

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

April 29, 2008

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Trenton, Missouri



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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



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SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the public opinion research process for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted five focus groups in Trenton, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Trenton community in regard to the downtown area. The five groups included the following: 1) City and College staff and administrators, 2) elected officials, 3) business owners, and 4) longtime residents, and 5) college students. Participants of all five groups were from a variety of backgrounds.

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all of the groups to the posed questions. Attached are the complete transcripts of four meetings and a summary of the surveys completed in lieu of a fifth focus group with college students.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUP:

General Questions about Trenton

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

Downtown Specific Questions

04. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Trenton is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property downtown (or not in downtown, for other business/property owners)?
06. How "user-friendly" is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? What are your thoughts about making Main Street a two-way street? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for? Is there a need/demand for more housing downtown?
07. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what's going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? How would you like to be communicated with regarding what is going on downtown from the City of Trenton?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

08. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Trenton. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...
 - Additional/types of businesses would you like to see downtown?
 - Dining and entertainment?
 - Parks and recreation?
 - Types of special events?
09. Now we would like to talk about the look and feel of downtown. Do think there needs to be improvements in the following areas?
 - Street repair?
 - Better use of space to improve parking?
 - Landscaping/beautification?
 - Green space?
 - Building repairs, renovations, upgrades?
10. Of all the potential improvements we've just talked about, what do you think the highest priorities should be for the city?
11. As you might know, there is a plan for redeveloping downtown Trenton. Among the key elements are a performing arts center, traffic changes, and a museum district. On which of these items should the City place the highest priority?
12. What could the City do to help your business thrive or keep your property values strong over the next few years?

B. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE GENERAL GROUPS:

General Questions about Trenton

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

Downtown Specific Questions

05. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Trenton is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
06. What are the major reasons you visit downtown? How often do you visit downtown Trenton? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?
07. How “user-friendly” is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? What are your thoughts about making Main Street a two-way street? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for? Is there a need/demand for more housing downtown?
08. How do local residents and visitors get information about what’s going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation)?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

09. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Trenton. We’d like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...
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12. As you might know, there is a plan for redeveloping downtown Trenton. Among the key elements are a performing arts center, traffic changes, and a museum district. On which of these items should the City place the highest priority?
13. What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like it to resemble?

C. THE TRENTON AREA

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

The groups described Trenton as a friendly small town with excellent access to healthcare for a town its size, good industry, high quality education from K-12 and North Central Missouri College in town, and a strong sense of community. Since Trenton is in Northern Missouri, people come from surrounding towns in Iowa for employment, entertainment, and shopping. Trenton is home of the County Courthouse, as well.

Participants felt that Trenton is moving slowly in the right direction, particularly regarding downtown development. In regard to Trenton as a whole, the groups felt that the new aquatic center and park initiatives are positive for Trenton. One significant reason that the groups felt positive about downtown, though, is the downtown development plan, which is currently in progress.

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

The main shopping area in Trenton is on 9th street. Most people shop at Pamida, Hy-Vee, Orscheln's Farm & Home Supply, Easter's, and other major local stores for their needs. Howard's department store, which is downtown, is also a popular shopping option, but participant suggested that local residents do not often do other kinds of shopping downtown.

Participants indicated that they can meet their basic shopping needs in Trenton, but for more of a selection, they often travel to Chillicothe, and also sometimes travel farther, to St. Joseph or Kansas City. Others shop online for a variety of needs.

According to the groups, people come from up to 30 miles away from the east, north, and west to do their shopping in Trenton. However, Chillicothe is the shopping hub for the area south of Trenton.

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

Participants cited several Trenton restaurants. Options in Trenton include fast food, a limited amount of casual dining, a Mexican restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a coffee shop, the country club restaurant, and a lunch place downtown. The participants felt that an upscale dining restaurant, a wider variety of restaurants downtown, longer business hours, and some outdoor seating would be welcome improvements.

For entertainment and recreation, Trenton has activities at the College, sports of all kinds, parks, fishing, swimming, an aquatic center, skating, and a movie theater. In downtown Trenton, there is a museum, and a library. In addition, Trenton has a strong history and presence of the performing arts— there is the Friends of the Arts program as well as a theater group in town.

D. DOWNTOWN TRENTON: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

Participants generally agreed that downtown Trenton is moving slowly in the right direction. They felt that the College expansions and the courthouse and law enforcement center improvements have provided two strong anchors on either side of downtown. They also cited the museum and library as strong positive forces downtown. Further, the groups mentioned that a few major renovations have already taken place downtown, such as the transformation of the Plaza Hotel into apartments. These renovations are helping to improve the image of downtown and fill previously empty spaces.

The major reason participants felt that downtown Trenton is moving in the right direction, though, is the downtown development plan. The plan calls for changes in traffic and navigation, the creation of a museum district, and a new performing arts center, among other improvements. These changes and incentives to renovate or build downtown are, according to many participants, a step in the right direction. They expressed hope that all these changes will help to attract retail businesses downtown and make it feel less empty.

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

Business owners cited the low cost of buildings and tradition as the two major reasons they located their businesses downtown. They indicated, in different points in the discussion, that new businesses might be attracted because of beautification efforts, the attraction of other similar businesses being attracted, and the performing arts center which may bring in more people.

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

The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit downtown currently, including the Wild Onion restaurant, Howard's Department Store, and a number of services—the courthouse, the barbershop, attorney's offices, doctor's offices, the post office, banks, and other related businesses. Two things that would increase downtown visits, according to the participants, are a wider variety of retail and entertainment businesses and expanded evening and weekend business hours for any shops and restaurants.

How "user-friendly" is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? What are your thoughts about making Main Street a two-way street? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for? Is there a need/demand for more housing downtown?

Participants had a few major concerns about user-friendliness, including traffic flow and navigation, business hours, signage, and parking.

In discussing traffic flow and navigation, the participants' major concern was the five-points intersection, which they described as "confusing." They felt that visitors to town and trucks coming through have a difficult time navigating that intersection. They also felt that the one-way streets make it difficult to navigate downtown. The participants overwhelmingly were in favor of making Main Street a two-way street, which would make navigation smoother and make it much easier for parents and students to find their way to the College.

The parking situation, as some described it, is a "perceived problem"—people believe that parking downtown is a problem, but in fact there are ample parking spaces. The participants explained that many people do not know about the parking lots behind buildings, or cannot find them. In addition, they brought up the issue that business owners and business employees sometimes take up all the spots along the street in front of their buildings. Some participants mentioned that some people want to park directly in front of the store rather than walking, but if they were aware of all the parking options, they would not have to park too far away. Other participants mentioned that many of the handicapped spots are unnecessary, since there is ample handicapped parking, and making some of those into regular parking would help. In addition, if there were more businesses and storefronts, it would be a more interesting walk from the parking space to a specific business.

The groups also suggested that signage would help educate people about the location of available parking. They felt that signage throughout downtown would help people more easily navigate downtown, finding various businesses, the College, etc. Specific college signage would help mark the boundaries of the College and help people find it.

The business hours downtown, according to many participants, are problematic, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most shops are open only until 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. The problem is compounded by the fact that the chain stores on 9th street and Wal-Mart in Chillicothe are open in the evenings and on weekends.

Some participants also felt that restaurant hours are inconvenient. Some restaurants close fairly early in the evening. Some participants complained that after theater shows or activities at the college's community center, there are few restaurant options.

Finally, concerning housing, there are currently some apartments downtown— approximately 50 units. Many participants felt that more housing would be welcome downtown, particularly second-floor loft apartments above businesses. Overall, they felt strongly that the rental housing should be fairly upscale, for students and residents, rather than so inexpensive that it attracts tenants who do not take care of their apartments. They also felt that affordable loft condos might be an option to explore.

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

The participants mentioned the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, specific businesses' and organizations' websites, the College, and word-of-mouth as the major ways they get information about downtown business and events. Some participants suggested a concerted effort, bringing together downtown entities to advertise together.

E. DOWNTOWN TRENTON: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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

The participants suggested a variety of new businesses downtown, focusing on independently-owned specialty-type shops and restaurants rather than larger chains. For apparel, they suggested clothing stores, shoe stores, and performing-arts-related stores. For food, they suggested a grocery store for residents, a drug store, another coffee shop, a juice bar, an upscale restaurant, and a variety of additional restaurants, potentially with outdoor patios. In other types of businesses, they suggested a farm supply store, art stores, craft stores, a jewelry store, an expanded movie theater, a bowling alley, a skate rink, and any other specialty store or entertainment option that might fill a niche.

Some commented that downtown's purpose should not be to compete with Wal-Mart and the other large chains, but to offer a unique experience to customers, drawing people to Trenton for shopping and entertainment. For this, participants felt strongly that small business should be encouraged and building repair incentives should be offered to building owners.

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

Participants in every group expressed that they are pleased with the current downtown development plan, concerning its beautification and renovation efforts.

Building repair was of the utmost priority. Many buildings, according to the participants, are in disrepair and either should be renovated to be structurally sound and attractive or should be torn down to build new structures. New structures should be in the style and feel of historic buildings, but would be an improvement because of their structural integrity. Structurally sound buildings and nice facades were absolute priorities for the groups, who felt that these improvements would bring in new business, make residents more likely to come downtown, and add to all of the other improvements planned.

Another priority was to give downtown a cohesive look and feel. The groups felt that signage was important, and should have a decided-upon style to complement the downtown's historic heritage. Filling storefronts was important, so that the downtown would have a lived-in look and feel. And green space and beautification efforts were also important to give downtown that aesthetic appeal.

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

The groups considered attracting businesses and building repair to be the two most important priorities, and felt that these two things go hand-in-hand. Businesses will be more likely to come into a downtown that seems more viable, and as business owners buy buildings, they will repair buildings. One participant described this as a "chicken-or-the-egg problem," but it is an issue that is still of high priority.

As you might know, there is a plan for redeveloping downtown Trenton. Among the key elements are a performing arts center, traffic changes, and a museum district. On which of these items should the City place the highest priority?

Overall, the participants felt that addressing traffic changes was the highest of the three priorities. However, they definitely felt that the other two elements of the plan— the performing arts center and the museum district— were important. Overall, they felt that improving traffic would improve the infrastructure of downtown, which would make the performing arts center and museum district thrive.

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

The groups named a few nearby towns and some farther towns as towns they admire for various reasons: Zona Rosa in Kansas City; Independence, Missouri; Pella, Iowa; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Parkville, Missouri; Kirksville, Missouri; Clinton, Missouri; Westport, Missouri; Warrensburg, Missouri; Little Rock, Arkansas; Big Springs, Texas; Huntsville, Alabama; Kansas City, Missouri; St. Joseph, Missouri; and Chillicothe, Missouri.

In these cities, participants admired the cohesive look and feel, the variety of shopping and entertainment, the integration of colleges into a downtown, and/or the ability to be a “destination.”

