

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

SEPTEMBER 2011

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

FINAL

Cassville, Missouri

PGAV**PLANNERS**



DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

SEPTEMBER 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, PGAV Planners conducted three focus groups in Cassville, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Cassville community regarding Downtown. The three groups included: 1) Business Owners/City Residents (Group 1), 2) Business Owners/City Residents (Group 2), and 3) City Staff. Participants of all three groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

This section summarizes the responses to posed questions of all focus group members. Sections II through IV of this report provide a summary of the three meetings with names and other identifying remarks omitted.

A. BUSINESS OWNERS/CITY RESIDENTS GROUPS DISCUSSION GUIDE

PGAV Planners developed a series of questions as a starting point for the group dialogue. With exceptions for when the discussion encouraged variations or additional questions, participants of the Business Owners and City Residents (described herein as “Group One” and “Group Two”) were asked questions from the following list:

1. Talk a little bit about Cassville’s business character.
2. What makes Cassville unique?
3. Would you say that Cassville is a good place to do business?
4. What does “Downtown Revitalization” mean to you?
5. Would you say things are moving in the right or wrong direction?
6. How would you describe the job market in Cassville?
7. From your perspective what are the most significant opportunities for Downtown Cassville?
8. From your perspective what are the most significant challenges for Downtown Cassville?
9. How do you get the word out about your businesses?
10. Are the City and Chamber of Commerce helpful?
11. How is the working relationship between you and these groups?
12. Are there any obstacles to opening or expanding your business?
13. Is there anything we left out or that you would like to add?

B. CITY STAFF GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

With exceptions for when the discussion encouraged variations or additional questions, the members of the City Staff (described herein as “Group Three”) were asked questions from the following list:

1. Tell us about the character of Cassville.
2. What makes Cassville unique?

3. How would you describe Downtown Cassville?
4. What does "Downtown Revitalization" mean to you?
5. Would you say things are moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?
6. Do you use downtown businesses?
7. How "user-friendly" is downtown?
8. Are there any types of businesses you'd like to see downtown that aren't there already?
9. What are the types of improvements you'd like to see in Downtown Cassville?
10. If you had an unlimited amount of money and could change anything about Downtown Cassville, what would you change?
11. Is there anything we left out or that you would like to add?

C. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three groups described Cassville as a family-focused town, with a strong sense of community, a friendly and giving spirit, and a strong school system. The town is near recreational opportunities and parks, within a renowned natural setting. Cassville is within easy driving distance of larger towns such as Springfield, Joplin, and Branson, which many of the participants felt is both a positive and a negative. Historically, Cassville was an agricultural based town, with some additional focus on industry and manufacturing. Throughout its history, the downtown square was the heart of the community.

The main shopping areas in Cassville are the strip centers and other independent stores near the square and on the outskirts of town. Many people, however, do much of their shopping in Joplin and Springfield as well as Rogers, AR, particularly clothing shopping, gift items, and specialty hardware items for their houses. Some people shop for certain items downtown, however the choices are limited and prices tend to be higher.

According to the groups, people come from neighboring towns for employment and recreation. The job market in Cassville is mixed, mostly industrial/agricultural and not white collar/high tech. The participants felt that it is a hard market for young professionals, especially with a lack of nightlife and entertainment options. Cassville's rural nature provides cheap labor and land, but industries also want locations closer to metro areas with highway access. People from neighboring communities and other out-of-town visitors typically do not come in to shop Downtown, however the courthouse and associated services around the square are utilized by Barry County residents.

There are a few restaurants in Cassville, with several more frequented ones in Downtown. The BBQ Station appears to be doing well and is located in Downtown Cassville, while the Rib Restaurant still has a regional draw. The participants felt that a wider variety of restaurants downtown, longer business hours, and some outdoor seating would be welcome improvements.

Typical outdoor recreation for residents includes hunting, fishing, camping, and boating. The Cassville area has a number of parks, and because the streams and lakes are accessible, water activities are also popular with residents.

Downtown Cassville: Describing the Present

Participants generally felt that Downtown Cassville is somewhat stagnant in terms of direction. While the square is maintained and clean, for the most part, it was stated that there is a lack of attractiveness and not enough to draw people in. They generally approve of the renovations completed by the Law Firm on the square, but believe that other buildings and a lack of streetscape, event space, and entertainment hampers the positivity of the historic Downtown area.

