

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

January 2010

# FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY  
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Warrensburg, Missouri



PGAVURBANCONSULTING



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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## SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted five focus groups in Warrensburg, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Warrensburg community in regard to the Downtown area. The five groups included the following: 1) University of Central Missouri students, 2) Newer residents, 3) Downtown business owners and stakeholders, 4) City officials, staff, and administration, and 5) Long-time residents. Participants of all five groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

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

### **A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUP:**

The following questions were asked of the business group:

#### **General Questions about Warrensburg**

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

#### **Downtown Specific Questions**

04. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Warrensburg 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. 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 Administration and elected officials?

## Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

08. As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Warrensburg. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...

- Additional/types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?
- Dining and entertainment?
- Parks and outdoor recreation?

09. Now, we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?

- Street repair?
- Landscaping/beautification?
- Green space?
- Building repairs, renovation, upgrades?

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

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

12. Would you be willing to support a Special Business District in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for Downtown?

## B. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE GENERAL GROUPS

The following questions were asked of the general groups (this includes the "University of Central Missouri Students," "Newer Residents," "Long-time Residents," and "City Officials, Staff, and Administration"):

### General Questions about Warrensburg

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

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

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

04. What kinds of recreation are popular with local residents? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in these activities in Warrensburg?

## **Downtown Specific Questions**

05. Generally speaking, would you say that Downtown Warrensburg 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 Warrensburg? Is there anything that you used to do Downtown but now do elsewhere or vice-versa? Why?

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

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

## **Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown**

09. As you know, the City is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Warrensburg. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...

- Additional/types of businesses would you like to see Downtown?
- Dining and entertainment?
- Parks and recreation?

10. Now we would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?

- Street repair?
- Landscaping/beautification?
- Green space?
- Building repairs, renovations, upgrades?

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

12. What Downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like Warrensburg to resemble?

### **C. THE WARRENSBURG 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?**

Participants described Warrensburg as a friendly, small, diverse town with a good sense of community, good healthcare, a good K-12 education system, and many nearby outdoor recreation opportunities. Warrensburg is home of the University of Central Missouri and just minutes from Whiteman Air Force Base, both of which provide diversity in population and a constant stream of new residents. In addition, because Warrensburg is within 45 minutes of Kansas City, residents feel that they have all the opportunities a nearby big city offers them while still being able to live in a smaller town. All of these features, according to participants, make Warrensburg a good place to raise a family.

Warrensburg is the county seat of Johnson County and a regional hub for surrounding rural towns for employment, shopping at large chain stores such as Wal-Mart and Lowe's. Because Warrensburg is a 45-minute drive from Kansas City, residents feel that they have access to the convenience of shopping and entertainment there, and often travel to Kansas City on weekends.

Participants generally felt that Warrensburg is moving in the right direction, though some cited particular ways in which they felt Warrensburg is moving in the wrong direction. Some of the positive things the groups discussed are as follows: The Downtown is being renovated and has been aesthetically improved; many building owners are improving their buildings; and Warrensburg continues to grow as a regional hub for smaller towns. In addition, as the urban sprawl in Kansas City continues to grow, Warrensburg's population will likely grow. Many participants felt that the City's decision to make the bars Downtown, on Pine Street, only accessible by those 21 and over was a good decision and is changing the direction of the Downtown.

A few participants cited negative issues, though, as they discussed the future of Warrensburg. A business loop for the highway is being constructed, which means that it will be harder to draw passers-by Downtown. Participants in the college student group indicated that the City's decision to make bars accessible to only 21 and over is negative, not because of its effect on the ability of underage patrons to enter the bars, but rather, students who have younger friends now have nowhere for all of them to go out together. They also felt this decision by the City was negative because those bars once provided employment for many students, and the age restriction on the bars makes it even more difficult for students under 21 to find employment.

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

The major shopping area in Warrensburg is along the highway, and includes Wal-Mart and Lowe's as well as other chain stores and restaurants. The Downtown, however, does have retail and restaurants, as well as a number of professional offices related to the Courthouse.

According to the groups, people come from about a 45-mile radius around Warrensburg to do their shopping at Wal-Mart and Lowe's.

Many residents try to do their shopping in Warrensburg, but some indicated that they have trouble finding an adequate selection in town, especially certain specialty or high-end objects. Residents often travel to Kansas City on weekends for such items. These items include a variety of men's, women's, and children's clothing, a selection of shoes, and other specialty items.

**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 Warrensburg, including both chain restaurants and locally owned restaurants: Mexican, Italian, fast food, a coffee shop, and one higher-end restaurant. Participants generally felt, though, that there is not enough variety for dining in Warrensburg. Many visit Kansas City when dining out for special occasions or to find a larger variety of dining options. They would welcome a fine dining option in town, a wider variety of restaurants, a higher-end bar or beer garden targeted at young professionals, a late-night diner marketed to students, longer business hours, and outdoor seating.

For recreation and entertainment, Warrensburg has plenty of outdoor recreation within a short drive to parks and lakes. There is some music, and a lot of entertainment provided through the University. Many people, however, travel to Kansas City for entertainment, especially for nightlife and entertainment.

#### **D. DOWNTOWN WARRENSBURG: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT**

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

The groups, overall, felt that Downtown Warrensburg is moving in the right direction. The Main Street group and the City have aesthetically improved the Downtown, there are a number of thriving businesses Downtown, the City has cracked down on underage drinking and imposed 21-and-over restrictions on the bars Downtown, and buildings are being renovated and improved.

Participants also felt that there is a lot of unrealized potential that would make Downtown Warrensburg move even further in the right direction—adding more retail, arts, and entertainment and having a diversity of businesses to cater to all three major populations (students, military, and permanent residents) were of the highest priority. Other priorities included improving parking and navigation, improving pedestrian safety, improving building façades, cleaning up the backs of buildings and the alleyways, and increasing cooperation by encouraging all Downtown business owners to have a stake in the improvements 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, tradition, and proximity to the courthouse or the University as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown. The participants indicated, in different points in the discussion, that new businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focuses on attracting a higher number of shops in the area and marketing the Downtown more effectively.

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

The groups mentioned a few reasons that they visit Downtown, including restaurants, bars, retail, the Courthouse, and services such as attorneys and banks. Retail included a shoe store, furniture store, and consignment shop. The only group that cited bars as an answer to this question was college students, and they expressed that other than a small amount of shopping, bars are the only reasons they visit Downtown regularly. Students also come Downtown during their Homecoming Festival in the fall. Other groups indicated that restaurants, retail, and services are their biggest draws.

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

The participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including parking, navigation, pedestrian safety, and business hours.

Parking is one of the biggest concerns, and participants discussed five different factors regarding parking: (1) the perceived parking problems, (2) two-hour parking, (3) employees parking in front of stores, (4) parking for residents, and (5) handicapped parking.

- (1) Some participants noted 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 may be willing to walk much farther from a parking place in a Wal-Mart parking lot. If, however, all of the storefronts were populated with shops and businesses, Downtown visitors might be more likely to park at the end of a block and walk.
- (2) The parallel parking spots Downtown have a two-hour limit on them, which many participants feel actually discourages business Downtown. If businesses want to encourage a pedestrian culture, in which people spend the afternoon having lunch, shopping a little, and walking around, two hours might not be sufficient time.
- (3) Many employees and business owners park on the street in front of their stores, which blocks parking for clients and customers. Business owners should be encouraged to enforce restrictions on their employees to park at the end of blocks, in some of the overflow parking lots.
- (4) Many residents Downtown do not have permanent or reliable places to park, and during the day, some park in front of their apartments and move their cars every two hours, while others have to park far from their homes. While college students said that they do not mind the walking, the parking situation does not encourage others to live Downtown.
- (5) Parking and walking to stores is difficult for the elderly and the disabled, and Downtown currently is not as handicapped-accessible as it could be. High curbs and limited parking make the elderly and disabled more likely to shop and dine elsewhere.

Traffic navigation Downtown, according to participants, is sometimes difficult, both for visitors and for residents. Turning from alleyways into the street is often hazardous, as there are a number of blind turns, and signage which points to businesses is sometimes inadequate.

Pedestrian safety, for many of the same reasons, was an issue as well. Because of blind turns out of alleyways, many cars may not see pedestrians. For businesses that cater to children, such as the music store, which provides music lessons, the parking situation makes it difficult for parents to park in front of the store, leading them to let their children off where it is then necessary for them to cross a street, which can be hazardous. Finally, some sidewalks are in need of repair or upkeep, which makes it difficult for pedestrians in wheelchairs or with strollers to navigate.

The business hours in Downtown, according to the participants, are a major problem, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 or 6:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it impossible for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. The problem is compounded by the fact that the chain stores in town, such as Wal-Mart and Lowe's, and the malls in Kansas City, are open in the evenings and on weekends. Participants also noted that restaurant hours are inconvenient, as few restaurants are open late. The groups suggested that, as more retail comes into Downtown, these shops should consider staying open until at least 7:00 consistently. They also felt that restaurants should stay open until at least 8:00 for dinner. Residents typically leave for Kansas City during the weekends, and students often go back home during weekends—participants felt that residents and students would be less likely to leave on weekends if more businesses and entertainment venues Downtown were open.

#### **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 newspaper, the radio, the Chamber of Commerce website, the Warrensburg Facebook page, businesses' websites, flyers, mailings, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown business and events. They felt, however, that Downtown Warrensburg could do more to market itself as a destination.

#### **E. DOWNTOWN WARRENSBURG: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

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

The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, entertainment, and festivals rather than larger chains (though if, in the future, chains were interested, residents were not averse to the idea). For retail, they suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, more shoe stores, a bookstore, a convenience store, an organic foods store, a butcher shop, an art supply store, and arts and crafts stores.

For dining, participants suggested additional restaurants, including fine dining, a wine lounge or beer garden, a late-night diner, an ice cream shop, and a variety of casual dining options, some catering to college students, some to young professionals, and some to older residents. They suggested that the restaurants have later business hours and possibly outdoor seating.

For entertainment, participants felt that a variety of restaurants and shops with later business hours would be a good start. They also suggested live music, art shows, art galleries, and other semi-regular events to draw people Downtown for a fun experience. Many participants felt that it would be a good idea to focus Downtown partially as an arts and entertainment district, opening galleries for students to show their artwork, perhaps painting murals on the backs of buildings, and having live music.

Participants generally felt that there is enough residential space Downtown, but more needs to be done to keep those residents shopping, dining, and spending their money Downtown.

They agreed that the Downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart and other large chains, nor is it to compete with the larger malls in Kansas City; it is to offer a unique experience to visitors. Participants in every group felt strongly that small business should be encouraged, and the City should find and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.

The groups also felt that the Strategic Plan should focus on shops, restaurants, and entertainment options for all three distinct groups in town: the University, military, and permanent residents (specifically young professionals).

**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, the participants agreed that the recent aesthetic improvements the Main Street group has made have all been positive, making Downtown Warrensburg more beautiful.

Participants' suggestions focused on giving Downtown a historic and cohesive look and feel while making it still feel safe and maintained. They suggested that building repair, filling buildings with retail businesses, improving the alleyways and the backs of buildings, burying utilities, improving signage, creating pedestrian trails that link to Downtown and improving building façades should all be priorities.

Generally, though, the groups felt that Warrensburg, aesthetically, has been moving in the right direction. They were all proud of the improvements concerning streets, sidewalks, lighting, and green space within Downtown.

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

The groups felt that attracting retail and entertainment businesses, and then marketing those businesses to a diverse customer base, should be the highest priorities, and that all other improvements should work towards achieving this priority. Other priorities included improving parking and navigation, encouraging later business hours, and defining a cohesive identity for the Downtown.

**Business Owners: 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?**

The business owners felt that the City could, in addition to all other improvements, offer or make available incentives for building repair and new businesses. They also felt that marketing Downtown in various ways would help the Downtown businesses thrive.

**Business Owners: 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?**

No business owners indicated that they favored a Special Business District with an additional tax, which they felt would draw people away from Downtown because of the increased sales tax. One participant, however, mentioned that the “competition,” which includes developments such as the ones with Wal-Mart and Lowe’s, use TIFs and TDDs to their advantage, and the Downtown may be able to as well, with enough community buy-in.

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

Many participants felt that Lawrence, Kansas serves as an excellent example of how a similar college town, within the same distance of Kansas City as Warrensburg is, has attracted retail, arts, and entertainment, and has managed to blend its diverse populations into a single downtown area. The participants also mentioned a few downtowns whose mix of businesses or aesthetics they admired: Clinton, Missouri; the Power and Light District in Kansas City; Zona Rosa in Kansas City; Lee’s Summit, Missouri; Parkville, Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; Weston, Missouri; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Grand Lake, Colorado; Marshall, Missouri; Sedalia, Missouri; and Omaha, Nebraska.

**F. KEY POINTS**

Key points about the Warrensburg area:

- ◆ Warrensburg is a friendly, small, diverse town with a good sense of community, good healthcare, a good K-12 education system, and many nearby outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as a University and a nearby Air Force Base.
- ◆ Warrensburg is the county seat of Johnson County and a regional hub for surrounding rural towns for employment, shopping at large chain stores such as Wal-Mart and Lowe’s.
- ◆ Warrensburg is within 45 minutes of Kansas City, and residents feel that they have all the opportunities a nearby big city offers them while still being able to live in a smaller town.
- ◆ Participants felt positive about Downtown renovations and improvements, Warrensburg’s potential growth, and the City’s cracking down on underage drinking.
- ◆ Participants felt negative, however, about the new business loop, which will divert traffic away from Downtown, and students felt negative about the 21-and-over restrictions for

even being able to go into bars, as they no longer have entertainment options in Warrensburg for groups of mixed ages.

