

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

JUNE 2011

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

FINAL REPORT

Rolla, Missouri



PGAV**PLANNERS**



DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
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JUNE 2011
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted four focus groups in Rolla, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Rolla community regarding Downtown. The four groups included: 1) City Residents, 2) Missouri University of Science and Technology Students, 3) Downtown Business Owners, and 4) City Staff. Participants of all four groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

This section summarizes the responses to posed questions of all focus group members. Sections II through V of this report provide the complete transcripts of the four meetings with names and other identifying remarks omitted.

A. GENERAL GROUPS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Participants of the City Residents, Missouri University of Science and Technology Students, and City Staff groups were all asked the following questions:

General Questions about Rolla

1. How would you describe this area to a visitor? Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?
2. What are the main shopping areas for residents? From how far away do people come or go to do their regular shopping (groceries, household items, etc.)?
3. What dining and entertainment options exist? What are popular choices for local residents? When friends or relatives visit, where do you take them?
4. What kinds of recreation are popular with local residents? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in these activities in Rolla?

Downtown Specific Questions

5. Would you say that Downtown Rolla is moving in the right or wrong direction? Why do you feel this way?
6. What are the major reasons you visit Downtown Rolla? How often do you visit Downtown? Is there anything that you used to do Downtown but now do elsewhere, or vice versa? Why did your visiting habits change?
7. How user-friendly is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough convenient parking? Can people find what they are looking for?
8. How do local residents and visitors get information regarding Downtown promotions, events, entertainment, recreation, and other activities?
9. Do many residents live Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more Downtown housing? What kind of housing exists (rental, condominiums, single-

family, etc.)? What markets do you think would generate demand for this housing (students, families, elderly, etc.)?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

10. As you may know, the City is in the process of developing a Downtown Strategic Plan. We would like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. For Downtown, what would you like to see regarding additional types of...?
 - Businesses
 - Dining and entertainment
 - Parks and outdoor recreation
11. We would also like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do you think improvements are needed in the areas of...?
 - Street repair
 - Landscaping/beautification
 - Green space
 - Building repairs, renovation, upgrades
12. Of the potential improvements we have discussed, which do you think should be the highest priorities for the City?
13. What downtowns, or areas of other communities, would you most like Downtown Rolla to resemble?

B. BUSINESS OWNERS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The members of the Downtown Business Owners group were asked most of the same questions as the general groups were, when appropriate. However, the following questions were asked only of the Business Owners Group:

Downtown Specific Questions

5. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property Downtown (or not in Downtown, for other business owners)?
8. How do you communicate information to your customers about Downtown (promotions, events, entertainment, etc.)? What are communications like between businesses (or business groups) and the City's staff and elected officials?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

12. What could the City administration or elected officials do to help your business thrive or keep your property values strong over the next few years?
13. Would you be willing to support a special business district that included an additional sales tax to fund services specifically for Downtown?

C. THE ROLLA AREA

How would you describe this area to a visitor? Would you say the City is moving in the right or wrong direction?

The focus group participants described Rolla as an educated, diverse, and welcoming city with great educational opportunities and a good sense of history. Rolla is located off of Interstate 44 at State Highway 63 in central Missouri. The City enjoys easy access to St. Louis, Jefferson City, and Columbia and serves as a business hub for smaller communities in a 30-mile radius. Rolla is also home to Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri—Rolla) and a regional medical center. Group members felt that Rolla has more cultural opportunities than other communities of its size, and a more educated, professional population because of the University.

Participants generally felt that Rolla is moving in the right direction. With the opening of Benton Square, new dining and entertainment options have been added. A number of new businesses have recently opened or are planned. According to participants, a few developers have begun to make significant investments in improving Downtown. While participants in every group noted that Rolla still has improvements to make regarding developing a vibrant culture that incorporates students and residents, getting residents to shop locally, and attracting more Downtown retail business, overall the groups expressed positive sentiments about Rolla's direction.

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

Rolla residents indicated that they are able to do most of their shopping in Rolla because of Walmart, Lowe's, JC Penney's, and Kroger's. However, some residents travel to St. Louis for more upscale or specialty shopping items such as dress clothes, children's clothes, upscale groceries, and other items which shopping centers offer in greater variety. Some participants also indicated that they often shop online.

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

There are a number of restaurants in Rolla, including independently owned establishments and larger chain stores. Participants noted Alex's Pizza, located Downtown, as a local favorite having broad appeal throughout Rolla and the region. According to many participants, the biggest dining improvement in recent years has been the development of dining and entertainment options at Benton Square.

For entertainment, participants noted that Rolla has a community theater, cultural opportunities through the University, festivals, and live music. However, some residents and students travel to St. Louis or Columbia for special events and a greater variety of entertainment options.

Many participants felt strongly that any new entertainment and dining options should appeal to students, as well as residents and visitors. The groups felt the student population would

patronize Rolla businesses more often if there were more businesses that catered to them as a consumer market. Options such as Wi-Fi cafés, upscale/casual restaurants serving alcoholic beverages with dinner, and live music venues were suggested as appealing options.

D. DOWNTOWN ROLLA: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

Would you say that Downtown Rolla is moving in the right or wrong direction? Why do you feel this way?

Overall, most group members were positive about the direction of Downtown Rolla, although a few saw it as not moving at all because of a number of vacant storefronts, parking problems, and lack of a unified visual theme.

Participants identified some priorities for helping Downtown Rolla, including adding more retail and entertainment variety, filling empty storefronts, repairing old buildings, sprucing up the exteriors of unattractive buildings, improving business hours, addressing parking issues, and improving aesthetics by adding green spaces and landscaping.

For 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)?

Most of the Business Owners who had bought property in recent years cited low costs as the major reason for choosing Downtown for their businesses. Participants indicated that new businesses might be attracted to Downtown if the City offered incentives to locate Downtown and to rehabilitate existing buildings.

For General Groups: What are the major reasons you visit Downtown? How often do you visit Downtown? Is there anything that you used to do Downtown but now do elsewhere, or vice versa? Why did your visiting habits change?

The participants noted numerous reasons they visit Downtown, including professional services, City Hall, the Post Office, and shopping and dining.

How user-friendly is Downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough convenient parking? Can people find what they are looking for?

The group members had significant concerns regarding the user-friendliness of Downtown that included parking, signage, and business hours.

Parking was a significant concern for some participants, though others felt there is currently ample parking Downtown. Some group members indicated that Downtown residents, employees, and business owners often take up desirable on-street parking, leaving little parking available for customers. Other participants suggested that parking was only a perceived problem if people cannot find a parking spot directly in front of the store they wish to visit. It was also suggested that if all of the storefronts were occupied with retail shops, the walk from parking spot to business might seem shorter. Additionally, some participants felt

that if the City could better enforce the 2-hour parking zones in front of Downtown shops, it would deter employees, residents, and business owners from parking there all day.

Signage was also noted by the focus group members as a significant problem for Downtown Rolla. Participants believed that Downtown Rolla is very difficult for visitors to find and that signage for visitors once they are in the Downtown area could be improved. Group members felt that a unified theme of wayfinding that included attractive signage would not only help visitors navigate, but identify the Downtown as a cohesive district.

The group members felt that Downtown retail business hours could be significantly improved, particularly with regard to evening and weekend hours. Participants noted that currently, Downtown businesses tend to be open only from eight or nine in the morning, until five at night. These hours make it difficult for people who work during a regular weekday schedule to shop in Downtown Rolla. Participants noted that for Downtown to attract more retail and entertainment variety, businesses should be available to people after their typical workday hours. Staying open later one night a week or expanding weekend hours on one weekend day was suggested by the participants.

How do local residents and visitors get information regarding Downtown promotions, events, entertainment, recreation, and other activities?

Participants noted advertising through media avenues such as the newspaper, local radio stations, the University, Facebook, City and Chamber of Commerce websites, and word-of-mouth as ways they get information about Downtown businesses and events. Some group members also mentioned that businesses and special events are advertised on regional radio stations and in regional magazines.

Do many residents live Downtown? Is there a demand or need for more Downtown housing? What kind of housing exists (rental, condominiums, single-family, etc.)? What markets do you think would generate demand for this housing (students, families, elderly, etc.)?

Group members noted that residential housing in Downtown Rolla primarily consists of student rental units and two new fraternity houses. Participants felt that most of the existing residential space is currently occupied, and that if new residential developments are to be encouraged Downtown, issues such as parking and shopping variety need to be addressed.

E. DOWNTOWN ROLLA: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As you may know, the City is in the process of developing a Downtown Strategic Plan. We would like to ask you what direction you would like the Downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. For Downtown, what would you like to see regarding additional types of businesses, dining and entertainment, and/or parks and recreation?

The focus group members suggested a variety of new Downtown businesses, focusing primarily on a mix of retail uses. Suggestions included adding independently-owned specialty shops, restaurants, and entertainment, rather than larger chains.

Focus group participants suggested some specific types of specialty retail stores they thought would have broad appeal to residents, visitors, and students, including:

- clothing stores
- a quilt or craft store
- a shoe store
- an outdoor outfitters shop
- a coffee shop or bakery with Wi-Fi
- a drugstore with a soda fountain
- a “nice” restaurant for a business lunch or a late dinner
- outdoor dining
- a winery or wine shop or a brewpub

Group members again noted the need for greater entertainment variety, as well as restaurants and shops with later business hours. They also suggested more special events and live music would draw more people to Downtown, as well as generate more diners for restaurants. Participants agreed that getting students involved in planning and attending Downtown events, would help students feel like a part of the community and would help the events succeed.

Some participants noted that Downtown should not try to compete with large chain stores in Jefferson City, Columbia, or St. Louis, but should focus on offering a unique experience to customers and to provide options in niche markets for both residents and visitors. Participants felt that small businesses should be encouraged and the City should develop incentives to attract retail stores and encourage building owners to rehabilitate their buildings.

We would like to talk about the look and feel of Downtown. Do think improvements are needed in the areas of street repair, landscaping/beautification, green space, and/or building repairs, renovations, and upgrades?

Overall, participants agreed that the improvements discussed were needed to help Downtown Rolla become an aesthetically pleasing destination. When asked about the look and feel of Downtown, many participants strongly expressed that cohesiveness in aesthetics is lacking and should be a priority. While the buildings are from different eras and some of them are in need of improvement, participants felt that landscaping, banners, and a unifying theme for awnings and signage would help draw the Downtown look together.

Building repair and occupancy were noted as a high priority. Several participants felt that building owners needed help to repair or rehabilitate their buildings and that the City should focus on attracting businesses to occupy vacant buildings. Some participants suggested increased code enforcement is needed, but were also concerning that the City should proceed carefully and fairly, making sure not to discourage investment in Downtown buildings.