The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit downtown, but the most prevalent reasons were the courthouse, service users, churches, and the post office. The shops and restaurants, although somewhat limited, were also listed. The participants felt that there are not many reasons beyond government and service users to visit downtown.

The participants' major concerns about user-friendliness were business hours and lack of openness in the size of the square, which also affects parking and events accommodation. They also mentioned a lack of signage on the highways and telling people when they have reached downtown Cassville, as well as signage within Downtown would all make downtown Cassville more user-friendly.

The business hours in Downtown Cassville, according to the participants, are problematic, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it impossible for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. Sundays are another problem, since the community often has free time to shop on Sundays and many shops are closed. Furthermore, since so many churches are located downtown, people feel it would be ideal to walk around and possibly shop downtown on Sundays. The participants also felt that restaurant hours could be more convenient. Some restaurants close fairly early, around 9:00 PM. Some participants mentioned that the coffee shops downtown often open only at 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, making it difficult for people who work to stop in for a cup of coffee in the morning. They suggested that options for early-morning coffee and breakfast and options for a later-night entertainment and dining would be welcome, and would make downtown much more user-friendly.

The participants had some concerns about parking, and more importantly, the small size of the square in Downtown Cassville. The groups felt that there is ample parking now, if people are willing to walk, but if downtown were renovated to reach its potential, there would not be enough parking available to support that expansion. They suggested opening old parking lots or creating public parking lots as potential solutions. It was stated as an example that the BBQ Station doesn't appear to have enough parking, yet it is successful because if it is good, people will find it.

Downtown Cassville: Looking to the Future

The participants felt that getting new business Downtown was important to make Downtown Cassville thrive. They suggested a variety of new businesses downtown, focusing on creating a mix of shopping, dining, and entertainment options for all ages. For apparel, they suggested clothing and shoes, perhaps with a focus on outdoors/hunter/fishing/camping. In other types of businesses, they suggested art galleries, a bookstore, a jewelry store, and a larger style general merchandise store. In dining, many wanted to see a larger variety of restaurants, including a family style restaurant, diner for quick lunches, bakery/doughnuts, a coffee shop, and ice cream shops. For entertainment, especially for children, the groups suggested a game room, a soda fountain shop, and a candy shop, particularly to appeal to junior high school students and teenagers.

Some participants felt that Downtown's purpose is to offer a unique experience to customers. While they felt that options Downtown should be affordable for residents, they acknowledged that the Downtown area should work to become a destination with unique shopping, crafts, and arts.

Another major focus in the discussions was the possibility of creating new events in Downtown, and incorporating more entertainment options for all ages. The groups all felt that Cassville needs to strengthen outreach to tourist and visitors to the area, and festivals and events are one way to attract people to Downtown. Many visitors only use Cassville as a pass through to Roaring River and other area destinations. Marketing and tourism efforts should be expanded to tap into this tremendous opportunity for Downtown Cassville.

Participants felt that there are many things to be done in beautifying downtown Cassville. In the public realm, streetscape improvements were of high importance. Items such as improved sidewalks, landscaping, bump-outs, underground utilities, and murals were listed. Other ideas include improving the cohesiveness and look of buildings to get Downtown away from words like "tired," "dull" and "uninteresting." Others felt that mismatched buildings made the downtown feel uninviting. Still others suggested that vacant buildings and buildings in disrepair make people feel a little unsafe, particularly at night.

Building and façade repair and renovations were therefore a high priority for the participants in improving the look and feel of downtown. They felt that the buildings covered in metal detract from the aesthetics and historic nature of Downtown. The groups acknowledged that this is difficult for individual building owners, but if incentives and help were available from grants, from banks, or from the community, it would become easier.

Many of the groups expressed that a cohesive, unified aesthetic was important in downtown revitalization. While the buildings should not all look the same, they should have the same historic "feel." Participants felt that a cohesive "modern village" aesthetic, with a historic look but modernized businesses, would draw the most people of all ages downtown.