- ◆ The major shopping area in Warrensburg is along the highway, and includes Wal-Mart and Lowe's as well as other chain stores and restaurants; Downtown is also a major retail and service area, however.
- ◆ People come from about a 45-mile radius around Warrensburg to do their shopping at Wal-Mart and Lowe's.
- ◆ Residents do their everyday shopping in Warrensburg, but travel to Kansas City on weekends for the malls and for a selection of retail and entertainment.
- ◆ Though there are a number of restaurants in Warrensburg, participants felt that there is not enough variety for dining.
- ◆ The community would welcome a fine dining option in town, a wider variety of restaurants, a higher-end bar or beer garden for young professionals, a late-night diner marketed to students, longer business hours, and outdoor seating.
- ◆ Warrensburg has a lot of recreation, including parks, walking trails, and other outdoor activities.
- ◆ Though there is some entertainment in Warrensburg, including live music and University events, residents often travel to Kansas City for more and different entertainment.

Key points about Downtown Warrensburg:

- ◆ The groups, overall, felt that Downtown Warrensburg is moving in the right direction.
- ◆ There is a lot of unrealized potential that would make Downtown Warrensburg move even further in the right direction—adding a diversity of businesses, improving parking and navigation, improving pedestrian safety, improving building façades, cleaning up the backs of buildings and the alleyways, and increasing cooperation among Downtown business owners.
- ◆ The business owners cited low cost, tradition, and proximity to the Courthouse or the University as major reasons they located their businesses Downtown.
- ◆ The business owners indicated that new businesses might be attracted in the future if the City focuses on attracting a higher number of shops in the area and marketing the Downtown more effectively.
- ◆ The groups mentioned a few reasons that they visit Downtown, including restaurants, bars, retail, the Courthouse, and services such as attorneys and banks; students also cited their homecoming festival during the fall as a draw for Downtown.

- ◆ The participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including parking, navigation, pedestrian safety, and business hours.
- ◆ Participants discussed five different factors regarding parking: (1) the perceived parking problems, (2) the two-hour parking, (3) employees parking in front of stores, (4) parking for residents, and (5) handicapped parking.
- ◆ Traffic navigation and pedestrian safety Downtown, according to participants, is sometimes difficult, both for visitors and for residents.
- ◆ Participant felt that business hours are often inconvenient, as shops are only open until 5:00 or 6:00 PM on weekdays, and restaurants are not open late for dinner.
- ◆ Many residents and students leave Warrensburg on weekends because of the lack of shopping, dining, or entertainment open on weekends.
- ◆ People get information about Downtown businesses and special events through the newspaper, the radio, the Chamber of Commerce website, the Warrensburg Facebook page, businesses' websites, flyers, mailings, and word-of-mouth.

Key points about the future of Downtown Warrensburg:

- ◆ The participants suggested a variety of new businesses Downtown, focusing on independently owned specialty-type shops, restaurants, entertainment, and festivals rather than larger chains.
- ◆ For retail, participants suggested more men's, women's, and children's clothing, more shoe stores, a bookstore, a convenience store, an organic foods store, a butcher shop, an art supply store, and arts and crafts stores.
- ◆ For food, participants suggested additional restaurants, including fine dining, a wine lounge or beer garden, a late-night diner, an ice cream shop, and a variety of casual dining options, some catering to college students, some to young professionals, and some to older residents; they also suggested that the restaurants have later business hours and possibly outdoor seating.
- ◆ For entertainment, the participants groups felt that a variety of restaurants and shops with later business hours would be a good start. They also suggested live music, art shows, art galleries, and other semi-regular events to draw people Downtown for a fun experience.
- ◆ Many participants felt that it would be a good idea to focus Downtown partially as an arts and entertainment district, opening galleries for students to show their artwork, perhaps painting murals on the backs of buildings, and having live music.
- ◆ Downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart and other large chains, nor is it to compete with the larger malls in Kansas City, and therefore small business should be encouraged, and the City should find and offer incentives to potential building owners to fix up their buildings into usable retail and office spaces.

- ◆ The groups felt that the master plan should focus on shops, restaurants, and entertainment options for all three distinct groups in town: the University, the military, and the permanent residents (specifically young professionals).
- ◆ Participants felt that Downtown should have a cohesive look and feel.
- ◆ Proposed aesthetic improvements included building repair, filling buildings with retail businesses, improving the alleyways and the backs of buildings, burying utilities, improving signage, creating pedestrian trails that link to Downtown, and improving building façades should all be priorities.
- ◆ The groups felt that attracting retail and entertainment businesses, and then marketing those businesses to a diverse customer base, should be the highest priorities; other priorities included improving parking and navigation, encouraging later business hours, and defining a cohesive identity for the Downtown.
- ◆ The business owners felt that the City could offer or make available incentives for building repair and new businesses and improve marketing in various ways to help the Downtown businesses thrive.
- ◆ The business owners were not in favor of a special business district with an additional tax, which they felt would draw people away from Downtown because of the increased sales tax; they are, however, receptive to discussing other options.
- ◆ Many participants felt that Lawrence, Kansas serves as an excellent example of how a similar college town, within the same distance of Kansas City as Warrensburg is, has attracted retail, arts, and entertainment, and has managed to blend its diverse populations into a single Downtown area.
- ◆ The participants mentioned a few other downtowns whose mix of businesses or aesthetics they admired: Clinton, Missouri; the Power and Light District in Kansas City; Zona Rosa in Kansas City; Lee's Summit, Missouri; Parkville, Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; Weston, Missouri; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Grand Lake, Colorado; Marshall, Missouri; Sedalia, Missouri; and Omaha, Nebraska.

## SECTION II

### UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI STUDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

*Moderator: Tell me a little bit about Warrensburg as a whole.*

Well, I mean, it's a smaller town. For me, coming from Columbia... I have a lot of friends who come from really small town, but I'm from Columbia, and in Warrensburg, there's not much to do. Probably 2 or 3 years were a lot of fun, but I'm here for school, and what's there to do? Go to bars, go to Pine Street, other than that, it's just kind of a quaint town.

It's a real college town. I'm from Dallas. When I came here, I had a class of 600 in high school, and if there weren't a college here, there wouldn't be much.

I'm from a town of 2100 people, so it's a little bigger, but I mostly hung out at bars and went to parties, but now that I have a family, there's really not a lot to do here. We go to Kansas City.

A lot of people my age, we don't stick around on the weekend. We go to Columbia, Kansas City, a road trip to Chicago...after a couple years, you're like, "What's next?" If you want to go out for entertainment, there's Pine Street.

When I first came here, Pine Street was a lot more fun, but after that whole raid thing, it went downhill.

I could talk for the whole time about Pine Street. I work down there as a bartender and manager, and a year or two ago, there was a club called Club Blue down there, and there was a huge riot, and there was shots fired, I think a lot of people hurt, pepper spray, even friends who were trying to help were pepper sprayed...people hiding in the bar, gunshots, nothing you'd ever think you'd experience here. Nobody was shot, but... that happened a couple years ago, and I could talk about the law. It used to be 21 and older.

I'm under 21, and I can't go to Pine Street, so there's nothing to do.

It used to be 18 to go and 21 to drink. Pine Street offers tons of jobs for college students, whether serving or cleaning or whatever. That's where income comes from. And there's nobody in there anymore. There used to be 200 people in the tiny bar, and you'd make good money to live, but now there's nobody there anymore. I have friends his age, and you can't leave your buddies and go out without them. So you decide to go to house parties. The occupancy in the bars has gone down incredibly.

Last spring, they put it into effect.

There was a lot of underage drinking. You can't be oblivious to that. But it wasn't everybody, and I don't think you can exclude half of the ages in this college to go out and socialize in the only place to socialize in Warrensburg.

We go to house parties and get in trouble there. We just kind of hang out, but you want to get out and experience things.

***Moderator: What do you do for shopping? Are there places here you can go?***

Wal-Mart.

Is Macy's mens?

We don't have Macy's.

Maurice's.

Yeah.

I leave.

I don't buy stuff here.

I don't shop here. I go home.

I think I once bought a pair of flip-flops.

You used to have Stages, but they just shipped out.

I had a presentation, but I forgot all my blazers at home, and there's not a place to buy a pair of slacks, a blazer, or a suit in Warrensburg. There isn't a place to buy a suit. It's crazy to me.

***Moderator: Do adults go elsewhere to work.***

Everybody that's graduated before me has left.

I know one person who works for the university now.

I don't know anyone.

People my age are saying, "I can't wait to get out of here." There's no opportunity.

My husband and I are planning on leaving. He's getting a master's in accounting, so he needs a big city to make good money.

I'm leaving in 3 more weeks.

***Moderator: Do you go out to eat here?***

That's fine. We could use more variety. I'd like an Olive Garden.

I'd love Olive Garden.

There's a couple restaurants.

There's an excessive amount of pizza.

There's a lot of places that come and go.

***Moderator: So you'd stay in Warrensburg to eat?***

Yeah.

***Moderator: Do you see movies here?***

They're building a new theater and a bowling alley.

That would be huge in this town. Something to do.

Things have kind of slowed down. I don't know if it's because of the economy.

***Moderator: I know you go Downtown for Pine Street, but what else?***

Opera House.

I'm going to live down there in the Opera House.

A lot of people live there. And there's a couple loft apartments above restaurants and bar. It's lofts, though, mostly. And they're really nice, too.

Maybe we go Downtown to eat, like Taco Tuesdays. They have good deals sometimes.

There's not a lot as far as shopping. But Brown's Shoe, I don't know how they stay in business. They're outrageous.

I bought shoes at Hibbit's Sports. It's a franchise, but other than that...

***Moderator: What about the way Downtown looks and feels?***

It's better than it used to be.

Absolutely. Definitely better.

They fixed the curbs and they dressed them up nice. It looks better. They planted trees.

And the facilities are nicer. A lot of places wouldn't go on health codes, especially on Pine Street. Those places are much cleaner. They've gone through and made you clean them up.

**Moderator: Do you ever feel unsafe Downtown, other than that incident?**

People walk by themselves.

I never have a problem.

It's a small town. I feel safe.

Yeah.

I have no problem walking Downtown by myself.

**Moderator: Where do you take friends who visit?**

When I had friends visit me, when I used to go out, we'd go to the bars. Nowadays, I go to visit them. I don't have friends visit me anymore. It's because there's nothing to do here.

My friends come, and we go to a house party or the Dewdrop, which is 13 miles down 50, and you have to be 18 to get in, and I know a lot of people who go there every Tuesday and Saturday.

Towards Sedalia?

Yeah.

**Moderator: Let's jump to the last section. Do you think there would be a demand for more people to live Downtown?**

I never really...

(mumbling.)

The apartments above the buildings, maybe?

I think people can always find an apartment Downtown.

Yeah.

**Moderator: Is it mostly student housing?**

Yeah, it's all students.

**Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown and dream a little about making Downtown better. If you could think of the kind of businesses that you'd actually go to, what would they be?**

Ice cream stores.

Old-school ice cream shops.

There's one by the Blockbuster, and it's really good. It's on 11<sup>th</sup>. One thing I would—me and my friends got pretty close to starting a late-night eatery Downtown. You always want to keep going, even after you have to stop drinking, but something that's open until 3 or 3:30 where you can go grab pancakes or a burrito.

It's safer than driving all the way to Country Kitchen drunk.

And that's what people do.

I'd like to have a Chipotle.

We always talk about a St. Louis Bread Company. Something like that in a college town would be great. I used to eat a Big Mac a day, but now I want to eat healthier, and that would be a huge asset. It's jam-packed at Mizzou.

Somewhere down there, a place for people under 21 to hang out at night.

***Moderator: Would your friends go there if there wasn't alcohol served?***

Mine wouldn't.

They had a place like that, and it went under.

I know that underage drinking was a problem, and it's a problem in a lot of college towns. I don't want to get a bunch of 17 year olds drunk, but for the jobs down there, get it back to what it was. I think it's good for the City. I know it's good for the University. I know people who came to the University because there were things to do, and now there aren't.

I don't know why they didn't just do the banding at the front door.

It would solve a lot of problems.

The police officers would hunt for people. I could probably find underage people anywhere.

I go to Lawrence, and I don't even have to show ID.

It's a problem anywhere.

It hurt a lot of businesses revenues. A lot of places had to sell or went under. A lot of people were struggling to pay the bill.

The Warehouse went under, and Smitty's is now Mixer's, but I quit because it just sucked. On a Friday, there'd be 20 people instead of 200. Some still do well enough. Johnny's.

I loved old Barney's. It was the greatest place. It burned down.

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

Some work down there. But some have quit. People now work for the furniture store or Wal-Mart, but it's limited.

During the summer, a lot of the players go home and work and come back. People don't stick around for the summer because there's no jobs.

The place I worked at, we used to have 8 or 9 door guys, and they have 1 now. So 8 people have lost their jobs. It's a really big difference.

***Moderator: Where else would you go Downtown?***

I think that naturally we want to go to bigger malls to get variety. Even if they built a Macy's here, I'd go somewhere else.

Unless you really need something. I'd never really just shop here, unless I need a dress shirt or something.

***Moderator: What would you change about the way Downtown looks?***

I mean, it's a college street, and they're all about the same. I really never thought about it being dirty.

It's got the old-town feel. It's kind of neat, really.

***Moderator: Is it well lit?***

Yeah, it is.

***Moderator: Do you guys park down there?***

We walk, but there's a lot of parking behind the bars. You can park anywhere on the street, and it's not that far to walk. A couple blocks. I've never had trouble parking.

***Moderator: Is there anything that Warrensburg could do to get people to stay here?***

There's just not any opportunities for jobs, for a career.

Yeah.

(agreement.)

The Community Center, one of the questions they put out is why can't they get more stores, and it's about the population. You have 16,000, 20,000 people who aren't permanent residents who don't count as residents, so the stores won't come here.

The town's dead during the summer or during Christmas.

I stayed here one summer, and...

It's nice to get around, but there's nothing to do in the summer.

The bars are dead, too, in the summer.

***Moderator: Are there any big festivals Downtown?***

Homecoming.

In October.

