

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CITY OF CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI

May 8, 2007



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I N I T I A T I V E

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



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SECTION I

FINAL REPORT

As part of the research being conducted as part of the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted four focus groups in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Cape Girardeau community in regard to the downtown area. The four groups included the following: 1) the Broadway Area Group, 2) the Riverfront Area Group, 3) the General Group, and 4) the Good Hope Group.

Participants of each group are from a variety of backgrounds, and all have some interest in downtown revitalization.

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

A. DISCUSSION GUIDE ABOUT DOWNTOWN OVERALL

The following questions were included in the discussion guides for the various groups:

General Questions about Cape Girardeau

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. What are people's perceptions of the Old Town Cape district? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?
05. What are the major reasons you visit downtown? How often do you visit downtown Cape Girardeau? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?
06. How "user-friendly" is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for?
07. How do 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

08. As you know, the city and Old Town Cape is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Cape Girardeau. 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?
- Residential development?

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?

11. What do you think about the idea of establishing a new or modified "special business district" in which an additional sales tax or property tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for downtown?

12. What do you think of current events being held downtown? (LibertyFest, Tunes at Twilight, Downtown Parade of Lights, Downtown Open House, First Friday, etc.) Which do you attend? How would you rate their quality? What additional events would you like to see?

B. DISCUSSION GUIDE ABOUT THE SPECIFIC AREAS: BROADWAY, RIVERFRONT, AND GOOD HOPE

The following questions were included in the discussion guides for these groups:

General Questions about Cape Girardeau

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 the Old Town Cape district is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction? What about the area specifically—is it headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?

05. What are people's perceptions of the area? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?

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

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

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

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

09. As you know, the city and Old Town Cape is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Cape Girardeau. 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?
- Residential development?

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, renovation, upgrades?

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

12. How do you see this area relating to the downtown district as a whole?

13. What do you think about the idea of establishing a new or modified "special business district" in which an additional sales tax or property tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for downtown?

C. THE CAPE GIRARDEAU 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 Cape Girardeau (or “Cape”) as a family-friendly, small-town community that is still large enough to serve as a hub for shopping, medicine, and education for smaller nearby communities within a 50 to 60 mile radius. Cape has a thriving art community, Southeastern Missouri State University (SEMO), two hospitals that serve a great number of the surrounding rural towns, and a mall, strip malls, and a Wal-Mart on the west side of town for which people come into Cape. Because Cape is halfway between St. Louis and Memphis, residents have easy access to both major cities.

The participants had mixed feelings about the direction Cape Girardeau is moving, but the overall sentiment was cautiously optimistic. They felt that the rise of the strip malls, the mall, and the Wal-Mart have taken away small business in Cape over the last 20 years, but see an “upswing” in the interest in downtown redevelopment and in smaller, privately owned shops. Many also felt that the downtown area is moving slowly in the right direction, but there are still parts of town that need work, and there needs to be a master plan to help move this work along.

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 areas in Cape Girardeau are mostly on the west side of town. Wal-Mart is a major place where people do their everyday shopping, which is on the west side of town, and the Town Plaza shopping center and West Park mall are also on that side of town. Some residents go to St. Louis for more luxury items or a bigger selection than what is available in Cape. People do shop downtown for certain items—there are jewelry stores, a music store, a convenience store, etc. that residents patronize. On the whole, though, the residents do their day-to-day shopping for necessities and household items at the Wal-Mart or the mall.

People come to Cape from a 50- to 60-mile radius to shop, often at the Wal-Mart, the strip malls, or the mall, but also for some downtown businesses. As a whole, people who come in for the hospitals or the University do patronize Cape businesses while they are in town.

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?

