

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CITY OF MARYVILLE, MISSOURI

June 13, 2008



D·R·E·A·M
I N I T I A T I V E

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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



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SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted five focus groups in Maryville, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Maryville community in regard to the downtown area. The five groups included the following: 1) the Campaign for Community Renewal, 2) administration, elected officials, and government directors, 3) downtown business owners, 4) long-time residents, and 5) new residents.

Participants of all five groups are from a variety of backgrounds.

This report summarizes the responses of the members of all of the groups to the posed questions. Attached are the complete transcripts of the five meetings. In all cases, names and other identifying remarks have been omitted.

A. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE BUSINESS GROUP:

The following questions were posed to the business group:

General Questions about Maryville

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 Maryville is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property downtown (or not in downtown, for other business owners)?
06. From what you hear from your customers, how "user-friendly" is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for? 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 Maryville?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

08. As you know, the city is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Maryville. We'd like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...

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

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

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

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

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

12. Would you be willing to support a "special business district" in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for downtown?

B. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE GENERAL GROUPS:

The following questions were posed to the general groups:

General Questions about Maryville

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 Maryville?

Downtown Specific Questions

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

07. How “user-friendly” is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for? 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 Maryville. We’d like to ask you what direction you would like the downtown to take in a few different areas over the next few years. What...

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

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

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

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

12. What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* Maryville to resemble?

C. THE MARYVILLE 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 Maryville as a friendly small town of about 10,000 residents with a good education system, good medical care, a large amount of industry, and a low unemployment rate. In addition that that, Maryville is the home of Northwest Missouri State University, which makes it a 9-month home to approximately 6,000 college students. Maryville is also home to the Nodaway County Courthouse.

Many participants also described Maryville as a “central hub” for Northwest Missouri and Southern Iowa. The town sits between Kansas City, Omaha, and Des Moines, and is within a short drive of all three of these cities. Many people from surrounding smaller towns come to Maryville for employment at major companies such as Kawasaki and Eveready, and they come to shop at the large chain stores such as Wal-Mart on the south side of Maryville.

The participants felt that within the last few years, Maryville has moved slowly in the right direction, but still has a long way to go in achieving change. On the negative side, within the last 10 to 15 years, the participants have seen businesses move away from downtown to the south side of town. On the positive side, a divided highway has been built from Maryville down to St. Joseph, Missouri, which makes access to and from Maryville easier. In regard to downtown development, the City has put a renewal plan in place and has worked through one phase of improving the infrastructure and aesthetics of downtown. In addition, the groups felt satisfied that the current City administration is a cooperative group that welcomes change.

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 Maryville is the South Strip, which has a Wal-Mart, a Hy-Vee, a J.C. Penney, and other chain stores. People come from neighboring towns to visit the South Strip and shop at Wal-Mart. A few participants mentioned purchasing a gift item or two downtown, but it is not a major shopping area.

Most residents and college students in Maryville do much of their shopping outside of Maryville, in St. Joseph or even in Kansas City. The groups mentioned choice as a major factor in why they leave Maryville to shop. While Maryville has many necessities, particularly at Wal-Mart, if the residents want higher-end goods or more choice in what they buy, they must seek that choice outside Maryville. In particular, many participants mentioned shopping for clothes, shoes, craft items, fabrics, and some home-improvement items outside Maryville.

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? What kinds of opportunities are there to participate in recreation activities in Maryville?

There are a few independent downtown restaurants, and fast food and chain restaurants by the Wal-Mart on the South Strip. There are also a number of bars downtown that are popular late at night with the college students. While there are dining options in town, many participants said that they take out-of-town visitors to St. Joseph or to other small towns nearby for a variety of dining options.

For entertainment, Maryville has bars and restaurants, a movie theater downtown, and a new live community theater company with a permanent downtown location. Entertainment associated with the University is also very popular, including sporting events, University-sponsored lectures and cultural events, and other related opportunities.

For outdoor recreation, Maryville has a number of options. Mozingo Lake offers camping, fishing, and other outdoor events, and many people take advantage of these options. In addition, there is a golf course that people from Northwest Missouri and Iowa visit. These recreation options sometimes get visitors from as far as Minnesota.

D. DOWNTOWN MARYVILLE: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

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

The groups felt that downtown Maryville is moving slowly in the right direction in infrastructure and aesthetics, but is not moving quickly enough in attracting new businesses, repairing buildings, and improving the perception of downtown.

The biggest reason, according to the participants, that downtown Maryville is moving in the right direction is the redevelopment plan that the City has put together to improve downtown. On one side of the courthouse, the City has improved streets and sidewalks, installed lighting, and created green space. In addition, on that side of the courthouse, the City has repaired storm sewers and worked on much of the underlying infrastructure. The participants felt that this is quite an improvement, and look forward to seeing similar aesthetic and infrastructure improvements on all parts of the Downtown Square.

The groups felt that downtown is not moving yet in the right direction in attracting new businesses, repairing buildings, dealing with absentee landlords, and enforcing building codes. Absentee landlords and absentee building owners are a problem because they allow their buildings to deteriorate. Even tenants who want to improve their spaces cannot make improvements because they are not owners. Dilapidated buildings downtown make it hard to attract new business.

Building codes are an issue that divided some participants. Many felt that building codes should be strictly enforced, while others felt that, while codes should be enforced, they should also be flexible enough to make it easy for new businesses to make improvements. These participants, especially business owners, feared that if building codes are enforced too strictly, they could be cost-prohibitive and drive new business away. The discussion of building codes came up in all focus groups, though, and is an issue that might be further explored.

Another issue some groups brought up in attracting new business is the issue of housing. Because there is a low unemployment rate in the area, new businesses have trouble staffing their companies with qualified employees. The participants felt that if there were more affordable, attractive housing in Maryville, more people would be willing to move in, and therefore companies would have a workforce in Maryville.

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

The groups expressed that the major reasons residents visit downtown are for services such as the courthouse, attorneys, the post office, and the bank. In addition, many people frequent Carson's, a bar and restaurant downtown, and A&G, a fine dining restaurant downtown. College students go downtown at night, primarily to visit the bars.

Residents used to shop downtown at a variety of stores, particularly clothing stores. There used to be a number of shopping and dining options downtown that are no longer there, and the groups feel that the current number of vacancies and the current aesthetic make it hard to draw the community into downtown.

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

The participants had more minor concerns about parking and more significant concerns about business hours, signage, and pedestrian accessibility.

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 in the Square. Participants explained that many people do not know about the available parking lots. In addition, they noted that business owners, business employees, and courthouse employees sometimes take up spots in front of others' stores. 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 more than a block away.

The groups also suggested that signage would help educate people about the location of available parking lots. They also felt that signage would help people more easily navigate downtown, finding various businesses, streets, the University, etc. Specifically, the groups were concerned about the signage on businesses, claiming that ordinances should keep the signs tasteful while still making it financially feasible for businesses and highly visible from the road.

The business hours in the Square, according to the participants, are problematic, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Many of the retail businesses are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it impossible for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to visit these businesses. While those who work downtown are there over their lunch hour, those who do not work downtown do not get the opportunity to visit anything but the restaurants downtown. Saturdays are another problem, since many in the community often have free time to shop on Saturdays and many shops are closed. The problem is compounded by the fact that the chain stores on the south side of town are open in the evenings and on weekends.

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 newsletter, and word-of-mouth as the major ways they get information about downtown business and events. They felt that an overhaul of the Chamber website, which is underway, will help people, particularly students, stay abreast of downtown events and happenings.

E. DOWNTOWN MARYVILLE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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

The participants suggested a variety of new businesses downtown, focusing on a mix of niche shops and restaurants rather than larger chains. They suggested clothing stores and a shoe store, a grocery store, a farmers market, a pharmacy, a bakery, an inexpensive breakfast place, and additional restaurants of many types. In other types of businesses, they suggested art galleries, art stores, a bookstore, and craft supply stores. They also focused on adding nice, affordable residential spaces downtown, to improve aesthetics and housing options in Maryville.

They felt that the downtown's purpose is not to compete with Wal-Mart, J.C. Penney, and the other large chains, but to offer a unique experience to customers. For this, many in the groups felt that incentives should be explored for loans, grants, and other possible funding for businesses that own their buildings, to help draw businesses downtown. In addition, many felt that improvements in building repair, code enforcement, overall aesthetics, as well as a centralized resource for people to come to when thinking about opening a business in Maryville, would all help draw more business downtown.

Many participants agreed that a few people cooperating could start to create change. The downtown business owners suggested forming a downtown business group, to serve as a resource for those interested in moving their businesses downtown and to serve as a catalyst to change the public attitude about downtown. Some participants felt that even cleaning up one building at a time makes a significant difference, since the building owners in the immediate vicinity may be inspired to fix up their buildings.

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

The participants all expressed that they are pleased with the improvements downtown so far, on one side of the courthouse—they are happy with the street repairs, sidewalks, and lighting so far that have been installed as part of that project. They suggested that beautification be a priority, both on the fronts of the buildings and at the back, to encourage people to feel safe and welcome downtown. The beautification efforts, according to the participants, should focus on giving the downtown area a cohesive look and feel, centered on the historic, "quaint" aesthetic of the courthouse.

The groups felt that the new green space by the courthouse is aesthetically pleasing and convenient, and think that small green spaces like that would be a welcome addition. Some participants suggested that planter boxes in front of businesses would also give the downtown a lively and welcoming feel. Some participants mentioned murals on buildings, sidewalk chalking festivals, and other ways to bring an artsy aesthetic downtown.

Most importantly, the groups felt that building repair, sidewalks, streets, lighting, and cleanup are essential in giving downtown a cohesive aesthetic. Building repair would attract businesses and make the downtown feel vibrant. Sidewalks would make it easier for students to walk from the college to downtown and lighting would make people feel safer at night. One of the other problems, trash generated by college students after the bars close, could be taken care of by more aggressive cleanup by individual business owners, but also, if the downtown area looked nicer overall, participants felt that college students would be less likely to leave trash around.

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

The highest priorities, according to the focus groups, should be building repair, attracting new businesses, dealing with neglectful and absentee building owners, aesthetics, and infrastructure.

According to participants, new businesses would bring residents downtown, and improvements to buildings would help bring these businesses in. Infrastructure changes like storm sewers would help avert disaster to the downtown area and keep the area beautiful. In aesthetics, the priorities were façade repair for the unrepaired buildings, sidewalks and lighting, and greenery and flowers. In attracting business, retail stores, restaurants, and residential space were all priorities. In improving user-friendliness, convenience of business hours was the major issue.

General Public: What other downtowns in the area would you say Maryville is most like? What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* it to resemble?

The groups named the following small towns as towns they admire for various reasons. They focused mostly on nearby towns with similar populations, but included some larger areas: Westin, Missouri; St. Joseph, Missouri; Savannah, Missouri; Clarinda, Iowa; Parkville, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; the Plaza and the Crossroads Arts District in Kansas City, Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; Atchison, Missouri; and Liberty, Missouri.

In all these cities, the participants admired one of two things: the "quaint" and cohesive look and feel or the businesses making the city into a "destination." In many cities, they admired both of these elements.

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 building repair, building codes, attracting new businesses, and improving sidewalks should be of the highest priority.

Business Owners: Would you be willing to support a “special business district” in which an additional sales tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for downtown?

The business owners indicated that they might support such a tax, especially since other taxes in Maryville are low. They were cautiously in favor of trying to create a special business district, provided that there is a logical rationale behind who has the additional sales tax. Questions arose such as: should an attorney’s office or the courthouse be subject to these taxes?

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Maryville area:

- ◆ Maryville is a family-friendly community with a good education system, good healthcare, Northwest Missouri State University, and a good community spirit.
- ◆ The South Strip of Maryville, with the Wal-Mart store and other chains, is a hub for many smaller surrounding towns for shopping.
- ◆ Maryville, according to community members, is moving slowly in the right direction but still has many improvements to make.
- ◆ The main shopping area in Maryville is the South Strip, with chain stores such as Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee.
- ◆ Maryville residents do much of their shopping in St. Joseph or Kansas City; while Maryville has most necessities; residents have to go to other communities for choices in their shopping.
- ◆ Dining options in Maryville include one fine dining restaurant, some casual dining and chain restaurants, fast food, and many bars.
- ◆ The community feels that a wider variety of restaurants downtown and longer business hours would be convenient.
- ◆ Recreation and entertainment options in Maryville include the movie theater downtown, a small theater company downtown, University sporting events and other events, and Mozingo Lakes with all of its outdoor recreation opportunities.

Key points about downtown Maryville in the present:

- ◆ The community agrees that downtown Maryville is moving slowly in the right direction—the street repairs, the addition of streetlights and sidewalks to one side of the courthouse, and a more progressive City government as steps in the right direction.
- ◆ The community, according to the participants, visits downtown for the courthouse, services such as attorneys and the post office, the restaurants, and the bars.

- ◆ More people would visit downtown more often, according to the groups, if business hours were more convenient, signage were clearer, parking were easier to identify, buildings were more attractive, and there were more businesses downtown.
- ◆ There is a “perceived parking problem”; the community feels that parking is hard to find in the Square, which deters them from patronizing downtown businesses. The participants felt that signage to the ample parking would help people find places to park, and more businesses would make the walk from car to store more interesting.
- ◆ Improved signage would also help with navigation and advertising.
- ◆ Downtown business hours are inconvenient for people whose jobs have regular weekday hours—expanded store hours during the evenings and on Saturdays would be a welcome change.
- ◆ Expanded restaurant hours, would be a welcome improvement, including a place that serves breakfast and coffee.
- ◆ Local residents get information about downtown from the radio, the newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, and word-of-mouth; the City is working to improve the Chamber website so that college students have easier access to advertising and event announcements.

Key points about the future of downtown Maryville:

- ◆ Downtown Maryville should focus on a mix of businesses including independently-owned specialty shops and restaurants rather than large chains; the participants felt that downtown’s purpose is not to compete with large chains, but to offer a unique experience to customers.
- ◆ Clothing stores, a grocery store, a farmers market, a breakfast place, additional restaurants, art galleries and stores, a bookstore, and any other specialty store would be welcome downtown.
- ◆ Adding affordable but nice residential space downtown would also be of help in cleaning up downtown’s image and bringing in a workforce for potential businesses.
- ◆ Small business should be encouraged, and there should be incentives for business and building owners, as well as access to knowledge about loans, grants, and other possible funding for business.
- ◆ More green space and flower pots, artwork (possibly murals or sidewalk art), and continued façade repair would help beautify downtown.
- ◆ Repairing buildings, creating sidewalks, installing lighting, enforcing building codes, and dealing with absentee building owners and landlords should be high priorities.

- ◆ The City should aim for a cohesive “quaint” aesthetic that matches the look of the courthouse and should consider extending that aesthetic all the way down the Main Street corridor.
- ◆ Signage on parking, more convenient business hours, and sidewalks are priorities in improving user-friendliness downtown.
- ◆ In additions to downtown, retail businesses, restaurants, and residential space should be priorities.
- ◆ Maryville can learn from a number of cities, small and large, about ways to improve the downtown area; the participants focused on downtowns that have a cohesive look and feel and downtowns that serve as a “destination.”
- ◆ Business owners felt that all downtown improvements would help their businesses, but building repair, building codes, and sidewalks should be priorities.
- ◆ Business owners were cautiously in favor of trying to create a special business district with increased sales tax, provided that there is a clear rationale behind who does and does not have this tax.