The business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, especially attracting other businesses to the downtown area and offering incentives to building owners to renovate buildings. Both of these things would help attract customers.

Areas of opportunity were mentioned multiple times by the groups. First were some gateway possibilities for streetscape and signage to help demarcate an entrance into Downtown, especially at the intersection of Main and 76 to help draw visitors toward the square. Second is the creek (Troublesome Branch) that flows through part of Downtown and has issues with occasional flooding. The creek could provide an opportunity for aesthetic improvements in conjunction with needed stormwater and safety enhancements.

The groups named the following small towns in Missouri as towns they admire for various reasons: Purdy, Branson, Mt. Vernon, Warrensburg, Columbia, and St. Joseph. They also named Bentonville and Eureka Springs, Arkansas, as admirable. In all these cities, participants admired one of two things: the cohesive look and feel or the thriving festivals that bring people in. In many of these cities, they admired the cohesive theme, since some towns revolve around art and artists. In some cities, they admired the cohesive look, especially between the streetscape and buildings.

Downtown Cassville: Challenges Going Forward

The groups listed many challenges for Downtown Cassville, with some key ones described as follows. They felt that Downtown is missing key components of a proper mix of uses, including retail and entertainment. This causes a “leakage” in dollars spent as locals go to other towns with their money in pursuit of such venues.

The tourism industry is not embraced by the community as a whole, including a lack of marketing, providing services, and business hours towards visitors. At the same time, tourism is not a year-round economy because much of the hospitality industry shuts down for the winter months. Therefore it is an opportunity, but not an end-all.

The stream running through Downtown is a liability and improvements, both stormwater and aesthetic, will need to be addressed. It is believed that the liability could become an asset with the proper attention.

Attracting industry to the city, and specifically new business to the square, is problematic for several reasons. First, industries are looking for interstate and rail access as well as closer proximity to more metro areas to tap into the amenities and workforce offered there. Location closer to metro areas now trumps the rural offer of cheaper land and labor. Downtown Cassville presents other challenges for new businesses with traffic flow and parking issues due to the small size of the square and a corresponding lack of major events. Building conditions also act as a deterrent to new businesses locating on or around the square.

Cassville’s strict liquor laws also have a negative effect on business attraction, specifically upscale bar/restaurants, retailers, and entertainment uses. The idea of a potential entertainment district in Downtown is hampered by the requirements. As such, a strategy to engage the local churches and elected officials will be necessary to discuss potential modifications to the law for the mutual benefit of Downtown businesses and city residents.

Key Points

Key points about the Cassville area:

- ◆ Cassville is a family-oriented small town with easy access to bigger towns nearby.
- ◆ Cassville is a hub for many smaller surrounding towns for employment and recreation, particularly Roaring River State Park.
- ◆ The main shopping areas in Cassville are the strip centers on the outskirts of town, but many residents travel to Springfield, MO, or Rodgers, AR, to do much of their shopping.
- ◆ Dining options in Cassville include the BBQ Station, located in Downtown Cassville, and the Rib Restaurant which still has a regional draw.
- ◆ The community feels that there is not enough variety of dining options and that a wider variety of restaurants downtown with longer business hours and easing of alcohol restrictions would be welcome improvements.
- ◆ Recreation and entertainment options in Cassville include high school sports events and local parks. Other nearby options includes the streams, lakes, camping, fishing, and traveling to Branson or Northwest Arkansas.

Key points about Downtown Cassville in the present:

- ◆ The groups agree that Downtown Cassville is fairly stagnant in moving any direction.
- ◆ Business owners located their businesses downtown because of the low cost and the availability of the space, unless they had been located there for a long time, in which case tradition keeps them there.
- ◆ The community, according to the participants, visits Downtown primarily for the government and service uses, with some going for restaurants or shopping. Churches are also a big draw.
- ◆ More people would visit downtown more often, according to the groups, if business hours were more convenient, the downtown was more aesthetically pleasing.
- ◆ Parking is only a minor issue in the present, but with expansion and development, the participants fear that the parking situation will get worse.
- ◆ Improved signage would help with navigation and advertising.
- ◆ Downtown business hours are inconvenient for people whose jobs have regular weekday hours—expanded hours during the evenings and on Sundays would be a welcome change.
- ◆ Expanded restaurant hours, particularly coffee in the morning and fine- or casual-dining restaurants at night, would be a welcome improvement.
- ◆ Local residents get information about downtown mostly by word-of-mouth, but also from the radio, the newspaper, and the schools.