Of the potential improvements we have discussed, which do you think should be the highest priorities for the City?

Most group members identified building repair and rehabilitation, attracting retail, integrating students and residents, and parking as the highest priorities for improvement.

Business Owners: Would you be willing to support a special business district that included an additional sales tax to fund services specifically for Downtown?

Participants of the Business Owners group expressed interest in Downtown incentives and noted that a special business district relating to an increased real estate tax is being considered. According to participants, there are some supporters and detractors of this idea, and the City and other Downtown interests need to place a greater effort on educating the less-involved business owners on how incentives will help Downtown.

General Public: What downtowns, or areas of other communities, would you most like Downtown Rolla to resemble?

Focus group members noted several cities, including Jefferson City, Missouri; St. Charles, Missouri; Branson, Missouri; Lawrence, Kansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Charlottesville, Virginia. The participants felt that all of the downtowns in these cities have a cohesive look and feel and a mix of businesses that makes it a destination for visitors. Additionally, a few of the cities mentioned are effective at appealing to both residents and university students.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Rolla area:

- ◆ Rolla is located in central Missouri, within easy access to St. Louis, Jefferson City, and Columbia.
- ◆ Rolla is home to Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri—Rolla) and a regional medical center. Because of this Rolla has more cultural opportunities and a more educated, professional population than other communities of its size.
- ◆ Rolla is moving in the right direction because of the development of Benton Square, recent Downtown investments, and other new businesses in the City.
- ◆ Rolla can improve by working to develop a vibrant culture that incorporates students and residents, getting residents to shop locally, and attracting more Downtown retail business.
- ◆ Rolla resident are able to do most of their shopping in Rolla because of Walmart, Lowe's, JC Penney's, and Kroger's. However, some residents travel to St. Louis for more upscale or specialty shopping items such as dress clothes, children's clothes, upscale groceries, and other items which shopping centers offer in greater variety.
- ◆ Rolla enjoys a number of restaurants, including independently owned establishments and larger chains. Alex's Pizza is located in Downtown Rolla and is a local favorite with broad appeal throughout Rolla and the region. The biggest dining improvement in recent years has been the development of the dining and entertainment options at Benton Square.

- ◆ For entertainment, Rolla has a community theater, cultural opportunities through the University, festivals, and live music. However, some residents and students travel to St. Louis or Columbia for special events and a greater variety of entertainment options.
- ◆ Downtown Rolla can improve its appeal by adding new entertainment and dining options that are of interest to students, as well as residents and visitors. Suggestions include Wi-Fi cafés, upscale/casual restaurants serving alcoholic beverages with dinner, and live music venues.

Key points about existing Downtown Rolla conditions:

- ◆ Downtown Rolla can improve by addressing issues such as vacant storefronts, parking problems, and lack of a unified visual theme.
- ◆ Downtown priorities should include adding more retail and entertainment variety, filling empty storefronts, repairing old buildings, sprucing up the exteriors of unattractive buildings, improving business hours, addressing parking issues, and improving aesthetics by adding green spaces and landscaping.
- ◆ Business owners are attracted to Downtown locations because of low costs. More businesses will be attracted to Downtown if the City can develop incentives to locate Downtown and to rehabilitate existing buildings.
- ◆ Parking is a concern for Downtown Rolla. However, the problem may be more one of perception. Downtown residents, employees, and business owners can tend to use on-street parking, leaving little parking available for customers. If the Downtown storefronts are occupied with retail shops, the walk from parking spot to business may seem shorter. If the City can increase enforcement of the 2-hour parking zones in front of Downtown shops, it will discourage employees, residents, and business owners from parking there all day.
- ◆ Signage is a concern for Downtown Rolla. Downtown Rolla is difficult for visitors to find and signage for visitors once they are in the Downtown area can be improved. A unified theme of wayfinding can also provide an aesthetically pleasing system to help visitors navigate and identify the Downtown as a cohesive district.
- ◆ Downtown retail business hours can be significantly improved, particularly with regard to evening and weekend hours. Downtown businesses currently have limited hours and are not able to serve people working regular workday hours.
- ◆ The University and Facebook are used to get information regarding Downtown, as well as the more traditional media of print, radio, and City and Chamber of Commerce publications.
- ◆ Downtown housing primarily consists of student rental housing, with some fraternity houses. If new residential developments occur, issues such as parking and shopping variety must be addressed.

Key points about the future of Downtown Rolla:

- ◆ Specific types of specialty retail stores the community thinks would help Downtown Rolla, include:
 - clothing stores
 - a quilt or craft store
 - a shoe store
 - an outdoor outfitters shop
 - a coffee shop or bakery with Wi-Fi
 - a drugstore with a soda fountain
 - a “nice” restaurant for a business lunch or a late dinner
 - outdoor dining
 - a winery or wine shop or a brewpub

- ◆ Downtown Rolla should get students involved in planning Downtown events to help students feel like a part of the community and increase event attendance.

- ◆ Downtown Rolla should focus on offering a unique experience to customers. The City can assist with this effort by developing incentive programs that encourage the attraction of small retail businesses and building repair and rehabilitations.

- ◆ Priorities for aesthetic improvements to Downtown should include addressing excessive vacancies, building improvements, and developing a cohesive design theme that includes the elements of landscaping, banners, awnings, and signage.

- ◆ The City should review its code enforcement procedures to determine if there can be improvements made to encourage better maintenance of Downtown properties, balanced with the cost efficiencies obtained in Downtown buildings, to make ensure that quality property owners are not being discouraged from make an investment in their properties.

- ◆ There is some interest in developing special business or property rehabilitation incentives for Downtown. However, the benefits of these programs must be demonstrated to the public to gain support. Some incentive programs are already under consideration.

- ◆ Downtowns that Rolla residents noted they would like to resemble, tended to have unifying design elements as a prominent feature, in addition to an improved business mix.

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SECTION II

TRANSCRIPT ONE: CITY RESIDENTS

Moderator: *Tell me a little about Rolla.*

I think it's a unique small town because the university brings some diversity and cultural opportunities that a town our size would not have. Over 15,000.

I think it's bimodal, which is a problem and a strength. We have the haves and the have-nots. We try to fill those holes with recruiting manufacturing and whatever else.

It's a safe, wonderful environment to raise a family, to live peacefully. The crime rate is very low, we don't have a lot of traffic problems, and I appreciate the fact that we don't have the rat-race that you have in the big cities. We do have cultural aspects. Leach Theater is a wonderful addition to this community.

We have great recreational opportunities. Canoeing and hiking, and the landscape here is fabulous. There's a great quality of life. The University is an anchor. They provide some good solid infrastructure. Some of the issues I see are, there does seem to be a big gap in what's going on. We're evolving, but we're not sure into what.

We're at a point where our workforce is retiring, and we have the opportunity to bring in young professionals. What does Rolla offer this group of people? Cost and quality of life. We don't have to offer, though, things for people to do after work, evenings and weekends. We need to add those.

I agree. With the University and the government offices, we have a lot of diversity. And that's actually a great thing. The City of Nations just recently, that was a great example of what Rolla has compared to other cities our size. I've got teenagers, and from 5 to teenagers, it's hard to come up with activities that are going to keep that age group involved. We are centrally located. We're 2 hours from St. Louis, 2 hours from Springfield, 4 from Kansas City, but you do want to bring people into Rolla. It's the middle—there is no middle. There's a lower income and a higher income. From a technology standpoint, Rolla is very advanced in what they can provide to people coming into the area with regards to people coming into the area. People moving in require more advanced services, and that's something we can offer.

For example, The Lions Club just recently installed wi-fi in the park. That blew my mind.

That's great to know!

(agreement.)

The organizations are very advanced. That's a beautiful park, and it's a free thing for people to enjoy. There are many community organizations.

Moderator: Where do people do their everyday shopping?

Unfortunately, Wal-Mart. There are some good local stores, Town and Country Supermarket and Kroger's.

I do not have any problem spending my money in Rolla, Missouri. Do we go to the City? Yes, for a day out. We're right on the highway.

I see this as a community with no boundaries, because you can get on the Internet and find stuff.

(agreement.)

We have good infrastructures, the rail and the highway and the airport. You can get on the Internet.

We're a community without boundaries.

People do shop out of town.

The day to day stuff in town, but for school clothes for my girls, St. Louis or Springfield.

Moderator: What about nightlife?

What about it?

(laughter.)

Benton Square is awesome. I go every weekend. I'm going to happy hour tonight.

Well, Auggie plays there. They bring in local bands and regional bands.

Benton Square is a restored elementary school that has become a destination with a spa, restaurants, beauty shop, you name it.

2 blocks from Downtown.

Before Benton Square, things to do were pretty...

Movie.

We never got the A-rated movies.

The bowling alley is still popular.

Too smoky.

The Leach Theater, it's not every night, but it's great.
The Ozark Actors' Theater, which is local community productions.

The Leach Theater is state-of-the-art, and they bring in named theaters.

It would be nice to have options other than Benton Square. It would be nice to have choices of bands.

I had people in for homecoming, and they said, "I cannot believe this is Rolla."

We've evolved a little bit.

Moderator: Would you say Downtown Rolla is moving in the right or wrong direction?

Has it moved?

There needs to be changes.

There's a few bright spots. I'm in Red Door, and we've got a great library.

And it's getting ready to expand.

What about the one-way traffic?

Would you like to see it two-way?

The parallel parking is an issue.

Does there need to be consistency of look?

No...

A Downtown unifications, where the awnings are the same or the lighting is the same, that draws you in because it's charming.

There needs to be a reason to go Downtown.

Think of Atchison, Kansas.

Lawrence, Kansas, too.

Look at the unification that pulls you down there, kind of like Benton Square does. If you're bored and want to get out, that would be top-of-the-mind awareness.

Benton Square is open until 11.

There need to be changes Downtown. The problem is across the country. They have the same mentality as the 1900's. They open at 9 and close at 5 and the parking is crappy. We have to change the mindset of the people that are Downtown. Springfield is open at night, they're alive.

And they have bars and restaurants and entertainment.

Yeah!

Moderator: Why do people go Downtown?

To the bank or for a specific need, to the Reader's Corner or Red Door. I don't wander up and down the streets. One of the reasons is because of the business hours and the accessibility. During the business day, I'm going there for a reason, but if it was 5 to 7, I wouldn't mind parking 6 blocks away and going to different stores.

What I've noticed, there's so few businesses. Red Door tries to bring people down on Thursday nights, and that's a great idea, but there needs to be quaint little shops Downtown. There's a new shop that opened not exactly Downtown, but it has white walls. They have no character. Benton Square is really cool because they've decorated, but a lot of stores don't take that into consideration.

I'm not going down there to dine, either.

Wouldn't it be nice with all these new restaurants to renovate one of these old buildings and make a restaurant.

Where would they park?