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SECTION II

CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY RENEWAL TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *If you had to describe this area to someone from out of town, how would you describe it?*

Rural. Rural area, but we're just 100 miles from Kansas City and Omaha.

I think we're very fortunate to have excellent healthcare, education. Business and agriculture. It's unusual for such a small town to have that.

We do have our aquatic center, with a pretty good pool. And we have lake recreation nearby. And they have cabins, and an RV park. Picnics. There's a little beach area where you can lay out while your kids swim. There are recreational opportunities.

Rural was also the first word that popped into my mind, but it needs to be balanced with the University here and all the diversity that the University brings, to contrast the rural. It's a nice balance, but there's also a power pull from that. Being a transplant to Maryville, as I'm being reminded constantly, the biggest frustration I feel is the lack of retail and...there is entertainment, if you're looking for it, but there isn't a lot of spontaneous entertainment. There's really only one thing going on. Not a real broad base to choose from.

Moderator: *What are the main shopping areas?*

Most of the retail is south, on the south end of town.

I think one of the things that was here when I first came to Maryville 50 years ago as a student, there was a whole culture in the downtown area that's not here today. It was very cohesive. It was kind of a good ol' boy club, but there was a unity. In 1905, they raised \$78,000 to bring the University here. It's a tremendous story how they recruited it here. There was a unity, and I don't sense that here as much as before.

It depends on what kind of retail you're asking about. What I would call commodity shopping versus recreational. As far as recreational, we have very little. I can't imagine anyone driving into Maryville. When my mother comes, she looks for little shops, and there aren't any. For commodities, we have the Super Wal-Mart, and even they have reduced their selection since their remodel. I find I have to go to St. Joe and Kansas City for a lot of my business supplies. There isn't an option for me to shop here. It's becoming more difficult.

There's been a conversion downtown from traditional retail to more service-oriented retail, financial and legal services, that sort of thing. I think we're experiencing a little bit of an inner-city decay. The new investment is on the perimeter, and the inner city core isn't receiving much of that. There's some, but primarily, a lot of the re-investment has been on peripheral areas, and we're seeing some of that ripple effect. Not that it can't be reversed as a trend, but it's something we need to identify and attack. I think that's what we need to counteract.

About getting that unity, and the renewal effort...about 20, 25 years ago, I went to a little town and they were having a tour of older houses. They drove us to houses, and we toured, and we looked at that town and we asked, "Is this the only thing they have in this town?" That town was Westin. They have little bitty shops, and a lot of that. There's restaurants... that's something I'd like, some of these niche shops that Westin has successfully done. Maybe we need to talk to them. When I first saw it, I thought no one would come back there. But they've done it. And over here in Atchison...if we could get this cohesiveness, joint ventures... and we've got to get little shops. I think Westin has got it right.

Moderator: *What would you say are popular dining and entertainment options in the Maryville area?*

Our restaurant here downtown, A & G, just went through a fire and rebuilt. They have Greek night on Fridays, and you see a lot of people from out of town that come in for that activity. It's just a very festive atmosphere. It's a destination point.

We have a Greek restaurant run by a Greek, an Italian restaurant run by an Italian, same with Mexican and Chinese. It's unusual for a town this size to have that variety. Maybe if it was more of a, like the Greek night, we have the Mexican night, or... the other thing I think is we've really captured...we don't have the atmosphere of an old river town, but we do have the Convent and the Abbey. It could be a unique experience for people coming in for the weekend. They're beautiful. 1872.

A lot of the draw is University-related, either graduation or academic-related events, homecoming, the big venue draws, cultural events...that's typically what brings people to town, and then they have these options, and the whole array of fast food, Applebee's...

One thing that we tend to forget when we talk about the University is during the summer, they use the campus for high school camps. And those kids don't drive. Their parents drive and drop them off, then come back at the end of the week. And we don't capitalize on that. _____ was saying that they have an influx of people coming through, and they'd go through his store, and they'd ask for other stores. And well, that's it. It's unusual that we don't have that.

This town has an awful lot of variety that similar towns don't have.

Economic diversity.

Yeah. But what you mentioned earlier is we're kind of cliquish... we don't see the resources, and the cultures... it's more a cultural issue. Getting the culture to work together.

I have realized that the restaurant thing you mentioned, that these places are run by people of that nationality, would lend itself to an international food fair, for a community weekend or event.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: *Let me ask you about downtown. Would you say it's moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

It would be good if it could just move.

There's a lot of work going on to keep it as good as it is. It's keeping focus on the fact that we need to not give up.

There's been a sizeable reinvestment in it, and the message is being sent, that it's valuable, it's important, to retain and rebuild, but the proof's in the pudding. We're at the initial stages. Foundation's been laid, now we've got to build on it.

(many people talking at once, laughing.)

In the past, people felt that downtown was dirty, sleazy, and my wife's in real estate, and she's had a couple experiences where people wanted to move here when they retired, and they went downtown and looked at it, and actually phoned her up and said, "we're not going to live in a town that looks like this." I think the aesthetic part is being corrected, and the next thing is how are we going to, like you say, maybe the retail or...let's get it moving now. So, the aesthetic part is, we're trying to get that corrected, so that when some retailer comes and looks at downtown, they say, "This is nice. Maybe I would like to have a place here." They may go south of town, okay, but they might take on the Square, too, maybe.

It goes back to that lack of unity, in talking to folks to support the downtown revitalization. People say, "Why should I help them? What are they doing to help themselves?" It's that not seeing that if people come in my front door, I should try to be sure these other front doors look nice too. That unity thing. How can we bring people together for the dream? And this cultural thing, I know a couple years ago, in the county working with some of the communities, and I'll never forget—we were talking about what we might be able to do for the future, and this one gentleman said, "We're not good enough for that." And, I mean, just like a sledgehammer down... "We're not good enough for that." I wonder how much of that may be there... we have to bring people out of that. I mean, if you perceive that you're not good enough.

Moderator: *What are the main reasons that people go downtown now, as things stand?*

Carson's Bar and Grill. Otherwise, the courthouse, business to be done.

Professional services of various types.

There's two flower shops in downtown. Of course, Hy-Vee and Wal-Mart also have flowers, but if you need an actual florist you go downtown. And the community theater group has recently purchased what used to be a small art gallery, and they have performances there. Their first production went very well. And they did a Valentine's evening, and a tea for Mother's Day. They're more active now that they have a venue. But Carson's and A & G.

And the other downtown draw...drinking establishments. It is a draw, like it or not.

It's primarily students.

(laughter.)

Low-end bars. Not high-end adult bars.

When this whole revitalization got started, a couple law-enforcement officers were really concerned because of the vandalism problems. A couple were very concerned.

Has that happened?

Yes.

The trees are gone.

Again, it gets back to that cultural issue. Is it... something that a city in Canada had a problem in a town very much like Maryville...it just wasn't a safe place to be. Have we defaulted the town to college students at night?

How long has Bernie's and the pubs been there?

They coexisted for a time.

One thing they did do, they started playing classical music in the downtown area...

And it drove the kids out?

(laughter, many people talking at once.)

Pipe them in!

Moderator: What did you used to be able to do downtown that you can't anymore?

Hardware stores.

Clothing stores.

Drugstore.

Scrapbooking store.

Some of those have totally left the community, and some have just relocated to the south. But some are gone entirely.

The movie theater used to be here, and now it's south, and it's a good theater.

It relocated.

And it has a restaurant and bar attached.

Was it ever open at the same time when downtown—(many people talking at once.)

Used to have a skating rink downtown.

And this used to be a bowling alley.

(many people agreeing.)

And recently, we had a Baskin Robbins close. You can't get a real ice cream cone in town.

The general trend is the reinvestment is being done elsewhere than downtown.

It's cheaper to build new than rehab.

If we just assume to let private enterprise take care of it, it won't happen. Reinvestment's going to go...there's no economic reason to come downtown. We're going to have to create that opportunity.

Yeah.

I firmly believe that.

How much is the absentee landowner of downtown...

That's huge. That's one of the major paradigm shifts that we're seeing the results of.

Yeah. Back when the influencers were the downtown folks... my 50-year-ago column will have names in it that had businesses downtown, and they owned their building.

Moderator: Do people live downtown?

Apartments for University students. We see that as an opportunity for possible new looks. We do have a new business coming downtown, and she purchased the only site that was available downtown, and she wants to have a corporate apartment above, catering to corporate individual.

A very prissy person, too.

Yeah.

This is the salon?

Yeah.

Moderator: In terms of using downtown, how user-friendly is it, with respect to parking and navigation?

We used to have 71 highway go directly downtown, and because we had the railroads, all the grain trucks came downtown, and that was not conducive to shopping. But now there's no reason for a truck to come downtown, which helps the pedestrian issue. And as for parking, we have city lots that people can use, and when they go to the Supercenter, they will park farther away from that front door than what they'd ever have to do from one end of downtown for the other. But they always worry about parking. There's no meters.

If you can't park in front of your door...

I've heard that as a complaint from retailers, and I never have a problem finding parking, which is nice for me at that moment, but in the big picture, it's very sad. In Atchison and Westin, you have to park several blocks away, but it doesn't bother me. I'm going there for entertainment and as a destination, and I don't mind parking. If you park in downtown Kansas City, you're blocks away. That doesn't bother me. It's all mindset.

When we come downtown, we have one thing to do. In Westin, you have all this opportunity.

It's very pedestrian-friendly and entertaining. I like to walk by all the windows. Everyone has flowers out front, and they're all different.

Your point's well taken. The purpose that you're there is to meander, and here you come to a spot. It's a different mindset.

There aren't really signs. It's easy to get around downtown, but to find a specific location, I don't think so.

No, the signs tell people to go around downtown. There are sounds that don't take people downtown.

I don't think that we've ever thought of downtown as downtown. Once we got all the light fixtures, this is a historic area. But at this point, if somebody's going there, they have an address.

You can figure it out. It's not that big a place.

In trying to get the culture changed, can one storeowner change it, or do you have to have 4 or 5 working together to change the retail image downtown? Can one unique store attract enough people to keep it going?

_____ did it for Atchison. She is recognized as a one-woman economic machine. She has that personality, vision, drive. Her store was called Gourmet Corner, and it was small, but now she's a three-store mega-machine. All of the downtown area has grown based on that. That's the only one I've ever known of where it happened with one store. Westin has a program with a very active downtown commerce group, and they meet at 5:30 once a month, and they rotate whose business they meet at, and they have wine and cheese together, and they have an agreement with the vendors that shops won't duplicate, and they all support each other and send each other to each other's businesses. It's fairly unique. They see each other as good competition.

Somebody mentioned benchmarking that community, and I think that's a good idea.

Do you think you can get the retailers?

I only think we need one to start, and we'll go down that path. But the idea is to help take it to the next level.

There was a lady that had a store here downtown, and she moved. She took the same philosophy to Shenandoah, and I don't know about Westin, but one person got things moving in Shenandoah.

Moderator: What about business hours? Are they convenient?

Okay... I know that I come with a Kansas City mentality, but when you come down at 2:00 on Saturday and everything is closed... the paint store I prefer close at noon on Saturday, because they're geared toward contractors, but if I just got out of the kids' soccer game, and I want to pick up paint... and the flower store, it was my daughter's graduation, and I wanted to pick up flowers, and I was trying to read the sign with the hours, and a woman was washing the window, and she opened the door and asked if I was with a certain wedding party, and I told her no, and she said, "Oh well we're closed, I'm just waiting for this wedding to pick up flowers." I wanted to give her cash, and she said no, and I had no choice than to go to Wal-Mart, and I've gone there ever since. I can understand a shop owner doesn't want to be there all the time, but at the same time...

I had the same type of experience with the coffee shop that used to be down here. We used to have two of them. They closed at 2:00 on a Saturday, and I was there at 1:30, and they had the doors closed. This college girl was inside, and I knocked, and she said, "Well, we're closed." I told her "It says you close at 2:00," and she said, "I have a date and I have to get out of here." As you were saying, I was there with money. The owner wasn't there, and the hired help didn't give a diddly, but she was closing up early because she was going on a date, and she was not willing to sell me coffee. I've never gone back there. It was interesting that, here was...in fact, there was two of us that was there. It was that kind of mentality...and it must have been several other people, but here's a customer...

What this tells me is that there's tremendous potential for someone to show a little customer service and exceed your expectations.

(agreement from others.)

Service is almost nonexistent, and it looks to me like this would be a great opportunity for somebody with a little pizzazz to come in and knock the socks off...

And 9 to 5, for us working folks, doesn't always do it. There are some folks that have different hours. How do you expect people to get off work and come? I get blank looks when I ask that.

When I had my store downtown, I stayed open until 5:30, and some Fridays I stayed open until midnight.

(laughter.)

You would be surprised. The reason I stayed open until 5:30 is for people getting off work. On the weekends, we stayed open until 5:00 on Saturdays. It was worth it.

I always said, move back your hours by an hour. 9 to 10 is probably slow. Move it to 10 to 6 to accommodate. Or, open late one night of the week.

To answer your question, no they're not accessible.

(laughter.)

But if you take inventory of the unique shops we had downtown, but when you went, they weren't open. It would be business hours, and the doors would be locked and lights are out. Finally, you say "the heck with them." You can't depend on when they're going to be there.

Moderator: How do people in the area get information on what's going on downtown?

Newspaper and radio.

Yeah.

I think they don't advertise enough. We have a bakery here, but I've never seen an ad for it. They don't advertise, and I've seen many stores make it only 6 months, and they never put anything in the newspaper or radio.

(agreement.)

They don't advertise.

We have a sporting goods store, and it just went out of business.

Like I said, how are you going to find out that they're even there...forget about new people coming into town.

If we get businesses into town so often, it's a repeat of something we already have. Like the fourth pizza place, or we have two sports shops and we had a new one come in, and hardware stores...we had three or four, and then another one came in. Why are we always doing the same thing?

(side conversation. Many people talking at once.)

You have to advertise on local radio.

(laughter.)

Somebody mentioned (name unintelligible), and it's interesting. Those of you that have children who are older, they come back, and they've got to have it. Their children live in Des Moines, Tulsa, and they have it there. And those kids say they don't eat it in other cities, and they say, that it's special. I think that tradition has been lost. Like the little hardware store. It was tradition.

(laughter. Many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

...I go back to Westin because I grew up there, and I look forward to it.

Well, you discover something new and different every time you go. It's the sense of discovery and engagement, as opposed to just pushing a shopping cart and fill it.

For antiquing, it was almost more fun to leave town, and part of the fun of it was leaving, and spending a whole day doing it. It's an experience. And that's what we want to develop.

And also capturing something of your childhood. And...

Moderator: Let's spend the rest of the time talking about the future of downtown. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

Non-chain retail... I'd like to see fabric and crafting and anything in that area. We have nothing in town. We used to have a quilt store who actually had buses come in, and we had a scrapbooking store, and Wal-Mart had a department, and when they remodeled they've reduced it. I can't buy a zipper or a spool of thread in town, I have to drive to St. Joe. Yeah, there's the Internet, but you have to plan for that. My husband, as a hobby, does scale modeling, and Wal-Mart quit carrying that stuff. We have to go to St. Joe or Kansas City to get it. There's a lot of knitters, a lot of anything like this. Crafting is making a huge resurgence, and we're not supporting that. We have no gift store beyond Hallmark or what Wal-Mart carries. As far as clothing...

Women's, men, and children's.

It's Wal-Mart and a really tiny Penney's... and we have a warehouse exchange, with is a consignment clothing store which seems to be doing okay. And Castaway's.