Key points about the future of Downtown Cassville:

- ◆ Downtown Cassville should focus on attracting affordable specialty shops, restaurants, and entertainment options; the participants felt that Downtown's purpose should be to offer a unique experience to customers.
- ◆ For apparel, a clothing store and shoe store would be welcome additions Downtown.
- ◆ For food, a bakery, a morning coffee shop or diner, sidewalk cafés, and a variety of additional restaurants would be welcome additions Downtown.
- ◆ In other types of businesses, art galleries, art stores, a bookstore, a jewelry store, and any other specialty stores would be welcome Downtown.

- ◆ New businesses should be encouraged to come in, and old businesses encouraged to renovate their buildings, through incentives.
- ◆ Building and facade renovation and streetscape enhancement are priorities for the beautification of Downtown; improved landscaping is also an important goal.
- ◆ Downtown Cassville should aim for a cohesive aesthetic that will attract both young and old patrons, both residents and visitors.
- ◆ Business hours and size of the square will need to be addressed for improving user-friendliness Downtown.
- ◆ Creating more events is a priority, and will attract residents to Downtown, as well as out-of-town businesses.
- ◆ Cassville can learn from a number of cities, small and large, about ways to improve the Downtown area; the participants focused on downtowns that have a cohesive look and feel and downtowns that serve as a “destination.”
- ◆ Business owners felt that all Downtown improvements would help their businesses, but attracting new business and incentives for building repair would be the most helpful improvements.

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SECTION II

SUMMARY ONE: BUSINESS OWNERS/CITY RESIDENTS (GROUP 1)

WHAT MAKES CASSVILLE UNIQUE?

- Testimonial about a cancer fundraiser shows the friendly giving spirit of Cassville residents
- Good cross-section, habit of working together
- Unique for community of this size to have strong school system, hospital
 - A surprise, most small-towns not this strong and vibrant
- Downtown – heart of community
- More people here in town each day, large factories (Justin Boot)
- Low unemployment, wonderful senior center
- Justin Boot
- Clean little town, Wal-Mart has not pulled people away from downtown like in other small towns
- Hillbilly golf tournament, tourism, corporate presence
- Five banks
- 20 some churches
- Family-focused community
- Chamber events: Movie on the Square, vendors
 - 500-600-700 people – to visit and shop
- Diversity – manufacturing, agricultural, Crowder College, schools, hospital, clinics, and tourism can work in several segments
- Cassville football team in tournament in St. Louis brought over 3,500 fans to support them which shows our area’s enthusiasm

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DOWNTOWN CASSVILLE?

- Tired, boring, needs retail
- Time just stopped, most buildings look the same from the 1960's (except ones that burned)
- Mundane
- Maintained, clean, presentable for the most part, just boring, old and tired
- No charm, nothing to attract
- Needs something positive to draw people in, not the image of dirty and old

WHAT DOES DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION MEAN TO YOU?

- Improving, sprucing up
- Updating, making it where people want to come, different types of small shops
- Need to do something to entice investment
- Hard to talk someone into spending money on their building with unknown return
- Christmas lighting – hard to convince owners to contribute initially
- More retailers
- How can we distinguish Cassville, set us apart from people going somewhere else?
- Lamar, Clinton have large squares, Downtown Cassville has small square, limited space
- Make it non claustrophobic
 - Could be a positive, all the events
 - make it a walking square – issues with parking however
 - Shops, trees, bury electric lines
- Have to keep easy access
- Need creative thinking to solve these issues
- Scary to invest – other communities have vacant buildings years later

- Main Street – works to solidify organization first
- Concern that initial improvements will only create short-term gain
- Example: Winfield, KS
- Long Range Plan
- No success without community buy-in
- Growth on the outskirts
- DT flooded – water, affects image of Downtown
- Discussion on DREAM boundaries
 - Expansion to include park area
 - Stormwater studies now included in DREAM scope

MOVING IN RIGHT OR WRONG DIRECTION?