The groups felt that Cape Girardeau has many excellent dining, entertainment, and recreation options, many of them downtown. There are a number of restaurants downtown, including Bella Italia and Mollie’s, among others, where residents and visitors

enjoy dining. The larger chain restaurants are on the west side of town, and those are available as dining options, as well. For entertainment and recreation, the Mississippi river and the mural on the floodwall are big draws for visitors and residents. Tunes at Twilight, which showcases live bands, is a success, as is the First Fridays effort, which showcases local artists on the first Friday evening of each month. Movies, bowling, golfing, baseball, and the walking trail are also popular choices. The groups felt that festivals such as Libertyfest and Riverfest were excellent entertainment options, particularly good for downtown, and were disappointed that Riverfest did not return this year.

D. DOWNTOWN CAPE GIRARDEAU: DESCRIBING THE PRESENT

What are people's perceptions of the Old Town Cape district? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?

The perceptions of the Old Town Cape district, according to the participants, have improved within the last few years, as the downtown area has made progress in its redevelopment efforts. There is an especially positive perception of Main Street, which is a very redeveloped street. Some areas of Old Town Cape are still perceived negatively, such as certain blocks of Broadway and the Good Hope Area, despite the improvement both areas have seen in the last few years. More specifically, participants felt that the number of bars made certain areas seem "unsafe for families," while stores like "tattoo parlors and adult video stores" made other areas seem unsafe. The participants generally agreed that these areas are much safer than the public perceives them to be, and enlightening residents to the improvements in the areas will help improve the public perception of downtown Cape.

Broadway Area Group: What are people's perceptions of the Broadway Area? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?

The Broadway Area group generally felt that people perceive the area negatively, as "shady," "rough," or "not family-friendly." Many participants stated that this is not the case, especially on certain parts of Broadway that have been improved in recent years. Despite these improvements, a negative perception has carried forward. Businesses that the participants called "undesirable," such as bars, tattoo parlors, and adult video stores, give the public a negative feel about the area. While the area has positive attributes, such as the Marquette Hotel, which is being redeveloped, thriving businesses, and proximity to the University, many residents still have negative perceptions of the area, according to the participants.

Riverfront Area Group: What are people's perceptions of the Riverfront Area? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?

The Riverfront area, according to the group, is perceived fairly well, especially since the mural on the floodwall was completed. Now, with the addition of a wider and cleaner walking trail, and with some of the cleanup efforts, the area will be perceived even more positively. The group felt that there are still things that cause negative perceptions, such as the lack of public restrooms, but overall the area is perceived positively.

Good Hope Area Group: What are people's perceptions of the Good Hope Area? Specifically, what are the positive attributes? What are the negative attributes?

The group felt that people still perceive the area as a "rough" area, though that perception is based a lot on the way the area used to be years ago. With all the redevelopment and the River Campus, the participants expressed hope that this misperception of the area being unsafe will be slowly dispelled, and people will be more inclined to invest in the area and to visit the area.

Broadway Area Group: What about the Broadway Area specifically -- is it headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?

The Broadway Area group had mixed feelings on the direction that the area is moving. They felt that some parts of Broadway are moving slowly in the right direction, while other parts are stagnating, not moving much in any direction. No one indicated that Broadway is moving in the wrong direction.

The 400 to 800 blocks of Broadway, according to the participants, have a number of abandoned buildings and buildings that need to be rehabbed. They cited businesses such as "a tattoo parlor" and "an adult video store" as businesses on those blocks that give the public a negative perception of the area, and make it feel "unsafe." While they felt that the two ends of Broadway are moving in the right direction, particularly with the redevelopment of the Marquette Hotel, the 400 to 800 blocks were mentioned as blocks that still need a good deal of work.

Riverfront Area Group: What about the Riverfront Area specifically -- is it headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?

The Riverfront Area group felt that the area is moving in the right direction to an extent, but that there is still more work to be done to keep the area continuing in a positive direction. The mural on the floodwall was cited by this group as an excellent improvement to the Riverfront Area, and was cited by other groups as a wonderful addition to downtown Cape as a whole. The Riverfront group participants also described improvements in the walking trails as positive.

The participants expressed, though, that there were a few places that the Riverfront Area was not moving in a positive direction: they felt that the area loses businesses to the train noise, and that the river is underutilized for a lack of docks. They also felt strongly that beautification and public restrooms should be a priority for moving the Riverfront area in the right direction.