There's the thrift shop and Castaway's.

Nacomo is a sheltered workshop, and they've done a great job of reinventing themselves as they lost production contracts. They opened a thrift store, and it's done well. They just opened a second one.

How much cooperation has to exist between the south end and downtown, to revitalize downtown? Do we look at these as two separate centers with separate identities?

I would think that you're talking about two different venues, shopping styles, delivery systems. If they cooperate, great, but they probably don't have to.

Look at little towns like Westin. Those are your little unique shops, independent shops, and your Wal-marts are in a different location.

It's kind of like, can the yachts and the dinghies exist in the same lake? Yeah. It's a different draw.

You mentioned earlier about the culture. That conversation needs to happen to build that supportive culture of each other, and recognize that they're two different things that support each other. As long as we have that conversation, maybe through the Chamber... the Chamber is all of the businesses and you can't show favoritism...maybe there needs to be a downtown subset.

That's a good point. It may remove the threat of competition, knowing that this is a different focus. That cooperation could be established, because we wouldn't be competing. If that threat is removed... some cohesiveness could be generated. But is that absolutely necessary? I don't think so.

Let's not replicate what we already have. Let's bring in a niche that's not already here... I'm amazed that we don't seem to have tapped our 6000 students out there. There was a group that wanted a casual college women's shop downtown... a little shop like that, casual only, for certain sizes for college kids. I don't know where the college students go. This would be within walking distance... they were going to advertise that you could buy something, go to the bar, and pick it up later or the next day.

That's smart.

That was service. The girls go in there and shop, leave it there, and come back and pick it up on the way back to the dorm. I haven't heard anything from them.

_____ that owns the Hangar is smart, and when we were talking about doing outdoor movies on the Square. His first response was, "This is something Maryville should've been doing. Do I see it as competition? If it's entertainment and it's movie-related, I need to be involved. Even though it's perceived competition, I need to be involved. It's good for the community." He was very involved, and they're still willing to do that with us. That's the kind of attitude we need to foster, that it's good for the community, it brings people in from outside, and they spend money in other businesses, so we all support each other. Wal-Mart and Hallmark, that's not destination shopping. But they would recognize that if we create a destination, people might also come to them.

Moderator: What about the look and feel of downtown? Streets and sidewalks?

I'd like to see consistency in the second level. Even if it was a fake front temporarily. Blocking out the windows, I mean...

There's lots of simpler other ways of doing it.

You know, our downtown renewal project, we're working on the streets and sidewalks. And we have a revolving loan fund to get individual merchants to fix the front of their buildings.

Yeah, but it's not happening.

If we could create a really diverse, different from Southside, how many people will drive here for \$3.45 a gallon to drive here?

Go to Applebee's on a Friday night? You won't recognize anyone. They come here to go there.

We drive to Westin, to Atchison, to Parkville for exactly the same thing. Now, Atchison is 1 hour from Kansas City, so it was just enough for women to make it a day trip. We'd drop the kids off, and we could be there by 9:00, and she extended her store hours, opened at 9:00, and there's a line at the register at 1:30 in order to get out by 2:00 and get back to Kansas City to pick the kids up from school. We'd take buses up. It was great. So we're a little bit more removed, but we could draw from Southern Iowa.

I think we can take that beyond...try to figure out, how many times do you go into a retail place and they ask your ZIP code? We could capture that data. Make that part of our marketing to retailers, so people can advertise specifically to locations to bolster their clientele. To me, I see a whole big strategic plan to make this happen. Knowing the market is integral. Where are they coming from, what are we competing with from where they're coming from? What do we need to not replicate? We need to know.

There's an atmosphere in Westin that you just want to be there. I can buy whatever I need in Kansas City, but there's an atmosphere, there's a feeling, an aesthetic, that I just want that experience.

It's the countryside. You're not fighting traffic, not threatened safety-wise.

And it's pedestrian. You park once, and you're exploring. All of your senses are engaged. It's truly an entertainment recreation type of thing, whether you spend a dime or not. You'll have an interesting time.

If we focus on recreating a Westin, and I'm not saying we should do that, but we need to pick a model and build toward that, whatever that may be. That's the stage we're at now. We're going beyond the physical investment.

I think we need to keep in mind always that the University sits right there. There's a huge potential, going someplace that isn't walking up the street to downtown here, and it should be. It seems like we missed that, and we joke about it, and we say they all want to come up and drink...that's not all they want to do. That's not true. Most of their money doesn't go to that.

And their parents come visit.

Yeah. It's beyond just the students.

If you want to see, if you haven't been there, Tuesday nights at 9:00, go to Carson's. This is wings night at Carson's. That place...get there early. It's full of college kids. Karaoke and wings night. They rack up huge bills. It's standing room only. So you're right...it's a captive audience.

And most are under 21. They're up there for entertainment.

Do any of them walk?

Yeah. I see some of them. But more would if they had a reason to.

That ZIP code idea is great. That's why Hoof and Horn moved over to Atchison. Lot of business coming from there, and they've gone there. That's the reason—they had a lot of business from Atchison.

What was that study that the city did four or five years ago, and I thought that's what they were capturing. Something by ZIP code.

Yeah, we have that information.

And it was redone, too.

It has not necessarily been publicly distributed...

They said they weren't going to.

It's interesting that the spots they want to come to, the real estate doubles in price. People will drive in.

There's another foundational thing we need to consider as a community. We've done all the industrial side, and we need to control investment costs for potential new clients. Why shouldn't we do the same thing on the retail side? Why shouldn't we have ownership in some of these properties so that they control the rents, the costs...? To encourage...to make it feasible for people to actually operate a business and actually make a profit. Why doesn't that same model work in retail?

That's an interesting question.

Moderator: *With respect to green space and parks, is there a place for any of that downtown?*

From the standpoint of street recreation, yes. Fairs, festivals, concert series, yeah.

Art. Art on the Square.

Yeah.

There really is a large green space, and if it's properly used...

Yeah. That is definite potential.

The plan for the movies was we were going to drape a white billboard thing that was being ordered on the façade of one of the buildings and use the terrace at the courthouse. As far as visual park, _____ and I drew up plans for a pocket park where there's that empty lot on Main Street, but there's some ownership issues for that lot. I don't know if that'll ever get resolved. But the parks department did agree to develop that into a little pocket park, if the owner ever agreed.

I think the arts idea...there's a place we go in Florida every year. They block off 2 or 3 streets, and they have artist draw in chalk on the street. They have professional artists and regular people, and areas for kids, and it's Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. They're expecting 100,000 people this year. Why don't we draw on the sidewalks by the courthouse? If we do have this Art Fair, that could be part of it. It brings in...it takes a lot of work, but local groups contribute... they furnish the chalk and all, but you have to pay, but it's amazing to look at... we spent hours walking around. They had bands and street vendors... I was very surprised when the Chamber said that 100,000 people were coming to this town of 20,000.

Yeah. There's building insurance concerns. If you want to do that downtown, you've got to come up with the \$1000 to pay the policy. That's what we need to kind of look at. Some kind of not for profit group, and for \$300 or so, they have insurance for the whole year. A lot of people, when we tried to sell movie night, Movie on the Square, they had to come up with \$1000 up front for liability insurance.

And there are all kinds of other places that do it, so it's again that mentality of let's think why we can't do these things, as opposed to the creative problem solving. I mean, there's a couple places in Kansas City where they show movies in the pool, and you float in the pool while watching the movie. Talk about liability! There's ways around that stuff.

Also, agriculture's a big thing in this area. Something that we could do to attract the farming community... thinking countywide, if you live out in the county, you feel like you're part of it. There's a lot of competition, and they say that Maryville gets everything, and if we build a county kind of spirit around it, as a celebration of who we are and where we live, and not a competition. It seems like that would be important. How can we bring agriculture? Maybe a farm show?

And the point about creativity is well taken. We all know community festivals that amount to nothing. But if you develop a tradition...

Or the pumpkin-launching...

The pancake-flipping...

(many people agreeing.)

All this nonsensical stuff is unique. That creativity... we can do that stuff.

If you want to start a county fair, it takes about 5 years before people expect it. Whatever we put in place, we've got to think about short-term endurance to build that tradition.

And don't give up on it after the first year. Don't even evaluate it.

Those are short-term fixes that complement the long-term results.

(agreement.)

I don't know if the city has done a study of the RV camping and the tent camping and cabin camping, how many people come from what radiuses. I haven't seen any program to bring them into town on Friday nights for some kind of activity, maybe even provide a little shuttle. Bring them into town. Maybe, for the movie night...just get them into town, and they may take advantage of other things in town.

But the industry that employs 400, 500 people, maybe some kind of celebration, they automatically bring an audience with them. That's another possibility. But you're right, if you want a particular day next summer for Mozingo, you've got to get on a waiting list. There's a tremendous demand. That's another population we should cater to.

Would you have been golfing here over the weekend? There were people here from Minnesota golfing, playing 36 holes a day. This is their southern trip. The weather in Minnesota is still cold. We think this isn't golfing weather, but for some people, this is spring. Those are marketing opportunities. Get them down here, have a cabin experience, make a package out of it. Drive them into town with something special. Now that they're here, everyone coordinates, and we've got six cabin fulls of golfers...let the merchants know that you bring in your Mozingo stub and get 10% off stuff.

We've got to get their spouses, too. Whoever the golfer is, get their wives in.

If we had the stores. We're looking for destinations, for draws.

If we market it well, maybe the avid golfers will bring more than just golfers with them. If the word spreads, maybe we can give them restaurants, shopping, movies, entertainment, a concert...

You can't golf in the dark, so maybe dinner and a movie at the Hangar.

Or the spouses or children could do something.

Yeah, but the coordination is a big part of this. It's got to be cohesive.

I don't know that we even marketed Mozingo. The Minnesotans kept coming past Des Moines, and stumbled onto it. Now they've had their experience, and they'll be back.

And they'll tell 10 other people.

So if we have their contact information, what can we do to put a better package for you next year? Can we plan something?

_____ did a great job being creative, in that you had some ladies from Iowa who wanted to do an all-nighter, and _____ did the customer service and stayed open.

(many people agreeing at once.)

Moderator: Is there anything else you think we ought to know?

I think we've identified a lot of things that need to be fixed, and that tells me there's tremendous potential here. If we package this thing right, this can be a real opportunity for the benefit for the community.

Something we heard from the trails group, is they built this whole culture of people who want to do the trails, and they all have lunch and dinner together once a week...they built a culture, a network of highly diversified people who want to have this trail grow. 2000 people eat at those restaurants. They walk down the trail on Thursday nights. 2000 people! It's a big tradition with them. It's got to be bound together. Eating together and planning has built a lasting organization, and young people are coming in, and it's growing, it's self-perpetuating.

Have you been to a First Friday in Kansas City? The Crossroads Arts district used to be a derelict area, and starving artists started in, and there were about 3 of them, and they started marketing themselves as a cohesive group even though they were totally unrelated. It's been about 5 years now, and you cannot on a First Friday, the streets are all blocked. You cannot get in there. And not all these people are artsy people... but it is the place to be. 10000s of people. It's huge. There are restaurants, and concerts. And the district has grown. But it all started with just a couple artists who started it. And you look forward to it, especially the one in the spring...they throw open the doors, and there are street vendors. It's family-friendly.

(agreement. Many people talking at once.)

_____ had a showing there, by the University.

Moderator: Thank you.

SECTION III

ADMINISTRATION, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND GOVERNMENT DIRECTORS DISCUSSION

Moderator: *If you were describing this area to somebody from out of town, what would you tell them?*

I'd start off with something focused on the quality of life. High quality of life. Away from the urban hustle and bustle. Good place to raise kids.

Traffic jam is 5 minutes to get from Kawasaki to downtown.

Accessibility. You're accessible to everything within the community, but you have good access to outside also. You have strong neighborhoods and strong relationships. The same people you work with, you'll see in the grocery store and church.

I'll take that a little further, with the University and the diversity that brings. Good diversity, good healthcare, good recreation.

Lot of people with agricultural backgrounds, which leads to a good work force.

We're the economic hub for all of Northwest Missouri. Strategically located between Des Moines, Omaha, and Kansas City, affords it some opportunities that other towns might not have.

We have a strong education system here from K up through...and private schools, and the University. A lot of educational opportunities, and recreational opportunities. Mozingo Lake, camping, fishing, golf, lots of hunting areas.

From an economic perspective, it's very balanced. We have industry, education, healthcare. We have a strong industrial base, and we're balanced. We're a draw for employment, education, and healthcare.

And the regional airport is also a draw.

Moderator: *Is Maryville moving in the right or wrong direction?*

I see you a good mix of community working together, leaders working together, on a similar vision, and it seems like a really good core group of people, and it looks positive.

We move at a much slower pace than a metropolitan area.

There are benefits to that.

In some ways, I think we have the appearance of being stuck at the present time. On Main Street, some of the empty buildings and lots... Main Street doesn't have the vibrant appearance it had five years ago. But that's just perception rather than reality.

A negative trend is population. We continue to see population loss. Estimates for 06 aren't trending in the right direction.

You could say that regionally.

Yeah.

Nodaway county did grow, but...

Some of that growth is probably outside Maryville.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas?

South Main.

Moderator: Is that a draw for outside the area?

Yes.

Many of the small towns within 20, 30 miles, Maryville's their only retail center. They have to shop here.

And even broader than that, our retailers draw from southwest Iowa.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment options?

Various places.

We try to hit all of them.

We have seen an increase, with an addition of Applebee's. For a while, we were stagnant, but we have added 3 or 4 new restaurants. Now when you go, they're full. It helps pull people to town because of the choices.

Unless you're looking for a sit-down breakfast.

(agreement.)

Things to do are tied to the University and Mazingo Lake. University plays, athletic events...

When we have people come in, they want to eat. They want to go somewhere with a bit of local flavor. They don't want to go to a chain. The name recognition draws from other community, and is important, but if we're trying to highlight the community, they want to go someplace local.

(many people talking at once.)

I think the Hangar is a real positive asset, for entertainment. It's unique, and I take folks there from out of town, and they're kind of shocked that this cool little place is here.

It's a movie theater. It's kind of a destination.

(many people agreeing, side conversations.)

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

I think housing is an issue, as far as...run down properties, a lot of rentals... I think that's a big negative downtown.

The rentals and the retail compete for parking, which does become an issue sometimes.

You've got older buildings that take a lot of money to get utilized... parking to go along with it. Perception about parking is something interesting, though. They'll park farther away at Wal-Mart, and here you're closer to the stores even though it seems far away...

We've made some really good strides in core infrastructure development, with the streetscape project. That only addresses a small piece of it, but that ability to be pedestrian-friendly beyond that core piece of it, and to create a safe environment that's brightly lit and healthy.

Moderator: *Why do people go downtown?*

Entertainment.

(laughter.)

Bars.

A lot of professional services.

The county courthouse.

I come from the cynical side—if you build it they will come, if you build it they will break it.

They will.

(many people talking at once.)

I've heard a negative, there's too many bars and nightlife, and it distracts from a lot of businesses that move out and go south. I've heard that a lot. The mess that is left the next morning along the sidewalks, litter, and stuff, a real turnoff.

_____ mentioned parking, and from the recruitment perspective, parking's a big piece. If you're going to recruit any name in, you've got to have X number of parking spots to show them that they can have. If you've got somebody willing to invest locally, you understand the dynamic...there is a challenge there. Every downtown has that challenge.

Moderator: *Somebody mentioned residential. What kind of rental properties are there?*

It's students.