Moderator: What used to be Downtown that isn't anymore?

The Copper Tree.

The Fashion Shop.

They were wonderful.

I like small places to shop for clothing. I liked the Copper Tree.

_____ was always so helpful, too.

You can't buy good makeup here, either.

Moderator: How user-friendly is Downtown? How's parking? Is there enough? Is it inconvenient?

Well, they have City lots outside here and here, and isn't there another one? The mentality of Americans... look at people at Wal-Mart? They circle until they can find a slot right up front. We should all be walking. I'm the same way. If I can't park right by Red Door, I circle around. I'm not sure parking is ever going to be solved.

If it were more pleasant, we'd walk up and down the streets, like Lawrence.

And Columbia. They have so much going on.

I don't know if it's the parking. I think there's not enough to do for the incentive to walk.

Or the curb appeal.

Everybody parks in front of Red Door, because that's the only store anyone goes into.

Offerings is, I think, the issue.

What is going to draw somebody Downtown? My friend and I have thought about opening a business, but what do people want? And buildings need to be repaired. Even if you have a nice one, the building next door could cause water to go into your building.

Moderator: And business hours?

Inconvenient.

Nothing's open on Sunday.

Even when I was a young kid, we had Thursday night, with all the Downtown stores open. At least one night a week. Get over the 9-to-5 mentality. Get some stores Downtown that we want to go into. Change the hours.

Moderator: Is it easy to find your way Downtown?

No.

It's impossible.

I send people to 10th street, and then you've missed $\frac{3}{4}$ of Downtown.

It should be two-way. Not everybody goes from Kingshighway, past Blockbuster and turn left.

Pine Street is a brick street under all of that. I loved it.

Bring it back.

They put asphalt over it! Why? That was just adorable.

I agree.

I was in Charleston, SC, 2 weeks ago, and their historic district is cobblestone and little dinky shops, and the crap they sell is just crap, but it's so much fun to spend hour after hour meandering through that area.

Because it's so attractive and charming.

It's charming.

I do think it gets back to the quality of the structures. It requires so much money for upkeep that it scares beginning businesses because they're undercapitalized. How do you start a business and worry about the roof?

Moderator: How do people get information about Downtown?

The newspaper.

The radio.

Word of mouth.

Some direct mail.

Radio, mostly.

I look at the Facebook page. It would be great if there would be more information there.

Benton Square has one.

City of Rolla has one. I'd like to see more information. And I think the students would look at it.

There's a Chamber website.

But that's not proactive like Facebook is. Something on Facebook comes to you immediately.

Chamber's on Facebook, and they post pretty regularly. They're very... the four ladies that run the office post quite often about special events. It's more events, what the Chamber's doing. They're very good about that.

Moderator: Let's talk about housing. I know there's housing around Downtown, but is there much living Downtown?

It's there, but it's students. It's not nice. It's not lofts. And what's there causes parking issues.

There's two fraternities.

When they moved the fraternity in, the parking has become atrocious. There are a lot of business owners who are very upset. They can't secure spaces for their customers.

There is little or no residential housing.

There's apartments, but it's just student housing.

The parking on Pine Street is monitored by the policeman with the yellow chalk. 2 hours for parking.

Moderator: Is there a demand or need for more or different housing Downtown?

I think it would be a neat mix.

It could be a chicken-or-the-egg issue. If you had more businesses, neat shops, that may bring more. A lot of Downtowns are revitalizing different buildings. What comes first, the lofts, or the shops?

A lot of people who live in lofts, they depend on public transportation, and we don't have that.

We hardly even have cabs.

What we have is fairly frightening.

(laughter.)

The good thing about Pine Street is it's walkable to the University.

Moderator: Who would you aim that housing to?

Students.

The younger... I would think.

My wife and I, we've, even without kids, we don't want to carry groceries up and down. As you get established in your lifestyles... but the younger people don't think about those inconveniences.

People that are contracted for a certain length of time for teaching. The younger professors for a year to teach or for their PhD.... also, governmental things. A six-month or a one-year lease. If you could get the charm in that area, they would like that. Higher income young professionals. But more shops, and you'd have to rehab the buildings.

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

I'd love to see a very good dress shop, a boutique, where you could find an outfit for a special occasion. I shop at Wal-Mart—not Wal-Mart variety clothing.

A specialty foods shop would be great. There is no place where you can go buy that stuff. You could highlight products from Missouri, too. You can't get anything for Indian or Oriental food. You have to go out of town or order from the Internet. Special cheeses, wines, chocolates...

And offer cooking classes.

And a good restaurant Downtown.

We had a wonderful Italian restaurant. It was wonderful.

Something I loved in Lawrence was a theater for art movies. We have to go to St. Louis. You could get popcorn with real butter and a cold beer.

I went to a theater in Charleston that had dinner and a movie. They served you through the whole time. You put a card up, and the guy came and brought your drink, your dinner...

I don't know if I could do both.

It was very strange to do both without sitting on your couch, but it was fun.

Moderator: Are there restaurants that would be a good fit?

Not casual.

What do you consider casual?

Fast-food type stuff. None of that.

Bistros, cafes.

Unique stuff.

Organic, local foods.

Moderator: Other businesses?

Things that you go out of town to buy.

Trader Joe's.

That would be good.

A seafood restaurant.

A good seafood restaurant.

Some things that Western towns have are sport shops that rent things for local outdoor activities. Maybe something along those lines.

I think we need a fake ski slope.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

I was thinking kayaks and fishing and... we have plenty of outdoors activities, but we don't have a shop.

Moderator: What other parks and recreation type stuff?

Carriage rides.

It would be nice... we've got bike trails and walking trails. We should loop those into Downtown.

How?

We walk the trails daily. It's so nice and wide. Maybe a place to park your bikes along Pine Street.

What about a Downtown run? Activities. Or when the cycle thing came. Maybe go-carts.

There isn't a place to park your bike. We should put bike-racks up. But what brings them? If there was a nice restaurant...

What are those scooters?

Segways.

Renting Segways for Downtown. Those would be fun.

One part of attracting more people and these shops and restaurants, the different University downtowns, a lot of them have roads that are shut off to cars. Yes, it would create a logistical nightmare, but if you said Pine Street from 6th to 14th is for walking only... making people... you're putting a lot of things out there. You're talking about parking. But you're making people walk through those areas. In Boulder, they have Pearl Street, and Pearl Street is really neat. Numerous different things going on, shops, restaurants, art fairs... some of it doesn't fit in here, but it attracts a lot of people. Pearl Street is packed in the summer! Absolutely packed! Thousands upon thousands of people. It's a bigger town. People just go to that area, and there's all the side streets that have traffic, but it's all within 5 city blocks.

In Phoenix, it has anchor stores. There's every anchor store you can believe. All the little streets, it's like a little village, and it has parking behind the buildings. It has a theater, which would be an attraction at night. Even if they didn't do the foreign films, just something. What about the big screen outside in the summer?

We do that.

Yeah.

We have done it in the past.

It was too expensive for its turnout.

There's no children's clothing, not much with gift shops, a coffee shops for a laptop and a sandwich or a small meeting. It would be nice if we had some green space, so you could get a cup of coffee and sit under a tree. Get people to stay, and have tables outside so you could drink wine and cheese outdoors.

And outdoor space, I love that about Benton. If we had more of that...

Look at it, it's packed! Even if it's cold outside, the place is packed!

The brewery that's coming, they're trapped on both sides with a big old parking lot.

Moderator: What about the look and feel of Downtown needs the most improvement?

You could tell if the buildings are quaint if you could update them.

When you look at the buildings, there are a lot of neat old architectural design, but the cost of doing it is astronomical, but the return... an investor can't... sometimes it makes more sense to just knock it down. Some of it has gone that far. To get everything up to code. To deal with the basic things, the cost is astronomical. That's the Catch-22. How do you do it? If I own the real estate, and I want to rent the space... by the time they put that money in, that shop can't sell enough glasses of wine for the rent. It's one of the biggest things—

Well, it's been proven already. Benton Square is a money pit. 3 million. There's no end to it.

It looks gorgeous, but...

They had that vision, and they've done a terrific job, but my heavens, will they ever be able to pay that down?

We have a couple of buildings... the Red Door, that was redone by a church group, and they sold it to Red Door. They did a tremendous job. And the Scott Building, _____ redid that, and they did a tremendous job. _____'s building. The upstairs on that building is wonderful.

Too many people have let them go so far. I mean, _____ has, he converted it with basic stuff... a basic retail floor, and it was ridiculous. You tear one thing out, and you find 10 more to fix.

If not TIF, is there some means for the City to help rejuvenate by forgoing some tax for a while to help these building owners Downtown to make that investment?

I'm the wrong person to ask.

They're getting very little now. It goes back to the TIF commission and Kohl's. Forgo some of the growth until they get some of their return back, and encourage people to make that investment. Otherwise, it's not going to work. Nobody in this economy has that kind of money.

Even in a good economy, it's bad.

Have you ever tried to get permits in this City to do anything? It's impossible. Yes the stairway has to be rebuilt, but I don't want to have to pay \$3000 for a permit to spend \$1500 to do the stairway. The permit fees and construction fees, the City could waive those or do something on a payback mode.

I think you're on to something, but it's beyond that. Trying to build something and working with the inspector, you're either going to hang yourself or kill someone else. I've talked to lots of businesspeople. One of them, he built a brand new building, and he had to put a hole in the ground big enough for a dump truck just to put in a sign. And the steel in his roof... it's just so anti-business. I bet the war stories are incredible.

I wonder if there aren't grants for revitalization and energy efficiency.

That's part of what DREAM is. I think part of it is how open-minded your community and your leaders are, and your business owners. Willing to sit down and say, "this is what I want to do." Negotiating what you're willing to do and what you're willing to invest. When it comes down to it, it's just negotiation between business owners and City. When I first started business, I learned there's always a gray area.

And bring in the architectural engineering program at the University in. Bring in those really bright kids to do projects.

And common sense. Maybe the University could bring some of that to the table.

I did talk to the guy expanding Reader's Corner, and he's doing it himself a little at a time. I thought about a coffee shop, and the guy said, "Are you kidding? I tried to put a coffee pot in here, and they wouldn't let me do it." He could give it away, but he couldn't charge for it. Zoning wouldn't let him. We need something like that. That's ludicrous.

Maybe some kind of advocate that helps those businesses, someone that lets everyone know it's an issue and helps people not give up.

They have all these rules and ordinances.

Planning and zoning, and City Council. I've watched it on TV.

I feel this way about our government and our City. We should throw everything away and start over. Do we have to live with all these rules?

Moderator: What other downtowns do you admire aspects of?

Life and activity Downtown.

Lawrence, Kansas.

Springfield. They've done a lot of work there.