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

The business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, but attracting new businesses and encouraging building repairs throughout downtown are of the highest priority.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Trenton area:

- ◆ Trenton is a friendly small town with excellent access to healthcare for a town its size, good industry, high quality education from K-12 and North Central Missouri College in town, and a strong sense of community .
- ◆ Trenton is a hub for many smaller surrounding towns for shopping, entertainment, and employment.
- ◆ Since Trenton is in Northern Missouri, people come from surrounding towns in Iowa for employment, entertainment, and shopping.
- ◆ Trenton is moving slowly in the right direction, according to the participants, who cited as reasons the new aquatic center, park initiatives, college expansion, and the downtown development plan.
- ◆ The main shopping area in Trenton is on 9th street.
- ◆ Trenton provides for many basic shopping needs, with stores such as Pamida, Hy-Vee, Easter's, Orscheln's Farm & Home Supply, and Howard's Department Store.
- ◆ People come from up to 30 miles away from the east, north, and west to do their shopping in Trenton.
- ◆ For a variety in shopping, and for a choice in clothing shopping, many people travel to Chillicothe, St. Joseph, or Kansas City. Others buy a number of things online.
- ◆ Dining options in Trenton include fast food, a limited amount of casual dining, a Mexican restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a coffee shop, the country club restaurant, and a lunch place downtown.
- ◆ An upscale dining restaurant, a wider variety of restaurants downtown, longer business hours, and some outdoor seating would be welcome improvements.
- ◆ For entertainment and recreation, Trenton has activities at the College, sports of all kinds, parks, fishing, swimming, an aquatic center, skating, a movie theater, a museum, a library, the Friends of the Arts program, and a well-established theater group.

Key points about downtown Trenton in the present:

- ◆ The community agrees that downtown Trenton is moving in the right direction—the participants cited the college expansion, the renovations and improvements at the courthouse, the law enforcement center, downtown building renovations, and the downtown development plan as major reasons.

- ◆ People visit downtown for the Wild Onion restaurant, Howard's Department Store, and a number of services— the courthouse, the barbershop, attorney's offices, doctor's offices, the post office, banks, and other related businesses.
- ◆ Two things that would increase downtown visits, according to the participants, are a wider variety of retail and entertainment businesses and expanded evening and weekend business hours for any shops and restaurants.
- ◆ The major concerns about user-friendliness were traffic flow and navigation, business hours, signage, and parking.
- ◆ To improve the flow of traffic downtown, the City should address the five-points intersection, consider changing one-way streets to two-way streets, and improve signage, especially the signage that directs people to the College.
- ◆ Current business hours are convenient for some, but since most businesses are open only until 5:00 PM, expanded hours for shops would be welcome. For shops and restaurants, the community would welcome evening and weekend hours.
- ◆ Parking is an issue, but not as big an issue as some of the other elements of user-friendliness; still, parking could be improved by signage, strategically placed parking spots, and encouraging business owners and employees not to park in front of their businesses.
- ◆ While there is currently some housing downtown, more housing would be welcome, including upscale rental housing for students and residents and affordable loft condos.
- ◆ People get information about downtown businesses and events from the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, specific businesses' and organizations' websites, the College, and word-of-mouth. A concerted downtown effort to advertise together would be well-received by the community.

Key points about the future of downtown Trenton:

- ◆ The community would like a variety of businesses downtown, focusing on independently-owned specialty-type shops and restaurants rather than larger chains.
- ◆ For apparel, clothing stores, shoe stores, and performing-arts-related clothing stores would be welcome additions.
- ◆ For food, the groups suggested a grocery store for residents, a drug store, another coffee shop, a juice bar, an upscale restaurant, and a variety of additional restaurants, potentially with outdoor patios.
- ◆ In other types of businesses, they suggested a farm supply store, art stores, craft stores, performing-arts-related stores, a jewelry store, an expanded movie theater, a bowling alley, a skate rink, and any other specialty store or entertainment option that might fill a niche.

- ◆ The downtown's purpose, according to participants, is not to compete with Wal-Mart and other large chains, but to offer a unique experience to customers, drawing people to Trenton for shopping and entertainment.
- ◆ The community is pleased with the current downtown development plan.
- ◆ Building repair is very important to the community; since many buildings are in disrepair, they should either be renovated or torn down to make way for new buildings.
- ◆ The downtown should have a cohesive look and feel, incorporating facades and signage into that aesthetic.
- ◆ Attracting businesses and building repair are the two highest priorities for the community in improving downtown.
- ◆ Choosing among the planned traffic changes, the museum district, and the performing arts center, the community felt that solving traffic issues was the highest priority and would improve the infrastructure of downtown.
- ◆ In other downtowns, Trenton residents admire the cohesive look and feel, the variety of shopping and entertainment, the integration of colleges into a downtown, and/or the ability to be a "destination."
- ◆ Business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, but attracting new businesses and encouraging building repairs throughout downtown are of the highest priority.

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SECTION I

CITY AND COLLEGE STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *My first question for you is related to the Trenton area as a whole. Describe it to me.*

Closest thing to us is Iowa. That's where we are. We frown on saying that we're 20 miles north of Chillicothe. We'd much rather say we're just south of the Iowa line. Small community, very friendly. And I think everyone else would second that. Some towns you need to know a person to wave at them, but here you're getting a wave no matter who you are. It's very welcoming. Welcoming to new folks to the community. Aging population, which has a whole set of issues that arise with delivery of services and the attraction of businesses and what not, but...

You have to think about the history of the community. We just celebrated our 150th birthday, and people talk about the way the community used to be. So, sometimes they have a tendency to live in the past and not look to the future. And the college has been a key part of the community for 80 years, and we have a great future, and we want to involve the community in our success.

A lot of big projects underway, one with the college, Allied Health. We got a 7 million dollar building, and we just finished a law enforcement center on the other end of downtown. Trenton has a generous history of supporting large projects. The library, the plaza downtown that used to be a theater and now has apartments. Certainly the community has the capacity for supporting big development, so I'm really optimistic about downtown.

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

Probably, what I hear mostly, for your basic things like groceries, medical, largely done here. I think if you look at our economy over these bumps in the road, we're more insulated. We don't have the big highs and lows... I think people are buying food and gas and basics here.

We do have some leakage. For the first time in 20 years, our pull factor dipped below 1. I would say we have probably a 20 to 30 mile drive time primary trade area, which overlaps with the Chillicothe area. We don't have a Wal-Mart, but we have groceries, gas, local necessities.

We do have a Dollar General and a Pamida. We have people who come for that.

A good system of professional services. I came from a community of 40,000, and you never knew if there would be a good doctor, but here, you can get all the services. Doctors and accountants. We have strong professionals here.

Moderator: *What are popular choices for dining and entertainment?*

Washington Street.

You can count on one hand.

Country club.

When I came here, those weren't there. There was only fast food.

There's a new theater, a couple years old. 3 screens.

Chinese restaurant. They just remodeled it. And we're working on barbecue and stuff.

We're completing a survey with students on the campus. Some of those are starting to come back, and it's been really interesting, some of the things they're saying. They're quick to identify that the downtown is a thing of the past. They've identified the same things we've had here, but they also go to Chillicothe and Kansas City.

As gas continues to increase, that may not continue.

And St. Joe is a hop skip and jump.

(many people talking at once.)

When it comes to recruitment, from a physician's standpoint, the closeness to Kansas City becomes a real recruiting point.

You can go to a baseball game or football game there. You're close enough to do that.

That ties back to the selling point of the community.

We attract a lot of hunters, too.

Moderator: What about other recreation?

Fishing. It's very popular.

Bow hunting.

I spent the weekend with 7 foreign exchange students, and they were all saying, "What's the big thing about mushroom hunting?"

(laughter.)

Moderator: Let's talk about downtown specifically. Why do people visit downtown?

They either work downtown—

Their county and city business, or the community center, the college for class.

The post office.

We probably don't capture the apparel market that's available. That's probably our big retail gap.

Don't forget the pool hall.

Next to the church.

(laughter.)

Two local bars, how many local churches...? A dance studio that's very popular. When it's practice night, downtown main street is...

Jerry's.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Are there things you used to be able to do downtown that you can't anymore?

We've really had a decline in retail.

There was a shoe store.

Furniture.

Drug stores.

Jewelry.

Flower shop.

Hardware store.

It was a good retail mix.

This building used to be retail.

Moderator: I'd like for us to spend a little time talking about downtown's user-friendliness. How easy is it to find downtown?

Trying to get salesmen, vendors, stuff like that, it's almost easier to fax them a map rather than explain all the partial lefts and circles.

Getting to the boundary is probably easy, to run right into downtown, but navigating through downtown is more of a struggle than making them hit the boundary line that's invisible.

Getting new students to campus.

We refer them to our website to look at the map.

Moderator: Is it an issue of the streets or signage?

Signage, 1-way streets, 5-way intersections...

Moderator: What about parking?

According to the downtown plan that was recently configured, there's a surplus of parking spaces, but the efficiency and placement of that parking might not be at its highest possible.

There's a perception that there's a parking problem.

It's a perceived parking problem.

You can't park right in front of where you want to go.

I've never had a problem.

If you're at a lunch hour, it's hard to find a close parking spot. Last night, the dance studio was having practice, we were having a city council meeting... but as a normal rule, I don't see a parking problem.

The first week or two of classes, it's always full, but that's like any campus.

And we're soon going to add to that challenge as we construct the new Allied Health complex, which is taking up some lot space.

There's a coffee shop and dry cleaning pickup place.

Well, I know she's looking for someone to buy that place.

Moderator: What about business hours and the location of businesses. Are those convenient?

No.

No.

Well, the Wild Onion... Howard is open until 5.

Same thing with Trenton Hardware. You go to Pamida and they're open till 8.

The office supply place closes at 5.

And nothing's open on Saturday. I've never seen a car dealership that closed on Saturday.

And all the shopping strips are open Saturdays.

Just from an outsider's perspective, I don't even perceive the downtown as retail. I know there are a couple things there, but I see it as a business district.

Yeah, it's all services.

We didn't mention the bank.

Yes, we should mention the bank.

But with the exception of Citizen's bank, they either have second locations or their main location is outside of downtown.

There's just not a lot of walking traffic. You don't see pedestrian traffic.

Moderator: *Would people like to see more business hours? Is there a demand?*

You'd have to increase the business first, I think. I don't think if one shop can make it being open. You'd need a lot of them to be open.

...a couple years ago I went to Chicago, and I was stunned. I was in a business district, and I couldn't find anything open at night. We need more going downtown at night.

_____ and I used to be bankers, and we always debated about lengthy hours on certain nights, and there just wasn't enough activity for that, or even a Saturday.

We haven't seen the need to do it yet.

And then you have, if you're saying the traffic's not here, and the hours are restricted, the public realizes that it's not open, so they're not going to pick that time to go downtown, so the business owners...

It's a cycle that's going to take some catalyst to move that in another direction.

I think they need more than one business that stays open late.

Well, the Performing Arts Center, since it's open on the weekend, you could have things open. When you have several thousand people downtown for an event, you can have things open.

Moderator: *Is there much housing in downtown Trenton?*

There's housing there, but it's not very good.

There's two apartment buildings.

We have The Trenton Arms apartments and the Plaza Apartments. They're both rental. There's 23 units in Plaza, and I don't know about Trenton Arms. Maybe 50 rental units in all.