College students.

There's also some families, though, looking for some inexpensive housing, and sometimes the apartments above the businesses.

Reasonable and affordable. That's the housing concern for the whole area.

I think there's a positive trend coming in more and more, there are neighborhoods and a positive trend looking at how are we close to downtown and the University at the same time.

Moderator: What kind of residential development is that?

Established neighborhoods.

Second-floor and stand-alone.

In the DREAM area, we have apartment complexes, 100-year old homes, not too many new homes, and apartments above...

Moderator: I asked how people use downtown. What did you used to do downtown in the past that you can't anymore?

We had retail.

We had a hallmark.

It switched to professional service instead of...

There was lots of retail.

Men's and ladies' clothing.

Hardware.

Appliances.

Furniture.

(noise, unintelligible)...

Moderator: Where has most of that business gone?

South Main.

Some left entirely.

We got a 4-lane highway that made it easier to get to St. Joe, which made it very easy to drive to St. Joe.

If we could just get the cost of gas up...

(laughter.)

We just need to figure a way to get stuff open on weekends...

There are people that commute into Maryville, and people could buy stuff here. For their daily shopping...

We'll drive 100 miles for a diet Pepsi if that's what we...

Don't you think some of that's availability? We don't have the variety you'd get.

Especially with the University students.

There's a lifestyle that doesn't exist here that caters to that clientele, and a lot of folks leave for the weekend.

The students will drive to St. Joe for Starbucks.

(unintelligible)...unless there was something big...a lot of local students went home...

Unless there's an event, there's a reason to leave Maryville. There's not a reason to stay if there's no event. I don't know how you put that in Maryville...

There's a lot of people from surrounding areas...we're there Saturday...

I think you're going to have that lots of different places.

Grass is always greener in other places. Yeah. We go to St. Joe, St. Joe goes to Kansas City, Kansas City goes to St. Louis, St. Louis goes to Chicago...

I do agree, if there's not some reason to stay...

Moderator: What about the user-friendliness...how user-friendly is downtown?

I'd give it high marks for usability.

(unintelligible mumbling)

There's room for improvement on sidewalks.

If you go past the core and talk about pedestrian access, that's an area that could be improved. And signage in.

I have noticed new signage directing people to the University.

They're trying to create a new route into the University.

Maybe not necessarily streets and sidewalks, but some buildings are older, and may not be accessible to all customers. When someone is locating downtown, they may be fearful that they can't cater to a wide variety of customers...whether it's handicap accessible...but we've taken giant steps to do the sidewalks, and we've got a good plan.

One of the negatives is the truck traffic is still on 46, and you don't get so much of the other traffic.

Along with that, we do get some truck traffic on Main, and we're working on the University to try to teach folks a new route. Truck traffic is tough downtown! But people still make deliveries there.

(agreement.)

Beverage trucks...

(laughter.)

Talking about accessibility, I think streets and sidewalks are a big part. We've made some strides, but there's still some tall curbs and broken-up sidewalks. There's still some room for improvement. There are areas that still haven't been improved.

From a shopowner's perspective, visibility's a challenge. How do make sure you're visible? You'd almost have to be a destination.

Didn't they make that harder with the sign ordinance?

Now, you can have protruding signs, where before that's not the case. The ordinance used to be that you couldn't.

It has to do with how it's lit.

You can't have fluorescent orange, green, and blue hoochie girls flashing.

It's a designated area.

The Sonic sign would not be allow.

Carson's sign, to me, when you lay it flat, unless you know that's a restaurant...

(many people talking at once.)

They had external lighting... the sign ordinance was amended to allow what Carson did.

But the sign ordinance was created to bring some uniformity to downtown for aesthetically pleasing signage, instead of flashing arrows and hoochie girls...

(laughter.)

There could be more consistency in the type of signage, and that was the goal of the ordinance. If you look at a complete downtown renovation, that consistency of look and design would be part of it.

...(unintelligible)...

Moderator: Is there signage that points people to downtown?

No. I don't think there's any directing downtown...Like a business district, that would be key.

Also for city parking, we have all 4 corners, there is parking, so drawing that in with signage so people are aware of it...it might help, and that was one of the things we talked about during our renovation, and unfortunately it didn't reach those areas, but I hope they do. We'd talked about other phases...

When they tear the courthouse down, we could put parking there...

(laughter.)

Moderator: Is parking a particular problem?

During the day. Business hours.

They took care of night, with no parking between 2 AM and 6 AM, so they won't take up those parking spots.

They'll park in front of the little shops, and they're there for 10 hours.

We do struggle here in our area, we've got city offices and a license bureau, and employees need to park, but we're not always cognizant of where we park. With the new building of the courthouse, there will be more parking for employees. So that'll help open that up. But just getting that word out. The storeowners may be parking in front of other people's store, and getting that message out to be respectful...

It would be interesting to know how many people are parked that are employees and how many are customers. I think we'd be very surprised. If we could come up with a parking plan...

Yeah.

Even to that end, though, is the ability to improve the existing city lots. Their maintenance has dropped.

Yeah.

In a way, when _____ talks to people coming through, seeing cars draws people. You take everybody off the Square for a couple days, it's going to look like there's 2 people in town.

It's the same mentality as having a line in your door.

But if you can't find a parking spot, you get frustrated and drive on. I'm one of these idiots who drives around and around until I find a good parking spot.

We had the streets blocked off, and we requested employees park in the parking lots, and there was adequate parking then. That's where they got the belief when they walked and it was empty... nobody comes down here unless it's for a lawyer or the bank.

I can see that point of that block facing the courthouse.

Business that demands parking.

That's probably about the only one, between 4th and 3rd on Market, is the one that requires in and out activity.

Moderator: Do you have an issue with parking enforcement or meters?

No.

We have a couple business owners putting notes on people's cars, but no.

...(unintelligible)...

It's not that it's just that they're taking up a space, but that they're parking in front of their door for the whole 8 hours they're there. That's really the deal. If the spots are taken up, that's bad. It makes it difficult, if you're talking aesthetics and draw, but at the same time, it's the shop owner's responsibility to make that attractive.

It's impossible to enforce a time limit.

(agreement.)

Sometimes it's good to have a sign to remind people...

Moderator: What about business hours? Are they convenient?

Not really.

8 to 5.

Or 9 or 10 to 5.

There's exceptions, but...some are professional services, and some are small shop owners.

Some have specials and open houses and advertise and stay open.

And you have the flipside, which is 10 to 2 at night.

Still producing taxes in the evening, a whole different crowd.

Moderator: Is there a demand for things to stay open later?

Yeah.

There used to be.

We used to have a Thursday night retail night.

We tried to encourage that this Christmas, and we tried to have them stay open, and they weren't willing to do that.

It has to do with critical mass. If you have 3 retailers and they all stay open, and you have 57 shops around the Square...if you had more retail and a block party...that might work.

Moderator: How do people find out about what's going on downtown?

TV, radio, newspaper, Chamber.

Radio ads, print ads. We used to have a banner, but it's getting fixed. We need one of those neon signs on all ends of town.

(laughter.)

Hoochie girls.

Yeah.

(laughter.)

We do have a newcomer program, the Chamber does, so new residents, we set up an appointment and sits down with them and lets them know about opportunities, events, businesses. We try to catch those new people.

Some of it falls on the event coordinator. There's not a consistent...well, there's one avenue, calling the Chamber, but it really has to do with...

Moderator: Is there a Chamber website?

There is. Right now it's not real conducive. We're in the process of rebuilding our website with a calendar of events, and once we have that finished, we plan on marketing that to the community.

I think that's definitely a need.

(agreement.)

A lot of that is just finding that right design and working with the right person to update it.

The county's website is also not up to date.

The city newsletter, I enjoy reading that. I like that.

The City started an email newsletter.

Quarterly?

Every two months.

Yeah.

It's really nice.

(many people talking at once.)

I think everybody has trouble with websites.

Yeah.

That is our goal.

The websites are crucial for your younger demographic. College kids, that's how they get their information. If the Chamber doesn't have a site or it's old, they're pulling up sites from St. Joe and Kansas City.

The new thing going on in other cities is podcasting and YouTube, so people can watch events. I've just had conversations with the local cellphone alerts to do text message alerts. Summer concert series, tonight. That kind of thing.

Moderator: Is there any effort to attract visitors?

Not consistent.

With Mozingo, they used to go to trade shows in Omaha and Kansas City, to push Mozingo.

But as far as marketing to relocate here, there's nothing going on right now.

Well, and even just to create a destination idea. And, back to critical mass, creating a destination idea and creating a style... if you've got the North Shops of St. Joe, they do a consistent message. You create a destination. It takes dollars and a community coming up with that brand as a whole to make that happen.

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

Retail, definitely.

Specialty shops.

Yeah.

We've got the floral shop, but that's about it.

Coffee shop.

A Dollar General or something like that.

Is this Dollar General outside the district?

Yeah.

We've had new thrift stores, but more like your necessity type things. If you're going to attract people to live downtown you have to have that source for them.

There used to be 3 pharmacists downtown.

Just a general store.

Yeah. It may fall under specialty retail.

A place you can get paper towels or a greeting card.

There needs to be variety, diversification in retail, it would be very helpful.

A lot of times, if you think about who utilizes downtown during the day, you've got banks and services, and just to be able to go and have a breakfast and lunch, or a deli type place where you could have lunch...like a café style, that you could conduct little meetings in. If you have people come in town, it's nice to walk up the street.

Get a sandwich.

There isn't really entertainment downtown. They used to be stages at coffee shops. Something removed from the bars, that's a different crowd. Two doors down from me, there's a new little theater group, but it's only open once or twice a month. But something like that.

Could always go to the county commission meetings.

(laughter.)

I would like to see increased accessibility in infrastructure, improvements in sidewalks and signage. I think it's important all the way through the Main Street corridor, even outside the DREAM designated area. If you had easy access to downtown...

And we definitely have the capability of having some events. It's so close to the University that if everything's pedestrian-friendly, they can walk. We can draw a whole variety of youth and townies...more formalized events to pull them in. But then you have the argument of blocking off parking... we do have plans for more events to draw people here.

The infrastructure underneath the sidewalks, that nobody sees, is the important stuff that nobody sees. You're talking about 110 year old valves. If you look at drainage and storm sewers...that comes into a huge cost factor to get things started.

The needs are not on the surface.

That's where you get into trouble with the negative sides of people. People don't understand that much money for what we have...they don't understand the costliness of that infrastructure. The public yells the loudest, "What are you doing with our money?" There's not that understanding on how the city works.

It's very taken for granted.

We have ADA regulation on the Square, and to get that engineered is also very costly. That's one of the obstacles is letting people know where that money's going.

I'm glad that it's happening now and getting it improved, rather than letting the infrastructure fail.

Think about a private property owner, though. If they were to undertake the same things...that's why they don't locate downtown. They go, "Oh my goodness. I've got to do all this to the building before I can open it..."

There are buildings that I'm worried about on my block. You see buildings in small towns that collapse. You see these empty buildings, and what happens when one falls down? We need some kind of programs to make sure these buildings are structurally sound. Nodaway Valley Bank just bought two buildings, and they're knocking them down for parking...doesn't do much for your downtown business locations, but it's better than them falling on somebody.

I do hear of businesses...we have a unique situation where building levels are owned by two different people. If you have absent landlords that are not fixing the roof, and the first floor retailer has a leak...it's a scary situation.

The whole trend in urban renewal...it's not just aesthetics. If we want to see families moving in and people walking around, we have to address housing, whether it's preserving buildings to be safe and pleasing, and blending them with the new, as long as it's safe and not a high cost. You've got to address housing. That speaks to the exact same thing, though. Some areas where housing and businesses are owned by different people.

Moderator: Are there particular kinds of dining or entertainment you'd like to see?

Breakfast.

(many people talking at once.)

People would like to see a farmer's market downtown. We're investigating that. There is a place on South Main that lets them do it, and they've contacted us about the possibility of doing it downtown. Another thing that would be nice is to pick a day of the week, and have them in a street or parking lot. Kind of an entertainment issue to draw people in.

I was at a place a couple months ago, and every Thursday night, they closed off 6 blocks, and it was Palm Springs, and they had a street fair. Musicians and vendors and flea market type stuff.

Columbia did that.

Yeah.

Everyone knows when it's going to be. They pay to be there and play, but it's a huge draw. Every Thursday. It's really eclectic, too. It's not just one thing.

And that's the key. It's not just one business. It has to bring a whole bunch of businesses that bring people downtown. You look at the downtown Trick-or-Treat event, and there's 1000s of people that come downtown. Why can't you capture a quarter of that once a week during the summer.

(side conversations.)

My vision of types of business is to create a critical mass, but you also have to have sidewalks. Have it be 6 or 8 feet wide going down Main Street to the University. Have lighting that goes along with that.

Pedestrian lighting as well as the big streetlights.

So people feel safe, it's well lit, easily accessible to moms and dads and strollers and bikes and skateboards.

We also need restrooms.

I remember, as a kid, they had outside ones at the courthouse.

Moderator: What about green space or parks? What should those play in the future of downtown?

We have one area we'd like to see something done with.

It's at a standstill.

As far as lawn space, right around the courthouse. There's lawn, some green space. And Franklin Park. I can't see having 2 lots dedicated for green space or parks.

The green space, I think it's critical as it relates to downtown, because it gives the illusion of space. It's aesthetics, but it's also inviting. We use the courthouse lawn and the park for events, but it also creates a welcome environment.

There's more people than you realize sit on the benches there. There's...you see people there.

We're not as urban as a Kansas City that it's necessary to the development and the downtown's future. You can go 2 blocks and find grass.

Can I back up? I think that additional signage to bring people to vital places, like library, license bureau, city hall...

Same type of signage...

(agreement.)

We don't have a CVB here, but there's not a good central place for someone to go where there's a kiosk of information. We're looking at kiosks outside of town, but also downtown where they could pick up information.

You almost need something like that. The highway department was trying to clean up the signage last year, because there were so many signs that you couldn't read them at all. It takes away with the getting away from the wires and all that. It takes away from that. That's why we only went to one sign on each block for parking.

If you could consolidate that with 6 or 8 places on one side...

There's probably a perfect balance.

For instance, where you come up here, on Bearcat Boogie, there's 2 big signs. What if there was a nice looking sign that said "Northwest, that way, City Hall, that way."

There's still one here.

Yeah, I worked at the Chamber almost 2 years before I knew there was a sign on one of these buildings. It does have an arrow, but I think having some consistent signage... we need some help with marketing, signage.

Something consistent.

Moderator: *The last question I want to ask you is, thinking about other downtowns, what elements would you like to see in Maryville?*

I actually think that Clarinda does a good job.

Savannah. They have a lot of mixed specialty shops and restaurants.

And they've removed all the tin from their buildings.

It's a process they went through for a few years.

They've created a corridor to it, too. I think it's important.

...(unintelligible)...

Parkville.

Clinton has a good mix.

They have a historic feel, a depot.

Shenandoah, Iowa has a really nice downtown.

Now, what's kind of ironic, these are towns that our retailers pull from because of our Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee. That's what we want our downtowns to look like, but we have to create what will fit us considering the big boxes. Having that happy combination...we need them to pull...we want our cake and eat it too.

We want names. People are drawn to names. If it's a name brand, then people are going to look towards that whether it's...

Starbucks.

Ma's Dress Shop, or Dress Barn.