Joplin has done a nice job lately. It's back, and it's nice.

What makes it charming?

I don't know. It's got a nice feel. There's green space and fountains, like the Plaza in Kansas City. Things with a nice look and feel. And wide sidewalks.

I think of Thanksgiving and all the nights.

A destination event.

On the Plaza, there's outdoor seating and... very walkable.

User-friendly.

Boulder.

Like I said, that Pearl Street area is amazing. I don't know that I could put up with the lifestyle, but the atmosphere of that area, it's just unique. I'm sure there's other places that are just as unique. There's something about it. You can walk for 5 city blocks or more.

Like Jackson, Wyoming. They take advantage of the outdoor activities.

Taking advantage of what you have in the area and what your demographic supports. I don't think that you could take the footprint of Boulder, that town is so different than Rolla, you'd see an uprising. But you have to pick different things that area neat. Some of the small changes will fit into what everybody wants around.

Look at the new ice cream shop. That should've been Downtown. They've tried to put that ice cream cone out multiple times, and the City keeps yelling at them for putting it outside.

That would've been great.

It needs an ice cream cone outside. And Schlotzky's and Papa Murphy's... all of that would've been a great addition to Downtown. We're losing them to those strips.

The hours.

I don't disagree.

You can't have a 9-to-5 Downtown.

(agreement. Many people talking at once.)

What's keeping people from Downtown?

There's no retail. Getting those retail locations, storefronts... the ice cream shop wanted a place to rent.

And they looked at traffic count. But you can't get to it.

And not much parking, either.

If it was Downtown. People could walk from the university. You've got a captive audience. If there was something Downtown, we would walk. After work to have a drink.

The crumbling buildings, the amount of money necessary, it's cost-prohibitive.

On one hand, _____'s needs to be commended. On the other hand, what he put in there, I would've much rather seen something different. If you're going to spend that, and bring them back up... he had to do something to get a return on his investment. He had to put something in. So, the things that ended up going in, were less than exciting.

But perfect for the kids to walk to class. As soon as he got past planning and zoning, he had them done quickly.

It was a business decision.

They have to have help renovating.

Is there money with DREAM?

(some discussion about the DREAM initiative.)

Look at all the major Downtowns that are thriving. One of the biggest things they've done is parking garages. We have nothing like that. They can be an eyesore. It's practicality, not aesthetics. You'd have to take a building out.

Why can't you put it on one of the lots we have now?

Not big enough. It would take half a city block?

Maybe you look at surrounding streets.

And that might be... but put it within walking distance. Not in the middle of Pine. Boulder, Columbia... there's only so many spots.

The Plaza in Kansas City.

They can be an eyesore, but it's a necessity.

And if you're going to do events, you have to have parking.

If you took parking off the streets, you'd be able to do something more attractive.

Brick and trees and green space.

You could close off Pine Street then. Make that a walking area. Make it cobblestone.

Put fountains up there.

It's a brick street under it.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION III

TRANSCRIPT TWO: MISSOURI UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS

Moderator: *Tell me a little about Rolla. What's it like to live here and go to college here?*

I guess one thing is that Rolla is a lot more peaceful than my neighborhood back home. That's a plus, but students stick to campus. They don't venture off campus except to Walmart.

There's not much to do around. Campus is a good place to hang out.

Rolla's actually bigger than my hometown, so it seems like there's a little more to do.

I come from Dallas, Texas, so it's a little smaller.

It's a small town but it has a lot of the utilities and access that you need.

There's nothing to do.

(laughter.)

Within 30 miles, at least.

(agreement.)

Movie selection is pretty terrible.

And it's too expensive.

It's a pretty crappy movie theater.

And it's too expensive to be crappy.

You run out of going out to eat options within the first month. There's like 6 restaurants.

And they're not close to campus.

If you go to 10th street or Kingshighway, but if I was a freshman without a car... Papa John's or Domino's, because they deliver.

And pay with points.

(laughter.)

Other than that, I mean, the school campus is Rolla, and whenever I venture out, I'm outside of Rolla already.

People visiting campus get a bad impression of living here, because everything surrounding campus is run-down, and you don't know that there is good neighborhoods. All you see is student housing. That being said, I've never felt unsafe in Rolla, and that's really important.

When I first got here, I walked around at 3 am because I felt safe.

Moderator: *Where do you shop?*

Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart.

Aldi's.

Kroger.

(many people talking at once.)

We need a Target.

(laughter.)

Moderator: *What about dining and entertainment?*

We play video games. You run out of things to do in the first week.

You have to be very creative when you attend this university.

There's nowhere to go on a date.

Gordoz, now.

But that's expensive. You need a happy medium.

Benton Square is a happy medium.

That's still expensive.

You're a cheap date.

There's nowhere to go after you eat.

There's no entertainment. Bowling, but that's it.

The skating rink isn't open late enough.

It's like junior high.

Everything closes at 6.

Or 5.

Actually, according to a survey I conducted with 300 respondents, 64% wanted nightlife.

(agreement.)

Moderator: Do you go Downtown? What are the reasons you go?

To pay my utilities.

According to the survey I did, about 53% only go to Downtown because of the banks. I personally don't Downtown except for the bank.

I go for the Blue Beagle.

I go to the fraternity Downtown.

Everybody thinks Rolla Downtown is for old people. If you aren't paying bills are going to the bank, there's nothing for you. The clothing stores are 50 or 60 years old. Everything closes at 4, 5.

It's so close to campus, too, but all the selections aren't for us.

(agreement. Many people talking at once.)

It's unfortunate. It has the potential to be so awesome.

I like the second-hand bookstore.

A lot of people don't realize what's Downtown. There's a lot of geeks that would love the comic store.

I hear a lot also that no one advertises towards the students, so when it comes to us being involved with Downtown, we don't know too much about it.

It's also run-down. There's empty stores. My dream is to live in a loft Downtown. I think students would live there.

There is some who lives there.

Every big city, lofts are like a big thing. In Kansas City, it attracts people.

There are some Downtown, but they don't look inviting.

They smell old.

One of the greatest ideas I got was if Rolla had more events and festivals for students Downtown. Not the old festivals, but if there was weekend festivals...

Have a musician play on Saturday nights. Just one event get people walking around down there.

We have no place to go Downtown, and there are stores, but no lounges or venues. There are bars, but everybody's not of age. Some people don't like the bar atmosphere. A lot of bigger campuses have Chipotle and Starbucks.

Any place where people can study late. You can go to Panera, but it closes at 9.

Like a coffee shop.

Anywhere you can study late.

And chill out and talk and drink a cup of coffee and smell fresh air.

They should make rooftop terraces.

Moderator: Do you hear information about stuff going on Downtown, and how?

My coworker works for the City, but that's it. But no one else knows.

Something on Facebook.

When I'm driving around and Pine Street's closed.

My aunt tells me, but that's it.

I have no idea.

I've been here 4 years, and I don't know what's going on. I never hear anything. One thing that can be done is to get the students involved. Ask them to have their events Downtown. Give free spaces, and it will be a win-win for the students and the City to have a live Downtown.

I mean, that's a good point. A space that doesn't cost that much. My fraternity's tried to have events in Rolla, and they try to charge \$1500 or \$3000, and then you just revert to doing it on campus.

I don't know if you guys attended the Celebration of Nations, but it was a lot of people. City officials, students, residents... it feels alive.

It's because it was advertised.

It's something to do.

They advertised it so well.

Everybody was involved.

That's the thing. The events that happen Downtown, no one cares what it is. It's something to do on the weekend.

There were a lot of people that went from Celebration of Nations and strolled around to the shops. Downtown businesses should support any event Downtown, because it'll draw in people and make them realize what's down there.

If we could get out of that historic environment... if they put in a fountain Downtown, something just to liven the area up.

I like how it is historic, but that doesn't attract you. I like the feel of it, but I don't like the look of it right now.

Moderator: What kinds of businesses would you like to see Downtown?

Food. The two cafes closed early, but one burned down. The other one closes at like 1 or something.

Alley Cats used to be Downtown. I used to love that.

I know a sports bar would be a really good idea because you could eat, drink, watch baseball, basketball.

I don't have cable, so that would be nice.

And a sports bar could just be open until 12 or something.

(many people talking at once.)

Buffalo Wildwings. Something like that might upset people from around the area about a chain store.

Bring a local bar like that. I like the idea of having several small, local restaurants.

(agreement.)

If there was several different places, there will always be people at these different places. Gordoz costs too much.

I know when we go in Houston or St. Louis, you can spend a whole afternoon or evening hopping from restaurant to restaurant. Hanging out.

Tell them to go to Mizzou and look around their student area.

Coffee shop. A nice, quiet place.

Or get the ones we have to stay open later.

A place to study.

Reader's Corner bought the sawmill, and they could turn that into a coffee shop.

I think the thing that bothers me is that we use no technology around here. Restaurants still have black and white tube televisions.

Some window displays look like they're from the 80's.

Moderator: What should be the high priorities for improving the look and feel of Downtown?

If you walk Downtown after 10 or 11, the lighting is not giving the Downtown a good look. I would rather walk around campus. It's a lot more open.

A lot of the businesses' signs and stuff look old. They have the board with the plastic letters.

It needs to be updated.

If you bring 150 students to live down there, it has to attract more people, because friends will come visit there, and people will come down there and go to businesses. But it looks crappy.

If we could take pride in Downtown, people would go there all the time. Lighting, signs.

Cleaning the buildings off, because they just look old.

What is the DREAM initiative?

(discussion about the scope of the initiative.)

I think it would be a lot more attractive, for incoming students. Other than saying, you have to make your own fun down here.

One thing we don't have is anywhere for a music venue, except for the Band Shell, which is cold in the winter. Campus would've loved them for them to redo the Uptown and have that theater venue available. It's going to be an Alumni House.

But we need money.

They can't use the gym anymore, really. The basketball team got upset about that.

Moderator: What about parks, recreation, or green space Downtown?

(many people talking at once.)

I don't know about parks, per se, but the openness of the Band Shell, things like that to go hang out.

I like the whole idea of rooftop spaces. I know it seems like a bigger swing to a new age, but if you put people on a rooftop, you get a completely new feel. There's not much space on ground for outdoor seating.

I think if you did a park and you did it well, even one lot with picnic tables, a fountain, trees, flowers, just some place that was a little more peaceful. We have parks not too far away, but a sanctuary type of garden would be cool.

With Wi-Fi.

Yes.

There are towns that have free Wi-Fi all through Downtown.

That would be really attractive to students.

Students could just come and sit and chill out with their laptop.

Study.

Tell them to clean Schuman park up. I think it's awesome park, it's just dirty.

It's skuzzy.

We use it all the time, but it's really gross.

One thing the city can do to bring businesses in is to give the businesses that come into Downtown incentives. They go to Kingshighway or something else. There should be advantages. The City should encourage them to come to Downtown.