Homecoming, everything we've said is out the door. It's just nuts. I have friends from all over who come in.

They have band events and shows and stuff.

Halftimes.

***Moderator: So they have concerts?***

They have high school marching band events where a bunch of schools from around the place come to compete.

They have a parade that goes Downtown, the Homecoming Parade, but they don't plan much else for Downtown.

In July, they have music on the lawn, a fireworks show thing.

***Moderator: Is there anything else you think I need to know?***

I think it would help, I know the Air Force base was supposed to bring in—

They didn't get it. They went somewhere that already had the facilities for it.

It was supposed to be really big.

I just found out this weekend.

I think a children's clothing place would be nice, other than Wal-Mart.

(many people talking at once.)

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

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## SECTION III

### NEWER RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

I like to describe it—I'm from the South, and I'm a Southern hospitality person, and it's a very welcoming city wherever you go. Everyone's very friendly. People are willing to reach out and meet you. It's a small town.

You get the small town feel, but because of the air base and the university, we've got a cultural aspect.

I think of it as an on-the-cusp rural community, not quite rural, but there is that element, but it's close enough to the City—it's close enough and far enough away, and I've lived in big cities...you start to see people move here for the affordable housing prices. It's becoming more of the urban sprawl from Kansas City.

It's small enough that you go places and you recognize people, and I appreciate that.

As a college student, I know there's a lot to Warrensburg, but my main focus is the University and the Downtown small business area. The university and the Downtown area is what I think of when I think of Warrensburg.

We have three distinct populations: the military, the University, and the rural locals, and I like the way those populations interact.

It's always been a great, creative, unique mix. As much as the military and school switch out, there's always a fresh combo of people with fresh ideas. Things do close down Downtown, but now we have a hookah bar, I mean, just crazy things popping up, and everybody seems to support local businesses because it's a local resource, but also because of local pride.

I work at the Chamber, and I get to see how integrated those communities are and what an extraordinary business community we have here... I've worked elsewhere and just seeing how extraordinary it is, there's a real sense of partnership, the residents and people working for social services, it's really cohesive. It's a great small town, with fresh ideas.

(agreement.)

There's lots of hidden gems that we could do a better job of promoting. We have a lot of Civil War history here, and some really great untapped resources. A great parks system for a town our size. One of the things I really love, in Midtown I was always surrounded by concrete and bricks, but now I can drive for 5 minutes and be out in nature, and I can come back and have coffee or Thai food or whatever I want.

***Moderator: Where do people go for shopping?***

Impulse.

(agreement.)

My daughter's favorite store.

I really enjoy Those Were the Days and the record shop. The town I grew up in didn't have that small business aspect. I go to Java Junction two or three times a week, and I like that its local.

Brown's Shoe is great. He trusted me to take the shoes home and pay for them later.

We have like a Goody's and Maurice's, Stage, Cato's. Maurice's took out the men's thing. Even the consignment company Downtown has really good clothes. Guys are really limited. For women, Maurice's, Cato's...Stage closed. There's Wal-Mart.

We're very limited on clothing options.

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

There's not a lot of entertainment. We're getting a multiplex. There aren't a lot of great restaurants, but there's a few. I love Siam, I love Manetti's. I love the little soup and salad place below Java Junction.

That place is awesome.

(a lot of agreement about the soup and salad place.)

They do fondue night.

There's Taco Bell.

You have your chain places, Rib Crib, Applebee's, Country Kitchen, fast food joints. People driving through go there. Tons of pizza places... (unintelligible.)

There are long-time restaurants that are very popular with locals and students, and that mix is really great. There have been attempts at upscale restaurants, and that's something that we don't have, kind of a high-end restaurant. Maybe there isn't quite the population to support it, but I think it's the perception that it's expensive.

My husband and I go to the City for dates because there's just not much here. We'd rather not go to chain places. We don't mind driving.

You can get to anything in 45 minutes.

The County's really growing, and the City's really growing as that sprawl comes. There will be—whether they'll turn east and come this way I don't know, but...

It's going to be interesting to see.

(many people talking at once. Chairs clanging.)

**Moderator: *Let's talk about Downtown in particular. Do you see Downtown moving in the right or wrong direction?***

I think it's... I think it's a constant challenge to have everybody get on the same page about getting Downtown to be a beautiful destination, and all the work that goes into it... (unintelligible.) I think it's moving in the right direction, but it's a challenge. People start stuff with a cool idea but no market research. And Main Street doesn't have any control over that, but it reflects back on Downtown. Moving in the right direction but always having to refocus on getting a cohesive look.

I think you get three new things, and six months later, three new things where they used to be. It's really hard. People look at Downtown as a hard place to survive businesswise.

(agreement.)

Bars... I left for Holland a couple years ago, and I was gone for six months, and Downtown used to be pretty crazy at night, always packed, but when I came back, three of the bars have closed, and it's over 21 now. From my point of view, that part of the college nightlife have gone down.

There's been a huge change. Club Blue has changed. I used to see people coming in more often than they do. (unintelligible...) After it became 21 and over, people don't go there.

**Moderator: *What are some of the main reasons people go Downtown?***

Restaurants.

Yeah.

Lunch. A lot of people do lunch Downtown. A lot of folks from the University, but also people from the community.

I think the specialty stores, people make those a destination—the shoe store, Impulse, Those Were the Days.

There's tons of bars, and the whole business side of Downtown. I forget there's stuff all around the Courthouse Square.

And the Courthouse itself. People go to church there, too. We just invested 3 million dollars in our Downtown church.

I know my perception was from people when I first came to town, and people told me never to go Downtown. They said it was a row of cars, and your car might get hit...those people have lived

here a long time. I can't say I've had dinner Downtown. Maybe I could go to La Sous Terre, but that's about it.

I've heard people say that Pine Street's so much nicer now. It's a shame that the reason it was so booming was the underage drinking. College towns love to party. Pine Street needs to be revitalized, because it kind of looks like a ghost town.

People also come down for social services, and we see a lot of those folks when we sell bus tickets. There are a lot of folks who don't live here, who are transient, who are Downtown. That's just another population, and it's challenging, because sometimes we're not able to provide the help. But sometimes folks are sleeping in the train depot... there's a need for those social services.

...(unintelligible)...the restaurants are trying to get more business, so it's not just college students, but it's after-business drinks and after-business meetings. As far as the safety issue, when I moved to Base...everyone told me that I shouldn't go there at night, and I stay there late, and I've never felt unsafe in my store. Safety has never been an issue, but people get scared because they're told to stay away. My kids come to my store with me.

I'd agree with that. I told people not to go down there three years ago, but now it feels safe.

***Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? Let me start with parking, traffic, getting around...is it convenient?***

Absolutely not.

I was going to say yes.

I've gotten eighteen parking tickets. It's two-hour parking, so you can't eat lunch and shop. People will tell me they wanted to come shop but they couldn't.

I agree. We try to make sure we give school district business to local restaurants, and when we schedule retreats, we have to go move our cars every two hours.

The only overflow parking is on the west end. It's a good point. I've wanted to stop at Java Junction or Brown's Shoe, and I've not gone because I couldn't find parking.

We hear that, too.

(agreement.)

It's not necessarily friendly to people staying Downtown, shopping, doing business.

Every time I've been down there, I've been able to find parking.

(unintelligible...) I'm not opposed to walking a block, and I park in the City and walk all the time. It's really not that far. It does create some sort of...

A lot of walking traffic does find us. I'm under an awning, so you can't see me from the street, but for older folks, people aren't willing to walk that far.

And college students aren't opposed to walking.

Young moms.

I'm not going to go walking up and down Pine Street with my kids during the day. The traffic, all the U-turns.

**Moderator: Is Downtown pedestrian-friendly?**

I think you have to pay close attention to the signage. It's easy to miss somebody stepping out into the road.

It's hard even for driving. I can't see around corners, what's in front of me, because of all the cars parked.

The trains. People are used to them, but it's a hazard.

No one stops at the stop sign by US bank.

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

If you work 9 to 5, no.

We're pushing for that. We're open until 7, now. I'm trying to get moms who are waiting for their husbands to come home before coming. People say their business is better 5 to 7 than 9 to 1. I do 11 to 7. But a lot of people don't.

**Moderator: How about...is it easy to find your way Downtown?**

The signs point you everywhere. It's great.

Yeah.

(agreement.)

**Moderator: How do you get information about what's going on Downtown?**

Flyers in windows. And the business owners put flyers in grocery store bags, things like that. There really is no one, universal place to go. The Chamber...

(many people talking at once.)

The newspaper. I was surprised when I first got the paper that a lot of people don't subscribe to the local paper.

At church, I see the townies read the local paper cover to cover. You'll hit the townies in the newspaper, but not the others.

(noise, unintelligible.)

...Email list. There's email list upon email list.

**Moderator: I heard someone mention there's a Facebook page?**

Yeah, we have a Facebook page. We had 300 people join, but it was all people who used to live here. But I think it's great. It's wonderful.

**Moderator: We've been talking about Downtown as it exists now, but let's look to the future. What kinds of businesses would be a good fit for Downtown Warrensburg?**

One thing that we talk about a lot is a little bookshop. Magazines, books... a little newsstand.

I grew up in Fulton, Missouri, and it was always kind of booming, because we had dinner, movie theater, and a drugstore. You just can't go down here to one store to buy everything. The one in Fulton even sells liquor... I also think a little (unintelligible) I think Club Blue wants a lot of money for his place. That would be a great venue, because the Hawthorne Movie Theater isn't going up anytime soon, but a little theater...

A place where you can do Downtown for Ladies Night. A movie theater, or even a live theater would be nice.

Some kind of entertainment venue.

And a bakery.

Yeah, a bakery.

My friend is selling baked goods out of our store right now. Her response is great.

Olive's does really well. We should have a drugstore, a bakery, and a butcher, like any downtown. You've got enough of the university and the medical community for an organic store. I think it'd go over great. We wouldn't have to go to Kansas City to Whole Foods.

I don't think it'd be as difficult as you'd think. A lot of students are conscious of that stuff. A lot come from St. Louis and Kansas City. More businesses that would market to the college crowd and to residents. I came from a town of 30,000, and same problems, but once they saw that they could captivate an audience like the college students who are spending their parents' money.

College students are not broke.

Once they found how to market to the college students and the local community, business started to pick up. That's one of the problems here. There's such a disconnect between college students

and the community. You're not capitalizing on the students, and you'd see more business picking up if you did.

Old Warrensburg love the university for the jobs and the stability, but the college students just annoy them. They love the university, but with a college comes students, and you have to embrace that.

If there's a brunch place down there. Coming from the City, brunch is a huge thing there.

There's not even an IHOP.

People could walk down the street from the churches and have brunch.

We used to have Corner Café.

They were just ready to retire.

That was the quintessential place...

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: Any other businesses?***

More retailers.

More clothing.

Look at their downtown in Columbia. They cater to college students, but they service the rest of the community.

I was just down there, and it there was so much support from so many different age ranges.

How do you keep the money in Warrensburg? The problem for me is, if I have to go clothes shopping for my kids, and we go to Independence, and we go see a movie there and eat there... I'd love to shop in Warrensburg if I could, but I can't.

We do have baby clothes at the consignment store. But the students don't shop there as much, either. The Warrensburg hospital delivers a ton of babies. I don't buy baby clothes at Wal-Mart, and I'd love to shop locally for affordable baby clothes, and I'd love to open a baby store.

I get Google alerts about Warrensburg, and there's new owners of the Raytown Post, and they're doing a little vacation thing with Warrensburg...anyway, one of the owners is doing a workshop play thing for a year, like the energy diet, but it's "I'm going to see if I can work, live, eat, shop, and do everything in Raytown." He's trying to show that you can get these things in Raytown. He's got a blog where people help him find stuff. I'd like for us to do that as a Chamber. I think there's potential there, because there is this perception that Pine Street's unsafe and there's nothing to do in Warrensburg. That kind of project could be good, maybe not for a year, but 3 months.

**Moderator:** *I know there's a number of second-story apartments Downtown. Is there a demand for more or different housing Downtown?*

I think affordable housing... people ask if some of them are available, and they're like \$750 a month above me. I think if there was more affordable, decent apartments. The Warehouse Lofts are pretty pricey. They are nice, though.

It's my impression that only college students would want to live in those lofts, so it would be hard to have nice, affordable rental housing. You don't want a really nice apartment to rent to college students.

I would rent Downtown, and the people who own the consignment company live above there, and they love it. Parking's an issue for them, and I don't know how they deal with it. But they have two kids. I'd do it.

I'd prefer to live Downtown, but the available housing for young professionals are either the slums or not. I have a three-bedroom house, and I don't need it, but I don't want to live next to college students. Having young professional housing... the biggest gap in this town has to do with opportunities for young professionals.

(agreement.)

**Moderator:** *Parks, recreation, trails—do you see a place for that kind of thing Downtown?*

There's a need for green.

There are planters Downtown.

There's trees.

Yeah, definitely green space. I used to work to bridge the gap up in Kansas City, and there's all kinds of evidence that people spend more time and money on streets with trees, shrubs, and planters.

I think a pocket park in one of the spaces would be nice.

That would be nice to go to get out of the office for lunch.

Parks and Rec is working on the trail system throughout the town, and plans to include Downtown as part of that. That's exciting. We've got some bike route signs around Downtown. And we're also getting, for the County, a spur to the Katy Trail, which is exciting. It's not Downtown, but it's still exciting. People will be able to connect through Downtown.

I would like to see... we have a farmer's market Downtown, but there's no structure there, it's just people pitching tents. A real destination farmer's market would be great, with a pavilion.

I'd like to see it in Fort Hills Square... I actually tried to find the farmer's market twice, and by the time I had breakfast, they were gone. If it was moved somewhere where people were forced to get out of their cars and walk a little, it would help.

I spent four years here, and I just found Blind Boone Park two weeks ago. It was awesome, but maybe if there were signs, I would've found it earlier.