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

Also, the college has dorms.

And there's a few single-family homes.

The restrictions on second-story residential housing is limited. If you own the building, you have to use the second-story apartment. You can't rent it out.

We have something like lofts, and more than half of our students have families. A large portion are commuters, but we really believe that there would be a market for lofts for non-traditional students with small families.

There are so many students who live away from campus. As we talk about prospective students, it's surprising how many of them want to live away from campus. They like to have a little bit more freedom. And housing close to the college is an embarrassment and it's expensive. With gas costs, it may shift, but for now it's inadequate and overly priced.

Especially for students.

We'd have to redo our zoning downtown. Years ago, we had a fire and a death in a rental property.

A college student and her boyfriend.

Moderator: Do you think there's a market for non-college students living downtown?

I don't know what the waiting list is for the apartments downtown, but there certainly would be a market for elderly residents.

We did our housing assessment two years ago or so. I can't quote the number of new rental units.

Most of the owners of duplexes outside downtown, there's a long waiting list.

That certainly would generate some activity downtown, with that kind of housing provision.

If you have population down here, then they'll shop after hours.

A coffee shop.

Students complain that there are no food places for them to eat downtown.

When I was in college, I enjoyed walking downtown and eating lunch. I went to college elsewhere.

There's a student union that provides a free lunch on Wednesdays, and everyone will walk and go there and get a good home-cooked meal.

Moderator: How do people get information about what's going on in downtown Trenton?

How do we market, or how do they find out?

I had somebody call here the other day, and I refer them to the Chamber.

Internet. Most every organization has a web page with information.

I don't think we have a concerted effort to market downtown as a unit.

What would we market?

Every business does their individual thing, but we don't come together as a group.

We have a daily newspaper, and a radio station, and both are downtown. That could be a vehicle for conveying activity.

We have various publications at the college.

(many people talking at once.)

You know what's not been referenced about downtown is the museum.

Best kept secret in Missouri.

It has terrible hours.

Moderator: Let's spend the rest of the time on how you'd like to see downtown Trenton take its next steps to the future. How would you like to see the traffic flow through downtown?

Change the 5 points. So you don't have to go around the corner to see if there's any traffic coming. The stop sign is pointless, because you have to go through it to see what's coming.

(agreement.)

But I've also seen people coming into town, and they don't know which way to go.

We need a two-way street.

Very common for people to come up the street the wrong way to get into a parking lot.

Just TMU staff.

(laughter.)

And even coming from the post office and going to TMU, people go down 11th the wrong way. There's just issues there.

I think the overall attractiveness, to come in and do a fresh look...it looks run down and aged. I'm really excited about what's going to be done with the park, and just an area where it's attractive for people to walk and to visit and to talk. We need attractiveness.

Moderator: Let me ask you a little bit about the kinds of businesses you'd like to see.

I'd like to see it as an entertainment district. Of course, the churches in relation to entertainment facilities...the city ordinance says no bar within 300 feet of a church, and the churches are strategically placed within 300 feet of each other...I think the entertainment sector is missing. And with our push for youth and entrepreneurship, but if we're trying to reach the young professionals that goes out for the nightlife, if we don't have those opportunities, they're not going to set up their business here.

The nontraditional students, too. People want to go out for dinner and get a drink.

It generates a lot of revenue in a lot of community.

I like the idea of loft apartments.

With the price of gas, that makes a lot of sense.

I think just general retail, anything from eating to grocery to clothing, drugstore, right down the line.

Moderator: What about specific kinds of dining and entertainment options?

I like when Wild Onion is open on Friday nights. A nice meal. Something.

You know, hard to get a steak in town. There's no upscale date restaurant besides Washington Street. And it's middle-of-the-road.

It's more like Applebee's than fine dining.

McJ's is probably the highest upscale...

And it's not downtown.

It's difficult to find.

And limited hours.

I like the idea of having some shops that are folk art and, you know, the museum and some of the areas where you'd have a lot of traffic, so people could walk around and view the businesses that relate to that.

That would pull people from outside the community.

And the museum would be a perfect place to put stuff that relates to arts and crafts.

And when people come to basketball games, they go home afterwards. Keep them here.

An ice cream shop, a coffee shop, arts and crafts, for traffic that's walking around. You've got the performing arts center... Really focusing on retail. I don't know if that would go here, though.

You'd have to shout it on the rooftops. There's no way we could develop anything like the North Shops in St. Joe.

You gals can both remember, but we had the ice cream place with miniature golf, and it was a huge attraction. That could incorporate a lot.

The 3:30 snack from the office.

To walk around, you want to be attractive and safe, too. You don't want to trip over a curb or sidewalk.

(talking, unintelligible.)

And you have to instill a bit of pride in the existing culture of downtown too. Some stores and services there don't put any pride in sweeping off their sidewalks.

Or even the signage. When it's a magic marker on a piece of cardboard...

(laughter.)

Some kind of common design guidelines would be great.

Yeah.

(talking, unintelligible.)

When anyone puts on a brand new storefront, people come for miles just to see it.

Moderator: Are there other entertainment or attractions you'd like to see in the downtown area?

We had a bowling alley one time, and the big snow of 97 ended that. When I was in college, it's something I did.

College kids love bowling.

That would appeal to them.

And at one time, the movie theater was downtown.

Moderator: What about special events?

We had races as part of the sesquicentennial.

All you have to do is organize some activity or event, and people will come.

Part of the concept on the downtown park is with the gazebo, where you could have concerts and bring people downtown.

You have to try to coordinate your event with your shops, so they stay open. If the historic car show is going on, Howard's needs to be open that weekend. I think we'll get there, but I don't know...

You drive enough activities enough times, people will want to come in.

So you don't have that mass exodus effect after the parade ends.

Moderator: What about the look and feel of downtown? Do you think there needs to be aesthetic improvements?

The building facades are really trashy-looking. They're beautiful historic buildings, but they haven't been kept up. And curbs, the streetscapes...

Part of the deterioration is all of those things.

There are a lot of buildings that are owned by absentee owners.

A third, maybe?

Yeah, probably.

And if they're not absentee, there are folks that are using it for little more than storage.

Yeah, can't afford to put a new roof on it.

(unintelligible talking...)

We were establishing some type of health clinic downtown, which could fill a need.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: What about landscaping, beautification, green space?

I think we definitely need some attractiveness. If you look at the third one on the left there, it's on Main Street, 2-way traffic... it would naturally slow the traffic down for the student traffic that's walking, and the attractiveness with the trees and a median for aesthetic value.

And if you're in the roundabout and you come to the right, that leads toward Ketcham Center, and we have a small park there that's unbelievable. Students and traffic are walking to and from there.

This projection is also without buildings that currently exist.

I don't think we have a defined...I have entered the campus of the college, and before you know it you're leaving. You miss stuff. You guys do a great job, and making that parking lot is probably the greatest redevelopment I've seen...and the message board... I'm not saying a giant archway, but you don't have a good feel on when you're on campus.

We agree. 150%.

If we end up with 2-way traffic on Main rather than Maple, so you'll need to know what the streets are like before putting up signs.

We have not done a good job with wayfinding, but we'd like to buy into a similar theme that the city uses to provide an attractive wayfinding.

The overhead utilities. You see it in every downtown. Improving the look by either getting them underground or bundling them together. We have 2 electric utilities, which doubles the number of poles on any block. It's a consideration that has to be looked at. Sometimes it runs right down the middle of campus.

I think we all agree, but redoing the 5-point area to get the entrance, to get the feeling of the college, that's going to be a central part of how we redo everything.

We're thinking of making that a perpendicular intersection.

Moderator: *There is a plan that's been developed for downtown, including traffic changes, a performing arts center, establishing a museum district...what are your highest priorities?*

Traffic.

Traffic.

Traffic.

Moderator: *Anybody think differently?*

No.

Traffic is important to how things develop.

And it's the easiest thing to deal with, too.

You certainly can't address the performing arts or museum district without the streets.

Wayfinding is critical for campus. How do you get people into campus, and how do you get them to other places.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: *My last question is to think about some of the other downtowns you've been to. What would you like downtown Trenton to look like?*

Zona Rosa.

Westport.

Most downtowns that have been redone, like St. Charles, Parksville, other river towns, they generate volume that we wouldn't. Cute shops and stuff.

We went to a little community in Iowa, and we went downtown, and I was really struck. It's an old community like ours, but it was so clean and so well scaped that the trees and the grass and sidewalks...just how it presented itself. And you could move around. It was pleasant. And it was just so attractive when you came in, just the entrance from all sides, it drew you downtown.

And it's no larger than Trenton.

And Pella, Iowa is gorgeous. And they have a theme.

Independence, now that's certainly revitalized with a whole new...history and cleanliness.

And you feel comfortable getting out of your car and walking.

I guess the other traffic would be the light... the first couple weeks I was here, I didn't know that you don't pull up.

(laughter.)

Things like that. That traffic pattern. That's dangerous.

And that's at 9th and Main. And we have been in discussions with MODOT, since 9th street is a highway and Main is a city road, and the convergence there with a lot of truck traffic getting to and from Con Agra.

Even coming up the hill from the West. You don't know if there's 2 lanes or 1, different people interpret it differently. People don't know where to be.

(agreement.)

So, you think there's movement actually taking place with MODOT?

Absolutely not.

We don't want to move the bank or businesses, and they aren't moving.

I'm not pointing a finger in any direction, but I feel like we're at gridlock.

The solution is very expensive.

I'd like to add that the group is right, and my example is Parsons, Kansas. I'm sure you all have been there. They were 1-way, and you never went through that downtown area. You were always on the other side. And when they went back to the 2-way streets, it had a major impact.

Moderator: Anything else?

(many side conversations at once, discussing improvements planned for the college and the current plan for downtown.)

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION III

ELECTED OFFICIALS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *Tell me a little bit about Trenton.*

We have a wonderful school system.

Great park system.

If you get in trouble, we can even put you in a new jail.

(laughter.)

We're a very hospitable community.

(laughter.)

We've got some industry, we've got some retail but we need more. We'd take another industry if we...

Plenty of doctors.

Good hospital.

College right up the street.

This is a farming community, and it used to be a big railroad town. It's no longer present, but...Trenton, I believe, is in the growing stages. Most of our infrastructure has been rebuilt. Parks, schools, a new jail. A lot of that infrastructure is being rebuilt, so we're on our way.

North Central Missouri College is a big part of that, and they're in the process of raising \$10 million, to build a new Allied Health building, which will increase enrollment. They have an agriculture campus going in southeast in town.

We've got a shooting range here, north of town.

I was talking to a young businessman the other day, and I said, "Do you see the recession having any effect on you?" and he said, "Nope. We live in a community that's broke all the time anyway."

(laughter.)

Moderator: *How many students are on the campus?*

15 to 1600.

It's probably going to grow, though.

I saw 2000 as a projection after the new programs.

Trenton school system has about 1200.

Expanding airport.

Oh yeah.

And we have a performing arts organization, that's acting and exploring the construction of a performing arts building. They've been sponsoring programs for 50 years in the community. I think that's a plus for a community, to have something like that that brings in all different kinds of talent.

