attend those dance session, and I'd sit in the car waiting, and I was amazed at the nighttime traffic. On a Wednesday evening, at 8ish or 8:30ish.

***Moderator: Where do people get information about Downtown?***

Webb City *Sentinel*. We have a local newspaper. It's a weekly.

We also have the flyer that lets people know about the sales.

We have the Webb City Chamber. The City has a more active role than they have in the past. Information is more readily available. It's not as easily accessible as in other communities, but it's there.

We get emails from the Chamber all the time, now.

We get the same type of things about school events. We do have some good email communications.

We've got a great grapevine in this town, too.

(laughter.)

Well said.

***Moderator: Do events draw regionally, or locally?***

Well, the car deal they have, it draws from all over. But Springtime on Broadway, that was pretty local.

Yeah, if we were talking about the market, which is close to Downtown, we had folks from Sedalia that showed up, but most of our traffic comes from within 10 miles.

***Moderator: Do you think there's a demand for more or different housing Downtown?***

We generally have a waiting list for our apartments, so there's certainly a demand.

It kind of depends on what direction you're going to take. If you adopt the work, live, and play mentality by bringing people in as residents, then there is a big need, but if you're going to work on the concept that you want to attract people from outside the area, I don't know.

I don't know who the housing is attracting right now. Ours usually attracts young professionals. \_\_\_\_\_'s attracts college students.

Isn't there a study that's supposed to be conducted?

I don't know whether the City wants to attract people with disposable income or what niche...

Is yours transient?

No, it's stable.

What about yours?

I've got people that have been there 3 or 4 years.

That's pretty good.

We have some who move out, but mostly stable.

They're not suitable for families, you know.

**Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown. What kinds of businesses would be a good fit for Downtown?**

We need specialty shops, because they have to have a reason to come. If they had specialty shops that they couldn't find anywhere else, that would draw them in.

I think a bakery.

I'd vote for that.

A candy store.

That would be delightful.

I tend to go the opposite direction. I'm in favor of things people need like Laundromats...

And grocery store.

You want it to be a place you feel comfortable in.

A grocery store would be hard to compete.

We've kind of gotten a deli already. I'd like to have a mini version of a Spaghetti Factory. They're old-fashioned, and they're typically in large cities. They need to create a whole new chain of restaurants for small downtowns. Replicate that theme on a smaller scale.

I'd like to see...they've got that youth bookstore on North Main, and I'd like to see a bookstore.

A bookstore-coffee-shop.

I really would like to see an old five-and-dime, and I think that would go with the Route 66 theme. I can remember still going to, on Beale Street in Memphis, and they had an old five-and-dime, and it was so much fun going to that, and all across Tennessee they have old country stores that have that kind of stuff and some gifts...we need a five-and-dime.

And if it was nostalgic...

Yeah. But they have to be profitable. We have to establish a critical mass that would attract people. If Webb City was the place to eat, or the place to shop for this...

Are you going to create dwelling spaces Downtown to create that mass?

We're never going to create enough dwelling Downtown to sustain businesses.

But if we can bring in some unique things. I keep thinking of Hardy, Arkansas. It's a mess and hardly any place to park, but it is crammed. It's all these old stores. It's all antiques. They come from everywhere. They have a few stores for the local community and restaurants...

Because of all that traffic, then you can have the bakery and the candy store, because there's a high traffic flow.

Or you think of Paducah that has the art downtown. I think we need some unique things.

Kind of a theme?

Yeah. Maybe not art, but I'd like to see a quilt shop, a bookstore.

A five-and-dime.

A miniature golf course.

The deli, every time someone comes in, we take them to the deli, and they love it. If the candy shop opens and has their fountain, that's just another place.

Hardy's not open every weekend, is it?

It is. All through the year.

(many people talking at once.)

...and they haven't even fixed up their town.

Do we want Downtown to be for people that don't live here, or do we want it to be for people who do live here? I don't want to be a tourist destination. I want to be a living community.

But you just answered that question. Is there enough to sustain business?

I'm talking about the region.

Why would we emphasize Route 66, then?

Well, I don't.

I don't see that as the major thing.

It needs to be a mix, though. We don't want to become a tourist destination, but we need to have that as a part of what we're all about.

I see Route 66 as supporting amenities for the local population. Like the park that's going in. I really think we need to reexamine that, in terms of how does it affect our local people?

When Joplin built their apartments and their stores reopened, that's when they got the coffee places and the market.

When we were a smaller town, we had 3 major grocery stores, so why is it that we now have more people, but we can't...?

We have Wal-Mart.

It's a very difficult business to sustain.

Wal-Mart does not cover all the markets, though. How can we support those niche markets for the local people and for the tourists? How do we make them want to stop?

A lot of it is image and perception, and a lot is how you get investors. You look at Joplin. They finally got the image turned around, which attracted investors, which has led to a renaissance downtown in Joplin. Hopefully, we could attract investors.

But it can't just be for the people that live on Main Street.

I mean, all of Webb City. I think they need to be our core market.

Oh, a quilt shop. I think of these little stores that are just out in the country, here, there, and everywhere. That type of deal.

Just from experience, I had a little grocery store in Southern California, and it's really hard, because I could buy cheaper soda at the supermarket than I could get it wholesale.

I keep looking at the old City Hall, and there could be 4 small shops. Look at all the vacant buildings. You could have 2 small shops in a lot of them.