**Moderator: What about the other aspects of the look and feel Downtown? Facades, streets and sidewalks...**

Those Were the Days is such a great antique store, and it's got a cruddy-looking storefront, and I was scared the first time I went in, and it's great. But an awning, a little tea shop in the front, make it look cute.

When I first moved here, I thought the storefronts were the least attractive part of the whole Downtown. I wondered if there were businesses even in there.

I totally agree. We talked about doing a window challenge for the holidays to spruce up the storefronts.

Yeah, all those facades are, yeah... it's something, I hope, Main Street's planning to get some painting to get them back to their original or spruced-up... I agree, though.

(agreement.)

The Tea House is going to have food again, too, right?

Yeah, it's going to have food.

Outdoor seating. I don't know if there's a city ordinance, but outdoor seating. I miss eating outdoor.

Java Junction has a patio, and it's packed.

And Johnny's has a patio.

Even Downtown...

I thought about buying benches, but I have no way to secure them.

(agreement that benches would be nice.)

We're like a block up, and our benches are balanced on the pillars somehow...

(laughter.)

I think in general just keeping Downtown clean. There's not very many trash cans, and the ones there are not very attractive. And I'm trying to get our alley picked up. Our window is just

boarded, and people who ride the train, Lee's Summit is having a parade and it's beautiful, you're not looking at a nasty alley, and in Warrensburg you're looking at alleys with boarded buildings and dumpsters. A lot of students ride the train, and their parents... I think it's a bad perception of Warrensburg.

I think \_\_\_\_\_, the branding person for Downtown, is looking at the possibility of a mural for the back of the buildings.

That would be awesome.

I approached \_\_\_\_\_ about getting our windows fixed.

The train depot itself is something that could use some sprucing up. It's complex, who owns it, but that's something that's in constant need of updating. Many people have something to say about how it looks. We did have planters out front last year, and nobody stole our flowers.

(side conversations.)

**Moderator:** *Thinking about other downtowns you've been in, are there other downtowns you'd like to see aspects of here?*

Lee's Summit, Columbia.

Parkville.

Westin.

It's the look, the mix of businesses, the way it's kept up, the historic preservation, it's walkable, it's safe, and it's interesting.

Cobblestone streets, but they're horrible to maintain.

Parkville, there's nothing fancy or cohesive about the storefronts, but there are very few vacant storefronts, but they have an active farmer's market and the parking's not great, but it's inviting to get out and walk.

It's quaint.

You really are kind of drawn into walking, and I think the same thing is true in Lee's Summit.

(agreement.)

Lee's Summit has the two-hour thing, too, though.

Did anyone mention a dog park? We had a dog park in Colorado Springs, and there's plenty of land in Warrensburg. All you need is a fence and trash cans for poop.

And it's free.

Yeah.

**Moderator: Anything else?**

Seattle's nice.

(laughter.)

I think it's nice when you're walking and you don't have to face the storefronts to see what's there. It's on the sidewalk or something. Signs... so that it's easy to know where something is without trying to look sideways.

Yeah.

I think Sedalia has that.

You could put putt-putt mini golf Downtown, or an ice cream shop.

One of the things...if and when the movie theater moves, one of the things that the grade schools... one of the things the kids say often is that we need a paintball place in the old movie theater.

Cornerstone Park had one, and they didn't have the support.

And that place was awesome.

She's trying to sell it.

You know, have you been to Grand Lake, Colorado? The putt-putt place is really small, but there's a ton of traffic. You don't need a lot of land.

When you have your ice cream place in town, you need more places to stay for a while so you don't just go back home.

Do you really take the kids out and go into the store unless there's something else to do? No.

There's just nothing. For a college town, I'm just surprised. There's nothing fun to do. Where's the pitch and putt, the batting cage, the arcade...where's that kind of stuff that could be an epicenter for fun, with ice cream and... in Colorado, they've got Boondocks, and you drive race cars and play putt-putt, and parents can drop their kids off and go see a movie. The entertainment piece is missing.

I wish there was more live movies.

Manetti's brings in some pretty darn good music. That's the kind of thing we need to do more of.

(agreement.)

Its fun, it's nice.

The UCM, the rec center... they do have...anyone can go, and they've got an arcade, they've got Wii, and they're closed in the summer, but they have bowling tournaments...but it's not open at 10 at night.

I think Warrensburg needs more things to do.

Even a coffee shop would be wonderful.

After 2:00 on Saturday, there's nothing to do.

If I'm Downtown on Saturday mornings, we drive through Wendy's because there's nowhere else to go.

(many people talking at once.)

Java Junction is not open on Saturday afternoon, and it's closed on Sundays.

Sunday is one of my best days, too. I'm open on Sunday. They go to the City on Saturdays, and they shop locally on Sundays. Lexington's downtown was struggling a few years ago, and they started opening seven days a week until 7:00, and they did it for a year, and look at them now. They...you just have to commit to it. I'm guilty of putting up a sign saying "gone to the bank," but having unclear business hours is a huge problem. If you can stay consistent...

The transient population, if they come once, they may never again... I wanted to have Siam yesterday, and I couldn't get it. They have no hours posted.

(side conversations.)

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

## SECTION IV

### DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

I would say that Warrensburg is a diverse community. We have people from the Air Force Base, the University of Central Missouri... I put two children through the University... so it's a very diverse community, people from the college and the air base that shop within our city. We're close to Kansas City, and that brings a lot of people to our community to live, to raise a family, to enjoy our school district which is one of the finest in the State...we pride ourselves on our sports and our academic achievements. We have a lot of good businesses within the community that support the community with fundraising projects and things like that.

I moved here because my husband was in the military about 30 years ago. I think Warrensburg is a great place to raise a family. It's not little, but it's not big. The people at the store know you by name, and it's got a small town feel. It has a university, which has a lot of entertainment and arts and athletics, and you're close enough to Kansas City that you can drive there in 40 minutes. When we found out we were coming here, one of our friends who lived in Kansas City said, "I spent a whole week there one afternoon." The Downtown didn't really have a lot to offer then. Now, you see a lot of activity Downtown. With the Main Street program, we've made a lot of progress. It's very attractive now.

I would echo... I came here during college, and my first experience was with the University, and I was close to the University's activities. I think of that first when I think of Warrensburg, but for those who grew up here, they don't see it as positive to see Warrensburg as just a university town. But we stayed here because of the University. They provided the activities that we liked, we enjoyed, and Kansas City is such a short drive away. We have retail that won't come here because people are just too quick to make a drive for 45 minutes and shop. But Warrensburg has done a good job of sustaining what we have, because of the turnover we have at the University and Air Base, we've done okay.

I came here nine years ago with UMB, and I instantly fell in love with Warrensburg. I grew up in a small, small country town in Oklahoma, about an hour from Oklahoma City. This is like home for me. A larger city right up the road, but a small town feel. The thing that impressed me most about Warrensburg is that it's a great sized community, enough to do here, enough to keep your interest, plenty of shopping... It's very easy to get up the road to Kansas City or Sedalia, if you need something. I can't see myself ever leaving Warrensburg. There's a replenishing spring of people coming into the community, and I see that as a positive thing. There's always new creative ideas coming in.

We arrived here in 1964, and I'm the only one who hung around here. I love the town, too. I think it's a great town to raise kids. The community is wonderful. As far as retail business, are we doing as well as we did last year, no, but we're doing okay. I don't have five employees. I load the trucks and clean the floors and pay the bills. Like I said, I feel the same as the others.

Warrensburg is a small town with big town ideas. There's a huge park culture that a lot of other communities don't have. When I was here as a college student, some business owners didn't really appreciate the college students. They complained about the college students, about how they were in the way. I would like to see the college kids and the Downtown community work a little better, because the college kids come down here when it's dark, so they don't know what they have. They don't know that we exist. They have to know. I came in 94, but I became a resident in 99... when I need something, I can run over to one of my neighbors and borrow something. The business owner's work well together and we send clients up the street to others. Even though you might compete in some things, you're not going to cut your nose off to spite your face, because they're going to come back Downtown.

Having been born and raised here, we're sitting in a spot that's an hour from Kansas City, we have the Lake of the Ozarks within an hour, so if you like fishing or hunting, it's within an hour. You can live in Warrensburg and go anywhere within an hour. When we got out of school, we moved over to Marshall for about 10 years, and it's the same size and has a small university, but it's not the same as Warrensburg. What you noticed there is that it was a different selection of people. Warrensburg, with the University here, has always been more educated. We never had factories here, per se, and when we moved to Marshall, that's what it was. You noticed immediately a different mindset altogether of the people in Marshall. We moved back here, and we just always have enjoyed Warrensburg because of everything it has to offer. I would like to see us have something similar to the Power and Light District in Kansas City. They want more people Downtown, and they renovate it, but in Warrensburg, we try to push people out of Downtown. We want them down there during the day but not at night. It's a great thing that we have too many people down here. What a wonderful thing to have a parking problem because there's so many people down there. Kansas City is doing everything they can to get people Downtown, and we're doing everything we can to get people out of Downtown.

I agree. I talk to several college students who are into music, and Lawrence has a huge music culture, and I consider that an art and I don't know why we don't have that here. People will drive from Kansas City to Lawrence to go see a band. And it's for people my age, too.

To continue what you both are saying, I'm on the Arts Commission, and we're looking at the bands, and we have opposing forces. We have the desire to have the vitality, but we have the responsibility of carding the people when they come in, and if you don't take that responsibility, you're not going to be able to continue operating. We have these opposing forces. We came here as graduate students, and we already had two of our daughters, and we were temporary residents, and suddenly after 10 years, we discovered that we were entrenched here and we didn't want to move. My wife was a teacher and I work at the University. I come from a town not too far from Marshall. Warrensburg, the military and the University bring in a diverse group of people, and I look at it as good. There's an intellectual level with the University, there's an education background with the military personnel, and if I were to sum up the changes I've seen, the water tastes better.

(laughter.)

Yes.

Because of the University and the Air Force Base, and they're bringing in money, we don't see the highs and the lows as what's happening in the rest of the world. They're not as high and they're not as low. We don't feel it as bad. The University students seem like they always have money in their pocket, and the military are always paid.

They always need housing, the University students. That infusion into the community brings about change. We have a third to half of the population in the voter file that changes within a 2 to 4 year period.

**Moderator: A few of you mentioned shopping. What are the main areas of town where people shop? Do people come from elsewhere?**

Shoes.

I can only speak for myself, but I pull people from a wide area into Downtown for the business that I have, the shoe business. I pull people from Higginsville, Sedalia, Clinton, Blue Springs, and Lee's Summit. I advertise in those areas to bring those people in. I see that growing all the time. That's the biggest growth of my business. That's not to say my customers within the community, new people from Whiteman and from the University that find my store... but my business continues to grow outward.

What we're seeing is what's happened to Warrensburg is what's happened to other towns our size. Downtown was the business hub for a long time, and Wal-Mart moved here and built a supercenter, which refocused the traffic patterns and people's shopping, and other businesses have sprung up around Wal-Mart. The traffic pattern has shifted out of Downtown. Another thing that's getting ready to happen is that there's going to be an East Loop that's going to bypass Warrensburg to the east, which will refocus some of the traffic to the east. For me, in the Downtown area... most of my business is local. UMB is focused around the area, so my business is local for the most part. There's some kids that come to town and bank here while they're at the University, but my focus is the Warrensburg community. At some point, somebody has to define what they want Downtown to be, and if we don't do that, it will define itself. If there's not a vision, like the Power and Light District or Laclede's Landing, then you end up with a bunch of undesirable businesses because of the cheap rent. That's what I struggle with. Do I chase the traffic pattern? But with the new Arts Council, we're beginning to define what we want Downtown to be. Downtown has defined itself as a party place. Lots of negative stuff. So I'm excited to see that there is some direction. A lot of towns are known for their antiques or their arts and entertainment, but I think it's important for us to have a vision of what we want Downtown to become.

**Moderator: Would you say that Downtown's moving in the right or wrong direction?**

It's moving.

(laughter.)

The fact that we've refurbished the Downtown area, and we're on the third leg of that, new curbs and water and sewer and trees, that's a good thing. We had one incident that I'm aware of that caused all the furor, and it upsets me that we have one incident and we just throw the dishwasher

out. I think that's wrong. Was there problems? Sure. But I think we could've resolved it a little differently. Also, the Courthouse and the City offices are Downtown, and everyone has to come down here for that, and we need to take advantage of them when they do come here. Everyone in the county has to come to the Courthouse.

With the renovation of Downtown, with the streetscape, I have people come in commenting on how much better it looks, how much nicer it looks. We all went through growing pains with each phase, but I think it still helps make the Downtown a more viable place for people to want to come. There's no question that we want to draw people Downtown. My store's located Downtown, and right north of me, the consignment store has created a great amount of traffic, these two kids have been very successful, and it's got to help the whole Downtown. They might shop elsewhere, or have lunch Downtown. I have redoing the Downtown is a big step forward. We're committed to staying Downtown, even though there are changes in traffic patterns, and we've considered moving, but we're committed to staying here.

I feel the same way. The largest furniture store in Missouri moved out near the highway, so I had to do more advertising, and all my advertising has paid off. Billboards and the TV ads have pulled the most people, but it's constant advertising. But we're established, and the community knows where we're at. And thank God we're not new, during these economic times. Being here as long as we've had has been an asset.

We've had some problems, though. Us, \_\_\_\_\_'s store, and the consignment store, we're the three businesses that are open a little later on Saturday, and I see that as an increase. We need to look at some of the issues...we want to draw the people Downtown, but our store draws every 30 minutes during the weekdays, 11 or 12 people coming in for student lessons at our store, and that means parents bringing cars down, no parking... we have a parking issue, and in spite of our redesign of Downtown, there are some traffic issues like in the alley by \_\_\_\_\_'s store, there's barely a narrow path you can turn into if you need access to the alley. There have been changes that the redesign have brought about, some positive and some negative. Visual is positive. But I have a hard time pulling out of Market Street by the Courthouse and turning.