- No movement
- Whitley's investment is positive
- Soda fountain
- Some movement – Townley Furnishings, Gussied up
- Expectations for less traffic in Jan-Feb-March, some owners may shut down temporarily
- Need to come up with things to keep people
- Need more traffic
- Furniture store may be leaving if things don't improve
- Need right businesses, need good plans, advertising
- Need parking
- Coffee bar – didn't start serving until 9am
- Need regular business hours, better techniques
- You got to know your customer

- Can see empty businesses if things continue the way they are
- BBQ – successful example
 - if it is good, people will find it
 - listened to customers, made changes
- Could be educating business owners
- Unique town, children come in from all directions for school
- Family restaurant opportunity in Downtown – but would need parking
 - Richmond restaurant
- Steak-Inn – people will find it even if no parking
- Why do we care about revitalization? Is it for tax revenue or something more?
 - We don't want to lose what we had - charm, history, heart of community
 - Get more people to be involved and want to improve Downtown
- Maybe Downtown is not for retail and should just be the place for service
- Example: Purdy – incredible concept what Ed Meredith is doing
 - incubator space
 - bringing back Purdy graduates
- Who do we want to attract?
- Do we want to have later night business?
- Coffee house – Mocha Joes in Monett
- It takes a local person who is willing to invest – low lease – to get young people with vision, but not money
- Looking for means to pull together, not be disjointed
 - Square can provide something people want to come here for
- Weston – Main Street full of B&B, antiques

- Focused tourism
- Years ago, questionnaire sent out on what do you want to see in Cassville?
 - Architecture group from Drury
 - Grocery stores, movie theater were some of the listed options
- Lack of organization to do anything with the results, fell to business owners
- The time is now because the organization is better suited to respond
- Is there any financing that comes with DREAM?
 - DREAM designation moves us up on the list for state programs
- What comes first, retail or façade and other physical improvements?
 - Depends on situation, but sometimes it can be both at same time

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

- Coffee shop, dining for lunch quickly which we don't have right now
- Retail to draw people and traffic everyday
- Artsy stuff, museums
- Art gallery – Shop at Hilltop (by Jerseys)
 - Pottery, classes
- Bakery/donuts
- Valerie's Catering – pastries, quiches
- Downtown Winfield has a niche store for Farming (hats, boots, overalls)
- Restaurant that sells wine (not sure it will go over in Cassville, proximity to churches)
- Ace Hardware store
- Micro brewery
- Rib restaurant - was crowded, had bands but changed their look and food and not as busy now

- Upstairs uses example of Highland, IL, has Square with 4-5 places that serve drinks and TVs with sports and are always busy
- Ice cream store – with something else to do year-round
- As business people what prevents us from opening these stores ourselves?
 - Incentives
- Attract young business owners
- Need to maintain oversight on business to be successful (no one knows your own business better than you do)
- Need central location to help bring young people into business – mentor program
- Need cash flow
- Worley has the mill which shows opportunity of specialized merchandise and it was impressive how many people go out of their way to get there
- Idea of bringing Farmers Market to the square?
 - Fayette, Kirksville, etc.
 - Not there now because of city taxes and sanitation requirements

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW STORES?

- Old Theater building
- Currently about half a dozen vacant buildings in Downtown area
- Dance studio
- Old police station
- Old Tru-Value

WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE JOB MARKET IN CASSVILLE?

- Lots of jobs, factories, lower income, college degree jobs are hard to come by
- Advertised locally for commercial lender and did not get any local resumes

- IDC – rail or I-44?
- White collar/tech jobs
- Hard market for young professionals
- Two professional jobs - husband/wife
- Problem recruiting younger workers - little nightlife, entertainment options
- Captive audience, courthouse/services
- Antique stores

IF YOU HAD AN UNLIMITED AMOUNT OF MONEY TO SPEND ON DOWNTOWN CASSVILLE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- Bulldoze it and pave it over
- Underground utilities (open it up more)
- Sidewalks, landscaping, bump-outs, mural
- Improve outside cohesiveness and look of buildings
- Flowers
- Parking away from square, public parking, more pedestrian-friendly
- Marketing
- Needs to be more than just professional 8-5 environment, provide for evening/entertainment
- Example of Bentonville, AR – restaurants/professional
- Business assistance programs
- Have to be smarter

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SECTION III

SUMMARY TWO: BUSINESS OWNERS/CITY RESIDENTS (GROUP 2)

WHAT MAKES CASSVILLE UNIQUE?