Good Hope Area Group: What about the Good Hope Area specifically -- is it headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?

The group strongly indicated that the Good Hope area is moving in the right direction, due in large part to the University opening its new River Campus. The participants also cited a cleanup effort in the last few years that has given the Good Hope area a more positive image and has helped encourage people to buy buildings and redevelop. The group felt that the movement in the right direction would take off once the River Campus opens, but that an organized master plan is essential to keeping this direction defined and effective.

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

Participants mentioned a number of reasons why they visit downtown, and dining was a consensus among all the groups. There are a number of dining options in downtown Cape that Cape residents frequent. The groups were also in consensus about how often they visit the river, either to walk around or to sit by the floodwall mural. Other reasons included jewelry and music shopping, Libertyfest, Tunes at Twilight, First Fridays, the newspaper, the courthouse, and simply walking around. Many participants in all four groups work or own buildings downtown, and a number of them said that they make a special effort to shop downtown.

The groups stated that there were shopping options downtown that no longer exist, that have moved to the west side of town, including groceries, clothing, and other household staple items.

Broadway Area Group: What are the major reasons you visit the Broadway Area? How often do you visit the Broadway Area?

The Broadway area has shopping options that people come specifically for, and as the participants stated, these places are "destinations." The group, made up of many business owners and building owners on Broadway, spends a lot of time on Broadway, but also discussed why their customers come to them. The music shop, antique stores, beauty salons, and the newspaper office are a few places on Broadway that people visit.

Riverfront Area Group: What are the major reasons you visit the Riverfront Area? How often do you visit the Riverfront Area or downtown Cape Girardeau? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?

The major reason that people visit the Riverfront area, according to the Riverfront group, is to watch or walk along the river. The new mural on the floodwall has made this area more attractive, and people—especially visitors, but also some residents—spend a great deal of time along the river. Antique shops were another major reason the participants cited.

Good Hope Area Group: What are the major reasons you visit the Good Hope Area? How often do you visit the Good Hope Area or downtown Cape Girardeau? Is there anything that you used to do downtown but now do elsewhere or vice versa? Why?

The Good Hope area began as a German immigrant community, and was once the downtown hub for Cape Girardeau. Some participants remember a time when there were retail stores in the area, and wish for that sort of redevelopment. One participant mentioned the “old mom-and-pop stores” that have closed in the past 10 to 15 years. When the River Campus opens, though, students will have a built-in reason to visit the area, and student transportation (which is open to the public as well) will encourage people to visit the Campus for shows and to the surrounding area.

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 groups had mixed feelings about the user-friendliness of downtown, regarding business hours, parking, navigation, lighting, and sidewalks.

Participants were in largely in agreement that business hours are inconvenient for residents, since most downtown businesses are open only from 8:00 AM or 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. These hours, they felt, make downtown shopping inconvenient for people who work during these hours. The groups recognized the inconvenience to individual shop owners of keeping their businesses open late, but felt that if there were even one advertised night when all of the businesses stayed open late, it would be a good start toward creating a nighttime shopping culture in Old Town Cape.

Many participants described parking as a “perceived problem” rather than a real one, but came up with possible reasons for that perception. Participants in all of the groups said that there *is* sufficient parking downtown but that many people feel that there is not. This could be because people are used to parking right in front of the buildings at strip malls or large chain stores, and in Old Town Cape, people often have to park a block or two away from the shop they wish to visit. This could also be because of insufficient signage; while there is plenty of parking in downtown Cape, people may not know which lots are private and which are public, and they may not know where to find the parking lots behind buildings.

Navigation, according to the groups, is fairly easy, but extra signage, better lighting, and better sidewalks would improve navigation even more. Coming in and out of downtown Cape is fairly easy, and the road are laid out logically, according to the groups. More signage would help visitors and new residents navigate the downtown area, and better lighting and sidewalks would make it easier for people to get around.

Broadway Area Group: How “user-friendly” is the Broadway Area?