(many people talking at once.)

As business owners, you have to have a positive attitude about what's Downtown. When they started in front of my store, it was over a year, and I had to listen to a jackhammer, but if I complain to my customers... I counted parking spots, and I've told my customers that we do have more parking. For your customers, you can't show them that you're not embracing the changes. You have to buck up and tell them, hang with it; it's going to be easier and pretty.

There was supposed to be a bump-out right in front of my store, and park bench and a trash can to take out the parking space in front of my store. As you headed north out of that alley, there was going to be a bigger obstacle. You're taking two parking spaces away from me, on my side of the street, and there's a bump-out right in front of the bike store. It was a hassle. But just getting involved, we made a small change, but it helped me in that situation. There are some cases where we lost parking, but it looks great.

We had a stoplight in the middle of Downtown, and when they put it on flashing red, they realized that it's better to have a stop sign. And that's probably a blessing, because it makes people slow down through Downtown.

***Moderator: You all are pretty closely connected to these changes. What do you hear from your clients about how user-friendly Downtown is related to parking?***

From our clients, I haven't heard a lot of negative. I get a lot of people in and out, and I don't hear that much complaining. When I was across the street in a smaller building, we had one parking space, and that was it. If they can see the front of your building, they can walk to you, but we still have a problem with employees parking Downtown. I have a no-tolerance policy with my employees...they get caught parking, and they're gone.

We haven't had a ticket-writer in months, and people live above it. There's a lot of apartments. The people who live here have figured out that they can park here without getting tickets.

We naturally have a parking problem, because of the size of our businesses and the amount of parking. The employee parking problem, I monitor, and I make them move their cars. The bank has gotten very aggressive about towing, and I tell them "go ahead." The college kids are smart, and they should know.

I do my best to park where you're supposed to, and I go to lunch from 11 to 12, and there's nothing. If I've gone around the block 3 times, I park where I can. I move it in 2 hours, but I still park there.

The business owners do a good job, but the employees parking, that leaves very little place for customers to park. I circle everywhere at lunchtime until somebody leaves.

It's a good problem. I'm not complaining.

When the City had a meter-person who marked cars and made people move, all the parking lots were full, but now they're all half-empty, because people are parking in front of our stores.

My business is a little different than someone getting a pair of shoes. Mine are scheduled lessons for 30 minutes. The parents come by with a child and let the child off. I've had to talk to the police about the speed of officers coming around the corner with the kids coming out of their parents' cars and crossing the street. One of the issues for me, deciding to stay Downtown, is a safety issue. It's unsafe for these kids to be crossing the street.

We'd all like to have our own parking lots, but it's not feasible. There's no way.

Sometimes, though, parking issues are a perceived thing. I'm not down here, so I can't...I'm empathetic to your situation, but I come down to Pine Street to eat, and if I'm out driving, I go park at the lot at the end of the block. I don't look for a place on Pine. People want to park where they can see where they're walking into, but when people go to Wal-Mart, they walk 4 times the distance that it would take to walk from the end of a block. There are spots within half the distance of what you'd walk with Wal-Mart.

I have children, though, not adults.

I have elderly people who call me and tell me, "I couldn't find a parking space where I could walk," where at Wal-Mart, they can park in handicapped spots. So I tell them to call me when they leave the house, and I meet them out front.

If we as business owners would force our employees not to park where our customers need to park, we wouldn't have this problem. End of statement.

**Moderator: A couple of other questions about user-friendliness. How are business hours? Are they convenient?**

8 to 5 Monday through Saturday, not open on Sunday.

Real close to that.

I'm 9 to 6.

Here's the difference in Warrensburg. Most people do have a lunch break, but I'm there 10 to 8, and I tell people that if they see me there, they can come in. Or, they can call me, and I'll be there in the morning or in the evening.

**Moderator: Is Downtown easy to find?**

The great thing about cell phones, I don't know how often I get calls asking where we're located.

(many people talking at once.)

I have people getting off 50 asking the easiest way to get there, and you can just tell them.

**Moderator: How do you communicate with your clients about your business or events?**

Ever-changing.

\_\_\_\_\_ is starting this Facebook for people Downtown, which is amazing, and I don't get it, and she's tried to tell me like 3 times, and I still don't get it, but I think that is awesome, because she can go on there and post specials and the tournament on big-screen TV at Heroes and all kinds of things.

Traditionally, newspaper, radio, billboards, word-of-mouth, direct mail, and now Internet blasting. I don't think there's anything we haven't tried.

We have a number of people from out of town that come for baseball games or for the State basketball tournament...

Literature festival.

I don't think we take advantage of those people. We need to make them go through Downtown or something to take advantage of them.

(many people talking at once.)

What it all boils down to, we're so fortunate to be in a town with an Air Force Base, a University, a county seat, small industry, farming...

You remember when they built the overpass at the college and they closed down 13 and rerouted it?

As a college student, that was a very frightening time. People don't stop at crosswalks. We would have to stand at the corner forever. We're late to class, and still standing at the crosswalk.

It really increased traffic Downtown, though.

***Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown. Let me ask you, what sorts of businesses would be a good fit for Downtown?***

I think we have to define what we want it to be. If we want it to continue to be a central business district, that defines some types of businesses, but if we want arts and entertainment or antiques, that will define some businesses. It's a chicken and the egg thing. It's kind of defining itself now, with law firms and some restaurants and bars, and other types of shops, furniture, consignment, skateboards...right now, it's a hodgepodge. As we define the Downtown area, that'll start determining the type of business that will stay or the type that will find something else.

I agree to some extent, but the hodgepodge is kind of neat, too. You have the kid who rides the skateboard, and the kid's mom drives him down here, but the mom goes and looks for shoes, or the wife who wants to look for a chair, but the husband wants to find out about an old photograph. I like the idea of an entertainment district, but you don't want it to be a ghost town at night. You might add a new element to it, entertainment, maybe someone's waiting to listen to a band and they look in our store windows. We've got to find a way to make the flea market work with the rest of them.

(many people talking at once.)

People go to the antique place on Sunday morning, and it's amazing how many cars are down there.

They're open on Sunday, and it's a destination. It's amazing.

We need to diversify, yes, but I have this fear that nags at me that if we don't determine some direction for Downtown, it will define itself. There are communities that end up with porn shops and tattoo parlors that end up in the places with the cheapest rent. With the stuff going up by Wal-Mart, people will start moving out. My fear is that if you get people moving, chasing the business out to the loop, you'll have people going to medium-rent districts, and Downtown will be vacant. That would hurt all of us, because these types of stores will go in. If we define what we want Downtown to be. If we want it to be a haven for small businesses where you can walk from

store to store, we need to define that and start setting the path to attract that kind of business. In Kansas City, people were vacating Downtown, and they consciously started designing it to be...

They'd left downtown Kansas City, and then they started revitalizing those buildings. We're ahead of that curve a little. People started redesigning some of the buildings Downtown, and we've redone the streetscape and the infrastructure, and now Kansas City is in the paper every day.

I think we're on the right path with the streetscape and the utilities. It's time now to define who we are and what we want Downtown to be.

There aren't that many empty buildings Downtown now.

And I think because it's a college town, I just don't see problems with porno shops coming into the Downtown area. I see restaurants, nice bars...

The tea house is coming in... \_\_\_\_\_ is going to sell a lot of stuff, do some serious work, and convert it to an art gallery and café and bringing the college students down here. It might be crazy art, but it'll make you think.

You've got to be open-minded.

(agreement.)

There's no vacant buildings. I mean, there's one little thing that's vacant, but otherwise...

I'd love to see Club Blue be a venue for bands.

Yeah.

The Arts Commission is eyeing it—would anyone like to contribute?

Any kind of music, from classical to anything...

There's tremendous upkeep on older buildings.

Yeah, I'm aware of that.

Yeah, but it's a lot cheaper to refurbish one than to buy some land somewhere and build a building.

I agree with what \_\_\_\_\_'s saying about having a vision for Downtown. We need to think about, we're all day business, but we have night businesses Downtown, and a lot of night people aren't here to contribute to this discussion. You have day, you have evening dinner, and you have the 10 PM to 2 AM that is completely different. And a lot of people are out here spending money. What they're doing is irrelevant, they're spending money.

We need to embrace them. It's jam-packed in those places.

If you stayed open later, you probably wouldn't acquire that much business, because it's the drinkers, not the eaters.

We don't get a lot of people after 10 or 10:30 because we don't serve underage drinkers. We get some graduate students, but we close it sometimes around 12 instead of 1 because we don't really have people after 12.

As we redefine what we want to be, we have to think in those terms of day, dinner, and after-dinner entertainment, and we have to define what these are.

Our business Monday through Thursday, we're open until 8, and we get some of that evening overlap and people coming early to the bars. I wonder why cars are here, because you can't leave your car parked past 2 AM... I have to be careful when I'm working, and I'm a night person, and I have trouble making sure I'm gone by 2 AM because sometimes I have work to finish. They try to promote...the students potentially are the ones who are parking out there and have drunk too much—

Not just the students.

You never hear the students complain about parking, though.

We force them to drive their car home drunk rather than taking a cab.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: You mentioned that you have apartments Downtown. Do you think there's a need or demand for more or different housing?***

I think we have plenty.

We need a grocery store there.

(many people talking at once.)

\_\_\_\_\_ tried having a convenience thing down there.

I loved it.

We need a bakery or something.

Bakery, drugstore, grocery store.

There used to be a butcher store in the 60's.

(many people talking at once.)

**Moderator:** *What about parks, recreation, walking trails? Is there a place for any of that sort of thing?*

Probably not.

Maybe a little more green space, but we've tried to do that with the streetscape already.

(side conversations.)

...it was an interesting, a quiet conversation, and the concept is to do something with those buildings, and we thought about making green space, a little park and a gazebo and a focal point, and there was a massive uproar. It goes against everything that Main Street, Inc. is about, and in order to create green space, you need to eliminate a building or a parking lot.

...when its spring and summer, we have someone walking in thanking us because it all looks nice.

We've got a park right down the street here, and the City has plans to tie the walking trail in.

They have plans on bringing stuff down here.

**Moderator:** *Are there other things about the look and feel of Downtown that need to be priorities?*

One thing I'd love to see happen, and it's going to take embracing some of the nightlife—I don't think we've embraced the fact that college students spend a lot of money Downtown—but I'd like to see a walking district after a certain time on Friday nights. I could foresee closing Pine Street at a certain time on Friday night, and become a walking district where people can move up and down... it's going to have to be managed and *embraced*, but I could see street performers and bands and a really nice walking district to embrace that after 9:00 crowd. I don't know how you make it work, though.

When I was in San Diego, they would do that after 9:00. They'd take their tables and umbrellas for the restaurants out in the street.

Did they have parking garages?

There were. But some of them not, you'd just walk. When I was in Hawaii, everyone walked everywhere.

How do you keep it clean? There's beer bottles and cigarette butts in my flower beds. The drunks...

We have building owners that have done a good job investing in their buildings, but not everybody does. Whether they rent or own, they just don't keep their area clean and washed. As far as the investment in the building itself, we probably haven't done enough in providing financial incentives for buildings to do that. There was a time when paint grants and awning grants were available, and it was just enough to push them over the edge, but the hope now is

that if we spend money Downtown with the streetscape, they'll pump in some money too to make their businesses more attractive. But we have business owners now who simply do not. But it would be nice if we had more money to provide a little incentive.

***Moderator: Are there other things that the City could do to help your businesses thrive?***

I think they do a good job supporting us, supporting Main Street and the Chamber. I don't know that it's the City's responsibility to do that.

I think that if you try to impose rules and regulations about zoning and what they have to do with the front of their building, it might hurt Downtown. People don't like being told what to do. I understand it has to look nice, but to say it has to be done in this way...

If you go into a mall, though...

I understand that, but I don't think...I think if you come in and demand that things be done, it's going to make them arch their backs and say no.

You have to make it financially attractive.

But you can't go in and say, "your building *will* look like this."

I think some people have fixed up their buildings because their neighbors have. They've redone the façade and taken down the awnings.

And years ago they gave you money to help do that.

If you would follow their guidelines.

And if you wanted to get a paint grant, you had to choose the historical colors. And we had help; we had work groups to help with the work, and money to pay for new awnings.

Was that Main Street?

Yeah.

(agreement.)

Now that's not available, though, and we have fewer people forking out the bucks to do that.

It was attractive, to get tax credits.

Kids seem to be going back and embracing the older stuff, and I think where Main Street has redone their building, we did ours, and people are going back to the old brick and tall ceilings, and it just makes a big difference when people see it, and they think, "Wow." I think that helps to keep that moving in that direction.

**Moderator:** *I have one other question. What are your thoughts on having a Special Business District with a sales tax that's earmarked specifically for funding projects Downtown?*

I think during these economic times...

I don't think it's a good idea at all.

I don't shop at Wal-Mart because I think it's wrong for them to tax me without me voting on it. This whole country really got started because we wanted the right to vote on getting taxed, and Wal-Mart pushed it through, and I was mad. I don't think...

Our representative government made that decision...

But they kept us in a fog. I tried to figure it out, and I couldn't.

That whole area is all going to be...that tax is going to be associated with that.

Here's the problem with TDDs and TIFs and all those things. Love them or hate them, our competition's using them to expand and improve. It's out there, and our competition's using them left and right to get things done. So, I'd be open-minded to it, but I would want to have it be up-front and out in the open, have a better education process. I agree that the last experience was kind of interesting.

That's what happens when you're trying to go after outside businesses, you're looking at outside developers, and they have the dollars.

(many people talking at once.)

If they come up with something that says, "We're only going to tax food items," we're probably going to be in favor of it, and you might not because it impacts you. I think it needs to be broader based, but if we do a Downtown area extra tax, that'll drive people away from Downtown. It needs to be Warrensburg-based, not Downtown-based.