- Proximity to Springfield, Joplin, NW Arkansas, Hunting/Fishing
- Advantages to small town – personal contact, emergencies
 - Break in – Got medicine replaced right away
 - Still not that far from other
- Able to own multiple businesses - Rib Steakhouse/Funeral Homes
- Coming from large metro area shows the advantages
- Raise children
- Good school system (discussion on size of district – about 1/3 of Barry County)
- Community pride in schools
- Potential for growth is great
- Location is key – natural beauty – people come from CA
- Three airports to utilize
- Most spaces don't remain vacant for long, especially on the square
- Cassville draws folks in
- Development has not spread out much, stayed in within certain area around the square
- Retail business – lots of repeat customers, out-of-towners,
 - Businesses promote each other
 - Friendships have been created

WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE?

- Gateway to Lake
- Four Seasons
- Normally our winters are not as extreme as other parts of Missouri
- Good area medical facilities/theme parks
- Property values are reasonable
- People vacation and then retire here
- People are treated better here – friendly, welcoming
 - Even the postal employees are friendly
 - Good customer service
- Relaxing
- Access to arts nearby – Springfield, Tulsa, etc.
- People know one another - community, family, assistance
- Manufacturing

WHAT IS THE REGION?

- Go to AR and eat – Rodgers/Eureka Springs
- Joplin, Springfield, Branson

DESCRIBE DOWNTOWN CASSVILLE TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE

- Like where I grew up 40 years ago, which is a compliment
- Churches, like it used to be
- Schools and courthouse – no trials, but still hub of business and beautiful building
- Diversity – shopping
- Can spend the afternoon and go to businesses

- Be nice to have more of a draw, movie theaters or something, to get folks to come to Downtown
- Downtown "Fridays Squared" Program for extended hours of operation
- Saturdays Downtown used to be full
 - Farmers Store was a draw
 - Due to lifestyle changes, no longer family farming
 - Now hours are more spread out

HOURS EXTENDED?

- Folks at home
- Diversification to evening type businesses might bring more people to square
- Kids are more involved in things than they used to be – sports, cup stacking
- Cup stacking – State tournaments on Saturday mornings
 - Choir, Band, YMCA
- Drawing folks to the Square after the game
- Lots of people leave town to go eat, shop, entertainment
 - With gas so expensive
- People go to Monett
- Example: Bakery/Ragtime in Columbia, MO
- We had "Movie Night on the Square", but only last year
 - Also at the library, not sure how well attended
- In town south of here they put a theater in a vacant Baptist church
- Need something to compete with watching movies at home
- New Harmony – entertainment – fiddling/country music/gospel
 - At least 2 or 3 per night

- Old time jukebox
- Musically inclined area
 - Bluegrass, etc. – high school group
- Things to draw people, more than just a one-time deal
 - Civil War re-enactment, other events
 - Bluegrass festival
 - Chili Cook-Off
- Example: Mount Vernon Apple Butter Days
- Tourism Task Force shows that it needs to be a regional effort
- Chamber has events

WHAT DOES A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN MEAN TO YOU?

- Sidewalks, plants, gardens, lamps
- Something to give it character, bring others in
- Electrical poles and wires removed
- More food, restaurants, movie theater
- BBQ Station has been good, especially being in walking distance
- Whitley's also is good
- Mocha Joes in Monett
 - Food, sandwiches, soup
 - Interesting design, board games
 - Events (American Idol)
 - Exposed Brick
 - Teen friendly
 - Hours are longer (except on Wednesday)

- Weekend hours/music
- Restaurant chain
- Need to develop theme and bring it throughout Square
- Bayless House could be a museum
 - Could have events
 - People to come play music
 - Could have a park area
 - Galleries
 - Exhibit space
- BBQ Station brings in live music from time to time and is well attended
- Civic Center or auditorium with gallery space, something to bring in art and music together
- Bayless could provide venue for fancy restaurant – date nights
 - Joplin, Springfield, Cassville, Monett, even Washburn

MOVING IN THE RIGHT OR WRONG DIRECTION?