(many people talking at once.)

They do have several civic organizations, Elks, Qantas, Lions, Rotary.

Moderator: Where do people in Trenton do their shopping?

Basic stuff is available.

2 grocery stores, excellent hardware stores.

Pamida.

Easter's.

No Wal-Mart Super, though.

Nope.

Thank goodness.

(laughter.)

They kind of hurt downtowns.

I think the Pamida store does a really good job.

(agreement.)

Moderator: What is Pamida?

It's similar to a small Wal-Mart.

It's like a K-Mart.

(side conversations.)

We have quite a variety, really, of about everything. There are some things you can't find in Trenton.

Size 42 jeans.

(laughter.)

I used to buy from JC Penney....by the way, we have the Trenton Acting Guild that puts on a couple performances a year, and they use the community but they also work with college students. Those things are good.

All local talent.

We have a movie theater now.

Moderator: Is there enough retail here? Do people stay in town for clothing?

A lot of people go south.

We have a wonderful men's store down the street, Howard's.

We used to have a bowling alley here. We could use a bowling alley.

Those are popular. The one in Chillicothe is busy all the time.

I hear they have a great restaurant there.

Moderator: Is there something that I should know about this?

People don't know about Trenton. Everyone knows about Chillicothe.

We should be called the twin cities.

Moderator: What about dining options?

We've got Italian, Mexican, American, Chinese.

Where's Italian?

Pizza places.

(laughter.)

We have a nice restaurant in the country club.

It's very good.

Washington Street.

Yup.

We don't have a barbecue place. I had some old retired boys that have some money in their pocket...

(laughter.)

What you need is retired folks with money.

Moderator: Do people stay here to dine?

Yeah, most of the time.

When people leave to go shopping, they leave to eat there too. That town south of here has Applebee's and other stuff we don't have here.

It's only 20 miles from here.

There is a rivalry.

In terms of retail, dining, athletics... it's a long-standing rivalry.

Well, we've all went looking for...we've competed for industry. We see some stuff go there. With 36 and 65 going through there, you can see why.

(side conversations.)

...positive things for Trenton...

Moderator: What do people do for entertainment?

We have a lot of summertime softball, baseball.

College basketball is a big draw.

Baseball.

We're redoing our field with assistance from the college and the parks department. Our college just went to a Division 1, so our field is being totally redone.

And the high school is working on their field.

Yeah, track.

The city and the school swapped some ground, and they applied for funding and solicited donations, and they're totally redoing the running track.

For all weather.

Yeah. And there's a half-million dollar renovation, all said and done. So there's several things happening. And there are several in the works.

Barton Campus of the college.

Moderator: Tell me a little about your downtown? Do you feel it's moving in a good direction?

That's been something we've been wanting to have for the downtown area.

Basically, there's a couple retails, but it's mostly offices downtown.

What have we got in retail? A coffee shop, a restaurant, hardware.

A couple of drinking establishments.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

Taverns, they're talking about.

A lot of downtown buildings need renovating. They're the older buildings.

Our building board, they're making some headway in getting some of these buildings repaired or torn down. Not just downtown, but in the whole area.

Moderator: What do people go downtown for? How often do you use downtown?

Light the Christmas tree...

There's nothing open after 5.

Going to jail.

(laughter.)

The most crowd that ever shows up is during the parade. Realistically, that's all.

Can you imagine this street being 2 ways? It's on the plan.

Is the arts building still projected for...when you leave the front of the building, imagine a new building there. That'll be a big improvement for downtown. Once we establish some kind of storefront to that new building, I'd like to see that pushed right on down the line. Instead of having hodgepodge storefronts, even if there's no one in there, it makes the place look good. You go up around Pella, Iowa, you're not going to find hodgepodge. They're going to be brick fronts and nice.

There's a town called Kristin, Illinois, and it's an old town. They're revitalized the downtown. The businesses are all renovated, and it's really a nice town.

How big a town is it?

Probably 15, 16,000, something like that. It's right along Interstate 80. Somebody had the vision to go in and restore it.

Moderator: Are business hours inconvenient?

I think that the ones that are uptown here, those people stay open at night. Pamida, the grocery store...all that stuff is open. Well, the little boy at the hardware store, he's not going to stay open. There's some competition with what they're selling, but a lot of these people don't want to stay open much past 5. They used to do it during the holidays, but before that, the late 70s is when it switched out. They used to be open until 7. That's when we had that jewelry store.

There were several retail stores then, and a nice restaurant.

And on a Sunday, everything here is closed.

Moderator: Let's talk a little about traffic flow through downtown.

There's quite a bit of flow. And if we get this plan done, we'll get a lot.

It's hard to get around downtown, unless you know.

When the first plan was put together, you would think that everybody would be receptive, but people were stirred up about getting rid of the 5-points. It was like, good grief!

There's not a road in the drawing, and that was part of the 5-points.

Back when I was a young man, the downtown area on Saturday night just flourished. You couldn't find a place to park. Two movie theaters, and both of them were busy. Two hotels. I don't know what the population was back then.

There was some little mom and pop stores.

But now, people want convenience.

They built the Eastgate shopping center.

Times have changed.

Moderator: What's the objection to doing away with the 5-points?

History.

Tradition.

But when you start trying to give directions...

(laughter. Many people agreeing.)

It's pretty hectic down here, especially if you're a truck driver.

They get in places they can't get out of sometimes.

They end up down around my house.

Moderator: Is there enough parking downtown?

For now there is.

There wouldn't be if it was a real viable part of the community.

We need to change the way it's perceived. If we're going to leave it one-lane, make the cars park at an angle.

It might really help.

Just change things a little bit.

That's what we talked about down at the courthouse. We'd like to put diagonal parking, and looks is maybe half the game.

(many people talking at once.)

...That might help get this started up too...

...You know, they talk about the new jail and the courthouse, and that end of town with the courthouse and the jail, all of it looks great, and you've got the college doing their things...there's a lot going on on the ends of Main Street. We just need to give them a reason to come down here.

We've got some great bookends.

The Library, the college, the museum, the courthouse.

Sometimes just a small change can make a big difference.

But you're not going to make everybody happy.

It would be neat to have angled parking by the courthouse.

We have those two lots across, and we're going to make parking over there, and that's going to relieve the courthouse.

Moderator: Is downtown easy to find? Is there adequate signage?

There needs to be some signs put up for trucking. They hit the intersection. There is some little signs that say no trucks, but they're trying to find their way around, and those little signs aren't enough.

(many people agreeing at once.)

We had a lot of renditions of possibilities.

That is a terrible intersection, though.

It has like half the turning radius that MODOT requires for trucks.

So they're all in the wrong lane...

And downtown, there's empty storefronts...

Moderator: Is there currently housing downtown?

There's a little bit.

And the Plaza Theater was renovated into housing.

(many people talking at once.)

...a little bit...

...remodeling the Plaza, that was quite a project...

That apartment building is awesome.

That used to be our movie theater.

Moderator: Do you think there would be demand for housing here?

I don't know.

We've ran studies, and the demand is for single-family in the range of 80-150 thousand.

And there's not adequate rentals available right now. And when that prison in Chillicothe gets up and running, people are going to be moving into the area. We're planning on sucking the gravy out of that.

(laughter.)

We do have a sesquicentennial park moving forward, park benches and the lighting of the Christmas tree, and maybe a stage-like area for some activities in the park during the summer time, maybe the band kids, a gospel night, a bluegrass night. That might bring all the residents to the Plaza.

I could see a hot dog stand.

Somebody with an ice cream shop.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: *This is exactly where I wanted to go. Since this project is called DREAM, how do you envision your downtown? Let's start with what kind of businesses you'd like to see downtown.*

Ice cream shop.

That's a good question. Most people are in a hurry through the day.

We need to have something up here for more leisure time.

A butterfly garden.

(laughter.)

Get people up here.

Businesses downtown, we've already got a barbershop.

We could use another.

(agreement.)

We could use a clothing store.

We've got several restaurants, but it would be nice to have a nice dining place downtown.

(agreement.)

That might go well with a barbecue place. Upscale barbecue?

(laughter.)

A piano bar, like in Branson.

Yeah.

In Branson, that place is great. It's a night of entertainment.

(many people talking at once.)

If you look down at the Plaza, there's a couple places that are pretty well filled. You've got plenty of seating in front of some of the nicer-looking buildings. People should enjoy that park area.

Put some benches out up and down the street.

Maybe we ought to make this a walking path. Walk, sit down, go to our little park.

You take this set of buildings out of the way, and you turn that into a 2-lane road, and you could make that a walking path.

It would be nice to have a little restaurant with outside seating, have a beer and a sandwich outside...

And some retail stores.

(agreement.)

So, some store space, whenever that does go in, that could be where the ice cream shop falls.

Chillicothe has a lot of murals in their town, and we recently placed a mural in connection with the museum annex down there, and you see it from three or four different streets when you come in.

Some lady complained!

(laughter.)

Something attractive downtown, that people would want to come see and spend an hour. If we didn't want to copy Chillicothe and put murals on every wall, we might think of something else that might be a draw.

I always think of fountains.

I went to South Carolina and saw a couple of parks, and they had a bronze statue of a celebrity from the area, and it was...there was 10 of us standing there, and there was more standing around. There were little stories where you could walk the trail. I could see that. You could, something about the founding fathers. Even if it was railroad-minded, people travel around the country and look at railroad stuff. Sad that we couldn't have redone our depot before it was gone...

I've been to some depots that have made some pretty fine restaurants in other towns.

Moderator: You were starting to talk about making downtown more attractive, but is there anything else you would change about the look and feel?

It would be wonderful to see an investor come in and clear out the front of these buildings, put in some lofts...we've got some students who could rent.

Campus is so close, it would be perfect.

Are these buildings structurally sound?

Some of them.

Not all have been inventoried in that detail, though.

We did a survey of landowners...I think our infrastructure's in decent shape. A lot of our utilities are buried. The structural integrity of the buildings...

Gas.

We're not sure.

This whole downtown's been replaced years ago, with the gas lines.

Moderator: *Trenton has already had a redevelopment plan, which includes the traffic change, a museum district, and the performing arts center. What's the biggest priority?*

I think the performing arts building has to happen to drive the nail home that we're serious. When you clear off a block and show them that we're moving forward on a plan, if you can afford to do it, you have to start big. A lot of people think you start small, but I think you have to start big and get people on board. Get them to believe.

When you get that done, you'll cause more traffic, and it just snowballs from there.

If you look to the Amish communities in Jamesport, they've done pretty well.

They're in a decline right now, though. I hear people say that it's in a decline. But they still get their tour buses coming through. It's like anything else, though. They're losing a lot of their young people, and the old people are tired. If you don't keep your young people involved, it becomes stagnant.

I guess most of their shops are craft shops and antiques.

Junk, you could call it.

Collectibles.

(laughter.)

Moderator: *Does anyone else think that something else is a priority?*

Well, after the performing arts center, I think getting some storefronts and getting something for kids to do downtown.

Consistent storefronts.

How will students be involved with the performing arts building. If you've got the building, that's a little different clientele than students, but the college is here and it's growing, and there's probably a need for more housing, affordable housing.