(side conversations.)

The whole purpose of tax-free days was to bring people to Warrensburg to shop. But it's up to you to attract them to your business. If you want to have a sale on that day, or put an ad in the paper to advertise a special...

There's things you can do. Some of the shoes qualify for that, so you as a business owner piggyback and say, "Get 10% off your meal if you show a receipt from Brown's Shoe."

It's beyond me how you give people a 6 or 7% coupon and people flock, but I have a 20% off sale, and people don't come. That day brings in tremendous difference.

I notice a monster difference those days.

Yeah.

(agreement.)

It's like when people come to town for ballgames. You've got to get them in your businesses, somehow.

(agreement.)

*Moderator: Thank you very much.*

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## SECTION V

### CITY OFFICIALS, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATION DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

Laid-back, middle-class, diverse, because of our Air Base and our University, very educated community.

Because of the University and the Air Force Base, and the turnover of the community, between 30 and 40 percent annually, we're very open and accepting as a community, Midwestern but with some international flavor, since we have international students as well as international business.

My first thing is, it's a great place to live. It's safe. I think of it as a big enough community to have a lot to offer but small enough to have a home-town feel. I really really like that about it. It's a great place to live.

You know, this is also a very giving community. There have been many times over the last few years when things come up, people need heart or lung transplants, and people take up the cause. We've got a very active food bank here. This community, time and time again, will rally around and muster up whatever's necessary to take care of folks.

I think our community is larger than our statistics show. We serve a much greater population. Our stats are deceiving, with the Air Base, the University, and the surrounding population.

The Air Force brought me to Warrensburg, and I decided to raise my family here. The crime rate's extremely low, your kids can walk the streets, and the schools are good. We stayed here to raise our kids.

***Moderator: Where do people do their everyday shopping?***

Wal-Mart.

The grocery store.

Wal-Mart and the two supermarkets.

***Moderator: Is Warrensburg a hub for the surrounding areas?***

Yes.

The County. You run across people from Higginsville... (unintelligible)

Lowe's has brought some things, some restaurants, so with the opening of Lowe's, there's more from the north that has come. Because we're 40 minutes from Kansas City, we have that competition. Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, Sedalia. Clothing is an issue. We have some clothing stores, but people may move out. JC Penney is one I can think of. But because we're a county seat, people do their business here.

88% of my customers come from over 15 minutes away. And I have a furniture store.

I don't know the statistics, but we have a large number of people from the county to our practice, from Odessa and Sedalia and Clinton, and they use the community for their eating and shopping while they're here taking care of their medical needs.

We talk about the Air Force Base and the University being major parts of our community, but we also have a great medical base, with specialists and some of the best doctors.

Our specialists here are as good as anybody in the region. The people in the community and the County realize that.

***Moderator: What about dining and entertainment options? Where do you take people when they're visiting?***

Everybody here could name a restaurant they'd like to see here, but we're very fortunate to have as many as we have... (unintelligible.)

I think the restaurants are a draw. I remember talking to \_\_\_\_\_ when he had his restaurant, and he said a lot of people come from Sedalia to get away. We could use more, and we want more.

Even now, on Friday or Saturday night, you have to wait to get into restaurants, even with the economy. Applebee's, Rib Crib...

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

Well, for eating establishments, the Downtown has lost 3. Barney's, Corner Café, and Tea House.

It's closed down.

It's to reopen, though.

The Corner Café was pretty popular.

One was lost by fire and one by the passing of the owner.

They retired.

That's an interesting mix, because that was the old-time folks from the County that would go to

those places, and now we don't have that as we once did. Come to the county seat and get a home-cooked meal.

But the restaurants Downtown, Fitter's and Heroes and Fan Club and Johnny's, La Sous Terre, we've raised our alcohol limit from 19-year-olds getting into establishments, there's some shuffling out going on as far as restaurants. But Fitter's is doing pretty well. We have restaurant capability.

We're getting more quality in the clientele because it's 21 and over, but we're getting more quality from the folks who are visiting the restaurants, more a restaurant environment than a heavy drinking environment.

One restaurant owner told me that he tries to get good customers out by 10 before the riff-raff shows up.

***Moderator: More generally speaking, what's your perception of the direction Downtown's going?***

Right direction, from the police department standpoint.

Cosmetically, it's not impressive at all.

It needs more mixed use. \_\_\_\_\_ likes to call La Sous Terre the jewel of Pine Street, but its lost vitality, because there needs to be more options for people to go down there other than just bars or those three restaurants. There is a little boutique clothing store there, but there's some consignment shops and less attractive businesses down there. If we could get those out...I think those are obstacles to development that would allow Downtown to diversify as a destination.

There's a lot of businesses down there. Furniture.

Screen printer.

There's a church.

Music stores.

Bike shop.

A hookah bar.

There's some social services that have moved in to the community that, uh, Lighthouse, Salvation Army, the Missouri Valley housing, and the services the County provides with the attorney and title and that. There's a daylight Downtown and a nighttime Downtown, and there's been a lot of discussion about moving the nighttime into more arts and entertainment, a higher...where there would be more entertainment for all groups.

There needs to be the element for folks that can come down and window shop and stop for a drink, more than just go eat.

There's nothing to stay down there for once you've had dinner.

I think we have a vibrant Downtown comparatively, but it's hard to get people to support the types of businesses that have come in and left, because people from our town have not been very supportive of those businesses. Bridal boutiques and women's clothing, they just weren't supported by people. They don't think of our Downtown as a place to shop. As far as the looks, they are going in the right direction, but you're working with so many building owners that aren't business owners, or renters that are business owners, and it's been a challenge, but I think they're going in the right direction.

The Library's on the north end and it drives a lot of traffic to that area of town. It used to be Downtown, but in its new facility, it's welcoming and inviting and better access, and more people use it.

It's more visible.

There's some businesses driving traffic, the music shop, and the flower shops.

You'll see people from the farmer's market on a Saturday going to the Library.

Parking is one of those challenges that Downtown faces. Where do you put the customers, and how far are they going to have to travel?

I think we've made some improvements.

I think the parking is more of a perception than a reality. You can get the people who work in the businesses to park not on the street. People will drive to Wal-Mart and they'll walk from the back of the parking lot in, but Downtown, if they can't find the right spot, they go on.

We have a lot of second-story residential, too.

Which is a plus.

But it creates parking problems.

It gives you a customer base, though.

I think a convenience store Downtown would be a real plus. I think one of the neat things is that we could market to the Kansas City area as something unique. Someone could come the same distance as Lawrence to Warrensburg. Lawrence advertises entertainment and that sort of thing.

***Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? Tell me a little more about parking.***

We've done some parking studies, and we reorganized parking this last year to create a higher turnover of the hotter parking spots in front of the retail and restaurants, and we gave free parking to the less convenient parking spaces to encourage employees to park there, and I think that's helping, but I don't think that solved the problem. We probably have enough parking, but

it's just barely enough, and it's not where most people want to see it. We need a larger parking lot right in the core of Downtown, in the West Culton Street area, and we need some corridors to connect that parking to West Pine Street and the Courthouse Square. A large number of apartments are using what used to be more customer parking, but they're also customers themselves.

There's some of the buildings, all on Pine Street, there's perception of no parking, and there's some buildings that aren't of the best use, used for storage, and if they could lose a parking spot or two...if they all had businesses, and there was all parking spots, you'd see more parking.

We think we've added a little over 30 apartments to our Downtown in the last 10 years, so that's 30 or more cars.

***Moderator: Is it easy for visitors to find things Downtown?***

I think we have signage now that has helped. But I don't think our Downtown is easy to find. When I moved here, I didn't even know there was a Downtown, until someone showed me an alternate way to the University. Because it's off of 13, a lot of new people to the area think 13 or Business 50 is our Downtown. They don't even know we have a real Downtown.

I find myself giving directions a lot. It's not totally military people. Its consultants and visitors and all sorts of people that don't have any idea. If they can figure out where Downtown is, they think it's the Courthouse.

The signage to get from the major highways is not prevalent. It's more out where there's space. My mother-in-law couldn't find it because she came from 13.

We've done a great job on our signage and stuff, but there's more that we could fine-tune. At Russell and Holden Street...

They've developed a wayfinding and sign program.

(many people talking at once.)

I've been in other communities, though. It's the same problem. You start getting so spread out, but the wayfinding signs are a big help.

I think our wayfinding is better than most places.

(side conversations.)

We've done some of the moving places to parking, but there's something more that we could do as far as circular patterns, so that you could see... at the same time, we're getting an awful lot of signs.

(many people talking at once.)

We need to get more user-friendly for our elderly people. We've got some deep step-offs, and I think that things that are going to happen are going to help for parking, but this is one area that would be helpful.

(mumbling...unintelligible)... if people have a hard time parking, they tend to just drive on.

As the baby boomers move through, and with the University and the military, we're going to have to think more along those lines of designing...we've done some of that with the bigger signs.

If we focus on it, then we could market it too.

**Moderator: How are business hours Downtown? Are they convenient?**

They could do better.

There's a daytime and a nighttime. Most close at 5 or 6.

I think Emporia...they stay open later and stay on Saturday.

Brown's stays open on Saturday.

Euphoria stays open late.

So if it was bridged into 7, you might get some more.

When I came to town, there wasn't anyone open past 5.

Day and night are separated, though. There's no overlap. If you want to go Downtown between 5 and 8, there's very little after-work cocktail hour activity, there's a couple hours where it's real quiet.

I think the restaurants are open until 6 or 7.

But you don't see a lot of people there at 5:30.

People want to go home from work, not out.

**Moderator: How do people get information about what's going on Downtown?**

It used to be a little more effort, by the newspaper, to have a Downtown page... it, I don't think there's any effort to my knowledge in the last few years.

There was. I think that's an area that could...

It's hard to get anyone to be supportive, though.

I think that's part of it, though. You don't get the customers if you don't have anything down there. We used to have the arts festival.

When they have the car show, they depend on flyers and word of mouth.

I think there's a real problem of communication when we're trying to get information out. The newspaper has limited circulation, the radio station maybe does a little better, but it's hard to get timely information out to the people unless you do the website or something.

I have to advertise, and it's very hard.

And there's a big habit of the type of people here...when I came in 87, the Downtown was in really bad shape. It was a disaster. So I think there's a habit, and a lot of people get in their car and go to Kansas City or go hunting or fishing, or pick up something for their garden in Wal-Mart, but a lot of people don't think of staying here.

That's because Downtown has become a bar street. If you hear about events, it's a pub crawl. It didn't mix with those who wanted to do other activities. I didn't go down there.

Even when you try to do events. We had a sesquicentennial... and Halloween is a big deal.

If you have the regular things down there, but you have the 21 and over now, and that moves you in a different direction. The Halloween, look at how many people bring their kids down there. If every year you have regular, consistent events... we used to have the arts... that was regular, but that went away. Chautauqua came and went.

The Blind Boone festival stayed 5 years and backed off.

I'm going to give a different spin on that. It's hard as a business person to support festivals, because you don't have any business.

But, we said earlier, we want to draw people Downtown. People might see the businesses Downtown because they take their children trick-or-treating.

(many people talking at once.)

It needs to be constant advertising, weekly, co-opting...that's what Main Street should be doing.

I don't know their money situation. When the arts festival was here, it continued to build, and I watched it, and it was getting impressive, but it went away.

We have a tremendous resource of student art, that whole idea of the arts, we have like 600 artists in that program there, that if they had the ability to show stuff and be involved in the Downtown...

The Mid-Missouri Art Group?

You've got professors there, too.

The timing, though, with people getting their work done and displaying it before school got out and left. They've tried to do it in businesses. But had they had a place for it, it would've continued.

I think that's what \_\_\_\_\_ has turned the Tea House into.

They've backed off that for a while.

That brings up another thing. The ability to use the existing buildings and codes, and how we move into that.

I believe that our community...there's a lot of communities that have an annual festival that people identify with.

(side conversations.)

Warrensburg Downtown streets are quite narrow, and a lot of things you try to bring in, you have to spread things out... (unintelligible). We don't have a real good area to bring in big events with a stage, the logistics are tough, and our Courthouse Square is quite small. That creates a problem with bringing these types of things Downtown. We have to take all the parking out of that area, but it becomes difficult for people to walk that far.

The quaintness...the design is tough.

One of the things the community misses out on, we could generate business Downtown, but the university has our annual homecoming parade, and thousands of people come in for that, but we don't really market that. People come in, but the Downtown or the whole community could capitalize on that to a much higher level than we do. We've had problems with alcohol, but beyond that, we have kids and all these out of town folks, but we don't make anything of it. There aren't any vendors; the Downtown businesses don't do anything unusual...

That's a culture change. We've finally got to the point where we're in a phase where alcohol's not as important as it once was, but why not have something that would focus on food? A food-fest for the whole weekend.

You could tie a lot of different things together.

But you've got the Downtown restaurants that don't want to bring in outside vendors, but they don't want to go out on the streets either.

But you're drawing a lot of people that day.

If you're watching the parade, you can't get a cup of coffee or a hot chocolate.

Java Junction.

The church sets up a little booth there, but they're few and far between.

**Moderator:** *Let's talk about the kinds of businesses you'd like to see here in the future.*

A dinner theater.

Comedy or something like that. We have a venue already established, and that would work in pretty easy.

An art gallery.

Definitely, an art gallery.

A convenience store.

A bookstore.

Yeah.

We have a used bookstore.

But it's not very big.

Specialty shops.

You've said before, there's not really a good place for a younger set, not college age, to go get a beer after work.

There's not a young professional gathering spot, and I think it would be great to have one. And another thing I see in a lot of university towns is a place for art house flicks, a brew-and-view.

We have zoning against those.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

Like, independent films.

Let's say you were thinking of a place Downtown that you wanted to have a beer, but you don't want to go in for that drink-all-night crowd, I think the 21 and over crowd addresses some of that. Their idea is to have a little bit of a higher clientele. But in the first 2 weeks, that clientele doesn't come, so they bring out the \$5 all-you-can-drink.