You know, when you talk about the other communities... I think they had total buy-in by the folks that owned the properties, and I'm not 100% sure that we have total buy-in. We have absentee landlords. The City's talked to them about doing simple things...and they just don't do it. They don't see it as a problem. How do we get...

That community pride.

How do we accomplish that? It may not be so simple as getting a restaurant and a Dress Barn.

We've allowed things to happen that don't complement...

The other piece is that it has to take that direct private investment as well as the public infrastructure investment to make it work. You have to find investors that are willing to put their money in it.

I think we do have a strong sense of community pride, but when it comes to ownership, we have these absentee landlords or someone waiting for free money...I don't know what the answer is to that. A lot of these business owners are involved.

It's the ones that aren't...

Alls it takes are one or two.

Here's an example. My niece has a shop downtown, and she looked at several locations, and she has parallel parking out front. All the issues we talked about, she looked at, and she chose the location knowing the drawbacks. Knowing that her hours are limited because of the stores around her, knowing the parking problems...she liked the style of downtown, she liked the feel of downtown, and she liked the nostalgia. She's not old enough to be nostalgic! But she liked the feel and the potential. When we talk about creating an environment, that's the ideal we look towards. Whether it's the guy who's hanging his sign up as a lawyer, or the one-person shopkeeper...what do they need? How can we help them be successful?

Moderator: Any other comments that we need to know?... Okay, well thank you.

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SECTION IV

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS TRANSCRIPT

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

I think it's a small community, and at the same time, a lot of individuals that rely on others. I'm in a small business, and I rely on Maryville to survive. I enjoy Maryville, and I don't think you'll find a lot of people my age who will say that except at the University. I like the small town atmosphere. I'm in a situation where I'm in a small business where I hope to be my own initiative. What I hope is to probably end up owning that business with my family. I really enjoy Maryville. It's a loving community. I think it's safe to raise a family. I was raised here and I think, I enjoyed it...

I think we're very fortunate in that we have a tremendous university that has any type of program you can think of. The only problem is knowing when the programs...people should take better advantage of the events, the speakers that they have. For a small community, we're very fortunate to have a university. This is a hub, St. Joe to the south and Kansas City's getting closer. It is a hub for outlying communities. I think there is a strong community feeling, and with the industry piece, we have a tremendous industrial base, and that's one of my concerns. We better take care of those industries. If we lose any of them, it's a whole different situation in this town.

Moderator: *What industries do you have?*

There's Kawasaki, Eveready...

Laclede...

Deluxe...

Moog Automotive.

Laclede Chain.

They're all significant to the community. We have an industrial development group. With the industry we have, we have a very low unemployment rate. It's difficult to recruit additional industries when you have a problem staffing what you have. We should take care of what we have. And we have recreation, between Mazingo Link and the athletic events at the University. I just wish our downtown looked better.

There's also a strong agricultural base. Agriculture plays a major role in this community.

I was talking to someone the other day, and I think Kawasaki needs 100+ employees, and they just can't find them. I think that's a major issue.

I was out there the other day, and we've already pulled people from Iowa...we're 10 miles from Iowa. I get a lot of customers from Iowa. We still pull people from St. Joe, and they've got everything there, but we have a specific thing. But with Kawasaki, they've gone outside of Maryville for employees.

They bus people from St. Joe.

Part of the issue is housing. Not having affordable housing for employees.

Moderator: What direction is your city going? Positive or negative?

We see small things, but it looks the same. Except what they've done recently with the downtown, the steps and sidewalks.

Population basically is in a slight declining.

Look at the high school.

Moderator: What is your population?

10,000.

5 to 6 years ago, there was probably 350 more students at the high school. I was talking to the athletic director, and that was a concern of his. They have dropped in classification, too.

I think the numbers at the University are increasing.

Last year's freshman class is the biggest they've ever had. But housing is an issue. You're finding a lot more people from out of town are buying off-campus for their kids to live in. Home prices are extremely high compared to surrounding areas. It's cheaper to live in Bedford or Barnard than Maryville.

Building construction is higher here, too, but that just goes with volume.

There's always new homes going up.

And the construction has slowed down some, especially with all the mortgage issues now. It takes longer to sell a home than what it used to. They used to sell in 60 days, and now it takes longer. But we're following some of the national things that are going on. We kind of follow that.

Moderator: Where do people shop?

People go out of town. Personal experience. I wouldn't shop here. I would say a lack of options. At the same time, you just want to get out of town to Kansas City, Omaha, St. Joe. St. Joe's north shops, how big they've gotten, it's very convenient. What's 35 miles? I'd like to see...we find a lot of times with sporting goods, we want to shop local, but sometimes they don't have what we need and we get it in St. Joe.

I try not to go out, but you're limited on soft goods sometimes. There's some categories that we have plenty, and some we have none. We have a problem if you want to buy a new car, it limits your selection. If you're living outside of Maryville, and if they're looking to buy a car, unless they don't want a used car, they're going to overlook us. The regional hub used to be us, but...

We've lost Ford and Chrysler.

And Dodge.

And it's unlikely that we'll get them back.

I don't think we're that different than other communities as far as retail. It would be tough for them. You can't expect them to stock like they're in Kansas City.

If we look at the industry, what's the lifestyle? We have a lot of things that would fit that. But with the University, 85% of my business is for the University. We do rely on them a lot. Going back to shopping, summertime...there's 10,000 people in town. It's half of our population. You can see a huge difference in summertime.

Moderator: What do people stay in town for?

Groceries.

Next level up from just the bare essentials. We try to get what we can, but choices are limited.

Contractors building homes, most of those products, the cement and lumber, but if you get into interior type things, a lot of that would be out of town.

We do have a furniture store and places that sell carpet.

It's a perception of selection. They can get it, but...

And a lot of it's showroom. People like to go in and take the time and look, and walk. That's part of merchandising.

Moderator: What about clothing?

There's not much of an option if I want to buy a suit.

I don't think there is any anymore.

Penney's might.

I've been here since 69, and downtown on a Thursday night used to be...I mean, how many men's clothing stores did we have?

We had 3 or 4 then, and JC Penney wouldn't be called a men's store.

For clothing you're looking at Penney's and Wal-Mart. Maurice's.

And sporting goods.

We have a shoe store.

Our sheer numbers on shoes, we have 9 stores in our corporation, and out of 9, I was 2 to 3 in shoes. Now that's competing with Pittsburgh, Kansas and Lawrence, Kansas, and we sold more than both of them. I was very surprised. But our best selling shoe store is Parsons, Kansas. And it's 70,000 people.

(many people talking at once.)

Our shoe selection is probably the least in the company. We're working on bringing more products to Maryville, but once again, you'll find it's about even with the University and people in the community. Lot of moms and dads come in...

How long have you been open? 2 years? How much business comes from outside Maryville?

When we first open, we papered. We didn't do any radio. When we first opened, 5 or 10% of people passing through. Now, Saturday game days, people from Kansas City or Iowa, 10,000 people are coming to Maryville. Now, in Maryville, when something is new, people want to check it out. Now, you can see the game day situations, but out of town sales are up 20%. We get phone calls from St. Joe during Christmas. The principal of Central High School wanted to get Northwest stuff. There's so many people down there that I've been contacted to put a store there.

How much of that is football related?

(laughter.)

If I could show you what we sell during football season, that's our business. If we didn't have football, we wouldn't have sales. Even the restaurant business. And now that we've redone our stadium, people are here all day long. On a Saturday afternoon, you can really tell a difference around Maryville. Definitely out-of-town business is coming this way. It's easy to go north for advertising, but now we've kind of decided to go south. We have over 500 pairs of shoes and Northwest Apparel. 5 or 6 years ago, we had the student body and the bookstore. It's really been a good decision for us to do.

I think what you're explaining is what a small town needs. What you do is unique and special. We're not going to get a Gap. You go into smaller communities, and a nice downtown square sells the entire town, and the shops are all full. They are unique specialty shops, and you need a couple of those as an anchor. You need some of those to come into a downtown area for the perception of success, and others will come in. I'm from a small town in Iowa, and this town is alive...of course, it has a lake, but the downtown area was beginning to dwindle, and there were a group of guys, and they said, "Let's buy that building, let's each pitch in \$1000." They formed an LLC, they renovated the building, made it look attractive, and they went out and...the guys were all different, and they recruited businesses in to their building. You rent it, and in time they

sold the building to them at a minimal profit so they could invest in another building. They're called the Downtown Mafia. They've renovated the downtown area that way. And I travel around the entire state, and I go into better and worse communities than Maryville, and I think the key to a downtown revitalization effort is trying to target unique stores that bring people in. I'd hate to own a clothing store in Maryville unless it had some unique aspect that would keep you here instead of the Internet or St. Joe. But if you look at our positives, Mozingo, the University, industry. If you list the negatives, housing...I'm still a member of MIDC, and I was on the board, and their target is to recruit industry into town, and it's an old corporation, and I gave up out of frustration. The original vision was to recruit industry when we didn't have it, and they were success in recruiting Kawasaki and Eveready, but that vision hasn't changed. They're still sitting on a pot of money trying to recruit industry, and what we have can't get employees. We need to retarget our vision and do something to help the housing problem. Even though it's Maryville Industrial, does that mean we have to spend every penny on industry? If we can do something downtown to make it more attractive, to bring people in, shouldn't we pursue it? We almost need a separate entity, and we need to change the mindset. There's a pool of resources just sitting there.

If you talk to the plant manager, their number one issue is employees. They're limited in their growth...they need to have enough viable employees to do expansions and create products. They may need 100 people, but they have to interview hundreds...when your unemployment rate is 1-2%, anyone who wants to work has a job.

Kawasaki had a program here, and invited area industries and suppliers, and they were trying to encourage them to set up in Maryville. So there's an opportunity there, but those industries aren't going to look at Maryville very favorable, if Kawasaki can't find employees... how will they find employees? We need affordable housing.

Moderator: Do people stay in town for dining and entertainment?

To a certain level. We have a choice of restaurants, a movie theater with 5 screens, but the main focus of entertainment is campus. If we didn't have a football team, I'd hate to see what would happen to our town.

What's so unusual is, how many home games do we have?

5 or 6. But it continues on throughout the whole season.

Yeah, people follow the team...

It's kind of a seasonal plus.

It's so much different in spring and summer when the students are gone. The town changes, the economy changes...the traffic is less...

When I look at downtown, one of the most recent successes is Carson's. It's a little sports bar. They have a student piece, they have a family piece...they cater to everyone in town. They have been very successful.

They found a niche. You can't come and bring a major department store in, but you can find a niche.

The only problem I have with..._____ owned 14 stores at one time, and he said Maryville was the hardest town to open a store in, from the help...he didn't receive any help from the city. We have a \$10,000 sign in our basement because we couldn't put it up, because it's downtown historical Maryville, so we can't have a backlit sign. It fits my building, it has value, but once again, there was no help there. Anything we had to go through, there was always hoops we had to jump through. He got so frustrated, and he said, "You do it." I was 23 years old. I didn't know what to do. When it came down to it, we had to just put an awning up, because the awning was part of the building we bought and it was grandfathered in. That's an issue. It's a big risk. It's a huge risk. We spent a lot of money to open up that building. We're lucky to have a sidewalk, to have a nice parking lot, you know, one thing we've done is to fix the back of our building...this summer, we're going to repaint it, but graveling the alley. We have a lot of traffic go through there, but we still end up paying for it. We don't get any help from the city there. And lighting, at night, we have 2 streetlights on 1st and Main, and one across the street, but I think lighting, that would benefit us... the area needs to be lighted better. Looking back now, it's not a big deal...we're open, we've been doing good, but I think for having niches, having small business come to town that is special, the city needs to help them out. Like you have this industry recruiting...if we had a small business recruiting... Hey, come, we've got a 1000-square-foot building here... I'd love to see the downtown have restrictions. I know it costs money, but you have to have your building painted each year... small things like that. Help pay for residing the sidewalks, rebricking this and that. Our building next door, we bought it and renovated it, and now I've got to go spend lots of money for the bricks on the back, so we've got to have an engineer come in... I don't have a problem with that, and they're obviously doing well, it's just a little candy store that you can take things to and they make a little bouquet. For how small it is, that's a niche. They've been busy. They use our parking lot, and it's no problem, and it always seems to be full.

That's part of the issue with downtown is you've got the old buildings that need a ton of work... it's a challenge.

It's a perception of success, you know. You're not going to go to a building that smells mildewy and musty and is not up to the standards of today. A building that is up to standards looks successful.

Yeah, but it took us months. We took our time. It was me and a handful of people that redid everything, but if you would've had a contractor do everything, it would've gone faster.

One of the other perceptions about downtown is there's a lot of bars, and that has its negatives. Maybe just the perception more than anything else. If you spend money fixing a place up, and you've got stuff on the street in the morning...

Carson's closes at 11:00, and I think that's a smart decision.

Moderator: How user-friendly is downtown to your customers?

With the downtown renovation, they spent a lot of money, and it looks nice. Some stores do a good job of merchandising, and some... man... some don't make it happen. Some of the best merchandising you see is the secondhand shops. Both of them do a great job.

You have nothing to compare to before, but the parking and sidewalks before were...what we've done so far is, the courthouse looks very appealing.

There's three stages for the downtown campaign, and I'm really excited. It's going to benefit the whole town. I think about improving downtown all the time. One thing we can do is clean everything up. I know Nodaway Valley Bank, that was at one time a nice building and there's apartments up there...that's one thing. There's dozens of buildings like that.

(agreement.)

And they're building a new county courthouse annex, and there's going to be a lot of departments that have been outside downtown moving back into downtown. It's going to create another parking issue.

Well, the body shop down over here would love to get out of downtown, and the city has a parking lot adjacent to it, and he's offered the city a fair price for the building...parking is going to be an issue, and I think a city/county investment in that.

It goes back to your Maryville Industrial Development. Can they be involved?

I think they should.

There's no incentive. If you come to Maryville and there's 10,000 people, why would you come? What's the incentive?

There's a lot of positives to be here, but it would be so much easier...why don't we keep what's going on here. It's easier to be accessible for people here. People would love to see Maryville downtown cleaned up. Buildings. The mural committee contacted me about doing a mural on my building. The birth of the bearcat. I'm going to let them do it. But it takes more... just keep going north.

One of the issues, you talk about incentives, and I think there's a lot of existing business owners that get frustrated that they didn't get any incentive when they did their thing. And we need to get over that. We need to come up with some incentives.

Well, the grant...when we wanted to do a building, there was a facade grant, but it was still a loan. We just paid for it then. I don't know if there's small business grant type programs, small things like that. It's very hard for people...I'm going to go spend \$200,000, but where's the money going to come from? Your building looks spectacular.

(many people agreeing.)

Just the cost of the land, what's the cost of the real estate? It's significant.

Ours was \$9000 just to buy the land.

And there was no incentive to do that, was there?

No.

But how many homes in Maryville could be torn down?

Yeah. If 10 of us get together and throw in money to go in and borrow money, buy a few of the bad houses, and tear 'em down and put in something.

A \$100,000 home for people who are making \$25,000 a year.

When people drive into Maryville, that's what they see. It's hard to see the good for the bad sometimes.

You own as many buildings downtown as anyone. How do you feel?

I'm not too sure, but more variety of business here, it will attract people. Now it's very limited. There's nothing much. 2 florists. But I think Nocomo's going to move in, and they may bring... dollar store, which may bring more traffic downtown. Nothing much, though. Right?

Yeah, you're right.

Very limited.