...they have passes to the plays, through the college.

Yeah, you'll get in free with a student pass. They're drawing college kids. Offer a little culture in their daily lives.

(laughter.)

Moderator: *Thank you very much.*

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SECTION IV

BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *This is my first time to Trenton. Tell me a little about your community.*

The business area is east. The primary commercial area is east of here. We have a lot of traffic that goes through this town. There are a lot of things going on that we might not appreciate as much. Good people here. They're not as progressive as some of us would like, but we deal with it. Good school system. Good utility... those are the things that come to my mind.

Friendliness. As a community, we say hello when somebody's walking down the street. That's why people move here. It's friendly and quiet.

A lot of people come back after they retire. It's really a great place to live.

We have a good hospital and a college, but we rely on those entities too heavily in keeping our economy robust. We have lots of good people, but maybe we're not so great about enforcing ordinances and keeping things clean.

We had 400 volunteers that pulled together for our 150th birthday.

(someone entering the room. Greetings.)

I think we've got very good doctors here, and dentists. That's a great asset.

We do provide a lot of services for the communities surrounding, especially the west, east, and north. We pull people in for medical and manufacturing jobs. The cost of living is pretty reasonable. We have a nice park system, and we have excellent streets. We have our own asphalt plant so we do our own paving and repair. We maintain things well.

We're all proud of our parks and the aquatic center.

We have a great airport.

And we accommodate jets. Between St. Joe and Kirksville, our landing strip is the one place where jets can actually land. Sometimes corporations will fly in here and then go into adjoining towns.

Moderator: *Anything else?*

As my children are growing up, I remember having an opportunity to move to Des Moines, St. Louis, or Kansas City, and I like being on a first-name basis with teachers and schools, and I like the price of real estate here.

Moderator: Where do people do their shopping, basic everyday things?

Hy-Vee.

Sav-a-lot.

We've got two grocery stores.

We have a 9th street strip, 6 highway. There's a business area down there that covers about 6 blocks, and we have the usual fast food and department stores. Everything in the 60s and 70s gravitated that way.

We had a terrible fire downtown then, and that started it. We lost Penney's, Mattingly's, Western Auto.

They built a shopping center out east then.

That was when Penney's was their main draw, they relocated out there.

My father's hardware store went into the new part, and Penney's was still downtown. We always tried to have a second supermarket, and they come and go. But prior to that, there was a little shopping strip there with a hardware store, an IGA, and a department store. There weren't many businesses there in the late 60s. Then that migration started. They built a new supermarket, and it just mushroomed.

The fire...

But we are an ISO 700 city because of our firefighting capability, so it helps with insurance rates.

Moderator: Are there things that people need that you can't find in Trenton?

Men's clothing.

It's limited.

And women's clothing is a little less limited, but even so. Appliances are not that limited. Electronics... we have a community that, I think, and somebody jump in here if I'm wrong, but I think we have a lot of draw here, but we're a mobile society, and people will drive 80 miles to buy something elsewhere that they can get here. We draw more small towns north of us and east and west of us, and our local people go somewhere else.

I think it's typical recreational shopping. A key to get them in town would be good restaurant, and that's up and down. And we have lost a generation of retailers. We used to have a lot more. And some of those families got out of retail. And I think that's typical through the Midwest.

We had a point when everybody went to Chillicothe within the last 10 years, but since then, we got Pamida, and some of the restaurants—now we have a Mexican restaurant better than Chillicothe's, we have a movie theater.

The shops we have, I think, have really good customer service skills in filling a niche market. At _____'s store, there were all these styles of hammer and they could tell me how to fix stuff. Same with _____'s store. That makes people stay here.

And we're building a super state-of-the-art animal shelter with dog shows and animal awareness stuff.

Moderator: Are there other shopping needs people leave for?

I think people are just more mobile, and maybe the price of gas will change things, but...I've always been a shop-at-home person, and I've always felt that, "Try Trenton First" is our slogan. I can tell you stories about what people have said to me about going out of town because it's cheaper. You drive 40 miles one way to save 10 bucks, where's the logic in that? But that's kind of the mindset with some folks.

And people sometimes want somewhere to go.

I suspect too that shop at home has another meaning, and that's shopping over the Internet. We all ought to explore that.

One thing that affects me is the lack of the farm supply selection here. There's only one store. We have to go to Bethany, they have two or three implement dealers, and Chillicothe.

We used to have two or three.

That's another thing. It takes a lot of business out of our town. Farmers.

That is something... that would be good for us. We lost our last big John Deere dealer that was here for a long time.... (unintelligible)

We lost them all one at a time.

So to buy an implement, you have to go out of town?

Yes.

We have one major car dealer, and we used to have three or four.

Moderator: Do people stay in town to eat out? Are there enough restaurants?

There's not enough.

But there's a selection. Mexican, Washington Street, McJ's out at the Country Club, Wild Onion, Chinese, Lakeview. You can find dinner if you don't want to drive. Again, you get back to the change in marketing, and that is recreational shopping. It's fun to drive to Bethany or Ravena, and they stop in stores and restaurants in other towns. We need to pull people in.

Trenton still has a very good Saturday night where you can grab a decent meal, see a good movie, and then we can go to Pamida or Orscheln's and do a little shopping. A lot of people with their families and do shopping. But you go to Chillicothe and you'll see 5 to 10 Trentonites in any restaurant on any night.

We need to think about the cost of gas, too.

They said that about the tax on cigarettes, but it hasn't curbed smoking. People are going to buy cigarettes no matter what it costs. Same with gasoline.

Moderator: What kind of recreational activities do people do?

They stay in and leave town. We have golf, tennis.

Skateboarding.

Walking track.

A swimming pool, aquatic center.

Tennis.

Baseball, softball.

The college has a good basketball team.

We have limited or no bowling, except Chillicothe.

Horseback riding.

Fishing.

Crowder lake for fishing, camping, water sports.

Friends of the Arts always has a good program.

Almost once a month, there are about 9 in a year, and they're nice offerings of different types of arts, maybe bluegrass, orchestras, plays. We do have a really hardcore acting guild, and we have a restored theater in our library that's really nice. It's a sellout. And we certainly could use a larger, something that would accommodate more people for events like that. The Ketcham Center is more of a gymnasium. So we could use that 5 to 600 or 700 seating theater for entertainment, because there's a big following.

Talking about those programs, though, the demographics of those audiences are older people. We're not providing much for people ages 20-50.

Wherever you go, the people are older.

We have dances out there, on Tuesday nights, and the place is full. And they're senior citizens. It's a big deal, and it's nice.

Bingo on Thursday nights.

You can dance and smoke and gamble there, but you can't drink. If you're playing Bingo.

We have an annual festival in Trenton, in the spring and the 4th of July. And Missouri Days is getting to be a good thing, and then the college cookout... shootout. So we have a lot of entertainment here.

Moderator: *Let's look at downtown. Do you feel positive or negative about the direction the downtown is going?*

It's a standstill right now, but I think that's a positive comment. It's not going backwards.

It had some trouble, but it reversed itself. It's kind of holding its own.

There are a lot of empty buildings in disrepair. It used to be every block was full of businesses. But on the other hand, you have the college and all their development, the law enforcement center.

Renovated hotel for apartments.

A renovated library. There are a lot of positive things about downtown, but it would sure be nice to have more businesses.

When there's been fires, we end up with empty lots. No rebuilding.

A lot of those fires are questionable.

(laughter.)

There's a lot of buildings deteriorating downtown, some of the parts are falling off. They're going to have to be drastically looked at very quickly.

We seem to have ownership without maintenance. With ownership comes responsibility, and I am not insensitive to the money issue, but if you own it, that's part of your responsibility. If you can't keep it up, you need to sell it.

That monstrosity by the Wild Onion...

Nonresident ownership has always been a thorn in the downtown. We've cleaned up a lot of houses and businesses, but it has gone so long that the cost to bring them back up is...the Plaza would never have been done if not for outside resources, because it wasn't cost-effective. That's the attitude with some of these buildings downtown.

I think it all involves investment in the community, and also ideas. And these folks are interested in the community. I've been brainwashed on this arts center, but it's original purpose was to be close to the college with classrooms for the college to be able to use it. It was supposed to be performance and educational. Within that, there was the hope that what would spin off would be businesses that would come downtown, whether it be a dance costume store or an arts store or an artisan shop selling their wares, which would also show different types, but it would be a touristy type center, not the type that the Amish would have at Jamesport, but more of an artisan type colony or something like that. That's pie in the sky stuff, but it would be doable if everything fell in place. _____ was the first president of Friends of the Arts to bring some Branson groups up. It's always been tough to get younger folks to attend... something like that is what would make downtown a real viable destination for the whole area, not just our community. It would actually work into building our trade territory to go further out, and with the college and all of it tying together... I can remember going this winter to the Wild Onion for dinner, and there was a play at the theater, there was a basketball game, I went to the Wild Onion then walked to the basketball game and then walked up to the theater. I thought, "Man, what a town!" There's really a neat concept. So I think there is opportunity if things fall in place. And then you don't take a backseat to anybody, because people are going to want to come here, and it's going to be the draw.

We really scramble to find out what to do for a day in Trenton for tourists. Many people here have been on City Council for a while, and we're still dealing with some of the same issues as 10 years ago. There's no sense of urgency. But I feel a sense of urgency about pigeons flying through windows and bricks falling on people's heads. We all have investments in this community, and we need to get serious about getting things done. It's not good to bring people in and then have that sort of thing happening.

Well said.

I was told we got 90 days for that property owner to do anything he wants to before we intervene.

90 days is one thing, but I'm talking 10 years.

I agree with you 100%. Things move too slow around here, and I'd like to see things happen yesterday.

Moderator: Why did you decide to locate your business downtown?

I worked there.

When I came there, it was the best place to be.

Cheap rent.

We bought our apartment building because it was convenient to downtown. It would be nice if there were a place that someone could buy groceries.

(many people talking at once.)

We've been there since 1902. Evidently, we must like it there. But it's a pretty good place to be, really. Been there a long time.

Got exposure.

People say, "It's inconvenient." It's not much more inconvenient than parking at Wal-Mart and walking half a mile.

People will do that at Wal-Mart, but they complain about parking downtown.

It was the place to be in the 50s and 60s, and that's why some people are here. I'm downtown because I had a chance to buy a building that I thought was worth the money. It was in decent shape, and I've kept it up, but cheap buildings is not necessarily a good selling point for downtown.

We've got a lot of assets here, like the street department that cleans the streets for us. The sidewalks are in good shape. If you was in a shopping center or you had your own lot, you'd have to clean off snow from your lot and you'd have to pay to have stuff resurfaced. There's a lot of assets down here, and it's easy to take it for granted.

We have an active museum downtown, and they're expanding.

Moderator: Let's talk about how user-friendly downtown is. How are business hours? Are they convenient?

I think they are, but I've had some feedback from my customers that the hours aren't convenient. I'm open 9-5 five days a week. I used to be open Saturday, and all I had on those days were chatterboxes. I'm not open at all on Saturday.

We're not anymore.