One of the guys who was trying to do a microbrewery, he had consultants come in and say, "no, you can't do it here because of the college students." They said he has to dumb it down.

I really believe with Club Blue, his idea was a higher clientele. He opened up with a piano bar.

So what we want to see is not what the market's going to bear.

I think that will change, but that's going to take time.

I think the 21-and-over will help it, but if you don't have the cooperative market, you won't sustain it.

You're not going to get the young professionals if you don't market.

And once the young professionals get in the habit of going to Kansas City, you lose them very quickly.

Quite frankly, my wife and I have three small ones, and there's not a business we can really frequent.

(unintelligible)... you can always take an area like that and create a restaurant or a museum. You need to have some draw to bring people in. There's got to be something there. Right now, it's a bar street, and there's nothing to draw you to it.

We need a path to get there, too.

...you have to have something in every building to keep them moving through your Downtown. That's important. Unless people understand that...

I think the continuity's hard because it's chopped-up. By the UMB Bank, you dead-end and then you jog. You struggle to have a continuous flow across Holden Street. How do you tie Culton, which is up the hill...? If you could develop methods of ingress and egress...we think of Downtown as one block, but we're not interconnecting our Downtown to make it a whole.

It'll help when we have all the lighting and all the phasing done, because then you have visual cues. But you also need signage saying, "You're in Downtown Warrensburg."

What about a professional medical legal building, to bring in new professionals. I think urgent care is really big in our area, and if you have that Downtown, you bring people to the Downtown. Dentistry and podiatry, and then, you know, legal professionals, just have a building for those types of services. Those things might evolve.

I've got another idea. Art supply. I'm one of those people who does it in my off-time. There's a lot of people like me. And you have the students, and the arts group. I've got to go to Lee's Summit to Hobby Lobby.

Or Michael's.

You don't need a whole lot of space for that.

You can get it at the college, but you can't park there.

A good quality bakery would go good, too... (many people talking).

That farmer's market.

That farmer's market's on the corner now, but we need to find a way to make it centrally located.

But add to that. Add arts and crafts.

They're trying that this year.

I still think that mules are a big deal, and it ties into so much, and that's our history.

It's never been promoted.

Not to go back to that, but I still believe the community needs a big festival once a year. You could tie in the mule. Tie it together. I mean, Lee's Summit has something named after an old crook. They all have something that gives them the identity.

(side conversations about festivals.)

We start and we stop. We need one thing, every year, same time of year, and you could draw people from all around.

There's a culture in this community of leaving Saturday or Sunday.

You're also fighting the culture of the people who stopped organizing these because of how much work there is.

I understand, but...people are leaving because we don't have anything to stay for. If we have something to keep them here for, say, the homecoming, they're here. Tie them in.

It'd have to be one event that the whole community does.

It's got to have everything.

It can't be in the fall.

Tie it into homecoming, though.

I think one of the things that my wife and I miss the most is these Christmas markets with booths and food and you can walk around, and our problem is, where do you get people to come in and do it. Those festivals, it takes some money to get those people in, and in the first year or two, they won't make much money. There's one in Hermann, and...

***Moderator: What about parks and rec? Walking trails, green space?***

Absolutely we need that, and it's a good fit.

(agreement.)

Linking the university, linking Pine Street, linking a trail, absolutely. Our community said they want more services, traffic reform, and more trails. Trails and connections is very important.

***Moderator: I know we've talked about the look and feel of Downtown, but are there other areas that you think ought to be a high priority?***

I think that we're going to take the streetscape into the City Hall area, and we're calling that a Civic Center, but we also need to go out from Holden and around the Courthouse Square...there's a lot of blighted area right around the Downtown that could be much better utilized for, if nothing else, parking. There's a lot of areas...we need to tie all these things together. Which comes first, investment or the businesses to draw the investment?

I think we need to make that connect from the Downtown to the college.

There's 11,000 students.

Bring the arts closer in to link it up. One thing, I would like to think out of the box and look at other cities, and I think there are things we could do on the outside, like the cafes outside.

Outdoor seating?

I'd love it too, but I think our ordinances don't allow that.

But I'm saying, yeah there's a design issue, but if you find the space...

When I was driving through Copper Canyon, there were kids all over and people all over the patio. If you bring that down there, you open up a whole new way for people to participate.

We're sitting here 2, 3 blocks from the University, and we're not capitalizing on students. That's a huge customer base that nobody's hitting, other than the bars. We could be doing a lot to draw those kids in as customers.

If you ask most of the kids, they only come here to drink.

But you need something down here for them.

The businesses need to cater more for students.

A lot of students go home for the weekend, but if there's a way we can keep them here...

The arts are important. If we move into the arts area, and if you're right there, and you get student artwork...

The other thing that needs attention are our alleys. You hear a lot of comments about burying the utilities. If you had an alley-scape program, it fronts on the railroad tracks, but you've also got parking. Right now, our businesses are oriented to only be accessed from the front, but a lot of towns have attractive alleys have reoriented their buildings.

Look at Lawrence. People park on the back and walk through the stores.

Zona Rosa's like that, too. There's parking on the backside.

And the image from the Amtrak.

That's what people see from the train.

If you've ever ridden Amtrak, most towns look ugly from the railroad tracks, and if we looked amazing, that would be even more of a draw. It would really make us stand out.

***Moderator: Thinking about other downtowns, what are towns that you admire?***

I can tell you what I wouldn't want is to close off the streets as they did in Atchison. People want to be able to walk in.

Parsons, Kansas did that, and it killed their downtown.

(many people talking at once, agreeing that a pedestrian mall is not a good idea.)

I like downtown Lawrence. I think that's one of the most vibrant I've seen. I grew up in Lawrence. They didn't want chains downtown, and downtown Lawrence ran the mall out of business, and there's real retail downtown. Abercrombie and the Buckle, they're in downtown Lawrence. Kids are down there. They go to the Penny Ante sweets shop. I see the potential with Warrensburg. If you could get a couple businesses that attract students.

We need a drugstore Downtown.

I can't think of a particular place, but I like a combination of the historic like Hermann, but also the design of the newer, so Zona Rosa, where you can flow easily. I can't think of another community.

They're starting to build malls, though...

Every downtown I know in Missouri has problems.

(many people talking at once.)

Columbia's struggling...Jeff City, they're all struggles.

I'd like to see us keep that old movie theater, that's something that's been there since the 60s. It's just a gem that we have here. Like Lion's Lake. It's something we should use as a centerpiece.

It's for sale.

(many people talking at once.)

To me, Clinton has a better looking Square than we do. At Christmas, it's decorated and it has unity.

They were progressive enough to put lots of parking there.

It's the largest Square in Missouri.

I like Marshall's downtown, but they don't have anything down there. It looks good, but...

(many people talking at once.)

The town I'm from in Ohio has something unique, I think. They have a standing group called Celebrate Delaware, and that one organization is kind of the overseer of the arts festival and all the events, but it's all coordinated through that umbrella organization. You have to get the Downtown people to participate. We run activities, but we don't involve the business owners.

A few years back, something got attacked and defeated before it even got off the ground, but we need a special district or tax to get money into a fund to fund this stuff. What I've seen is, the theme that I heard is, you couldn't get everybody moving at the same time. Once you get it moving, it moves, but getting it to move is the hard part.

Do you think getting the activities and bringing people down to start, or getting the businesses first? A lot of communities that do well have the activities...

I think the hurdle...the businesses in Downtown Warrensburg don't support Main Street. Some do, but they carry 90% of the load. But 90% of them don't do anything and aren't behind the organization. So then you've got Main Street trying to program and market, but they're only representing 10% of the businesses. Sometimes I think the other 90% are outright sabotaging. If this is the wrong organization for this Downtown...let's address that. We're not going to see success with anything until you get all the business owners to buy in...they badmouth the Main Street people.

Many of the businesses were very much against the fall festival.

They're not enthusiastic about their own businesses. They don't think about the broader marketing.

There may be people that don't know that La Sous Terre is down there.

(agreement.)

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

## SECTION VI

### LONG-TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

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

The people here are friendly and helpful and welcoming.

The schools are really good, and I have kids in school here.

With the student population, it's a little younger population.

For being in Missouri and in a smaller community, we have diversity because of the Base population and the University.

It's a very transient community. People are in...

47% turnover every year.

We have a lot of people who come back to settle.

And we have a lot of Base people who retire here.

It is a very welcoming community. It speaks to our community that people come back. It's safe, we don't have a crime problem.

(agreement.)

We have a great community if you have a family. We don't if you're a young professional. In that 25 to whatever range...everything's centered around church and education. I've heard a lot of complaints from young professionals. They don't want to do the Pine Street bar thing with the students.

It's not easy to be a single adult.

We could retain a lot more people leaving college if they really liked the City and if we had those opportunities.

**Moderator:** *Do you keep a lot of people from the college?*

No.

Rarely.

(agreement.)

People who come from smaller towns like it, but they get caught up in where the jobs are. And you've got people who want to go back to the City.

And we have a lack of entertainment.

The college students go to Kansas City for the career opportunities. My husband and I went to Kansas City after college for our careers, but then we came back.

**Moderator:** *Do people commute to Kansas City?*

Not really.

That's a plus for me. I can be at their airport in an hour and twenty, or I could eat at the Plaza in an hour.

I can get to St. Louis and Branson, too. I don't have to live there, but I feel like we have a nice central location.

I think we have a nice city, and we have activities like hunting and other stuff like that.

I think Kansas City's distance is not a deterrent for someone who's okay with commuting. That's what we're getting at. For me, I put myself in the category of young professional.

(laughter.)

25 to whatever, right, \_\_\_\_\_?

(laughter.)

It takes you an hour to get across St. Louis, so what's an hour from here to Kansas City.

It takes 20 minutes to get across Warrensburg!

(side conversations. Someone joins the conversation.)

I like the proximity, we have good parks and rec, our schools are solid, they're consistent award-winners, they're recognized by DESE for their strength, we have the benefit of the University... what I'll tell you is not so good, if you're young and single, there's a weakness.

(agreement.)

That's the single most common thing I hear from young professionals. Quality of life—it's hard to beat. I went to the grocery store back in the day of the checkbook, cart loaded, and I'd forgotten my checkbook. Any other community, I'd have to walk away, but I was told to take it home and bring a check back. That's reflective of the attitude of the community towards its

citizens. Prove to me you're dishonest. For people with families, people do a good job of watching out for each other's kids, so there's great peace of mind.

**Moderator: Let's talk about shopping. Where do you do your shopping?**

Grocery shopping I do here, but if you need apparel, you need to leave town.

There's no men's clothing.

There's nowhere nice to get kids' clothes.

And I have teenagers. There's nowhere to go.

We have Impulse for women's clothing.

And Maurice's.

But they're limited.

The clothing is the hard one. We have a good shoe store.

They price themselves out sometimes.

It's only what the market will bear.

As far as being responsive to the community, the shoe store will get it. They don't throw a box at you. They're very responsive to customers, and some of us have grown up with the kind of thing they still practice. Gifts can be hard to acquire in the community. If Wal-Mart doesn't have it, you don't need it, I say.

AAAAHHH!

How could you?

I'm not trying to suggest that Wal-Mart is the end-all, but it comes back to how close we are to Kansas City.

We do have a Payless here.

Wal-Mart has shoes.

**Moderator: Where do you do retail shopping?**

Lee's Summit, Kansas City, Blue Springs.

KC metro.

For my daughter, everything is from a specialty store. There's some stores in Independence that you used to have to go to O Park for. It would be convenient to have more retail, but it'll all boil down to the concentration of population, the discretionary income...that will drive what will locate here. With gas having come down in price, I think it's reduced the near-likelihood of chain retailers creating new store formats with smaller footprints for smaller communities. Right now, it's hard for any of the majors to justify the expense of expansion.

It seems like we would have enough of a market to sustain something of that scale, between the University and the high school and Whiteman and the other small communities.

If you do the demographics of Warrensburg compared to others, you'll see that our young population is huge. And a lot of our demographics don't include the college students.

(agreement.)

The smaller communities around here come here for their big city.

And the Courthouse.

(agreement. Side conversations.)

Being a county seat does draw people.

Our license bureau.

Yeah.

Something about the university you mentioned is that 50% of the people that work there don't live here. They probably don't even buy their gas here.

(surprise.)

Where do they live?

Kansas City, I think.

There's a small population of faculty and professional staff commuting from Lee's Summit and Blue Springs.

The last number I saw was 55%.

A lot live in the Kansas City area. We've lost many of our folks to Kansas City. They can drive here in 40 minutes.

And they don't spend money in this community.

And they don't know what we have here. They drive in on 50 and 13, and they go back. They don't have a clue outside that corridor.

The Downtown people, though, would be more local people. We're not going to get people that commute from Kansas City.

They think Downtown is 13 highway.

Yeah, our main thoroughfare through town is 13 highway. Downtown is kind of hidden.

(agreement.)

We don't have good signage. We've done a pretty good program in town, but there's not great directional marketing, "come visit our Downtown," compared to other cities. Whether it's a highway billboard or...it helps you know that there is a Downtown, whatever you're marketing on there...we've talked about doing it through the Main Street program as we get funding. That would be one of our main goals. Market our bar and restaurant district, currently...

***Moderator: Do you go out of town for dining and entertainment?***

Fine dining, that's a relative term, too, but that...I think most people would agree that if you're seeking that, you're going to go out of town.

It's not a big enough base for that kind of business. Because, seriously, I'll go back to what I said. We used to drive to the Plaza to eat and go to a show. Unless somebody brought in a chain with national recognition on TV...it would be extremely difficult.

To me, what I've always thought was, on the south of town, things don't succeed as well. Nobody wants to go that extra 2 or 3 blocks.

One figure I saw, the daily car count on 13 was 22,000 or something.

What portion of 13?