The Broadway area group felt that the area is fairly user-friendly, in terms of parking and navigation. Concerns about the area mirrored those of the downtown area as a whole when it came to business hours, building repair, and other such issues.

Riverfront Area Group: How “user-friendly” is the Riverfront Area?

The group felt that a lack of public restrooms and the “perceived parking problem” were issues in user-friendliness of the Riverfront area. Otherwise, they felt the area is fairly user-friendly.

Good Hope Area Group: How “user-friendly” is the Good Hope Area?

The group felt that it is very easy to get to and from the Good Hope area, and in that way, the area is user-friendly. However, the streets and sidewalks were a major concern for the participants, particularly on Morgan Oak, where the sidewalks are uneven or torn up.

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

The newspaper, the radio, and “Tip Off” are all places that residents and visitors get information, but many people mentioned word-of-mouth as a major source of information about downtown shopping, entertainment, and events. Many groups stated that a stronger online presence and a stronger presence at the University would help downtown tremendously, making it easier for visitors and students to find out information about downtown Cape, since visitors and students are unlikely to read the local newspaper.

E. DOWNTOWN CAPE GIRARDEAU: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As you know, the city and Old Town Cape is in the process of developing a master plan for downtown Cape Girardeau. 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? Residential development?

Participants in every group felt that Old Town Cape should not try to compete with Wal-Mart or other chain stores, but rather offer a unique, different experience that appeals to people in a different way than a chain store. For stores and restaurants, the groups suggested specialty clothing stores and gift stores, bookstores, pharmacies, convenience stores, specialty grocery stores in the style of Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, wine and cheese shops, coffee shops, sandwich shops, bakeries, art galleries, and craft shops. For residential development, the groups suggested that downtown Cape work toward offering a variety of housing options for buyers and renters of all incomes; these might include high-end and low-end apartments, townhouses and condos, lofts above shops, and full residential buildings. The participants stressed the importance of residents in the downtown area to its improvement, stating that having people who live downtown will help the downtown thrive.

What additional/types of businesses would you like to see in the Broadway Area?

The Broadway area group suggested focusing on appealing to the college students, because of Broadway's proximity to the University. They suggested bookstores, coffee shops, clothing shops, and other options that would appeal to students. They felt particularly strongly about this because many students do not have transportation, and would eat and shop on Broadway if there were businesses that targeted the student population.

What additional/types of businesses would you like to see in the Riverfront Area?

The Riverfront area group suggested specialty shopping along the lines of what all of the groups suggested for downtown as a whole, but realized the limitations that businesses face being so close to the train. They also felt very strongly that the river should be utilized more, and that a dock, if possible, would help bring people on pleasureboat rides into Cape.

What additional/types of businesses would you like to see in the Good Hope Area?

The Good Hope Area group wanted to see services targeted toward residents and students, as well as more residential options for Cape citizens. Because of the University's River Campus, the group felt good about the idea of businesses targeted to students. They felt that the stores and restaurants should include a bookstore, ethnic restaurants, a sandwich shop, a café, a grocery store, and a pharmacy. They also felt strongly that residential options should be available for people of all incomes.

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, renovation, and upgrades?

The groups mentioned a number of aesthetic improvements they would like see, including sidewalk repair, building repair and renovation, beautification, cleanup, and green space. They felt that downtown, either in its distinct areas or as a whole, should feel cohesive. Some cited downtown St. Charles as an example of a city that has a consistent aesthetic. Many described bricked sidewalks as aesthetically pleasing options, as well as more authentic historical building facades.

Cleanup was a major priority for the groups, particularly as trash is concerned. The groups in the different areas felt that people drinking at the bars at night generate a lot of trash that ends up on the street, including broken beer bottles.

Beautification and landscaping were also focuses of discussion. The groups felt that flower pots, trees, green space, and cleanup efforts would all help downtown feel more desirable to residents and visitors. There have been, according to some participants, problems with people stealing planter boxes, flower pots, and small trees, so security would be integral to making beautification efforts work.