Get rid of some of the old, industrial structures next to the railroad tracks. Not a good image for Downtown.

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

(Laughter.)

Enough parking for what?

Students who live Downtown, there's no parking. People fight over parking.

There's 3 fraternities.

Yeah.

And the 10-hour parking, you can't park between 1 and 5. So that takes away from them.

If we do revitalize Downtown, you need permanent parking. What if your parents come to visit?

Every time that any student seeks the guy who chucks the tires, that irritates me. You want people to come Downtown, and you're going to give everybody tickets?

People come down here to pay bills. You don't need 3 hours.

There are way too many 10-minute spots.

With campus being so close, Rolla really needs a parking garage. Even though they're ugly.

You could make a parking garage look pretty nice, though.

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

Everything's on one street.

Once you know which street goes which way, you're fine.

There's that one turn by the railroad where you can't make a left, which is really annoying.

People turn left there anyway.

All these streets back here are confusing because they don't connect.

It's so close to campus, so accessibility is super awesome to walk. Most people would walk from campus. They wouldn't drive.

Moderator: *Thinking about other downtowns, what do you admire and think would work well in Rolla?*

I mean, like Westport, Kansas City. It wouldn't be a big booming downtown, but... Westport is a little older, like this, but it's more up-to-date. They have Starbucks and Chipotle and a jazz bar and tattoo shops... more up-to-date. Not everything, but 4 or 5 businesses in between historic things. There's good lighting, and it's all on one strip.

Down in Dallas, there's a street behind the busy city places, and there's local businesses around Hooter's and Planet Hollywood. You need just one thing to bring people down.

If you could hear music as you walk... outside music adds to the feel. You feel welcome as you walk. And not Frank Sinatra.

If you were going to do a jazz bar. But having a dance club would be cool, and a lot of students would go.

(agreement.)

Something nice.

According to the survey, 65% wants nightlife or a dance club. That's 200 out of 300.

We have all the potential to make nightlife amazing, with all the college students. It could be huge.

And people just leave town.

People have been willing to pay gas money to drive to St. Roberts, so if you had it here, there's so much potential in this area. And there's a lot of locals, too.

(agreement.)

And give student discounts.

Put a student discount on everything.

Hardee's changed theirs, and I haven't been back.

Moderator: What else came out of your surveys?

I wanted to know how long people have been in Rolla, and they had mostly been here 3-5 years. The second question was, "Why do you go to Downtown?" and they go there for the banks. 30% go to walk around. I don't know where they walk. And there's 20% that had never been Downtown. I think that's a really big percent. The third question was, "What would you like to see Downtown?" 65% said nightlife, 68% said restaurants, and 52% said coffee shops, and 50% wanted a place to sit and hang out and get some fresh air.

Mine was open-ended comments, so I ended up with a huge list of specific things, like restaurants and nightlife, and they wanted the movie theater updated. Somebody had lighting. A bunch of people complained about housing. If we had housing down here, that would be better.

If we could get away from Investment, our housing company, it would be great.

And it would create some incentive for them to pick up their game.

I think a good clothing store would be huge.

Is there a Kohl's going in? I think so.

I heard it wasn't going in.

No, it's been accepted.

Yes!

People want department stores.

Olive Garden.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

Just like a cool clothing store.

Or name brand that kids our age would wear.

Like a Buckle or a Maurice's.

An Old Navy.

(agreement.)

The J.C. Penney is tiny. It just doesn't work.

I went in there with a friend from back home, and she was like, "This is really sketch."

It is.

Their luggage department is as big as the entire women's department. What do we need luggage for?

Because we're leaving.

What do you put in there? There's no clothes.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION IV

TRANSCRIPT THREE: DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS

Moderator: *Tell me a little about Rolla.*

We're centrally located on I-44. You can go to RollaChamber.org, and it'll tell you the facts.

It's a university town, safe, friendly people, a lot of churches.

A lot of locally-owned businesses.

Not a lot of industry, but what's here is effective and high-tech. It is a major distribution center as county seat and cross section of I-63 and I-44.

Everything's affordable here.

Very easy to navigate.

I was in the book business for 18 years, and my sales reps from Chicago or wherever, they found it amazing that it was rural but we have a high concentration of professionals. Military, the university, the geological survey. They were amazed at the fact of the knowledge that people have here, the talent, and the willingness to get involved and to make things happen. I work in a statewide healthcare coalition, and people are struggling to have the team efforts we have here. If we're trying to get a project done, people come to the table. We have a Summerfest every year, and it's a unique committee, there are new people that come, and then you have the City people like _____, there he is. And he has a new plan. "Last year, I evaluated this, and let's do it this way." We have that with traffic flow with the tour of Missouri. It blew my mind. They come to the table and say, "How can we help?" or they bring a plan to the table.

All of our community leaders and department heads are easy to work with.

(agreement.)

That doesn't mean we all agree, but they're easy to work with.

Moderator: *Is Rolla moving in a positive or negative direction?*

Certain sections are positive. The University has a new research center and a new student design center, and that'll clean up that corner. They've got the highway 63 corners cleaned up. In parts of the community, there's a KFC here going in and Bandana's and a steakhouse. There's spots of life. But I don't feel the Downtown moving in a forward direction. It's kind of stagnating.

It's not moving forward. There's lots of areas that are moving forward fast, and others that stand still. The majority of our community wants to see change, but there's a portion of the community that's negative and wants to stop things from happening.

The reason the Downtown hasn't gone downhill is because of _____. If he hadn't improved those buildings, it would've gone downhill. That brought new life Downtown with residences in converted buildings. They seem to be very successful. The residents say good things. The fraternities are living in luxury over there. It's guys like _____ who make things happen. But some let things deteriorate until they have to do something. It seems like some of the building owners don't want to make improvements.

Moderator: How many people live Downtown?

Probably a couple hundred.

Probably closer to 300.

Moderator: Is it mostly college students?

Yeah. I'd say it's more like 350.

I was asked, how invested are the business owners Downtown? 6 people have invested 5 million, and the Benton Square was 4 million, so in 2 years, it was 9 million. So there's that going on, and then there's people doing nothing. Then there's people with a skeleton in their window doing nothing.

We need more quality businesses Downtown.

Our business owners have said that. People who are property owners, they're looking for better quality tenants. The 900 Pine Street building and the one up to the jewelry store...

But you have to improve your building.

And we're looking at things that we can do to bring improvements to our area. We've talked about signage and marketing, but you have to have things for people to do when they get here. We do have the theater, an equity theater, one of two in the state. They do live performances. It's in the arts and entertainment district, and I refer to that district as part of Downtown. Rolla Street and Main Street and Cedar, not just Pine Street. You have more ways to attract people, but you also have more players involved.

Moderator: Let me backtrack for a second. Where are the main shopping areas?

People go elsewhere.

I think people leave Rolla and go to bigger cities with malls, stores we don't have here. Clothing, retail. I've heard people leave for grocery shopping at some of the bigger grocery stores. All the big ones in the City.

There's some stuff you can't get here. My wife's a vegetarian, and the vegetarian selection in town is embarrassing. Kroger's about the best, and they've only got one section in the freezer.

And there is a push by media people about shopping locally, and the Chamber's been doing that for years, because people don't get the connection between buying locally and the sales tax. I know people that go once a week to St. Louis to shop. Every time I see their car coming back, it just drives me crazy. Keeping it local is critical to fixing our potholes. I don't think people even think about it.

They just think of what they want to purchase. We have some wonderful retail businesses here, but people leave.

When you're recruiting docs and their families. Also military spouses. I think they love Rolla because we have extended learning, but they go shop in St. Louis or Jeff City or the Lake. Target, Kohl's, Macy's.

You can't find that stuff here.

We have everything. Clothing, vehicles, furniture, jewelry.

It's not the huge selection that people are used to. But we don't have New York and Company, Macy's...

If you want brand name clothing, you're limited.

It's never been a big deal to me to shop locally, but some people don't want to drive around to the different stores. They don't want to go all around town and go in to all these different shops. But if they go to St. Louis to the Dove Mall, it's all right there.

Plus they have entertainment. You shop, you have dinner, you go to a Cardinal game. Columbia, you go to the Mizzou game. We need more activities to bring people here and keep them here.

You've got people going to St. Louis from all over. My wife says, "You need a dress shop Downtown," but it's not popular.

It's a chicken and the egg thing.

My frustration is, people come to rent a house, and they say, "This is too small." Well I can't make it bigger. When you say entertainment, what do you mean?

That's different for everyone. The Rolla Downtown Days, there was an art walk, music, wine tasting, and Friday night was packed. People seemed to enjoy that. In my mind, it would be jazz festivals, bluegrass, music, art, that kind of thing. The uniqueness of Rolla is what we have going for us. We're not going to be able to compete with Macy's. If you knew you have antique stores to go to... we need to pull people in and give them something to do for an overnight or two. We have the performing arts at Missouri S&T going on.

I have so many things to do that, for me, I don't have time to do all the things I'd like to do. _____'s family is going to perform Snoopy to get kids from Russia here. I'm used to paying

for hockey tickets. I think the campus performing arts are super cheap. I'm paying 58 dollars a ticket for things in Springfield, and here, 35, 40 bucks. We're very spoiled here.

Moderator: What about restaurants? Do you have enough?

I think we're good. Especially with some of the recent chains. You attract the locals, and we go to the locally owned restaurants. Then you have the tourist that's staying overnight or something, they may not want to venture out to a locally-owned place, but some of them want the chains that they can rely on. We have several hotels, and when Bandana's opened there, the hotel managers were excited because people could walk over to Bandana's. I would say we're doing good when it comes to restaurants. I know we've got a lot of fast food.

We have some good chains, and we have a steakhouse coming, and Panera's.

We're doing better than 5 years ago.

I do think there's a hole Downtown, though. You've got one decent restaurant. I'm looking at a boutique restaurant or a little place to service the University students. There's one up in Mizzou, and it's like a food court all in one place. That would draw the students toward Downtown.

And it's not university owned.

No, it's right across from Shakespeare's.

I think we'd like to have a nice lunch and dinner place.

Like, Leona's kitchen is open, but they close at 1.

We have these people living Downtown, and we need to feed them. And if we're going to have an evening event, we need lunch and dinner. We'd love to have a lunch and dinner place.

Moderator: Let's focus more on Downtown specifically. Why do most of you choose to have your businesses Downtown?

Mine was built there 52 years ago. The business.

Mine was an affordability factor for the size I needed.

That's a lot of why we picked our building. The price per square foot was untouchable. Since then, we've really appreciated the support of the Downtown association, but the reason we moved was price.