There wasn't enough traffic to make it worth your time?

Well, yes and no.

I'm open all day Saturday.

In terms of user-friendly, we do have some parking issues. I did have a business down there, and there was a parking limit, and my customers were getting tickets. So I moved east. And now people want to park in front of a business, but there are so many handicapped spots. There's 67 feet of no parking in front of the Chamber, but the ordinance only calls for 20. There's the Chamber, a beauty salon, and a store with only one parking spot. We're not user-friendly, nor are we consistent, in parking.

There's a few on the side, but there's license bureau customers.

Do we have parking regulations?

No.

How can we enforce them? My store, there used to be a yellow line that you can't see anymore, and a little old lady was parked there, and the police chief pulled her over.

I don't want to step on any toes, but we had a survey sent to every business owner in downtown Trenton, and only a small percentage of those who responded said we needed a parking ordinance. So after the other issue was resolved, the Council, and I was on it at the time, said, "If the people down here don't care, why should we worry about it?" That was the attitude at the time. They were either noncommittal or nonresponsive. It was a mistake not to change the parking. As far as I know, that survey is still on file.

I think parking is a problem.

It is. I have a guy next to me who parks in front of his business all day.

Even when we had ordinances, nobody did anything about it. They wouldn't enforce it until somebody complained.

And I will say that we downtown business owners are as much responsible for the parking situation as anybody else. You can't blame the city.

Years ago, the spots were full of retail stores. We had meters on diagonal parking, and the spots were enforced, and there was more activity downtown. I don't know whether the diagonal parking was...we streamlined getting through downtown, but now it's so easy to go through that you can't stop anymore.

We've got a block of buildings that you can't park halfway down on it.

That's a state highway, though. MODOT controls that.

(agreement.)

They have been more receptive than I've ever known them to be. They were going to eliminate all parking, and then...

The only time you need a turn lane there is for about 30 minutes.

We need more parking if you're going to have businesses.

We have lots, but they won't use it.

Even the people that work won't use it. They want to park in front of the buildings.

We've got a lot behind our stores, and 80% of our business comes from that lot.

And my block has a parking lot that they're going to put a park in. It serviced the whole block, and now it's going to be a park. And there's no place to park to go to the park.

(laughter.)

If I recall correctly, the idea is that they would park behind _____'s office and walk down a green path to get there.

That's a dream, all right.

We'll drive to Royal Stadium or to Wal-Mart, and we'll park way far away from the door, but in small town mentality, people want to pull right in front of the business, but there's only room for a couple cars there. We certainly have the traffic.

Is there still the plan to do diagonal parking?

It is. It's part of the main street plan.

When was this street one-way?

It's been that way since the 40s.

Because they're talking about changing it, which makes sense.

This was always parallel, but it was diagonal a little further.

As a child, we came to town and through here, and I remember they'd been big crowds and traffic going both ways, and my daddy had to pull over to let somebody through. That wouldn't happen today. They just don't do that now.

Moderator: Are you all in favor of Main Street being 2-way?

It's too narrow.

I have concerns about width of the street.

I think we're all in favor of any design that would pick up more spaces.

(many people talking at once.)

If they could park at an angle, I could put 3 cars in front of my shop... I think there's 19 or 21 cars in the picture, but now there's place for about 5 cars. So they cut it way less than half when they done that, so...I'd be tickled to death if we could angled park. And tow people away if they sit there all day in spots that they're not supposed to be in.

And from a shopping standpoint, if we slowed traffic down to get through down here, so I'm not zipping through. To get downtown to shop, traffic needs to be slower to accommodate the angled parking. People will just zip by the business if they're going to fast.

And you need them to be able to back out.

Exactly.

What about a roundabout around the flagpole?

(many people talking at once.)

I'm in favor of both ways of traffic, but I don't know how they'll do it.

There's only 26 feet across. The sidewalks could be narrowed, though.

They're a lot wider than they need to be.

I think the plan shows parking on one side.

It wouldn't work.

I don't know if it would.

Moderator: Do you think there's a need for residential space downtown?

If it's done right, it would help with the upkeep of the building.

But every fire we've had down here is because of residents.

It wouldn't help with parking. You had people leave their cars in front of the business.

If you do downtown housing, it has to be quality housing. It can't be \$100 a month apartments. We had a fellow from Neosho, which was a DREAM city last year, and there was a loft down there that was unbelievable. We talked to them a little, and their biggest problem is they've got even bigger high-dollar lofts right now that are huge, and they need to get down to more affordable sizes. We have a client right now looking at a building to build a loft. They're wanting to move into it, and it would be where they live during the week.

I think the viability of upstairs apartments in the past is that people didn't have cars and everything was downtown. Now you need a car.

Now you have 3 cars, and they'll all be right in front of somebody's business.

That's why you have planning and zoning, though. They need to have an ordinance specifying off-street parking.

They have to enforce it.

The city needs to put the ordinances in effect, and we have to be supportive of them to do it. We had some legal action a few years ago when we tried to clean things up. We need to put the ordinances back.

There's a person that has a business on Main Street, and he parks right in front of his front door, and I asked about why they do it.

Moderator: *Let's talk about the future downtown. What kind of businesses would you like to see downtown?*

Well, we have 2 churches downtown right now. At least they're occupied.

Parking's only on Sunday. There's not many retailers open then.

Another restaurant downtown would be good.

When I had a restaurant next to me, it was really an asset to my business.

Shirley's?

Yeah. They boosted traffic.

We could use a breakfast and lunch place.

Good old mom-and-pop operation from 5 am to 7 pm would be good.

There's a couple folks in town exploring options. It takes investment. They're from out of state, and that may be something to encourage them to come downtown.

And it's now all offices, where the restaurant used to be.

It's a nice building.

And the tenants are real good. It's good. It's managed well.

The good news for us in terms of revitalization is that it's a good buy. You can buy a building downtown from 7000 to 30,000. In Parkville it's \$400,000. Someone would have to invest in the upkeep, but it's not a huge sum of money at this point.

I have to go backwards a little bit. I own the audio shop/clothing store/anything that caters to young kids today. I'm working with outside people to bring something bigger and better. An indoor skate facility/ski facility/BMX. You've got a couple of bad apples right now where parents could just drop off the kids, but we're looking at this option. I have a friend in Kansas City who does this, but I think if you build it, they will come. If you tell companies how many people come in from surrounding counties, you can get them to distribute their stuff to you. I sell 5 brands of shoes. I want to show the town, I've been trying to build this facility with bikes and skateboards and in-line skates, a place where parents can drop off their kids. It's been a tough ride, but if I could change anything, I wouldn't. I like Trenton a lot, and I think a lot of people put us down. If you want to sit there and complain... There's a lot of good kids in this town, and Trenton has made a lot of improvements. We've got a jail, we've got the manpower... I like Trenton, and I've done good business here, but I get a lot more business from outside Trenton. They do come. A lot of people just have to give you a shot. I try to be fair with everybody in the community, and all I want to do is just be positive. I know I'm not from here, but I just want to feel that I could get some backing from people once I bring the money and the investors in. Once it's built, this will be a good thing. And I want to live upstairs, so I can control it... (unintelligible)... I just wanted to

say that. I just wanted to give my input on how I feel. A lot of people tell me to move, but I don't want to move. I've been in business for 5 years. I understand about the parking, and the issue on the streets here... in California, when they widen streets, they put those speed bumps in. Make them slow down. Make them look. I see a lot of historical pictures of Trenton, and I think angled parking is a great idea.

Moderator: Is there anything else in your dream downtown that you would change, in the way it looks?

I think the facades. I think there's some buildings that if they aren't usable, should be taken down. We can't just hang on to buildings if no one's willing to invest.

We almost need a theme.

We've tried. We've had plans in the past, like a walking mall or... maybe it goes back to actually trying to recruit...if there's one clothing store, maybe we need other stores that enhance. Maybe what we should be doing is from an industrial development corporation, maybe we should be chasing retail. Our pull factor is really pretty good. But a lot has to do with the east corridor, and maybe we should look at the available buildings to see who can house retail or a restaurant to pull people downtown. We should be looking at soliciting retail. The people that won't play ball, we take em down. What we're doing now is not the answer. We have to dream to figure out what would be best for downtown. We do have the two anchors downtown now.

We used to have 2 nice furniture stores.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

...buildings boarded up...

...very unattractive, and it could be fixed...

I was taking pictures of the downtown for Great Northwest Days, and I realized how hodgepodge our buildings are. We have newer styles, we have no theme, no rhyme or reason.

No continuity.

No planning.

We had a man with a really unsightly property, and allowed him to move the junk to another downtown building. I agree with _____, that if you own a building, you have a responsibility. If you can't do it, the building needs to be condemned.

And that ordinance is much more important than to chase that little old lady away from a parking spot in front of a store, waiting for her husband.

And that was a crippled little old lady, and because of parking, she was chased off.

And even with those bed races, who would dream that we would have that many people down here?

It proves that people will come downtown, and like to come downtown.

I don't think competition's a bad thing. People want a choice. I think another clothing store would be great.

We used to have 3 hardware stores downtown.

Other stores are assets to other businesses. When people are waiting for a haircut, they can go shopping... whenever you divide it up, it's not as easy. We feed off of one another's business.

There's a lady, and she put a craft store by the flagpole on Main Street, and it didn't go, but I was in there. She said, "Boy, this is really tough. We need a couple more craft stores up here, because that brings the people, and when they come to the area, they're going to look at what's there." That's what you said. Competition...when I was a kid, competitors didn't speak to each other. Back then, competition was there. But we need competition. It's not going to take away from this person, but it'll bring people in and more people will go into each store.

Somebody was talking about lofts, and I don't know if anyone's ever looked at Zona Rosa, and they have little lofts, but to get into them you have to come in through the back. And those people in those lofts, it would be nice to have little shops in some of those old buildings.

I would say, though, if you was to check most of these buildings, many of them wouldn't be structurally fit for a 300,000 dollar loft. These buildings are old.

I say we start with a small loft.

The small ones, yeah. They're much more fit than the large ones.

(agreement.)

Chillicothe tore down several of theirs, because they checked them.

A lot of them had an upper floor taken out, but the façade stayed intact.

I think when you're looking at what's going to be downtown, you need some key retail, but you need food, services, and entertainment. Between the college, the library, the law enforcement center...we need a blend of both to get people down here. We're not going to change the east corridor.

The east corridor gets people into town!

If you could do a little deli.

We don't really have a lot of buildings to be rented.

If you tear down buildings, how do you afford to put a new building in?

Some could be parking.

You can't have all lots but no buildings.

You can't have business without parking.

(many people arguing at once.)

We're too lazy now to walk.

We do it in other places. We just don't do it here. If the whole downtown was attractive, you might park a block or two away so you could walk.

Moderator: Thank you very much for coming.

SECTION V

LONGTIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: Tell me a little bit about Trenton as a whole. Describe it to me.

Congenial.

We've got a lot of good diamonds hidden around here.

I think one of the big draws is the college here, and it's growing, and it's going to continue to grow.

I think our education, K-12, is also very good.

We've got one of the best state parks in the country.