Building repair was a big concern for the participants, and they agreed that tax incentives would be useful for helping building owners repair their buildings. The most important thing, according to some participants, would be to revisit and relax building codes to make it more realistic for people to renovate their buildings, therefore attracting more people downtown to buy buildings.

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

The groups felt that the highest priorities should be developing residential and commercial spaces, increasing security downtown, revisiting building codes to help building owners redevelop, beautifying the downtown area, fixing sidewalks, improving signage and lighting, and working together to create and implement a master plan.

What do you think about the idea of establishing a new or modified "special business district" in which an additional sales tax or property tax would be collected that would provide services specifically for downtown?

The participants had mixed feelings about a "special business district," but many were positive about the idea. Parts of Old Town Cape, Main Street in particular, already have a property tax that operates in this way, and the other parts of downtown Cape have seen the benefits of that tax. The groups were generally more positive about increasing the property tax than the sales tax, but overall, they felt that creating a "special business district" would be a good idea.

What do you think of current events being held downtown? (LibertyFest, Tunes at Twilight, Downtown Parade of Lights, Downtown Open House, First Friday, etc.) Which do you attend? How would you rate their quality? What additional events would you like to see?

The groups felt overwhelmingly positive about all of the downtown festivals, especially recurring ones such as Tunes at Twilight and First Fridays. Libertyfest is also a big draw for residents and visitors. Many participants were disappointed that Riverfest is no longer happening and want to resurrect Riverfest.

Broadway Area Group: How do you see this area relating to the downtown district as a whole?

The Broadway area, according to the group, could thrive on its proximity to the University and be more of a college-focused area than the rest of downtown. They do, however, see themselves as an integral part of the downtown area.

Riverfront Area Group: How do you see this area relating to the downtown district as a whole?

The Riverfront area group participants felt that the area is an important part of downtown because so many people come in to see the river. While the Riverfront area is clearly part of downtown, it is distinct because of its natural beauty, the walking trail, and the possibility of a dock.

Good Hope Area Group: How do you see this area relating to the downtown district as a whole?

The Good Hope group felt that the Good Hope area will be tied inextricably with the University's River Campus, providing services for students and residents, and providing apartments and other housing options for citizens. The group also felt that the River Campus provides not only a nice anchor for the area, but also a clearly defined border for downtown that will make zoning and redevelopment easier than it has been without a clearly defined boundary.

F. KEY POINTS

Key points about the Cape Girardeau area:

- ◆ Cape Girardeau is a family-friendly, small-town community that serves as a shopping, medical, and educational hub for towns in a 50 to 60 mile radius.
- ◆ Cape has a thriving art community, a University, and two hospitals.

- ◆ The community feels that Cape Girardeau is moving slowly in a positive direction, particularly with the redevelopment downtown.
- ◆ Much of the shopping in Cape is on the west side of town, where Wal-Mart, the strip malls, and the West Park shopping mall have sprung up.
- ◆ There are a number of downtown stores that residents go to, including jewelry stores, a music store, and a convenience store.
- ◆ There are various dining options in Cape, and many of them are located downtown.
- ◆ There are entertainment and recreation options in Cape such as baseball, golf, walking trails, the riverfront, a bowling alley, and movie theaters.
- ◆ Cape has a number of festivals, some yearly and some more regularly, including Libertyfest, Tunes at Twilight, and First Fridays.

Key points about downtown Cape Girardeau in the present:

- ◆ Old Town Cape has improved over the last few years, as have the public perceptions of the area.
- ◆ Main Street has undergone a positive transformation, and parts of the Broadway and Good Hope areas are being redeveloped.
- ◆ People visit downtown Cape for festivals, to sit by the river, for shopping, for restaurants, to see the floodwall mural, and for the courthouse.
- ◆ People perceive the Main Street area and the Riverfront Area as fairly safe and improved over the last few years; there are still negative perceptions about the Broadway Area and the Good Hope Area.
- ◆ Downtown Cape's business hours, according to the participants, are inconvenient, since they are mostly daytime, weekday hours.
- ◆ While there is plenty of parking in downtown Cape, people perceive it as a problem, in part because of the ability to park in front of the building at places like Wal-Mart or strip malls, and in part because of insufficient signage in downtown Cape letting people know where the parking options are.
- ◆ Navigation in downtown Cape is fairly easy, but more signage, better lighting, and better sidewalks would help people get around even more easily.