- Friday Squared could catch on would be a big positive
- Competing events can be an issue
- Farmers Market
- Block off square on Saturday
- Would require a new entrepreneur
 - Has to see Cassville moving in the right direction before they'll invest
- Getting property owners on board – issue of absentee owners
- Getting conformity and streetscape improvements – Make more attractive will draw more owners

- Discussion on what the DREAM boundaries are
- Great buildings
 - Why not loft apartments?
 - Need money
- Downtown St. Joe did lofts – maintenance was issue
 - Night life

LOFT HOUSING FOR 30 & OVER?

- Not at the price you would need?
- Singles population – needed
- Renovating – Historic tax credits
- Hard to compete with larger homes with yards
- Need to be educated about incentives before tackling residential
- Not a lot of owners doing anything with second floor – Info needed
- Would need more high tech jobs to bring in younger professionals
 - Jack Henry example (in Monett)
- Have fiber optic cables – Crowder Campus is wired
- Do have Community College here
 - Keeping young people that would have otherwise left

WHAT BUSINESSES SHOULD BE IN DOWNTOWN?

- Coffee shop, ice cream
- Something to draw people
- Donut shops have been successful, difficult to maintain with hours
- Shoe store

- Sports World/internet
- Want to try and keep our money in Cassville

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE FOR DOWNTOWN?

- Outdoors store
- General store/variety store
- Movement away from box stores
- Need to have events for businesses to succeed
 - Example: Eureka Springs Blues Festival was placed during typical slowest shopping weekend of the year
 - Eureka was about to dry up

IF YOU HAD UNLIMITED MONEY, WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR DOWNTOWN?

- Uniformity of downtown – sidewalks
 - Would help new businesses
- Courthouse lawn – band stand, landscaping, benches, more park-like setting
- Park area needs to be more attractive – flooding needs to be solved
 - MFA owns the land, parking lot at ball field is pretty bad
- Buyout flood zones and make park area
- WAR EAGLE
- Attract people going to Roaring River - entrance areas
 - Streetscape, signage, giant gateway
- Eureka Springs has galleries
- More people means more needs – food, retail, service
- Manufacturing jobs

- Two industries with needs to expand
- Need to see more support for these type of projects
 - Incentives needed
- DREAM will help move us up on the priority list for grants, loans and other programs that might be available
- Discussion on city's role in job attraction, assistance with specific industries looking to expand, other business assistance programs, and EEZ
- We need to think positive in order to make positive things happen, come together to make it work, improve quality of life
- To be successful we have to build on our uniqueness, our history and our heritage

- SECTION IV

SUMMARY THREE: CITY STAFF

WHAT MAKES CASSVILLE UNIQUE?

- Agriculture, tourism, industry
- Light industry
- Resort owner – private vs public perspective, attempting to expand season
 - Need to capture tourists
 - Attracting visitors to Cassville
 - More activities
 - Make a true destination
 - Hidden gem
 - Lots of opportunity
- Great place to live – people interested in relocating here
- Hometown atmosphere, appreciation of history, pride in historic square
- Expansion of businesses – support of local businesses, tie into local appreciation
- Family oriented – sense of families
- County seat, geography, valleys = crossroads = highways
- Close proximity to Branson, Joplin, Northwest Arkansas, outdoor activity
- Historic area of convergence (Old Wire Road, Civil War, Trail of Tears)
- Geographic location has strongly influenced our history, development, and success
- Not a boom or bust town – steady growth throughout history, strong agriculture
- Low cost of living
- Good school system – not so big that kids don't get lost in the system