I would say it's a balanced community. We have a little bit of everything, the college, light industry, we have a strong agricultural base, a heritage of the railroad, and it's still with us. I think it's a place of friendly people, I really do. I've met a number of people who have moved here, and they always say it's just a friendly place. People wave to you, they're easy to get to know, we've made a lot of friends.

One thing I've asked of people that have moved in is why they chose here, and they because they could afford it.

That's that quality of life, affordability, a slower pace.

If you can't find it, you can go to the city and come back.

We've got good medical facilities, a hospital.

We have many amenities that other communities this size do not have, but we still have the good points of a small community.

And for the elderly, we've got one of the best senior citizen places in the state.

We have good media. A lot of towns this size do not have a daily newspaper.

That's a good point.

Look at your city services. For a community this size, the services are tremendous.

A jail.

(laughter.)

Fire department, ladder truck, ambulances.

I think we have momentum. If you rewind six years, since then we have a new aquatic center, detention center, middle school, tennis courts.

The library.

The Plaza Hotel.

We have a nice museum.

A walking trail.

Wonderful parks.

(many people agreeing at once.)

The whole park system, softball and baseball fields keep the little ones busy.

And those are all being improved.

The college requires more things for their baseball fields than we had, so we're building a new stadium.

I think our community is very good at donating monetarily and time to projects for the community. I mean, we have done...sesquicentennial just took in...how many thousands of dollars?

It was a surplus. But we had over 400 people helping.

If they see the need. Right now we have a fundraiser for the stadium. We have this ball field, and we have lots of money and time involved, and people are stepping up to the plate.

And keeping other things going, too.

And the Sesquicentennial Park.

I like the things they have to keep the little ones busy. Something like that I think is very important.

We do have numerous entertainment opportunities throughout the year, and we'd like to do some things with the new arts center with after school programs.

Friends of the Arts has been part of this community for 40-some years, so we've had it for a long time.

We're having Larry Gatlin next March.

And Mary Welsh.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Would you say the trend is in the right or wrong direction?

I think we're moving in the right direction, anytime you can take care of your kids and adults. There's still things we need.

(agreement.)

I think the downtown plan will take care of a lot of that.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas for residents?

We have a lot here, if we supported it locally, but a lot of people choose recreational shopping 20 miles to the South or 110 miles or 90 miles, St. Joe and Liberty, and a lot of that is recreational. We do need more retail opportunities, but people have to use it.

We don't have any volume anymore. There's no volume. You've got the basics, and that's it.

I think with the buying online, everybody's doing that, and the mom-and-pop stores are being hurt so bad. My kids go online.

What I've heard is "why would I want to pay \$12 to have one choice when I can drive to Wal-Mart or Chillicothe and find it for \$9. Even with the price of gas, I can buy it cheaper there." What maybe we need, we need is those specialty shops. Buy that special thing that you can't buy at Wal-Mart. Maybe that's what we should do. We do have Howard's, and that's the only one around, and Vines and Treasures, The Harvest Moon. We can't compete with Wal-Mart, so we need something that's different or specialized, maybe.

Moderator: Let's talk about dining and entertainment. What are popular options?

Fried chicken.

Depends on if it's lunchtime or at dinner.

If you don't like McDonalds, you're out of luck. You've got one place to go.

Washington Street or McJ's. That's it.

There's a Mexican place.

Chinese.

(many people talking at once.)

To sit down and have a nice dinner, there's only McJ's.

But you've got to have enough people to support it.

So we need to have something that will draw people from other people here.

The Arts Center might do that.

Keep plugging it.

You've got to have enough to get them here and keep them here the whole day.

There's a new thing we haven't mentioned, and that's the Trap and Skeet Range. That's an attraction for a group of people like that.

(agreement.)

And I think sometimes, one of our problems is we have a tendency to not give ourselves credit for what we have. We mentioned Wal-Mart, but between Easter's and Pamida and Orscheln's, we have most of that covered. We lose traffic because people just want to get out of Dodge, but when I think of the statistics printed out, we have a positive inflow of cash. We get lots of people from the North, from the East. We have a positive pull factor. But we don't give ourselves adequate credit.

Maybe we're not marketing what it is that we do have... maybe our marketing skills are not what they should be.

I think they would do pretty good in small communities, they enjoy coming here and getting what they need.

(agreement.)

I think we just don't really know how many people come in here.

And you have the college students coming in and out daily, and they'll generally eat something or have some kind of spending while they're here.

Moderator: Let's talk about downtown. Is it moving in the right or wrong direction?

If we get this accomplished.

When.

Right now, I don't see us moving. We're trying. I don't see that it's moving.

I think sometimes we don't feel like we deserve something as good as Chillicothe has. We feel like they're better than us.

Maybe we just don't want to pay for it.

We're more conservative.

I don't think we realize that we can dream big, too. We can have nice things in our community. I think sometimes we sort of defeat ourselves before we get going.

Sell ourselves short.

Our leaders from before, they never asked the city if they could do anything, they just did it. We're waiting for the city to do it rather than just doing it. And we need to break that chain.

We have to work together, though, in a cooperative mode.

I understand, but I mean for businesses and stuff like that. We can help people get business here.

Downtown isn't what it once was, but I think we stopped the bleeding and we're starting to move the other way. There's a tremendous improvement the college has made, and the museum has restored the flatiron buildings, and a few others are well-maintained. It's better than it was. Plaza was a great improvement, but I think it's moving forward. Not as fast as we'd like it to go. When we're finished with it, it isn't going to look like the downtown we remember.

You talk to the new people, and a lot of them thing 9th Street's Main Street. We need to change that mindset.

Moderator: What are the main reasons people visit downtown?

The college.

The professional services.

The Wild Onion.

All the offices, insurance, City Hall.

Barbershop.

Post office.

The courthouse, legal services.

Most of the lawyers are downtown.

The Chamber of Commerce.

The detention center.

If you have something to do at the courthouse. And there's lots of things going on there.

Moderator: What did you used to do downtown that you don't anymore?

Drugstore and clothing stores.

Shoe stores.

Grocery stores.

And a couple more restaurants.

And a few more beer joints.

And for the people who live downtown, it would be nice to have a grocery store.

Or some kind of transportation.

We don't have a taxi.

Moderator: *Let's spend a little time talking about how user-friendly downtown is. Is it easy to find downtown?*

No.

Well, it is for a native.

Not for an outsider.

If you watch the trucks, you can tell that it's very difficult to turn from 669 to 9th street, which is also 6.

It's a challenging intersection.

It's complicated to give directions.

That's part of the charm, though.

It's just the way it is.

9th and 10th street come together twice. It's unique.

I agree. I don't want to change any of it.

And you've got to have some one-way streets.

Moderator: *Are there enough signs?*

We need more signage.

(agreement.)

Five years from now, we're going to have GPS stuff.

But it's nice to have a sign.

And GPS even works in Trenton.

Moderator: What about parking?

There's plenty of parking.

There's plenty of parking in lots, but we have two retail businesses that have no parking, which makes it very difficult for them.

Where?

The shoe store and the hardware store.

There's a lot behind the hardware store.

It's hard to see where the parking's at.

And then you've got to go up the hill to get back around. It's limited.

Moderator: Is there a perception that there's not enough parking?

People want to park right next to the door where they're going. There's plenty of parking, but it's not all next to the door.

If we had more businesses, we might not have enough parking.

Some of it's a self-inflicted wound. They park in front of their own store.

(many people talking at once.)

I think the new plan addresses parking.

One of the things that's been cited is the 5-point intersection. That'll probably be debatable as to whether they really want to make those changes.

The 5-points, that's downtown. You might have a fight about that.

Moderator: What about business hours or locations? Are those convenient?

Everything closes about 5. But there's no reason to stay down there.

You go to any other town this size, at 5:00, it goes dead. That's a sign of the times.

I was thinking, this park that we're going to have, it would be nice if there was a place you could get a sandwich or something to eat.

Not yet.

Like the Wild Onion closes at 2:00 in the afternoon. Something needs to be open. If you want to go to the museum on Sunday, wouldn't it be nice to get a sandwich?

Moderator: What about housing in the downtown area. How much housing is there?

Isn't there an ordinance?

We're not supposed to have anybody in those upstairs apartments.

There are some there that it's because of the building, because it's not in shape. And there's the issue of occupancy in residence above. There's more than just one thing. When other things happen, that'll also happen.

Depending on our definition, there are quite a few apartments. Trenton Arms, and the one by the courthouse, and the Plaza apartments.

On the south end, there are several.

Moderator: Is there a demand for more housing?

No.

I don't think so.

Unless it's students.

Old people don't want to climb those stairs.

I don't see a need. I see a need for more housing, but not downtown.

It would be nice to clean up the northern end of Main Street, however.

(many people talking at once.)

CDBG grants have helped Trenton immensely.

Moderator: How do people get information about what's happening downtown?

The media.

Radio, newspaper.

The Chamber puts things in *Missouri Life* and *Rural Missouri*.

We have a nice web page.

But what goes on downtown?

There's things at the library, and they have it on their sign.

They have a newsletter.

Friends of the Arts has a website.

That's all within 50 feet of the college. Otherwise, there's nothing going on.

It's the truth.

We know when Trenton Hardware is open.

What goes on in that billiards place?

(laughter. Side conversations.)

Moderator: Let's spend the rest of the time looking at the future of downtown Trenton. Let's start by talking about getting around downtown. Do you see some room for improvement? What sorts of traffic changes would you like to see?

I'm real curious to know, how did they figure out that you could park on that side of the street and have two lanes of traffic?

You're just parking on one side.

They did measure it.

I'm thinking I'm going to pull up there, and it seems so close there.

I don't know.

Well now, you've got parking on both sides.

There's room.

I think it would work.

It's a little scary.

(many people talking at once.)

I think the two-lane would be good. It would give us a way to get to the College that has a better flow.

(agreement.)

You could put up your signs there to direct people to the college.

That's probably the biggest point that people ask how to get to. It would really simplify things.

Right now, it's complicated.

The other challenge is getting to the post office.

I'd like to see the performing arts building downtown. I think Trenton deserves to have one. We've had an acting guild and Friends of the Arts for years. We deserve to have a building dedicated to that purpose.

And it's more than just that. It would have banquet facilities, after-school programs...

Big Springs, Texas has got one just...an old one. They have events once in a while, and it's deteriorating. So we'll have to have uses for it.

And the College is wanting to use it as well.

And that's very important.

I think we demonstrated that we have an interest in the arts, because the college has an art gallery that a lot of people go to, and TAG performances are well attended, we have a strong music department in our public schools, and the Friends of the Arts programs are well attended.

Are we really locked in to the location, or could it be moved to the next block?

No.

That old building is more of an eyesore. The Montgomery-Ward building is the worst eyesore in this town.

We have some alternatives.

Parking around this thing would help a bunch... if that coffee shop wasn't there, that would be perfect for parking.

There's about 3 or 4 places that we have in mind.

I'm a believer that it should be on Main Street, but I also want to do something with the old Ward building.

_____ mentioned that, when you come into town, you would see it from the front if it were on an angle there.

And it would be neat with the park right there.