We were located on Kingshighway, and people couldn't get in and out because of the traffic, so we moved Downtown. And I didn't agree with my husband to do that, and it's proven

much better than I thought. He proved me wrong. We have a large parking lot behind our store and come in through the back. We own our building, and we were renting before.

Moderator: How are business hours?

I wish things were open later. I get off work at 5.
And they close at 5.

Some 5:30.

I close at 6, to catch people after work.

Very smart.

I'm open until 8 or 9 every night, and I get a lot of business then. We're busiest from 3 until close.

And we're open a lot later during the week. Sometimes we're open until 9.

I think that's a difficult factor. You don't want to pay employees to be there when no one's coming in. If everyone had a way to at least try staying open until 6, the working people could shop... I mean, they can only shop at noon or on Saturday, but a lot of businesses aren't open even Saturdays.

And if you have kids in sports, Saturdays are crazy.

My book business, the evening and weekend business was huge. And yet, I would never say to someone, "You need to be open 9 to 9." It's not that busy Downtown in the evenings, except Blue Beagle.

And Alex's.

Especially on Friday night.

What about one day a week?

We've talked about Thursday nights. When I was a kid, Thursday night was the night everyone stayed open. If everybody did it and we made an event of it, it would pay off. But at least be open until 5:30 or 6.

How do you motivate people when you've got businesses where people are happy with what they've got? I guess the key is motivating people to stay open.

You show results. You show that there's good business when everyone stays open.

If you have a business, it's a little bit selfish, but it's also about your customers. You should be open when your customers want you to be. If you're going to have people in at 6 or 7, it pays to be open.

I don't think there's too many people who say they're making enough money. If I can make more money, I'm going to do it.

Then why don't they stay open?

I think everybody needs to do it for it to be effective. Or at least more people.

I've tried to do it, during the holidays. Nobody came in.

I think _____'s open until 6, too, isn't he?

It kind of changes from day to day.

Do you find it's effective to stay open until 6?

It helps me. I do catch a lot of people between 5:30 or 6. It's a convenience factor. I do a lot of drop-off, pickup stuff. They can drop off or pick up repairs or a plaque or an engraving.

We used to be open on Saturdays, and no one came in in the afternoon.

And retailing is just grueling, especially for a mom and pop operation without any other staff. It's exhausting. To me, we're looking at bringing a farmer's market Downtown every Saturday until at least 2, and hopefully that will bring people Downtown and know that something's going on. That might help the businesses that are staying open, and that might motivate other businesses to stay open.

Moderator: Is there enough parking?

I think that there is plenty of parking Downtown. That's a fact, and that's proven by the numbers. There are enough spaces. The problem we have is business owners and employees parking on the main drags in the 2-hour parking zones at their leisure, and there's ineffective enforcement. I've been working on it now, and it's going to change the first of the year. The problem is that this all stems back... if we can't solve a quantifiable, easy problem, how are we going to lure businesses Downtown? You can't lure people down there like that. How are we going to lure smart people unless we take care of the parking problem? That's the elemental problem. If I see that the City is doing something about this, then I as a building owner am going to work harder to keep my building nice and bump the rent up. I have a building on a side street that gets more income than my others, because there's a parking lot right next door.

(agreement that parking is problem.)

People just park right in front of their stores. They park right in my parking.

The University has me well-trained to park where I'm supposed to. If you get tickets, and even if you pay them all, you'll get booted if you get enough tickets.

Maybe the campus police should patrol Downtown. (laughter.)

We're looking at privatizing this. We're on the first steps. It has to be a mindset. If the building owners want to keep the level of their rentals at an all-time low, they will not care about where people park, but if they tell their renters, "Don't park in front of the building..." it has to become a mindset. All the employers and employees need to agree that they're going to park somewhere else, not in front of the buildings. There's plenty of parking closer than you would be at Wal-Mart.

People just don't want to walk.

It's a mindset that you have to get through. The one way that we can do it is try to approach the building owners, but if we're going to have to get some hard-ass enforcement, if it takes that, we have to do it. We're looking at technology to take care of some of this, not this stupid chalk-mark business.

How long are we going to talk about parking? Either do something about it or something! Form a committee. Why talk about it? Either do something about it or stop talking about it. Build a task force. I get tired of talking and talking and not doing anything about it.

Moderator: *Is there enough signage?*

No. That's at the top of our list in the meetings where we've walked through and analyzed the Downtown. You can't find Downtown. What exit did you take?

Moderator: *185.*

How did you find Downtown?

Moderator: *Accidentally.*

There you go. The University is putting signage out there. North Pine is being addressed right now by Missouri S&T. The urban planners there are sending out some ideas and working with us. This is just an idea, I printed out.

(people passing papers around and agreeing that it's a good idea.)

We're looking at a pocket park and then directing them to shopping, and creating a parking lot to take you over to Arts and Entertainment. We have little wayfinding signs.

Moderator: *That's how I found Downtown, because I found the post office.*

Missouri S&T is doing the green signage, and it would be coordinated so people could see and read the signage for each district.

That is being addressed right now.

If we do a bang-up job of getting people Downtown, what are they going to find? 25 professional services, 17 retailers, and a restaurant and a half.

Moderator: How does Downtown communicate what's going on?

We have the Rolla Downtown business association, and we've gotten most of the email addresses for at least business owners and some building owners. We meet once a week at Alex's Pizza, and we discuss what's going on and email the minutes. We have a Facebook page that's recently been set up, and our website. And if there's big events, the Chamber sends out those announcement to its members, and then the Visitor's Center has their own Facebook site, and we get the message out through them. If we have an ad in a magazine, we incorporate big events.

I type up news releases and send them out to regional media, broadcast and print, and if it's something about alumni, we send it out to the University.

Does RDBA have a standing appointment on the Morning Mayors?

I'm on there, and _____'s on there.

I also send PSAs out to Channel 6 and KMST. Anything I send, they run it. Kaleidoscope runs our stuff. Regional media.

Moderator: How's communication between City and elected officials and business owners?

I think so.

Oh yeah.

There is some animosity with some of the property owners.

(laughter.)

I think that was precipitated counter-control of our initiatives for Downtown.

A lot of people attended this open house for the special business district, and the majority of people had never been to our meetings, and at least we got stuff out on the table. In my mind, I think there's a general overall distrust of government anyway, and I don't think the local businesses think they can call up the federal or the state level. They take it out on the local level. Beyond that, and there was a lot of information that came out of that meeting, and some of those were old gripes that they'd never addressed them directly with the city official. I talked to them one-on-one, and it was something that happened 10 or 20 years ago, and they never really addressed. We have a Downtown person who was charged \$1300 for the water bill, and she got a less than wonderful response, and that has changed. But all we had to do was hear that, and they could address that. They may not wipe the bill out, but she should have been respectfully treated when she called. But we can do that, because we know the person. You guys had a potential police issue, and we called up the police chief, and he's followed up on that. In my mind, we have that ability to pick up the phone and at least talk to somebody about it. If you don't do that, you can't complain about it. It's like not voting.

I think you missed the point. Why do they need to bring it to us when they do take it to the people in charge and are just pushed away like she was? It should be taken care of by the elected officials.

I just didn't go directly to the police because I was a little uncomfortable. I went for advice.

The problem has been that way for years, and people are upset about it. When you go down and you get milled around by the City, you get fed up. For us to really go forward, that needs to change. It takes 2 sides to change it. We are focused on changing it. But the direction in the City is not Downtown, it's Rolla West, so we ought to be pleased that we get whatever little support we get right now.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown Rolla. What kinds of businesses would you like to see Downtown?

A bakery would be nice.

Restaurants will be key.

Outdoor dining options.

I used to live in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and the Downtown was wonderful because of the restaurants.

Rooftop dining.

Outdoor options are great. You can people-watch and check out retail businesses.

Vintage stores. Not necessarily antiques. But vintage is kind of fun.

And students would like it.

That's true.

Obtain a better mix of retail for students and seniors, niche and specialty shops, a convenience store, and restaurants. That's real targeted.

I approached _____ about putting one in. They make their money off the store, not gas.

People always need those types of things.

How do you feel about traffic flow being 2-way on Pine Street?

Plans are on the table for that. We're waiting for \$100,000 dollars.

We're going to change that.

That would help tremendously.

Has anybody ever asked the students what they would like to see?

How much purchasing power do students have, though?

A crapload. We have international students. I know a gal that works at the bank, and they said the international students deposit \$100,000 to \$200,000 in cash. They live like paupers.

There is a disconnect with this Downtown right next to the University. Lots of us have seen other communities where the campus is next to Downtown and that is what they market to. I think there's that disconnect. I don't know why. I do think talking to the students... they came up with, where you go and buy climbing gear.

Like a Dick's sporting thing?

Outfitters. Stuff for fly-fishing or... not a full-on Bass Pro, but stuff for climbing and caving, things like that. They really wanted that. We kind of already have gaming going on.

How profitable can that be?

Think how profitable my bookstore was, and I didn't have expensive stuff.

When I buy stuff for hiking, I pay a fortune for things. I'll pay \$200 for a pair of good hiking boots.

If that's so profitable, isn't there somebody who wants to make money?

I used to consult with retailers, and people are afraid to take the risk and work that hard. I think the right people are out there, and we need to recruit them. We need to recruit these unique businesses. Not everybody wants to work that hard. You've got to find somebody with a passion for a little bakery or an outfitter store.

When you think about Downtown, what's left?

A lot of buildings between 6th and 7th on Pine.

Yeah, but I thought those were purchased.

It hasn't rented yet. They could do something with it.

I think the small units are big enough for an independent retailer.

There's a lot of under-used stuff.

(side conversations.)

If you have to remodel your building, though... as far as outfitters, how much stuff could you put in there and be profitable? Our biggest need is to identify the buildings we have, their sizes, and what could go in there.

My theory is, have the owners measure their spaces and tell us what the usage can be.

Moderator: How about the look and feel of Downtown? Are there things that need to be repaired?

The City's done a good job. The lighting and sidewalks are nice. My building looks pretty crappy right now because I ran out of money, but I'm working on putting the front on there in the next 6 months.

There are some buildings that are not maintained.

The new Children's library is in a butt-ugly building. We've got older buildings that have advertising on the side that's not maintained, that looks shabby, and you've got buildings that point toward Kingshighway, and that's ugly, and I was over at Cuba, and they've put murals on their buildings and spruced up the backsides, and if they can do it in Cuba, we can do it here. If you look around Pine Street, it could all be better. But how much money are they going to spend.

We're spending a lot on the library just to get the inside done.

At least painting the brick would give it a more cohesive look. Right now, you can't tell there's a children's library.

They're aware of that, though.

And we're looking at doing some plantings and landscaping.

The fountain area?

6th and Pine.

That little niche area with the Children's library.

Gotcha.

Moderator: Does the Downtown need more green space?