And you've been in a situation where you could buy all these buildings, and if you could have some help cleaning it up... like he said, the Downtown Mafia. Making one building look appealing will create a chain reaction. I think that it takes one person. You're up here north. There needs to be someone in the middle. When Looks first came here, Carson's came next door, and they look nice. One thing you can get here is that we need some help from outside somebody. Our city needs some help.

Moderator: Are business hours convenient?

We're open until 7:00, and 8:00 at Christmas. I don't think that's a problem.

You're an exception to the rule.

I think with the banks and law firms, it's a different environment. There's just a handful of retail.

I would say 5:00, 5:30. The industries down there...

I think there's an opportunity here with the new building and renovation here...

Are they going to do 2-story, 3?

3.

It's not going to be an architecture that's consistent with downtown, but it's nice, it's new. I still look back on the parking lot thing, though. The city and county should get together and knock down a property and have a parking lot.

Not just employees, but customers and clients.

If one person needs to drop off one check or renew a license...

Moderator: Do a lot of people live downtown?

Very limited.

Just some apartments.

By Bernie's, Molly's...by Bearcat Boogie...

Are they college students?

Yeah, about 90% college students.

In St. Joe, they rehabbed some of those old buildings for housing. I don't know how successful that's been.

Is that a zoning issue?

Moderator: Do you see a need to have housing downtown?

There's not much of an option.

It would make sense that if we had people living there, they might go to buy something.

Parking might be an issue.

Parking's always an issue in any downtown.

On one hand, we talk about wanting help from the city, and on the other hand, I think that there might be some stricter regulations as far as what they do architecturally to a building. For example, the dance place...if I owned that, I wouldn't have closed in those windows with plywood. They needed new windows, but it should fit the original look of the buildings. It would be nice to have some type of architectural code of some type. That may be a little over the top, but it would maintain a consistency of look... maybe a grant or something to bring it back... some of those historical preservation grants are so extreme, like Barbosa's in St. Joe's, and it was so restrictive that they had to put a slate roof on... I think some architectural control might be nice.

(agreement.)

If these other small communities can do this and look nice, why can't...? We can't seem to fix one thing? I'm sure I'm not educated enough to know...

Part of the issue has been the county-city thing. The courthouse is county, but the city has everything around it. In years past, there's been a battle between the two. Now they're working together.

Who helped downtown city renewal?

I think they worked together.

Moderator: *We want to sort of look to the future. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?*

We've got restaurants.

Moderator: *Is there a need for more restaurants?*

We only have a few places to go. If we had more selection, people might get out more. We're talking a lot of money, a lot of restrictions with the city. And buildings. There's a lot of work that has to be done. It's a big risk. And if we bring a chain in, where are they going to find employees?

How many vacancies do we have downtown?

Not that many. Not right now.

(side conversation.)

What is the Artisan?

It's a way for artists to exhibit their work.

So it's like a gallery then? I've never been in it.

Look in the window.

In talking about what we need downtown, if we have 3 vacant buildings, it's a matter of making more attractive what we've got.

It's the mix. How do you change the mix downtown. It's insurance, attorneys, offices. If you have someone that wants to stay open until 7:00, you need similar stuff around that's open until 7:00. That's why everything's gone south, because that's where all the businesses with related hours are. If you're going shopping, your first place is south.

It would be nice to have a little Dollar General or something, a little convenient place.

Would you shop there on Saturday? No. You'd go south. What do you put downtown?

If I were going to open a restaurant, I wouldn't go downtown. There's no parking.

It seems to work for Carson's.

The crowd is after work, a lot of the time.

If Nodaway Valley Bank tears down and adds parking...

If a person comes to a retail store, they feel they have to park right in front. But if they go to Wal-Mart, they don't park right in front, but they see it. You have to have some nearby parking.

What about a gas station? We have a pit stop north, but that's it. Even look at, it seems like 1 block away from downtown, that community's been vacant for...

You'd think that would've been a prime location for campus. Right off campus...

You see a lot of students walking down there.

There's no reason that that should fail.

What would draw... a lot of money is spent at the University. What would draw the kids, other than bars?

Food.

Then again, you're competing with Carson's...

If you cluster your businesses, you have similar businesses across from each other, they feed off each other. A&G and Carson's are two different types of restaurants. They both have a niche.

(agreement.)

On a nice spring afternoon, you could walk out from a restaurant and go into a shop or something.

As far as restaurants, we don't have a place to go eat breakfast. It would be nice to have a diner of some sort.

You know, you had the deli in the shopping center there, and it's almost like a restaurant can't be successful without alcohol there.

It got to the point there that there was so much smoking that the tiles were black, and you walked in there, and it was smoky. I still think that would go. There's a lot of people who miss that.

(agreement.)

For the courthouse, that would be the thing during lunch.

It needed to be cleaned up. It needed renovation, paint, ceiling, floor, tables, chairs...it was pretty nasty.

There is a restaurant in St. Joe, and that's all they serve—breakfast and lunch. It's a marketing niche we don't have.

Look at (unintelligible) café, and it does really well. Breakfast and lunch.

I don't even think about it.

Maybe we could recruit them to come down here.

Moderator: What about streets and sidewalks, green space, and other aesthetics?

We have some lawn space on the courthouse, but there's not much room for it.

That's been planned out, phased out. We've spent 1.6 million on it so far.

I don't think we've come that far, you don't see it.

A lot of it's infrastructure.

Where can we go from there?

It takes so much money. It's going in the right direction.

And we should fix what we do have.

It was about the early 90's, back when we were doing engineering... and all the lateral streets, and I came across that article, and the construction cost back then was \$335,000 to do the all of the streets coming into downtown and the downtown area. That's how much costs have gone up... There used to be, talking about specialty shops, there was a not necessarily antique shop...

They had knickknack type stuff...

It was overwhelming. She had to work there all the time, and ended up closing the doors. It looked to be very successful.

Then you're back to help.

It's nice to think of something to bring in kids, but it's also nice to draw parents of those kids.

Moderator: Would you support a special business district with an additional sales tax?

I'd be up for it. Of course we'd benefit...

We may have to. There's always resistance to taxes, but we may have to do something like that.

If everyone felt the way we did, Maryville downtown would be done by now. But if it's going to benefit our town...

Would that tax apply to bars, to law firms, to banks...what we do? You take a lot of what's downtown, and if they're selling services and not products, you can't tax it. What's the realistic benefit, and is it worth the battle? And is that going to deter people from coming downtown?

(agreement.)

Right now, people would say no way.

I'm kind of out of that realm right now.

If you go one block south of here, you'll see tree limbs, disaster. I'm embarrassed. I just drove to Colorado, and we'd judge towns along the way, and if I was just passing through Maryville right now, I'd compare it to all the crappy towns on the way to Colorado.

Moderator: I only have one more question. Is there anything else you'd like the city to do that it's not doing?

Put a sign up. Maybe if there were some options that they could give us...

I think it all revolves around money. The City doesn't have extra money. They're like the rest of us.

And their focus isn't all on downtown right now. They're focused on fixing roads and picking up limbs...

I think you're right, that we need to have a plan, and if there's some way to move towards a goal of what we want to look like, to have them help coordinate that goal...

More cooperation between county and city would be great, too...

Yeah, and look at the streets between downtown and the south part of town, and the logistics of getting in a business and out of a business, traffic issues that we run into at certain times of the day, just all that kind of stuff is...you know, it's a challenge.

I'm kind of baffled about where you start. There's lots of successful things, but it never ends. Our problem on Main Street is not something that was there last year. It's a 20-year problem that they haven't taken care of...

A storm drain?

Yeah.

What they did last year on the south side of town, that was such a huge improvement. It really cleaned things up. They did brand new curbs and storm drains...

But you can't do the whole town that way. It costs money.

I'm not one to look towards the city to get things done, and I think it all gets down to personal pride. Even a group of people coming together...and MIDC, their vision is locked on what it was 30 years ago, but it all boils down to individual pride... we could've just as easily put a metal building up and it would've passed code, but we chose to put in a nice brick building, and the façade is nice. We didn't ask anybody to help. But others are, I don't know what you'd ask the city to do...

I think it's going to take a group of individuals to form some group, and come together to ask help from the city.

(agreement.)

Maybe there's a frustration. Maybe this is telling a story, that we need to get back with the other 20 folks, and ask them what their frustration is.

They'll say, "Nothing's happened in 30 years, and it won't now."

_____ wasn't invited to this thing. I called and found out about it.

Why wasn't he invited?

He works behind the scenes, and he's very active. He was frustrated with the city, and no one would return his phone calls... he came in in 2000 and wanted to buy a building, and nobody helped him out.

There seems to be a stigma about bringing people in like him. He's very aggressive, and changes a lot.

He gets bogged down in the process. It's easy for that to happen.

We shouldn't make it that way for them. If a guy like _____ wants to come to town, we should make it happen.

There's nothing set up for that. There's no MIDC, no downtown committee to help people.

I've heard that same thing from housing developers. They say, Warrensburg welcomed us with open arms. We came to Maryville, and...but that was the past administration. The people before were complete asses. The developers come in, and all we want to talk about is problems. We try to convince them not to come to Maryville.

You know, the guy who put in the low-income housing, he put up a sign out front, a brick sign, and they wanted him to move it 3 feet after he put it in because it wasn't far enough from the sidewalk. He didn't have any help. He didn't know.

I've had that frustration, trying to be a liaison with development. I think it's better now than it was before, because they'll tell you what to do, and you'll think you're clear, and they say, "you have to do this, this, and this, too." That adds frustration to the developer. That blows the budget.

And it adds frustration on to us, because we've already spent money, and we have to fix stuff we've already done.

(agreement.)

I think there's a lot of frustration like that.

They'll tell you that you need one handrail, so you put it in, and then they tell you you need two.

With our building behind the Candy Bouquet, he took pictures, sent me a letter in October, and said, "You need this fixed by November."

(agreement.)

They should've told you that when you purchased it.

The city waived landfill fees for us, and 6, 9 months passed between the time we bought the building and got rid of it, and we got a bill for landfill fees, and I had to go through the process to convince people that they were waived, and then we got another bill...

Just things like helping with fees to get rid of stuff...

If we're willing to do the work and spend the money, at least help us out...

When these people come in, we need somebody to greet them with a smile, somebody that's appreciative. It just doesn't happen. The first one they go to is the building inspector, but there needs to be someone on a level before that's personable and welcoming, someone to sit down and visit with, "what are your visions for Maryville?"

Yeah, and that person can answer questions and give people all the information.

Public relations.

And I hate to bring this back to _____, but _____ is right. He looked at Maryville for 6 years before he came.

Nobody took him serious. He came in, looked at other vendors, was here for 2 days, went to a realtor, and the guy took him around, and the guy left him. Didn't think he was serious.

But if he had somebody to go to in economic development...

But the Chamber, they've got a little thing like that... I think they do a great job...

But there needs to be somebody from the City that knows the compliances and how things work. They could be a recruiter. Put the voice in people's ears, get people in here.

I think part of the perception with the 20 people that didn't show up today is that we're kind of stuck where we're at.

We've been through this before.

I don't want to think that's happening, but it's hard to keep a positive attitude.

I hope I just win \$200 million dollars.

I don't want to say anything bad about City administration at all.

Yeah!

(agreement.)

He's available.

Who was here when the whole downtown thing started? Was he here?

(discussion on who was in city government.)

Just from him talking, I wouldn't be afraid to go ask him for something.

He's very open.

We're all in sales, and that first impression is the most important. When someone comes in, it shouldn't be the city inspector. It should be somebody... someone that needs to say, "We're excited that you're here." And help them through the steps, rather than just sending them to the next person.

Is that economic development or the Chamber's job? We have those.

It depends on where they go. They all need to be prepared for that.

They all need to work together, and cooperate. The Chamber, economic development, and the City.

We're looking to open another store, and I don't want to do that. We're looking at going to Ames, Iowa, and I'm so worn out from the first go-round...

Moderator: Thank you for coming.

SECTION V

LONGTIME RESIDENTS TRANSCRIPT

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

There's an Italian restaurant here that's not bad.

The Bearcats.

I grew up in Shenandoah, Iowa, and it's a small community without a college, and that makes a huge difference. And I don't know that Maryville has grown so much as it's developed and changed over time. But it's a great town to raise kids in, excellent school system. I don't care where you are, kids will say there's nothing to do. But great opportunities. A lot of our kids leave, though, and do not come back.

Lack of entry-level professional jobs to get kids to stay here. Sometimes once they get established, they want to come back... but for young professionals, there's not a lot. Not a lot of diversity in shopping. And the highway is divided now, so it's easier to get to St. Joe. The housing market is bad, and it's hard to keep them here.

Geographically, for me, it's perfect. The things that don't happen here are 2 hours and 30 minutes away in any direction. The University entertainment is enjoyable and affordable. My kids grew up here, and a few are still here.

(unintelligible)... my kids...same type of environment, and they recognize the quality of life in a town this size and what a university adds to that... we're in better shape here than they are, and you can... (unintelligible)... and there's no traffic here. If you want to go to Kansas City for the weekend, you can. Or Omaha... this is a great place to retire, too. And I have no problem retiring here. And a lot of people do retire here.

I'm amazed at the number of college faculty that retire in Maryville. I grew up around here, but...

I think one thing is even though we're a college town, the college kids don't really associate with the town. One thing the community's trying to work on is how to get those dollars spent in Maryville.

(unintelligible)...the culture here...

There's no crime here.

Moderator: *There's not a crime problem here?*

Well, there were 3 murders in the last year, but that's an anomaly.

When we first came here, when we were looking for a place to stay, we were looking at the paper, and one of the things in the police report was that a kid stole bubblegum from the grocery store. We had to laugh about it.

(unintelligible)...

I have to agree that I've lived in Lincoln and St. Joe, for professional type jobs, and we came back to Maryville. We are lacking nice sit-down family restaurants. People go to St. Joe to go out to eat. Now we have Italian, so... but just for change they travel to St. Joe. One thing you do notice driving into Maryville, other towns' streets are a lot nicer, they're wider, there's sidewalks, there's gutter, there are curbs...you don't see that here. We really need to improve the infrastructure here in Maryville. The work ethic is awesome in Northwest Missouri, and Maryville people are great. I have the best neighbors I've ever had. I mean, the guy who mows my yard, he's retired, and he actually has a key to my house to let my dog out. It's a very unique atmosphere here. The one thing I did find out when I first moved here, it took a while for the neighbors to associate with you, they're very private people at the beginning. But after a while, they opened up. I was at first an out-of-towner, always been an out-of-towner, and it took a couple years.

When we had the big ice storm...this is a family community. We all take care of each other. For as many diverse people as there are here, we're a family town.

One of the unique things is that I can never find...(unintelligible)...there's not an established local hierarchy that controls everything... (unintelligible). We got a YMCA, and people organized it, and they got it. With very little resistance. The quality of life here is very good... and we have a nice golf course out here. We're not going to be 30,000 people. Maryville wants to stay where it's at, population-wise. Our university is set for 6,000, and we really don't want 50,000. There's a lack of political culture here that's phenomenal.

Moderator: Where do people go for shopping?

There's no place to shop.

Grocery shopping, maybe lumber, here. Unfortunately, they run to Home Depot and Menard's. The lumber stores here are actually cheaper.

It's just being able to have a choice. I don't want my choice to be made for me. There's just not enough healthy competition for that diversity of product.

And the north shops at St. Joe...

You've got to understand that all the little towns around here come here, so it's a phenomenon. Now, Clarinda is not that great for restaurants, but you know... (unintelligible). We don't have enough for people to come in for restaurants.