That's a possibility. But there's others. And they're all good.

And really, anything will be an addition. Except for the flatiron buildings.

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

Another place to eat, whether it be a sandwich or a full-blown meal. Maybe several other places to eat.

We've got a coffee shop down there.

We've talked about on the Arts center, the front part will be 3 or so retail spots where people can go in and go into the Arts Center from those places. Some of the things that we've thought of would be businesses related to that building, such as arts supplies and things like that, or tutus for little dancers and things like that. You can't put it in until there's a need, so it would come later. But we do have retail space in the plan as of now that helps pay the rent for that building.

And another plus for the Arts Building is an area big enough to have a nice dinner dance, a reception. We have no place for that right now.

It includes some rooms that can be classrooms or banquet areas, and a catering kitchen. Yeah, it could be used for meetings or closed circuit or wedding receptions. And we have talked about the alcohol issue in that building, because of wedding receptions. The Arts Center would be run by a board of directors, and they would make those decisions. We wouldn't want a keg party, but we might have a wine tasting or a champagne toast, and they'd be approved as it comes along.

Moderator: What other kinds of businesses?

I'd like to see the museum area. I've talked with the mayor about developing more in the museum area.

Down by the railroad tracks?

Yeah.

Right now, we're trying to raise funds to get _____'s building, and the city's trying to raise funds to get it, and maybe some private people might get it and donate it to the museum. It's an 1800's building.

I would guess some kind of specialty shops. I'm not really sure if you build it, will they come, but if there's not anything there, why would you go in the first place? You've got to have a purpose to go there, provide things that people want. I'm all in favor of eating. Ice cream shop, coffee, whatever.

A chicken and the egg problem. Which one's going to come first?

They have to put something in here to draw the people, so that money will be spent here.

It needs to be enough of a regular need thing, it's not so specialized that people will not buy on a regular basis.

I've got some wild ideas, but if we're going to capitalize. If our sales tax comes up, people will come in. We've got to bring people to Trenton to spend money. If we could come up with a science museum, that wouldn't cost us much money. Then you contact Apple, Dell, and all these companies, and we get all the laptops they've ever made...then, if you've got everybody in striking range bringing a 4th grade class to the museum, they're going to eat at McDonald's, they're going to fill gas... things like that. If people are coming into the Arts building to see in play, we want them to spend the night in a hotel, we need them to eat breakfast and dinner... when the sales tax come up, the other stores will start coming in.

And Missouri Days with all the bands...

The Gooseberry Festival, that brings money.

But you can't make a living on 1 or 2 days a year. We had ice cream shops and Sears and all that. You just can't.

You need something to draw them here.

You can draw them all you want.

It's not just the Arts Center.

That's what's going to draw people, but the lady in a sandwich shop can't make a living...

But if it's in conjunction with the college...

But you can't make a living off of the college.

But when we had the shootout, those people are looking for things to do.

But you can't make a living off of those people.

But you have 50 buses a day coming in if you have a place for field trips.

Look at Jamesport, they get a lot of tourism.

And no one spends money. The bus is the worst thing in the world to come to Jamesport.

We need to bring them in to see something.

I'm just saying we can build on some of the things we got. Could we even give tours of Crowder Park? How often could we give a tour to the library? That library is beautiful. We don't follow through. We should have them give tours.

They do that.

But they don't advertise it.

We have native grasslands in the old cemetery here, and how many people know that?

And I really think with this new thing at the stadium, those are those things that...

We've got to capitalize on what we've got, and go from there.

(side conversations.)

I think you've keyed in that the downtown is where the college is at. College, library, and the museum.

And the courthouse.

And they're looking to revitalize the old county jail to be a children's advocacy center.

Moderator: *Let's talk about the look and feel of downtown. Where do you think the priorities should be?*

Buildings. If you had decent buildings, people would be better to rent, sell, or...

Feasible.

Things have been there for years, and...

Don't have plumbing or heat.

Lack of maintenance, and holes in walls...it's just horrendous. Just about every building uptown should be refurbished, reworked, new façade fronts, whatever it takes to make them attractive, safe, and marketable.

It'll take money.

Yes.

We've got 3 or 4 buildings downtown that have been redone, the College building and the old Hotel, that's about the only buildings that are safe.

And the buildings on the west side of the street from the park, any of those along there...?

You look at those buildings, they should be knocked down.

On 5-points here, the Bob Haynes building, it's got pieces falling off. Had somebody been in a car or walking by... and the old shoe store building has pieces falling off of it, and other buildings. We addressed that at the Council, and there's nothing we can do for 90 days. We can't even give them a ticket.

We need money to help the owners of these buildings. Many can't afford it, or they'd have to...they need some help in this initiative to help revamp downtown in that way, or tear them down.

(side conversations asking questions about the DREAM initiative and speculating on what other groups might say.)

The aquatic center is a tourist draw. Some people think that it's costing us an arm and a leg, but it's bringing people in.

I think it's wonderful.

And people were skeptical about it.

The one thing, overall, Trenton is an agricultural center, and we have no farm implement dealers close by. If I want a good deal on a tractor, I go to Clinton. If a farmer wants something, he'll go to Moore's, but he can't buy new equipment there. Orscheln's has a lot of support, but they don't have good, solid implements. So you have to go to Bethany, Chillicothe.

Moderator: I just have a couple other questions. The city's been working on a plan, and the three major components are a performing arts center, the museum district, and traffic changes. What is your highest priority?

Traffic and the arts center.

Maybe if you build the roads first and then put the stuff around.

If we could get all the vacant building tore down, clean it up...clean up the town first. I think we need to clean it up, get rid of anything that's bad.

I like to restore buildings, but I think we're past that with a good many buildings that are downtown. It's too bad we let it go that far. Perhaps some new structures could feature some of the qualities of the old structures.

The College has an enormously hard decision to make when they go in to revitalize their old buildings. Do you modify? It's cheaper to tear that down and start with a brand new building, but people want to keep the old building, so they fix up the old building but it's never right and it's more expensive. We saw that with our high school.

We can tear down these buildings, but if they build ones back, they should build it back to look like old buildings.

That's part of the plan, is to look like an old town.

Down in New Orleans, down in the French Quarter, they're rebuilding them back just like they were.

(many people talking at once.)

New Orleans is doing that. If we clean up the town, and someone wants to put in a new building, they can use the same front.

No matter what you do to downtown, the mode of living in this century is different than before. You have a lot of offices and businesses downtown, more so than retail. Our mindset is that we have to park right in front of the building, but we'll go to Wal-Mart and park half a mile away...

Moderator: I just have one more question. Thinking about other downtowns, which would you like Trenton to resemble?

Clinton, Missouri is nice. New storefronts, brick sidewalks, new lighting.

We already have the sidewalks and the lights, but we have these old dilapidated buildings.

I just went to Arkansas last week, to Fayetteville, and they're doing a downtown revitalization effort, and they're going green by 2025. They have a college that's directly downtown. They do have a 70,000 seating capacity for football for the college. It's a booming economy. I told the Council that Trenton parallels it a lot. They've got parks and walking trails. But Trenton lacks the Wal-Mart money or the Tyson money. Several of their campus buildings were paid for by Wal-Mart or Tyson. Trenton could be similar to Fayetteville, though.

If we just get University of Missouri to move up here...

(laughter.)

Old buildings and street cafes and buildings.

Little Rock has a wonderful trolley. Wouldn't that be a neat draw? I know they're expensive, but it's really nice.

Fort Smith has the same thing.

If there was something that you wanted to go to, it would be nice.

Moderator: Any other downtowns?

Huntsville, Alabama.

Parkville, Westin.

Yeah.

There are a lot of people who work in Kansas City who live in those bedroom areas.

Moderator: That's all I have. Thank you.

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SECTION VI

STUDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Instead of meeting, this focus group filled out written responses to questions. The following is a summary of key points from the surveys given to students in Trenton.

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

The students described the town as a small, old town with historical buildings and the college. Some students suggested that Trenton is “boring” and does not provide much entertainment or shopping opportunities for them and other people their age.

When asked what direction the town is moving in, the students were split in their responses. Many answered with a definitive “wrong direction,” many answered with “right direction,” and a few felt that Trenton isn’t moving at all. Those who felt that Trenton is moving in the wrong direction cited a lack of entertainment opportunities for students, the old buildings in disrepair, and a lack of “energy and life.” Those who felt that Trenton is moving in the right direction mentioned the renovations of the College and the courthouse, the influx of small businesses, the renovations downtown, and the historic architecture.

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

The survey participants mentioned Pamida, Hy-Vee, Orscheln’s Farm & Home Supply, and Easter’s as the main places they shop in town. Many stated that they go to Chillicothe for much of their shopping, for Wal-Mart or some of Chillicothe’s other options. A few wrote that they go as far as Kansas City or St. Joseph for some of their shopping.

The students felt that, while Trenton stores cover their most basic needs, they have to go out of town for a quality clothing and shoe selection.

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

The respondents mentioned a number of restaurants, including fast food chains, El Nopal, and Washington Street. They also mentioned the movie theater, golf, and live theater as three entertainment options in town. Some explained that they go out of town for some of their entertainment.

Overall, the students felt that the selection in dining and entertainment is extremely limited for them, and they would like more options in Trenton.

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

The students mentioned many recreational activities, including fishing, basketball, baseball, softball, football, volleyball, swimming, the walking track, golf, the skate park, and other parks. They also mentioned activities at the Ketcham Center on campus.

What are the major reasons you visit downtown? How often do you visit downtown Trenton? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?

Most of the students responded that they do not visit downtown often or at all, except for occasional service such as fast food restaurants, the post office, the barbershop, paying bills, or a particular store downtown. Many students said that they pass through downtown on their way to class and they take classes at the College downtown, but they do not stop to use any of the businesses. A few students, though, stated that they eat or shop downtown everyday or almost everyday.

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

The students felt that downtown is user-friendly. They suggested that parking is usually easy to find but sometimes a little "tight," and they felt business hours to be convenient. They were split on the issue of Main Street being a two-way street. They also explained that traffic and navigation can be "confusing" and difficult.

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

The students cited the following as ways they get information about downtown: the radio, the newspaper, flyers as the community center, word of mouth, and signs downtown as they pass through.

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

The groups made the following suggestions for additions to downtown: a bowling alley, upscale restaurants, a skate rink, a juice bar, a bar and grill, a night club, a few more bars, a wider variety of restaurants, mini golf, a bigger movie theater, and generally more retail. They focused on businesses that would attract and retain the younger generation in Trenton.

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

The students felt that building repairs and renovations, landscaping, green space, and streets and sidewalks are all priorities for downtown Trenton. They felt that parking is a lesser priority, but still should be addressed.

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

Overwhelmingly, the students felt that traffic changes are the highest priorities for the City in improving downtown. However, a significant minority chose the performing arts center and the museum district as priorities.

What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most like Trenton to resemble?

Some students named other downtowns. Most named either St. Joseph or Chillicothe. A few suggested Kansas City, Warrensburg, and Kirksville as inspirations for Trenton's downtown. Other students explained that Trenton should try to create its own unique look and feel, and not mimic other cities' downtowns.