Uh-huh.

Yeah.

Depends on who's going to take care of the landscaping.

With the planters, all it takes is a little watering, and some people never water them.

And some people use them as an ashtray.

We need better trash receptacles.

They're around, but there should be more.

They're dark green, just like the benches.

In defense of the City, they empty ours.

We did this all during the first revitalization.

There's a place in Albuquerque with music piped in all around you.

Really?

Yeah, outside. And the trees all had little Christmas lights in it.

That makes an area look really neat.

There was nothing really spectacular about it, but it was nice.

Benton Square has their lights outside on their patio, and even early in the morning, it makes it so cute.

I don't think it's a huge expense.

Not any more than street lights. You could hook it in to the street lights.

Moderator: What's the highest priority for helping Downtown?

Parking.

Parking.

Traffic flow.

Moderator: There's been some talk about a special business district that collects an extra real estate tax.

We don't want to do that.

It's controversial.

Would you say it's split 50-50?

First of all, when you're talking about taxes going up, nobody wants to pay more taxes. The people who are on board are major business owners. We have maybe 1 major business owner not in favor, but they're not going to fight it. The people who are opposing it, those

people have no information. They haven't been to any of the meetings. When we talk to them, they come on board. The other issue is they're hoping there's an end to the tax. And there is, if you vote for it. Currently, we make \$1000 a year with our arts and crafts festival, and that's what we operate with for the whole year. We served on a committee looking at an extra tax so we can pool our money and make things happen. They would get to vote on what we want to do. But the City Council has to give its blessing. We don't quite have the participation we need. The good news is that we are applying for a community block grant, and with that, we're going to be able to put a pocket park in, buy the parking lot across the railroad tracks, and a couple other things.

How much would that bring in?

\$400,000. At least something could happen this year. We've also decided we need a plan. We've kind of avoided that because not everybody's on board, but _____ and several others have said we need to go with a plan. "This is what your \$30,000 total can do this year and down the road." If you say you go with a plan, you have to deliver on your promise.

Moderator: What else do I need to know?

We do a lot of events.

We have a number of events that bring people Downtown, but we don't have a way to bring people into the stores Downtown. The Downtown Days brought people into the stores, but other events don't.

We only have so much money to get out there and market it. And we run this with 2 or 3 volunteers.

And people will burn out.

We'd talked about doing an event in the courtyard by the library, weekly small concerts or small food nights or things like that during the summer, like every Friday night. Close off between 9th and 10th street and use that courtyard for entertainment or art... something informal. If we could do it in conjunction with the Saturday, people aren't going to be inconvenienced. Whether we have music or what... I'd like to see it. Have kids playing and parents listen to poetry or a book read or something. Just get a little...

(agreement.)

Yeah, children's activities have been mentioned. Kiwanis has been talking about a water feature, and the architectural students came up with the idea of children's climbing walls. They want to do it across from you guys. They have an idea of doing St. Pat's Court, and doing picnic tables and children's activities. We'd like to do something with that over in the festival park. We've talked about sculpture to look at and fountains. We could expand our current historical walking tour. All these pieces need to be tied together.

This is back, I remember _____ telling me that there used to be 4 big events city-wide for the 4 different seasons. One event per season. They had all the businesses Downtown open and offering discounts, and maybe that's something we focus on. 4 seasonal events just to bring people into your businesses. 4 events that encourage businesses. And then you have your Summerfest and Arts and Crafts Festival...

I came up with 5 retail stores that would do that every time. And 3 of us are in the room. So how big an event could do it?... I think it would be great if there were a niche diner open or a place to get pie or ice cream.

(agreement.)

Has anyone ever talked about, I'm from a small town outside of Quincy, Illinois, and we have the Gus Macker Tournament. They turn part of Downtown into a 3-on-3 basketball game, and it brings in hundreds of people.

They did that at least once, maybe twice Downtown, and that was part of Summerfest.

It brings all these little towns around Quincy. All these people come in and start early in the morning and go until late at night, and the moms go and shop.

We tried that with the big softball tournament, and nobody came.

If we could capture the people who already come... we just need to capture them.

I think signage is a great start.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION V

TRANSCRIPT FOUR: CITY STAFF

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

We're pretty cosmopolitan. A good mixture of urban and rural and suburban, a real mixture.

We don't have a huge industrial base. I don't think we ever have. What drives this economy is the services—M S&T and healthcare, a regional institution. Throw on top of that a few federal agencies (microphone noise, unintelligible)... it tends to insulate us a little bit.

Fort Leonard Wood also plays a part. A lot of people commute to get health services or schools.

To be at the interchange of highway 44 and Kingshighway at 7:00, you can't get through.

Moderator: *Do people work here?*

Rolla is the hub for a 30 to 50 mile radius. We have a strong industrial base... (unintelligible).

Moderator: *How many students are around here?*

There's 7000 at the University and about a 1000 of those extended learning.

East Central Community College has 3 or 400 students, maybe 5?

(agreement.)

Moderator: *Where do people shop?*

Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart.

JC Penney's.

Lowe's.

Trips to Jeff City and St. Louis.

You can take a look at the zoning map and get a sense of it.

Online.

Online.

Some in St. James.

You've got the wineries and restaurants in St. James.

I'd say there's a fair amount of leakage.

But at the same time, people come in here for JC Penney and Kmart.

Moderator: What about groceries?

We don't have enough.

People wish we had an upper-level store.

Wal-Mart is our best grocery store.

(laughter.)

We don't have much choice.

There are people that go to Country Mart and Kroger's because they hate Wal-Mart.

(many people talking at once, unintelligible.)

...There are a lot of people that carry a cooler to St. Louis for meats and fishes and cheeses...

If we were just a redneck community, we wouldn't be hankering for these things.

Moderator: Could your community support more upscale groceries?

Oh yeah.

We did a study years ago that documented that.

If you could train people not to go out of town.

Oh, yeah.

If we could get awareness about how important it is to our community to shop here, how much sales tax matters, you wouldn't have potholes... how much it impacts... I know people don't realize this. I get my soapbox out at the country club when I heard that people shop in St. Louis once a week, and for them, they buy their cars elsewhere. They have no concept of how that hurts us. They need to shop here with everything they can.

But we have to have something to shop for.

Hence the Kohl's project.

(enthusiasm about Kohl's.)

Several women's groups want Kohl's and Target.

And a Hobby Lobby.

I'll believe it when I see it.

Moderator: Are there enough dining options?

A year ago, I would've said no. But in a year's time, it's amazing.

I think the market found out that we were...

...hungry.

Pizza, Mexican...

(many people talking at once.)

We have another Japanese restaurant coming in.

And East Indian.

Benton Square is probably the biggest, in my mind. It brings people from outside the area.

(unintelligible side conversations.)

It changed drastically in a 2-year time. It was one of the top things you would hear, and now it's changed.

We're short on a country breakfast.

Leona's.

Never been in.

It's on Pine Street.

It's smoky.

It's a nice greasy spoon.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Is there any upscale dining here?

I would consider Sybill's...

(many people talking at once.)

Matt's. I wouldn't consider that really "upscale," though.

Gordoz and Sybill's are probably the two.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

Moderator: Are there enough entertainment options?

We need a new movie theater.

Absolutely.

We could do a freestanding one in the Downtown area.

(unintelligible side conversations about movie theaters.)

The arts are pretty hard to beat.

Rolla's got some fantastic cultural arts, theater.

Nightlife, though.

That's why Benton Square has found a niche, though.

We need something that students can use.

A microbrewery.

I think it's the nature of the students. The science types, they don't do that kind of thing.

I think a fair amount of them leave Rolla for the weekend and go to St. Louis for cultural events. If you could do a few establishments for students, they may stay in town.

Moderator: Do the students use Downtown?

There's housing Downtown.

This never occurred to me, but somebody mentioned that, when the campuses go alcohol-free, the communities start benefiting, because they go out to the clubs and the bars. In Columbia, you can see the growth of the pubs and restaurants after Columbia went to an alcohol-free campus.

Are we?

No. They have alcohol in the fraternity houses. That might be something, though.

Still, they're a different student. Rolla's not a party school.

No, you're wrong. (Others agreeing that Rolla has parties.)

I think there's a fair amount of students who would stick around for the weekends if there was a few more establishments that would offer them something. They don't want to get sloppy drunk. They want to be out and about.

There's a couple bars Downtown.

You'd probably look at something a little more... they, too, like things more upper-scale. They come from backgrounds that can support a little upper-scale establishments.

They drive Audis and BMWs.

There's a lot of cake decorators in our community, and one of our small spaces Downtown would be great for pastries. We have Wi-Fi, and the kids could come and get a coffee and a pastry and meet someone for a meeting or to study.

Moderator: Let's back up for a second. Let's talk about Downtown as it is now. Do you think it's moving in a positive or negative direction?

I think Downtown is really doing well. I think a lot has to do with the new student housing, but also all the investment. How many millions of dollars? We have _____, and he's taken 3 buildings and revived them into key properties without any assistance or incentive. And I think he'll make money on it. It does create parking problems, but that's a problem you want to have. We didn't have that before. We've had a lot of investment. The Red Door, and Alex's Pizza is expanding. The surrounding investment, and what the university's been doing, I see nothing but positive stuff. We have some vacancies, but...

(many people talking at once.)

There are some holes down there.

There are some places, though.

(noise, unintelligible.)

If you look across town, if you could get people to move down here... we don't have all the synergy of all the shops in the same spot. What would it take to offset costs?... (unintelligible.)... to create a stronger draw.

When I moved down here in 1979, there was 9 dress shops on Pine Street and the side streets.

Retail Downtown is almost gone.

But it's not just Rolla.

That's why the college kids all go home for the weekend.

Downtowns are remaking themselves into something else, because you have big department stores elsewhere. It's the specialty shops Downtown, and maybe a few clothing stores, but that's more for specialty... (unintelligible.)

Try to get things like Urban Outfitters, stores that students want to visit.

I think it has to be culturally driven, for people who don't mind getting out of their car and walking half a mile. They're the ones you want to attract. The rural person wants to go to Wal-Mart, but if you look at the university mix plus a lot of people who want that culture. I know a lot of people who drive to St. Louis to go listen to live music. I think it has to be selective. I think the bookstore on the corner draws the culture. I think Red Door and Alex's draw culture.

The one with the skeleton in the front window, they're tacky.

Working with the property owners, they're hoping that this brings a more upscale tenant. _____'s on board with the 900 Pine Street building, and _____. The special business district will bring them more upscale tenants. How do you put a tattoo on a skeleton? I just don't get it.

I think the success of Benton Square shows that people don't mind paying a little bit more for the ambiance.

When they've got a band going, try to find a parking spot.

(many people talking at once.)

...Most mornings, it's packed...