That's because of the habit more than anything else. You go to Savannah, Missouri, they have a pizza shop, very unique, very family-oriented. You look at the Square, the streets are wide, the parking's easy, sidewalks... it's clean. And it's well maintained. That's the whole thing we're trying to do, but there's still a long way to go.

It's always been a question for me, but we've got to have more accountability for those who own the properties. It's like the elephant in the room. We go around it. I don't even know who owns those buildings. Where's the accountability for that and for some of our rental properties. When I try to bring people to town, people tell me, "It's a college town, but it's just kind of dilapidated, and there's issues with housing and the downtown..." That's one of the reasons that downtown revitalization...that is one of our issues there. If you're somebody that wants to start a business, and there's some incentives for the storefront, but there's so many issues with the structural aspects that we're not dealing with, that takes all your money. And then you don't have a profit. You can't keep a business going. I think that's one of the issues that, how do we get businesses down there. I've never understood why our downtown Square, it's walking distance for all the college students...they walk there to go to the bar. That's the only place they visit downtown, but what else is there for them to visit downtown. And why did those businesses move? And I'm not asking you to answer this question, it's just a question, but why did the businesses continue to move out of those buildings, out of those storefronts. What is the issue with those buildings?

(noise, unintelligible. Many people talking at once.)

...fires...

...but also when they started, like J.C. Penney's went from downtown clear out to that center, and that kind of started the exodus. Parking has never been that good uptown...

It's better than when I moved to town. But we have that problem, that south expansion, that really took away from downtown. One of the things that's worse now than when I got here is we don't have much choice for grocery shopping.

Yeah, there was something on the north end as well as the south end.

(agreement.)

Having been in that business for 35 years, it ain't going to get any better. You have to be bigger in order to make a profit.

What is it about the other small towns like Savannah and Clarinda... they have Wal-Mart, Hy-Vee... Savannah, you're close to St. Joe. Their Squares thrive.

They have other stuff out there...

(many people talking at once.)

For some reason, there's still a pride factor, a feed the downtown Square...why doesn't it happen here?

I visited with some of the people who moved off the Square, and they said the majority of business owners don't live here, and as long as they get their rent check, they don't care what happens here.

And our dilapidated post office is an embarrassment. It's a joke.

We have grandfathered in an enormous amount of property owners, too. It wasn't until 90 or 91, we didn't even have any renter's codes... we have grandfathered in an awful lot, because we didn't want to deal with the controversy, and it's hurt us in the long run. Now we've got years of them saying "we're grandfathered in."

We do have an individualistic political culture here, so we don't have a lot of community codes... homeowners don't have many codes... (unintelligible)... I moved here from Iowa, and... (unintelligible)

If everyone individually takes pride...just because we live in the Midwest, but if a few have ownership and don't have that, it only takes a few.

...(unintelligible)...people have moved their furniture out in their yard...

Moderator: Where do you take relatives and visitors?

...(unintelligible.) We used to be angry at college kids with their couches out on the lawn. We have made progress. It's reflective of the political culture here.

And maybe because we're lacking that political elite, our taxes, we can't afford to fix up anything, and nobody wants to pay more taxes.

You get what you pay for.

(agreement.)

If you mention raising taxes, it's a death sentence. Everybody looks at the government for the courthouse or street repair... coming from outside, where we used to live...taxes...(unintelligible)

We've made great strides here, as far as the streets go. I remember all these streets, none of them were paved, there were ditches all over, and that was most of the streets 25 years ago.

I'm not denying that it's improved, but your first impression coming into town, if you take South Street, there's no crosswalk. There's no sidewalks. Somebody's going to get killed. It's not made for people to walk or ride a bike, and that's what the college is. This town survives for the college, and the students need to get around. I see that as a big issue. But there is no tax base.

They'll be the first ones to complain about it, but if they're not going to be a part of the solution...

If you're really concerned about it, in Maryville, you can get things done. We don't have smoking in restaurants because of a middle school class at St. Gregory's. They got rid of it. We're better for it. I go to St. Joe less now, because we have smoke-free restaurants here.

Moderator: Let me ask you about your downtown. Do you think things are heading in the right direction and wrong direction?

I think the exodus has been the last 10 years.

The work in the last 9 months is a positive, though. The organization has been 3 or 4 years, but actual movement...

Nobody wants to mess with individual property owners, and you have to entice them to make improvements.

None of them are particularly enthused. They don't see this as the start of something, they think after people come in they'll renovate.

If the buildings downtown had proper codes...

People don't want to rent in there because the rents are high, and you can't improve the buildings, and customers don't want to come in, but they don't want to sell the buildings so somebody could do something with those. That's where the city government has to step in. They needs to say, "This is not going to float anymore." Don't grandfather anyone in anymore.

There's always the codes they need to start enforcing.

We need to have people that are comfortable enforcing codes, maybe a team... I don't know what the concern is there, but it almost seems like there's not enough people to do the follow-through. If you don't have follow-through, it means nothing.

...(unintelligible)...contractors...they're busy...

One of the things is, even though we're a hub of the region, they're coming in to Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee. They have no interest to coming into downtown.

There's nothing that stops them, that pulls their eye. Nothing that will make them stop.

I don't think you'll ever see a major business back downtown. There's no women's dress shop, though... shoe store. There's a lot of things that are missing downtown, and we're going to have to look at small stores.

We've been in a culture shift. You have to shift into things that would draw people in downtown like good restaurants, maybe a regular cultural fair. I don't have anything against the lumberyard downtown, but who has a lumberyard in the Square? It destroys the ambiance or any type of culture down there. But lots of towns have this problem. They got some wonderful places in St. Joseph, but very few of us go downtown St. Joseph.

How many businesses have we seen start up downtown in the last 20 years? It takes a while to get your business going, and the rents are astronomical.

And there's not that much money in niche stores.

Baskin-Robbins just closed.

And with the college kids, they come alive at 10:00 or 9:00 at night, but there's nothing open for them then. A shop, anything but the bars. You say, "The kids don't shop here," but they're not awake.

They're not very rich, so they don't eat at fancy restaurants. Cheap beer and fast food. That's where they spend their dollars. We don't have Johnson County kids here. A lot of our kids work, and they don't need a nice restaurant.

And the town itself, we're pretty blue-collar.

(agreement.)

But we don't have a place to eat breakfast in this town.

(many people agreeing.)

So those are some of the issues. There's things that could go downtown that you could draw people to. An electronics store.

We had one.

But they moved out.

But why? The high rents, the dilapidated buildings. There are a number of businesses that would be great down there, but we don't have the infrastructure. It's the same with the streets. You have to fix the underlying infrastructure.

Moderator: Are there things you used to do downtown and don't anymore?

Yeah.

I haven't gone downtown since I moved here.

Only A&G or Bernie's.

I used to go to the shoe store, or Claire's.

(many people talking at once.)

One thing, and it may just be me, but I love towns that have a neat courthouse that keep the old, all the old style on all the buildings. Not metal stuff on it. I think we started deteriorating when we put up little one-story mini-malls. It destroyed the ambiance of downtown. I know maybe there's façade grants, but I wish there was a way to get it back to the brick and the two-story...just for the appeal.

When we were talking about whether you go to downtown St. Joe, you go to something that's visually appealing. It draws you in, and then you can start searching it out, rather than a hodgepodge you want to go past. Business, shopping, education, it's part of the human psyche.

Westin, Parkville, they're all old buildings with little shops, and they draw people in.

We don't have a college town here. The bars are downtown, but there's nothing else downtown...

When you look at Movie Magic, they were on the Square. The college students go there. But they moved because of the building and the rent. And all college kids need clothing, and we could have a factory outlet type thing. There's a lot of things, stuff along those lines, so you can look for little treasures. But you can't afford rents down there. I've seen so many businesses go in and out.

Moderator: *Is downtown user-friendly? How are the business hours, the parking, the navigation?*

There's no hours because there's no stores.

We do have a western store down there.

And the cobbler shop.

(many people talking at once.)

I don't go there, so I can't answer. I only go down there for the courthouse. Or the post office.

Library's just off the Square, and City Hall.

And City Hall's nothing to be proud of.

(many people talking at once.)

We have one jewelry store downtown.

Yeah, I take my kids down there...

We don't have good sidewalks, though.

I do it every once in a while, and there's nothing that makes us stop. There's nothing. We might do it 2 or 3 times a year, and what an easy thing to do with your kids, but there's nothing to draw them.

There used to be a good bookstore down there. It has no unity. She's right. There's nothing. I just came from down there, because I meet students down there. I chose Carson's because it's the closest thing to out here. The Community Center isn't even out here. And it takes away from the fitness center.

But don't even get him started on that, because that's why he's not changing the front of his store.

(agreement.)

Moderator: Are there residents downtown?

Not much.

There's college students.

I'd say not 100 people live downtown.

Wouldn't that be the coolest place to live, for college students?

Most of those are in the same shape as anything else.

Yeah.

I did run across a blue-collar worker who had an apartment downtown, at Carson's.

(laughter, many people talking at once.)

It's okay if they don't spend big bucks there, as long as they spend some bucks. How you present it is how they'll treat it. It's the same with rental properties. I live next to college students in Maryville, and they're fine. It's not bad living next to college students, but anybody will live up to or down to the expectations set of them. If we hand them dilapidated pieces of crap, that's what they're going to do.

Part of that is the students' problem. At bigger universities, they have places where they evaluate different rental property. When I was at Nebraska, they evaluated rental properties. The kids here don't want to do that. And rental property is big business for our students.

They're paying 600, 700 a month for places I wouldn't put anyone in.

There was one case where a landlord put a rug over a hole in the floor that went into the basement.

(agreement.)

Moderator: Let's shift focus a little. What would you like your downtown to be like? What kind of businesses would you like to see?

A bagel coffee shop, only open for an hour at bar closing where you do wraps. Things along those lines. If I had a store down there, it would have to be about 6 different things. Some artists that want some of their stuff shown, and maybe a coffee shop/restaurant, or a clothing store, or home stuff. We don't give our students choices. It's just, "This is what you have and that's it." Or a good used bookstore.

The old bookstore....

(many people talking at once.)

There was a nice children's section.

We have the artist gallery, but they don't have anything now. That was kind of neat.

It's gone.

The new community theater bought the building.

That's the problem, we can bring these things in, but without continuity, we can't sustain them.

(many people agreeing at once.)

There's many people that do have ideas, but I haven't been in the business world. I have a lot of ideas, but the community could give support and help to businesses that go in. You have people with a passion for something, but maybe not the expertise.

You've got all those bars downtown... students flow into the bars. You know what's strange about it, and when Carson's opened up, they had higher quality beers. The guy said, "I prefer that beer myself, but it goes stale." Why? Because the college students don't buy it. If you want a higher quality thing, you have to understand that they're not on the same income level.

So what about us young professionals? I don't mind going down there, but if we go out for dinner... I don't want to see everybody and their brother. Give me a booth. Give me a little bit of privacy. Maryville is a chirpy town. We live in a small town where there are people that really...just some personalities like to know everything that's going on. A little privacy for the professionals. Maybe a bar with tables for backgammon or chess or checkers, but I also want a booth. That's... a small university, if you go even to some of the smaller towns, you can find that. It doesn't have to be Ann Arbor or Lincoln. If you look at older university towns...

My wife leaves town for crafts. There's no craft stores here in Maryville. They go to Clarinda. We don't do sidewalk sales and craft sales.

We do an art fair.

But they don't advertise it. In Westin, there's all kinds of little craft stores and a doggie treat place and wine stores... we need individual things to draw people in there.

(many people talking at once.)

I'm not saying we should be Westin, but we can learn from them.

You can look at those, and look at them as a model, and say, fit, fit, not a fit. It's just a model to say these are some aspects we'd like to see. Is it realistic? Could it work?

I'd like entertainment downtown. A variety of Country Western bands... (unintelligible)...maybe bluegrass. That would attract our students and people from Northwest Missouri. If we could draw people in like that...

That's all nightlife. What are you doing during the day?

Well, some of your stores won't be opened until 11:00, but your storefronts...you get people downtown, and your storefront is your advertising, and people start realizing that we have that down there. But I'll come back to it again, but I wouldn't put a business in one of those buildings at this point. Not until the city deals with the issue.

What I hear you saying is that there need to be some ordinances that would encourage our business owners to fix up their places.

Yes.

But they're going to have to go structurally and do a lot of work, and maybe there's some funding to help.

And it's almost not encouraged. Because we have loans for the façade, so they've tried to approach it from that avenue, but people still look at the infrastructure... I don't want to own a business that only looks pretty on the outside. It's the guts that count. It's got to be sustainable.

We're buying into the downtown. We bought two businesses. The old Radio Shack building, we're going to tear it down. The Theater Building is structurally sound—it's in very good shape. What happens, though, is we're looking at running family movies in there... the outside still looks like crap, but the inside is fine. But there's no community on that. It draws some people in sometimes, but there's nothing else to attract them.

(agreement.)

An ice cream shop or a bookstore...

We've got a very good bakery downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

...I would ask him, if you were moving into this area...

...but he bought the building...

Some people say that they won't sell the building. I'll go into someone's office, and I'll tell them to fix it up, and they'll be like, "I don't own the building."

I don't remember where this was, but about 20 years ago, I went to some river town halfway between Columbia and St. Louis...

Hermann?

It wasn't far from Hermann, but there were 3 churches right there on the Square, there were 2 restaurants you could go to after church on Sunday, and a library right there. That was most of the town downtown that I got to see. I don't know how many businesses were open, but they all looked like they were functional and operating. Dress shops, novelty stores, jewelry. We have 3 churches there, but everybody goes out to Hy-Vee to eat. They're missing something...

Well, I don't think we can tell people what to do with their property, but all of a sudden, tear a building down and put parking in before you get to...I think the appeal initially...

(many people talking at once.)

I like the convenience, but the parking lot looks...

They could've had parking in the back...

My daughter lives in Kansas City, and her degree is Architecture and Historic Preservation, and it just breaks my heart to see Maryville now. And we've allowed one of the most beautiful houses that needed repair to be torn down to put up the bank. We continue doing things, and we're going to lose. Buildings burn, fall down...we've lost a lot of our uniqueness.

The cost...when you allow something to continue dilapidating, the cost to repair is not affordable. We're going to continue on this path unless it's dealt with. We need to enforce our ordinances. We've been the nice guy...you can only coddle it for so long. I feel like that's what we've done. We're so afraid of making waves, but we have got to start looking at, for the betterment of all...health and safety codes! My God! Some of those buildings...

Do we have any buildings on the historical register?

I have no idea.

That would be a great avenue to look at, though.

Getting that designation can help you get funding.

Exactly. It can get you funding for your foundational, for your wiring and your plumbing. The guts issues of a building.

Moderator: Is there anything else visually that you'd like to see?

Green space! Places to just stop. They have done it over by the courthouse, and it was really nice to have those benches. I could just make a phone call and sit. Plants...green stuff.

We've got a mural system down there.

I never understand asphaltting that. What a cool...

It's private property. They asphalted that.

...(unintelligible)...

That's a very good point, though...when our city and the way we're taking a look at things...we've got to make sure we're all on the same page, so we don't have disagreement...

We do have code, and it's a matter of enforcing it.

How much is grandfathered in?

I don't know. I sit on a citizen board... these things will come up, so there is code enforcement, and it could be better...(unintelligible)...

That was a cool building.

But it was structurally unsound.

Like the old hotel was a neat old building.

It was part of that explosion, right?