Over half of the storefronts are empty. They may not be available for rent, but they're empty.

Webb City has a strong success in discount retailing. The off-price general merchandise category, that's the way you could draw people to Main Street. Those guys buy from JC Penney and Target, returns or distressed merchandise, and they'll sell those things in Kansas City for 10 cents a pound. You'd draw people to Webb City because of that niche image. If you get a retailer to accomplish that, you could have all kinds of different merchandise. The finest shopping mall in the whole region, that is the prettiest presentation of a small mall, and yet it struggled to lease out for 3 years, and they're still struggling, because the beauty shop doesn't help you because it's valuable retail space. It's a failure of that mall to perform. I think of Joplin as an example—you would not be able to do that, because it was a retail site.

**Moderator: Do you think other restaurants would go well Downtown?**

(many people talking at once.)

Spaghetti.

(agreement.)

A restaurant where people could pick up food on their way home. We've already got people driving through to go home.

You've got the fitness center, and you could have a drive-thru.

(laughter.)

That's a promotion point that the City could pursue, how convenient it is to stop and work out, pick up your dinner, whatever people need to do on their way home.

But, part of it is just getting the word out. People don't know I'm there, and when Eddie's Spaghetti was opened, I didn't know about it at all.

(side conversations.)

I'd like to see a nice—and the people of Chatters would not agree—but I'd like to see a nice, theme-oriented, sit-down restaurant Downtown. There's a confidence level you have to reach before people will start investing. But a very nice sit-down, theme-style restaurant could bring people here. I think back to the Old Miner's Inn... it was not necessarily a theme-style or an Olive Garden or anything like that, but people would drive. A nice theme-style, well done restaurant, good food, good prices, could start that confidence level.

I don't see that at all.

I do.

He talked about restaurants, and the movie theater is turning into a big draw, but it's open when businesses are not open. I don't know how well they'll feed into each other, supporting new businesses.

Stop and think about the gamut of things that are out there. We'd like to have a grocery store, but a grocery store's not going to make it Downtown. Think about the various retail operations that, unless they're willing to endure losses for a long time, there's got to be something that's going to attract people, and food attracts people quicker than anything. You take Del Rio's, or a Coconut's, look at what happened when they put that into this silly little strip mall.

I'd like to see a boutique or two, if they're the right kind. I've driven all over the place to get a Webb City Cardinal cheerleading uniform for a little kid. I only know of two places in the area you can get those.

***Moderator: What should be the priorities in improving the look and feel of Downtown?***

It already looks a lot better.

The storefronts look pretty sorry.

The façade.

Yeah.

I think we've made a good start on the street and lighting, and storefronts are an area of focus, and longer-term is thinking about the side streets and alleyways, which will encourage people to walk from the parking lots down to here.

I'd like to see Downtown become a gathering place, a place where they come to eat, where they can sit outside and play checkers, just a public space. Even with the sidewalk improvements, it feels very Spartan Downtown. There's not any benches or tables or anything.

I think benches are coming.

It doesn't feel very welcoming.

I keep thinking of, like in New York, in the 80's and 70's, every single block has a market on the corner, fresh flowers, a deli, and every block has a Starbucks, and a lot of little restaurants that aren't big, but they're full all the time because they have really good food.

And they're ethnic type foods, too.

They're able, having a market on every corner, to sustain that.

But they have a very high-density population.

It would be nice to create some periodic entertainment venues. A guitar on the corner.

The old-fashioned Saturday night, sitting on Main Street.

I'm not attracted to cars, but there's other people with other conversation topics. Just some venues where people gather.

Do people set up kiosks at Cruise Nights?

There are some vendors, but not much. The deli are sponsors...

I'd like to see a restaurant with some small tables, umbrellas.

Sidewalk cafes.

I'd suggest we move the truck route, though. This is a truck route, and it's noisy.

Where are they going to go?

I have no idea.

**Moderator:** *You mentioned some other cities that you liked. Are there other downtowns that you admire?*

Springfield, Illinois. It's got some interesting attributes with an emphasis on 66. I could see some similarities there.

(mumbling, unintelligible.)

I think Neosho's done a good job of their Square. It's a pretty little Square now. It was getting pretty run-down.

Pittsburgh, Kansas, especially with the backdoor entrances. You never think about parking problems, because there are back doors from the parking lots. If they have a vacant building, they'd tear it down, and they'd do a parking lot.

In a lot of blocks, we also have 4-way alleys, so we already have the alleyway, so just fix it up.

Those alleys can be very attractive.

They can.

(many people talking at once.)

Sometimes it seems like the City isn't all that receptive to helping businesses.

Yeah.

But how many years are you talking about? Because my perception is that there's been a much better attitude. Culvers was commending the City.

It was just one person.

And she's gone.

We did redo the sign ordinances. If you were to put a sign over a drive-thru, it would work pretty easily now.

Your spaghetti idea, I've got the building, you find the spaghetti.

There's been a lot of effort in historic preservation... a lot of meetings over how the look is going to be, and the City's writing...

A historic ordinance? I thought it already passed.

It'll come into play. There's some guidelines.

Rules and regulations are progress stoppers, though.

But they're not if you've got the right people working with you. It just depends on the attitude, and it's the same with historic preservation. It's not in place to make your life more difficult; it's in place to make everyone's property do better.

It's also in place to protect buildings from temporary remodeling.

*Moderator: Thank you very much.*