Downtown should fill those niches. You can't compete with Wal-Mart or McDonalds.

The college kid is not going to buy that often. You can't carry the inventory and make it work.

A small venue, something to draw that student and keep them here.

There's a 30% female population. They party in the fraternity and at social gatherings.

We need to recruit women.

The gender breakdown is about 75-25.

Get the cute women Downtown.

The 25 is double what it used to be.

Hooter's!

(laughter.)

In 1971, I remember walking across campus in a dress, and that's the last time I wore a dress on campus.

The university's opened up, though. They do more than engineering. From what I've heard, we've targeted men for a long time, and it's unlikely we'll get more than 30% women.

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

People need to stay open in the evenings. They close up at 5:00.

Likewise, if they're open, no one comes in.

Chicken and the egg.

It would take a really organized effort.

If everyone stays open together—

--on selected nights.

Thursday nights in Tulsa, they stayed open. If we did it as a group, at Christmas or something, we have 4 or 5 that are interested.

How many other stores are there are the types that people would come to?

Just 4 or 5.

The jewelry store.

Groceries.

(many people talking at once.)

... interesting niche...

...lots of camps, family events, and students. It's packed in there... I'm just amazed the people. They're really busy from 3 until 9 at night.

...niche stores...

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

Aunt Floo does all these classes, and I see students there, regular working people, whether ballroom or belly dancing, and that's been a lot of fun.

Moderator: How is parking?

We were making good strides for the retail side, but we weren't prepared for the parking needs.

People park where they're not supposed to.

I think there's an opportunity for the University and the city to partner.

There's a lot of growth on the fringe, and they have parking built in, but there's a lot... they're in newer facilities, over by Busy Bee and back towards the city. You're going to see a lot of duplexes and four-plexes. There's 7000 students.

Moderator: Is the problem that there are not enough parking spaces?

There's lots of parking spaces.

I'm willing to walk where I'm going, but I don't mind walking a block or half block. I find a spot easily. And I can always get a spot out here.

For people shopping and for workers, we have places to park. But people who live here...

There's not permanent parking for residents.

Is the university going to reserve spots?

The students had to buy them, but they didn't.

At some point, you're going to have to tear down buildings and put in parking garages.

The University and the City are going to have to work together.

If you could put parking at the north and south ends and create a pedestrian mall, like Branson or the Lake...

Moderator: How is signage?

It's getting better.

Someone coming into town, I think, they have put up some signs and they're improved, but...

It's pretty nice to have those signs to find the post office...

Could you find Downtown?

Moderator: No.

We need signage to go into Downtown.

But if you get there and there's nothing there, it's a disappointment. We need to get more down there before you shout it out to people.

We need to attract customers, that's true, but what we need to do is to attract businesses Downtown. Both have to go together.

We need to reach out.

I think it's going to take a collaboration between the City, businesses, and the University. Support the arts district, and make a commitment to help with it. Instead of being separate entities. I think that's the only way to be successful, is it all has to happen at once. You could provide all the signage you want, but there's nothing to do. If you bring the businesses and no one comes down here, that doesn't work either.

It's going to take money and a risk to start as a small business... and things need to be brought up to code, of course, but come up with some way to make it easier to meet those codes. Aren't there some codes that are used by historical buildings?

There's a historic building provision.

They tend to be more restrictive than codes.

Under the building codes there's a section that deals with existing structures. They can't meet the step requirements because they're 100 years old. But if you don't change use, they can go on indefinitely.

How do other communities do that?... (unintelligible.) ... people give up on their businesses because of codes.

How are you going to attract a quilt shop, for example, when they have to do so much to the building to even use it? I'm sure we can come up with a funding mechanism, a grant possibility, something to invite people in. I worked with retailers around the country in all different locations, and those people were adamant about the businesses but not the structure itself. Maybe there's a group of people who want to buy the building and have a tenant. We've talked about putting a real estate section in the Downtown website... there's got to be a way to reach out and say, "We've got this available for your quilt shop or if you want to buy a building."

I think there are developers who would want to develop the facilities and rent them out. Again, back to the code thing, some of that is that people don't realize how much it does cost, and then they get hit with it, and they didn't expect it.

And they should have.

They should have.

We at the University know how to build, and we know what the costs are. We get a lot of criticism about that.

But if you put \$40,000 in a building, the quilt store can't rent.

But you can get grants and other ways of paying for that. But if you get someone that goes in without the knowledge... if you have maybe some guidance.

We do that.

We do a lot of that.

Moderator: Let's talk a little about Downtown living, outside of the fraternities. Is there any second-story living?

At least a couple hundred.

Oh yeah.

And there's a lot of stuff that isn't in a condition to be occupied.

Some business owners live upstairs.

There's apartments above many businesses.

(agreement.)

There's 110 kids in the Bueller building, and 50 in the Ramsey building. There's probably 3 or 400 people that live Downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

So, until you start moving cars at 6 AM, there are students and people living upstairs.

On Rolla Street, there's several things, too.

That's great. That's something we learned the first time we went through the revitalization project.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: Are there a lot that are not developed?

I don't think so.

There's offices and some... there's not as many as there used to be, but they're generally pretty used.

Not a lot of vacant businesses Downtown.

6th to 7th is bad.

We've got areas that need to be filled in.

Some of the spaces around the jewelry store.

It cries out for A Slice of Pie type establishment.

That's really a good place.

But it's not Downtown.

They've got the best pie in the world.

It's just too far for those who work and live Downtown to walk.

(side conversations.)

Moderator: Let's talk about the future of Downtown. Do you envision your Downtown for residents or for visitors or both?

Both.

I think there's people that live Downtown, there's people that work Downtown, and the stores need to use that base as something to build on, and then people can come in. There's a pretty good market already established, and if you throw in the University, for people that work and go to school there, there has to be an opportunity. I mean, look at Alex's. It's been there forever, and he does pretty well.

We couldn't find a table Friday night. The tennis group had to stand in the corner. It was filled with people.

Alex's is an example of a business that can not only survive but thrive, and they do that by providing something you can't get anywhere else.

Imo's and others, you can't get them here.

And Alex's is unique.

When my kids come back, that's the first thing they want to do. And University kids come back.

I still think it more as a place for visitors and shoppers than residential. The residential is secondary, but not the primary market.

We need to get the people that come and visit the University for a conference, meeting, if we give them places to shop... every time we do the Arts and Crafts festival, they don't even feed the alums, they just give them coffee in the morning. To me, if we already have people coming on campus for various reason, and if we had stuff that hooks up with them, and not just the students, we could hook up with the university so easily. We could combine those. A

beautiful example was Celebrations of Nations, when the community and the students came together. Look at the opportunities.

That's a one-time thing, and the craft fair is a one-time thing, and the support of the economy.

But I visited... I used to be faculty in a former life, and went to many campuses, and I'd go nearby to see the cute shops, and I think we're missing that.

And the Fort Leonard Wood spouses come in, and they're having lunch at Randy's... where are they going to shop?

We take them all over.

What are they looking for when they come? What would they like to see?

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What kinds of businesses would you like to see, other than game stops and quilting shops?

I think a Casey's type of thing... if you're a student, there's no place to buy a gallon of milk.

A little butcher shop.

A deli.

Convenience store.

That liquor store out by McDonald's, my gosh.

Maybe a liquor store.

(many people talking at once.)

...I'd like to see a bakery, ice cream, soda shop.

...How in the world is Slice of Pie going to make it out there?

...Coffee and sandwich shops where students can sit.

...Get them on the same page.

It used to be everything was Downtown, and then everything moved out, and in St. Louis and all that, things are moving back in Downtown.

Because of reinvestment Downtown. Give them a reason to spend time down there, not just to get in and get out. Go to stores and grab a bite to eat.

Sorry, we're all talking at the same time.

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

It would be great to have a unified look. It looks very 60's and 70's.

The first 2 blocks, you've got some remnants of what it was back in the day, but from there north, it's stores that were built in the 40's and 50's and 60's.

Just as long as it's not Mediterranean, Mexican, or colonial.

You can do a lot with paint.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: How would you change the look?

I hate fountains.

We have fountain ideas over here, and murals that can go on the sides of buildings.

Part of the point is that Downtown isn't the greatest-looking architecturally, but I think a little greenery and landscaping and sculptures would improve the streetscape drastically. The buildings are what they are.

If you had some sort of a look, like the awnings...

Also, somehow blend the University into the Downtown. It's better than it used to be. It used to be distinct, and they are beginning to blend, but to me that's good.

I agree.

The new Alumni Center uses columns and... incorporate that into your Downtown.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

You've got 300 or 400 kids walking up and down Rolla Street to get to class and back, and there's nothing there.

Other than the brewpub going in.

Back to signage but also defining our district, is I think a simple thing to do is a banner program for the University district, for the business district, and the arts and entertainment. It would define those districts so they kind of get the feel. At least it can be the beginning. We have poles and brackets.

The ones that the Chamber did are pretty well shot.

Well, then, we need to look at that for tourism.

It needs a facelift.

The banners and brackets, that was not expensive. It was the transformers to light the Christmas lights. But banners would immediately define the districts. Celebrations of Nations could get them printed... (unintelligible)...if they can do it, we can do it.

(side conversations.)

We have talked about some events, a specialty banner...

Moderator: *Is there anything else about your dream Downtown?*

You need to decide where to be at the end and decide how to get there, rather than tidbits here and there. You need a goal or some reachable... you need something and how you're going to get there. You keep saying the three districts, but to me, I think we should just have one district. Missouri S&T has made a lot of progress, and Benton Square has...

We're making steps forward.

We're excited about them.

(many people talking at once, excited about new development.)

Moderator: *Are there other downtowns that you've been to that you admire?*

Jefferson City is wonderful.

I think we need to aspire to be like that.

They have a wide range of architecture.

They've got the two-way traffic.

I love it.

Independence is kind of neat, but it doesn't work for me, and they've spent a lot of money, but you walk around, and there's good places to eat and stuff, but it just doesn't seem to work.

It's more residential.

There's some pockets around Columbia.

Charlottesville. It's close to a campus, and they do a good job of growing with it.

Nevada, Missouri.

Lawrence, Kansas.

Oh my god, yes.

Tulsa.

Downtown Tulsa has done a lot of different districts, and back in the 20's, you went to the big department stores, and then they moved out to the shopping centers, and now Tulsa has done districts, and they've really concentrated on local chili shops or diners or... it's a unique place. They've done the districts and they're defined and they have names and uniqueness... there used to be a trolley there, and the students mentioned a shuttle service between the shuttle service between the university and business district and arts. In Cuba, Missouri, they have a trolley coming out of St. Louis that they use for special events. Maybe for special events. It would be nice to have it. Something needs to be thought of for transportation to get people from point A to B.

Moderator: *Thank you very much.*