- Prevalence of established families
- Rural lifestyle, character and morals
- Churches and schools are still the focal point with tremendous influence on our community and they need to be factored in for residents to be able to embrace change
- 650,000 visitors to state park from larger areas – often cite the terrain, weather, scenery, laid-back environment as positives
- Hospitality and friendliness – people wave at everyone
- Natural beauty
 - Spring and Fall colors – both visitors and residents appreciate
- Once visitors come here they get hooked and will come back again
- Where the origin of the city logo “It’s In Our Nature” comes from, describes both the natural setting and our way of life
- We tell directions by where people’s houses are rather than actual street names
- Cassville is not the destination, it is the pass-through – we haven’t been successful in capturing the economic opportunity those visitors present
 - Lack of hotels rooms is an example
- Ownership of the park (perceived as owned by Cassville, not State)
 - Out-of-state firm took over concession, sales dropped dramatically because Cassville didn’t appreciate non-local influence – protectionism
- Regionalism from a tourism standpoint is difficult with different states – visitors don’t recognize the state lines like the states do

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING DOWNTOWN?

- Need to recognize that Cassville has got to be a destination
- We need to listen to our customers/visitors and make improvements based on their suggestions
- Missing a lot of things
 - Retail – go to Rodgers or Springfield, can get everything they need

- Movies – nothing much for youth to do
- Not affordable to shop Downtown, need to keep people spending their money here, small market doesn't allow for competitive pricing
- Leakage because of proximity and convenience of nearby larger areas
- Not year-round economy (dead from November through March)
- Stream is a liability, could be an asset with aesthetic enhancements
- Tourism not embraced as an industry (lack of marketing, services, hours toward visitors)
- Attracting industry – need interstates, rail, proximity to metro area
 - Now it's location OVER cheap labor/land
- Traffic flow and parking on the Square due to tight area – how to accommodate events, maximize it, utilize it
- Change mindset that parking has to be in front of store – get people to park further away and walk
- Underutilized fiber optic network
- Stuck mindset of what belongs in Cassville, new opportunities for things like Google setting up for satellite locations
- Lower tech workforce – kids leaving right after school
- People working other places/under employed provides an employment resource
 - Cassville pulls in as many employees as those that leave
- Strict liquor laws
 - Severely limits retail/entertainment options
 - Hurts development of potential entertainment district idea (young citizens task force)
- Everything is closed for tourists, especially after 5:00 and on weekends
- City lacks opportunities for youth and all age groups
- Would like to see Cassville stay small but be strong, grow tourism so that they come and go

- Reluctance to grow too much here

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES IN DOWNTOWN?

- Too much Cassville-based entrepreneurs, need to market to outside entrepreneurs
 - Get fresh perspectives
 - Provide knowledge of new economy
- Outdoor mall concept could provide a destination
- Outdoor stores – Johnny Morris/Bass Pro/Cabela’s – tap into our natural surroundings
- Professional service, not as much retail – caught in a time warp where it used to be more merchant types of stores

WHAT DO YOU ENVISION THE DOWNTOWN SQUARE TO BE? TO LOOK LIKE?

- More service oriented
- Future of retail on the square is very limited
 - Parking
 - Liquor laws
- Capturing past architectural glory/history – aesthetically it’s our trophy case
- Develop a common look, design code
- Square as a show case, shows a pride in our city
- Can create entrepreneurial opportunities
- Courthouse strongly influences the uses around the square
- Really impressed by the make-over in Warrensburg, stunned by how well done
 - Duplicate that would increase downtown businesses and resident pride
- Uniformity, but uniqueness
- Clean, fresh, smooth look

- Sidewalks, signage, streetscape
- Appealing
- Field trip worthy, need to see the visual difference, before-and-after
- Example in Cassville: Law Firm

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE TO CASSVILLE?

- Facades, colors, hardwood floor
- Use what you have – architecture
- Capture history and unique architecture of buildings, but still allow for the function of a modern day business district
- Utilize old photographs to show current building owners what they have and can help to bring back
- Refresh and modernize on inside but keep that historic look on outside as an attraction
- America is becoming more urbanized, so people will want to get out to the rural areas for the occasional escape – Cassville has an opportunity to capture that
- Promotion of Cassville will require developing a “product”
- Important to remember that the strategies and recommendations to come out of this process need to have the buy-in and resonate with locals
- Opportunity for the Farmer’s Market, could be springboard into other things
- Crafts, canning, agricultural background
- Example: Purdy’s Downtown – war memorial
 - Benefactor
- Cassville needs to pull in those types of entrepreneurs
- Smaller downtown of Purdy allowed for more control