What I discovered was, lots of cars came by my restaurant, and they were all heading north. They try to get to the north end. And from the University, they don't come south...I had a supper club.

I'll tell you, from somebody that's entertaining the idea of putting a restaurant in town, proximity's important, but you've got to look at median income. Poll everybody in town. Everybody's going to say they want a restaurant, but how often are people going to Kansas City to dine? Even if you kept them in town, a restaurant of any size, you have to have that volume and that income base to satisfy that upper dining needs.

Are you talking about fine dining or family dining? We could easily sustain family dining. That's the mentality here. I've got a family of 4 I need to feed, is the mentality.

Those who go to Kansas City, what's the frequency and what's the ticket at the end of the night of food versus alcohol? You've got to have the alcohol, as a business, to sustain. People have said,

"I can't believe what that costs," for a meal at any location. "You should not have to pay that much to eat." They'll tell you they want it, but their actions say they don't.

(agreement.)

If their disposable income allows them to eat out that much, it will work.

The Country Kitchens and Applebee's can only make it because they're on major highways.

(agreement.)

Manetti's is midtown, though. And if it's packed, that's a good sign.

That's a block away from Downtown.

I think they are Downtown.

***Moderator: Let me switch this to Downtown specifically. Do you feel your Downtown's moving in the right or wrong direction?***

There's an ebb and flow.

Retail, we're kind of going backwards, because we're seeing things leave.

We're seeing a slow growth in revitalizing buildings, so I'd say a positive direction, for sure.

With the streetscaping.

It looks great.

(agreement.)

To keep businesses down there, we're struggling. We're utilizing it as incubator, cheaper rent, and encouraging younger businesses to start there... we'd like to keep them there. If they want to go to a bigger area, a lot of downtowns are used as incubators. We have some ebb and flow; I think it's still positively growing and aesthetically being revitalized. We've had 6 or 7, just in the last couple years, that have been... maybe even 10. Of a hundred, we have 10 that have been restored in the last 5 years.

There's a lot more apartment space Downtown. We need to do a better job marketing them.

I think there's still that view that Downtown is bars. And people don't want to go down there. I'm sometimes the only person with kids down there. And I'm just eating pizza with them. But people don't realize.

There's a lot more attorneys Downtown than bars.

We've got all of our government.

If we had more signage. People don't know. Things come and go, and things move around, and people don't realize it.

It's so simple to get to Pine Street, but I can remember first getting here and still being confused about what street to take. I could not figure out the way around without signage.

Main Street is not Downtown. When I first moved here, I went to Main Street and ended up in Old Town.

(side conversations.)

I moved here as a student, so to me, Downtown is a bar town. So I think, depending on where you are in the community, you associate different things.

Education is key, and we don't have a ton of funds to educate people. All we have to let people know is what's down there and why you should go down there. We're working on ways to get that message out.

Our Downtown is near the railroad, the old Downtown, the museums, but our Downtown moved, and it's very recognizable...

Our main street really is Pine Street.

I think Culton Street is the main street.

I never think of Holden.

(arguments about which street is the main street Downtown.)

...It depends, too, on when you came into the community...

...we need to educate people...

...most of our streetscaping is on Holden Street...

Pine is next.

2010, we're starting.

It didn't go all the way up the Credit Union, right?

But it will.

(side conversations.)

It needs to go all the way up to the University.

That's one of our phases.

***Moderator: How often do you use Downtown?***

All the time.

I live down there.

I work down there.

I work down there.

I work down there, so every day.

I don't work down there, but we use it quite a bit. We eat out a lot, so...my kids like to go to Fitter's, Heroes. We try to have our meetings at local restaurants.

My kids love Johnny's.

I eat Downtown four days a week, easily.

Depending on the type of person you are and your interests...my parents live south of town, so if they're coming Downtown, they're coming for a purpose. Brown's Shoes, or...

It's a destination for them.

Yes. Or a night out. They don't go to Kansas City often, so they'll go to Heroes or something.

Paying attention to larger cities...Kansas City's goal is to increase residence Downtown, and everything else comes in. Grocery stores, restaurants. That would apply to a city like this. If we could somehow make that a goal to increase some living spaces, and as houses around Downtown renovate, families would frequent Downtown establishments more.

Don't you think when you talk about residences Downtown that you get into the parking issue? Where do you put them? They're going to take the places that restaurants want. If we go Downtown to eat and can't find parking, we go somewhere else.

We're small town people, so we don't like to walk too far.

Except at Wal-Mart.

If you can apply the Wal-Mart parking spots' distance to Downtown... but people want to be right in front. I don't think that'll ever change. There is parking, but we do have this dilemma. But we do have a city ordinance that if you have more than 3 apartments, you have to provide parking.

The lady I work with, she's older. She thinks Fitter's is too loud. To her, for students to be walking around, it's uncomfortable. She doesn't drink. So they don't go down there.

The noise at Fitter's that bothers me is the metal chairs dragging. The students I'm okay with.

My mother, she doesn't go Downtown. She's not by any means older. She does not use the Downtown area. Maybe she goes to the Courthouse, but that's it.

(conversations on where participants live.)

I've lived on Grover Street for 22 years, and I could tell you on one hand how many times I've eaten at Applebee's or Rib Crib.

I could do that, too.

They're too far north. It would take bare feet and hands to tell you how many times I've eaten Downtown in 30 days. It does come back to the proximity. I'm going to eat and do my stuff in the locale. There are stores...when Goody's was here, I was only in it 3 times. Never went there.

I don't go to those chain restaurants because I want to support local businesses, independent small business owners.

I think the other thing that will impact is what that family unit consists of. I have high school and college students. Rarely do we eat out of town, when we go to dinner theater. The rest of the time, are we going to drive out of town to eat? No. On the other side, when you don't have children, \_\_\_\_\_, with what frequency do you go out?

Whenever the mood hits. It's interesting to hear people talk about Downtown, because most of the discussion is about restaurants, and I think we're going to see it morph into less retail.

Maybe. Is it happening?

The theater will open in about 60 days.

You can tell this group would like to see more entertainment Downtown.

I'd like to see more entertainment in the community. I eat at all the places in town.

Most people don't make that effort.

You have a mixed occupancy Downtown. You have a lot of professionals Downtown, the attorneys, and then you have the residents. It's definitely grown. And then you have the eating and the restaurants and bars, but I don't see Downtown as an area for retail growth.

I think you're on to something... focusing on an entertainment district that could make the Downtown unique. What makes you different? If retail's at the strip centers...

(many people talking at once.)

And you only have so much room Downtown.

Contrast that with the success at Lexington, Missouri. Or Clinton, Missouri.

Those are squares.

But Lexington isn't really.

Downtown isn't easy to drive in, though.

I had thought of the initial parking behind the depot, but when we go to the Plaza, I feel comfortable walking. How do we make parking more visible Downtown?

With the parking dilemma, and we've researched it...it's very easy to take lighted pathways, maybe with covers, and we're doing a covered secure walk, but if you take the alleyway between, you know, if you go on the south side and you want to go across the tracks, Union Pacific won't allow us to cross that under or above. It's so impossible that we'll never get a corridor under or over that railroad, so you've got to go around. So that walk's always going to be lengthy. Maybe to light it up...and our police station's there.

When you change the landscape and the lighting, you have more to look at, and it's inviting. Environment will do a lot.

The parking lot at the end of Pine Street is really dark. Lighting would make you feel more secure.

If you park on that upper level, it's pitch black.

It's the local version of a parking garage.

(many people talking at once.)

***Moderator: My next series of questions are about the future of Downtown. Is there any problem with business hours not being convenient?***

Shop owners close at 5:00.

Only the unemployed can shop, then.

But since there's such a strong presence of restaurants, you do have stuff open past 5.

If they would just stay open until 6.

Impulse is open until 7.

Main Street, we've talked about getting people to buy into Downtown after 5. If you could organize them all and get them to buy into staying open until 7, and track their sales...

We talked about doing that one day a week, stay open an extra couple hours.

Our business owners, for whatever reason, if you have something Downtown, they close up.

(many people agreeing.)

***Moderator: What are some kinds of businesses that you'd like to see Downtown?***

A farmer's market.

A gentleman's... I think of the stereotypical Downtown. The bakery, the coffee shop, the gentleman's store. We do have a nice coffee shop.

(many people talking at once.)

We don't have those things, though.

We had a great coffee store. And we used to have a good men's store.

In the 80's, we had one Downtown.

(agreement.)

A bookstore would be great.

We do have a library Downtown.

I still think a market Downtown would be great. A small grocery store. An easy place to go get milk or eggs on your way home.

But you work down there.

But all the residents down there.

(many people talking at once.)

Our building doesn't have students. We have professionals, and they want to buy a loaf of bread or something.

Panera.

Oh, that'd be great.

You'd think with a college right there and with all the professional services, there is a demographic that could run out and grab a few quick things. There's so many people.

A little breakfast café.

(agreement.)

The people that are stopping to get coffee, if they had bagels, they could buy that too.

Java Junction has bagels.

(many people talking at once.)

From a family perspective, anything children related. Children's clothing, books...

The consignment store on Pine Street, Those Were the Days, that's a huge draw for our community. Lots of people come to our community for that.

I take my family there when they come from out of town.

That place is making a killing. The business is booming.

(agreement.)

There's nothing eclectic about Those Were the Days. You're going to have the same antiques, collectibles, imports, and they will not sell the way they do in Lexington. People go to Lexington for the shops.

Because there's shops, plural.

I do look for how to get out of there when I go there.

I don't think it's up to code.

We do have a farmer's market.

And it's wonderful.

We're looking for a new location Downtown in the next few years, to have a large area. That's one of our short-term to medium-term plans. To expand that. We want to jump on their popularity.

It'd be great to make Wednesday nights and Saturdays Downtown days. We need more retail, though.

Specialty people, things for kids.

(many people agreeing.)

The retail shops aren't close enough to the farmer's market. We need infill.

We need more, we need more variety.

If we're dreaming, I'd like to see us do something with the back side of the buildings on Pine Street that faces the railroad tracks. Murals or paintings or something, so that people on the train think this is a cute little town.

(unanimous agreement.)

If building owners don't have the buy in, though, what do you do about that?

I think you can get the buy in, though.

It has to be thought out. We'd gladly do something if others were doing it.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

That would be so great, if people coming through town could see paintings. Or the statues that \_\_\_\_\_ does, those are great.

That one walkway behind that upper parking lot, that building is brightly colored and painted, and it looks great.

(many people talking at once.)

**Moderator: What else would you change about the look of Downtown?**

Lighting. Most of our south side of Pine Street is exposed to lots of people, this back end. Our Amtrak comes through. They see dumpsters and... there's some things you can't eliminate.

But you can paint them.

I push kids in strollers, and I would hate to be in a wheelchair, but even getting out of your car, even the handicapped parking, if we could do down-ramps, that would be great.

Our streetscaping... It's incorporating that.

Strollers are a pain.

(agreement about strollers and wheelchairs, concerning ramps.)

...The sidewalk issue is through the entire city...

...The city sidewalks are so bad...

We have bricked sidewalks, and that's just a nightmare for the stroller.

I love the brick accents Downtown.

It's just a detail.

Our city has a sidewalk program. I don't know how many people take part in it. If you build, you have to put one in, but if you want to put one in, they'll pay a lot of it.

The landowner pays very little.

We don't have as many apply as we have had funds budgeted.

I think...I'd like to see the City come in and just start taking care of them. Take care of one area and move to the next.

And not leave that 3-inch gap between the end of the sidewalk and the curb.

One of the sidewalk projects this year is from the southeast...

I think a sidewalk from Rotary down to Lion's Lake. Somebody's going to get killed. Strollers, kids...

(agreement.)

We need bike racks Downtown.

That's a good idea.

We have some, but the Daily Star Journal is using them to chain up—

(many people talking at once.)

We need more trees. More greenery.

Like old-town Omaha.

***Moderator: Did you read my next question? What other towns do you like?***

Omaha.

Lee's Summit.

Yeah.

You know what's happening in Lee's Summit? Businesses are pulling out. They pull out and pull out. I think they did a wonderful job Downtown, but retail and restaurants have a hard time. They have events and close off the street, they do all those things, but they still have people go out of business. They have a really hard time. But Lee's Summit was growing...

Yeah, they have a huge district go out on the highway, and that's hurt their Downtown.

(many people agreeing.)

I think people go to those things, but they don't go regularly.

You have to want to go to Downtown Lee's Summit the same way you've got to want to go to our Downtown.

It's not easy to find.

You have to think.

You need to see Omaha.

It's wonderful.

(agreement.)

There was a water fountain. You can take pictures, and they have people playing their stuff.

It's a destination.

It's how to make Downtown a destination.

An ice cream place.

Coldstone.

No, don't.

Violin players.

Horse rides.

What's the new things they have? Segways?

(laughter.)

Downtown St. Louis, they have Segways.

Downtown St. Louis freaks me out. I hang on to my purse.

What kind of parking do they have in Omaha?

It's on the sides and the back edges, but there's a lot to look at there.

Most of those areas, they make it a walking district, and that's why you like walking Downtown. So if you're going to do something Downtown, but we've got to get away from the mentality of parking right in front of the stores.

We should block off the streets for homecoming, but the business owners go crazy.

The people in this community cannot afford to park in a garage. But if we collaborate...

With the university?

Yes.

If the university keeps expanding, it would be Downtown.

Students would be in favor of Internet cafes.

Wi-Fi Downtown.

If I was a student and could have my laptop and eat my bagel and drink coffee.

Java Junction has that, and it's free, and students go in and don't buy anything.

But he's got to think out of the box.

\_\_\_\_\_ just came up with a fundraising idea. Places that serve alcohol where you could use your computer. You could charge for computer access.

For people to sit in there surfing all day...

***Moderator: One last question. Where should I eat tonight?***

Heroes.

You've got to go Downtown.

(laughter. Side conversations.)

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