No, it just fell.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

If codes were enforced... our soft brick is not the problem, it's the drainage.

Getting back to what you're asking us, the historic aspect...if you're going to have a historic courthouse, the other buildings should have the same aesthetics. Some of it's still there...the bookstore is a prime example of it. They have little flower boxes and those little windows. If there's any way...you can't dictate, but you can put ordinances in place. They do have a signage ordinance... there's some guidelines for fixing up storefronts with loans. It would make sense, the green space, the little park, makes it friendly...

But there's nothing to do. There's nothing down there.

Moderator: Are there other downtowns that you've been to that you like as a model?

Savannah.

Westin.

Omaha...

(many people talking at once.)

...the market in Omaha...

...restaurants and shops...

They did some of that through funding. It did not come all out of tax money. They developed a plan, they had a vision, and they went after it. One asset that we do have now is the grant writing knowledge that _____ brings to the job. If you look at the number of grants we've gotten in the last couple years...I asked him, "did we get a grant writer?" You have to have the vision and then a good grant writer. Anytime you find a small, Midwest, quaint town...we're not over-the-top people. We're simple, but we like it nice.

Should we do this for the whole Square, or can you go block-by-block.

Especially if you can get something on the National Registry...you can get the funding to repair it and work your way down.

Kind of that ripple effect. That was the concept of starting with the courthouse.

The strength and weakness of Maryville is that you don't have a leadership structure. That's also nice, because if you want to piecemeal it, the activists get things done. You need somebody really dedicated to getting a nice downtown district, with the resources and organization to make it happen... the individual property owners aren't going to do anything. They still own the property, and if they haven't bought in...

Unless you do it for nothing for them...

And even then they might not like it.

Missouri just passed that eminent domain thing.

You don't pass it.

Well...!

I'm not saying that you make friends when you do that...

It's going to take a lawsuit first...

(many people talking heatedly at once.)

Do the proposed trails even come towards downtown? Things like that, we never have a total plan of how this community should fit together...

(many people talking at once.)

...the schools...

...the railroads...

The middle school, the high school were funded through the grant, and the University has their own going on...

We would've had a trail here, had not individual property owners taken issue with it.

Sometimes it's about how it gets approached. There is a pride factor here. It's the manner in which it's brought to the table.

How many people thing Mozingo's been a bad idea?

If it could sustain itself financially, it would be better.

It took 25 years to push through, and it should've been built 20 years before.

Like the divided highway.

That's a matter of perspective. My friends who come up here feel like their tax dollars shouldn't be spent on this boondoggle highway in the middle of nowhere. I'm glad to have it. Sorry, sucker. But that takes Maryville citizens to St. Joe. It doesn't help the town here. Our marketing base is in Iowa and Northwest Missouri.

I don't know what incentives there are to bring businesses downtown...

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION VI

NEW RESIDENTS TRANSCRIPT

Moderator: *If somebody was visiting from out of town, what would you tell them about Maryville, or what would somebody need to know if they were thinking about moving here?*

Well, I don't live here right now. I'm moving here. I'm actually putting a business in downtown, and I love that they're redoing the downtown.

Moderator: *Do you think the city's moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

I think that Maryville's a quaint community that shows some age and a little bit of wear and tear, maybe neglect, especially downtown, but I think we are moving in the right direction with the projects to revitalize downtown.

I look at the downtown different than most people do. I'm investing a lot in it, and I'm the first one to actually change as a business. New windows, doors, everything... I'm from Parkville, and I'm used to seeing things already quaint and done. Where I live, everything's quaint...

Moderator: *Let's just talk about downtown specifically. How do people use the downtown?*

I think it's a split use. During the day, you'll have community members and residents going to Carson's to eat or to the shoe place...that's what I find myself doing during the day, but then at night you have a whole different crowd, and the majority of them are college students. So if you run into somebody here during the day, you're probably not going to run into them at night, and vice versa.

And that's the thing that's frustrating. Somehow there's got to be a way to coincide. A lot of these kids are from Kansas City, and a lot of them are going to nice areas, and they're not messing them up. They'd be thrown in jail if they messed up the Plaza. But I think the town needs to get the town back...the drunk kids puke all over the place! I was looking for a building this summer, and I was told that I'd have puke on my sidewalk and I'd have to rinse it off. For somebody wanting to start a business here, it's frustrating that all I hear is about the drunk kids who will tear all your stuff up. I'm the first one to be putting all my money into my façade, and I'm going to have flowers and stuff, and I'll kill somebody if they ruin my stuff. I'm investing a lot of money to try to do what they're trying to do, and it's aggravating that they're trying to do all this work, and we let the kids run drunk around the town at night and tear it up. That makes no sense to me at all. But the same kids are from Kansas City, and they would never dare destroy anything on the Plaza. It doesn't make any sense. But I also mentioned too that the revitalization meetings don't want to let another bar in. They have too many. Somebody has a cute clothing store doesn't want to be next to a bar. There needs to be a bar district, maybe, or just a shopping district and restaurants...now, Carson's doesn't bother anybody...but it's very frustrating. I get excited, I want to be down here, I want to be part of it, but all I hear is about the awful things the kids will do at night to my property...it's always gone on, and that's why the Square looks like it does...that's what every business owner has told me since I've been here, that it's not really possible.

Moderator: *Are there things that people used to do downtown that they now do elsewhere?*

The shopping. All the shopping is gone. There's no retail on the Square besides two flower stores, and that's it. There's no clothing store, no...I grew up close to here, and I used to buy clothing and shoes, I used to do shopping here, you know...17, 20 years ago, and it's all gone. And a lot of it is because the bars ran off the people.

Moderator: *Have these gone elsewhere in Maryville?*

They all went on the Strip.

Moderator: *How user-friendly is downtown? Streets and sidewalks in decent shape?*

No. That's why they're reviewing it. My sidewalk is awful.

Moderator: *Is it easy for people to find their way around downtown?*

Yes.

I've been here 3 years, and I kind of know where stuff is.

Moderator: *What about signage that would point you toward downtown?*

I don't think there's signs that say downtown district.

No.

But at the same time, I don't think we live in the same classic Mayberry-type setting. Everything was downtown 20 years ago, and there wasn't anything else that would catch your attention.

When I grew up here in high school, there was signs around the Square.

That's exactly, I agree.

There was.

Moderator: *What about business hours for the businesses downtown? Are those convenient?*

I have no idea.

For the ones I use, they're convenient. They're pretty standard. There's Bank Midwest, normal hours. Carson's has got normal hours.

Moderator: *What about parking? Is parking easy or difficult?*

I don't have a problem with it, but part of that is that it's not full...what's right next to you?

Edward Jones.

Along there, there's always space.

To park here is pretty simple. I hear people bitch about the parking here, and I'm like, um I don't see a problem. There's parking lots next to anything.

Bally's has got the parking lot, and there's one by A & G. I'm originally from Iowa, Kansas City, Syracuse, New York. Those have parking problems.

There's no meters downtown. You do have parallel and...

Just that one side is parallel, and the other three are regular.

And the courthouse has its own lot. I'd say their revitalization to that street is done.

I just noticed it. I didn't realize that lot was even there until a month ago.

I think with the revitalization, Market looks great. I look forward to them having that done on all four sides of the Square.

Moderator: Do you get a sense that there's a demand for more housing downtown?

No...we're actually putting an apartment in in our building. We're either going to rent to college kids or alumni. It's really a pretty old, 2-bedroom apartment, and people come into town. I think the downtown should be open to alumni and adults. It shouldn't just be for kids. Is there any bars for adults?

There's the townie ones, like Bernie's.

Molly's is young.

Molly's is all the young... it's a younger crowd...and Outback is a younger crowd.

We're going to be fixing part of that up, too, with the living loan. Nobody's lived there for 40 years. It looks like a museum. We're trying to restore it back to where it was, and we'd like to get it...unfortunately some of the people living in the Square, it's kind of rough. It might be nice to change that also, so that way if college girls want to live up there, they should feel safe. So we're going to be doing that in the future, too. I think...there's so many football games, and the hospital...it would be convenient on the Square.

...if it's done right, it would be great. That's the problem, that people don't want to invest their money.

We're going to be the first to do everything right. Everyone else is just kind of doing it. I've seen some scary guys living up there, and I'm sure that no one's fixed them up and done them right, and they're kind of gross. If we've got more of a corporate thing...that's kind of the future.

Moderator: How do people find out about what's going on downtown?

The paper. That's pretty much where I do. Or word of mouth.

I don't really know how they advertise it, since I don't live here yet. It seems like everybody knows.

Yeah, you hear about it.

Moderator: Are there banners or a website?

They'll do a banner across the street for some things...

Well, _____ at Chamber services, she gave me the list of all the 2008 functions. The fair, and...

The fair's a big draw.

Moderator: Is that a summertime event?

It seems like they have the same functions every year. The marathon, and the fair, and Halloween.

And those are all very well attended.

Moderator: Let me ask you a little about what you'd like to see downtown look like. What kinds of businesses would you like to see?

Shopping.

Moderator: Anything in particular?

Anything. I mean, there is none now. So, anything. Clothing, interior...if somebody would open something up...there's really nowhere to buy anything in this town.

And I kind of like the service stuff, the service industries. Like what you guys will be offering, the restaurants... we eat at Carson's weekly...

To get people to come from surrounding towns, they need to have shopping for women to come.

The thing I kind of look at is, you can always do stuff before and after dinner or lunch. If I'm dropping off shoes at the cobbler, or banking...if I'm on the Square, I'm going to eat, I'm going to stop at the bank, or vice versa. That's the best way to do it. But I would agree that the female gender will probably do shopping.

Yeah, like the shopping districts like Liberty and Parkville and Westin.

Once you get somebody parked on the Square, you should be able to address two, three, four needs they have. You don't want them getting back in their car to go to the bank, get back in your car to go eat, get back in your car to go to drop off dry cleaning. The unfortunate thing that

I just don't understand, is I see these new buildings going up all the time. _____ has been built from the ground up, and I don't understand why they'd spend the money to build a brand new building versus taking a fraction of that and going on the Square.

Because they can't get in. I've got my building because I got it on the market, because the Chinese guy who lives around here buys every single building and no one can get it.

And no one can buy the buildings?

No. You can't get 'em.

What happened to... I know there's been some turnover, but what's next to Carson's that just went up there?

A bar.

So who's got that now? Is that going to be for sale?

I don't know. I looked... that's the problem...I wanted to be on the Square, and you've got one guy just buying up all the buildings, and they get it before it even goes on the market. That's what's happening. And he's not nice to the renters, so he's... you know...he's not nice to people who want to rent from him, so that's why they're going out to the Strip. It was wonderful that I was able to get that, because it was not...he didn't know about it. Otherwise, I would've been out of luck. You can't buy anything.

I guess I'm going a block or two off the Square. Like the one just south of A & G. It's been vacant for over a year now. I just don't understand why there are new buildings going up... I don't understand why people aren't buying...

There's nowhere to go. There's no options.

So everything in the Square is full?

Yeah. Everything's owned. It's all for renters. When I was looking, it was a miracle that I got it. Stuff's already bought before it even goes on the market. The same one guy is buying all the buildings on the Square.

Moderator: Is this a local guy?

Yeah. But one guy is buying up all the buildings, and that's why nobody can get it. I wanted to be on the Square, and it's really frustrating when you can't get on. Stuff was already bought by the time I heard about it. And he's not willing to update or make his buildings look nice. He owns the pool hall that looks awful, and they've been on him, and the video people left because he wasn't a nice guy to rent from. That's a lot of why people are leaving?

Do many have apartments above them?

Some do. Over by Carson's...about half do. But again, the same guy who's being a crappy landlord isn't fixing up apartments... he's not willing to make his business part look nice, and he's not fixing apartments, and he's getting scummy people up there. The city's on him to fix up his buildings. You've got one person who owns so many of them, and he buys everything. That's why people are going on the Strip. But luckily, a couple of people managed to buy other buildings. There are people that are wanting to make a change. Basically, the only one who's not is the Chinese guy.

(side conversation about who owns what.)

Everybody on my side of the Square is going to be doing nice things, but... I don't know what you do with somebody who's refusing to change everything who owns so many of them. I know they talked to him about it. I think I would like to start a downtown association just like they do in other places, and the people that own the buildings have to be responsible to fix things up, responsible for the kids getting drunk in their bars. They're going to have to. It does no good to do all this work, and then... you've got people that care and people that don't.

Moderator: Assuming you can get the people who don't care on board, how would you improve the look and feel of downtown?

I'm doing new windows, a new door, awning, flowers. Anything that I can change, I am.

I think the revitalization of downtown, I still look at Market Street. That would definitely help. I wouldn't mind seeing a sign ordinance. Look at Molly's sign vs. Bernie's sign vs...

Have you seen Molly's sign? It's really inappropriate. It says something like, "Drink like fish." We have families coming down here, and it's just not appropriate.

Some ordinance on temporary signs vs. permanent signs.

It is. You wouldn't believe what I'm going through with my signs, for the permits and all. I'm having a tough time getting mine done, but then these other places can do what they want.

Moderator: Are there particular issues that you think should be high priorities?

Right off downtown, all the downed limbs look awful. Those should be picked up by now. There's no reason they should be on the main street. That's a big eyesore. I have a lot of people coming in in June, and those better be gone. They've been there since December. Other surrounding towns, their limbs are gone. The limbs look really bad.

And the road repair...that road is just trashed.

Yeah. It's not good driving. Especially when there's water. It's just awful.

Moderator: The last question I want to ask you is about other towns you've been to. What other downtowns would you like to see aspects from here in Maryville?

Parkville, Liberty, Lee's Summit, and even just 20 minutes away there's a town called Savannah, and their Square is already done. It looks really nice. In the summertime it's beautiful. They've got beautiful flowers and hanging baskets. And their town's only 5000 people.

It's got that unified look, and it looks like everyone on the Square cares.

It's nice to see Savannah. They don't have any money. With Savannah being smaller, they've done very well. They don't have a lot of money. Savannah is exactly what hopefully this Square will look like.

Yeah.

When people bitch about when I talk about it, I tell them to go look at Savannah. It looks very nice. It's the same look, I mean... so my point is, they don't have expensive stores, but they still manage to have it look nice.

It's cleaned up, it's maintained. I mean, those are the things...the sidewalks aren't all torn up and stuff looks freshly painted.

I actually brought...a thing from Independence, MO...they're working on revitalizing their downtown. This is from Kansas City Magazine. This is what they've done to promote their businesses...so many people look at the downtown as old, and... you know, Independence Square is just...this is just in a local magazine, but...this town brings in people from smaller towns that won't go to St. Joe or Kansas City, and this is as far as they go. This is also in the magazine, in Arkansas. It's just so cute. It's old, but...

Yeah, downtown Fayetteville...yeah.

It's just, I thought that was nice looking. And I think the trees, and...if people start getting this idea in their head... because people like me, strip malls don't do it for me anymore. To buy a 100-year-old building and have the courthouse as my view, it's wonderful. And city people just thrive on this, because they want a sense of community and shopping. They're burnt out on strip malls. But in a small town, people look at it as old and worn out, and that's why they build on the Strip. But a lot of people have never seen anything like this. They've never been to Liberty. They don't know that it can look quaint. But like, Westin, it's just the place to go. It is. And Maryville has it made, with all the extra people coming in for the ballgames... Westin relies on the extra people who's in town, and they make a fortune. They would here too. A lot of people, if they see our Square instead of this, it's pretty run down.

Moderator: Thank you.