- ◆ People get information about the downtown area from “Tip Off,” the newspaper, and the radio.
- ◆ According to the participants, there is not a strong enough online presence to inform students and visitors about what is happening in downtown Cape.

Key points about the future of downtown Cape Girardeau:

- ◆ Old Town Cape should not try to compete with Wal-Mart or other chain stores, but rather offer a unique, different experience that appeals to people in a different way than a chain store.
- ◆ Specialty clothing stores and gift stores, bookstores, pharmacies, convenience stores, specialty grocery stores in the style of Trader Joe’s or Whole Foods, wine and cheese shops, coffee shops, sandwich shops, bakeries, art galleries, and craft shops would be welcome additions to downtown Cape.
- ◆ Residents are particularly important, according to the groups, in redeveloping the downtown; downtown Cape should work toward offering a variety of housing options for buyers and renters of all incomes; these might include high-end and low-end apartments, townhouses and condos, lofts above shops, and full residential buildings.
- ◆ Downtown, either in its distinct areas or as a whole, should have a cohesive aesthetic.
- ◆ Cleanup, beautification, and landscaping are all priorities in making the downtown more attractive for residents, visitors, and potential building and business owners.
- ◆ Tax incentives would be useful for helping building owners repair their buildings.
- ◆ It is very important, according to some participants, for Cape Girardeau to revisit and relax building codes to make it more realistic for people to renovate their buildings.
- ◆ Signage, lighting, and sidewalk repair are all important in improving the downtown area.
- ◆ Security, according to the groups, is of utmost importance, since heightened security will help in keeping all the cleanup, beautification, landscaping, business, and residential efforts effective.
- ◆ Establishing a “special business district” with an increased sales or property tax is an option that downtown business and building owners are willing to discuss.
- ◆ Downtown events such as Libertyfest, Tunes at Twilight, and First Fridays are all excellent ways of drawing people downtown, according to the participants.

- ◆ The community would be in support of resurrecting Riverfest, according to some participants.

Key points about the Broadway Area:

- ◆ Some parts of Broadway are moving slowly in the right direction, while other parts are stagnating, not moving much in any direction; the Marquette Hotel redevelopment is a positive change, but there are still many abandoned buildings and “undesirable” businesses in the 400 to 800 blocks of Broadway.
- ◆ People visit the Broadway area for the music shop, the antique stores, the beauty salon, and the newspaper office; they typically visit to accomplish one thing, and then leave, rather than browsing around.
- ◆ People perceive the Broadway Area negatively, despite its recent improvements; they see it as “unsafe,” “shady,” “rough,” or “not family-friendly,” according to the participants. While this is not true of all blocks of Broadway, it is the public perception of the area as a whole.
- ◆ The Broadway Area is fairly user-friendly, since it is easy to navigate and to find parking.
- ◆ Additional Broadway businesses should focus on appealing to the college students, because of Broadway’s proximity to the University.
- ◆ Bookstores, coffee shops, clothing shops, and other options that appeal to students would be good additions to the Broadway area.
- ◆ The Broadway area is an integral part of downtown, but because of its proximity to the University, has the opportunity to be a more college-focused area.

Key points about the Riverfront Area:

- ◆ The Riverfront Area is moving slowly in the right direction, especially with additions such as the floodwall mural and the cleaned-up walking trail, but there is still work to be done in beautification, public restrooms, and cleanup.
- ◆ People visit the Riverfront Area because of the river, the mural on the floodwall, the walking trail, and antique shops.
- ◆ The public perceives the Riverfront Area fairly well, especially with the new floodwall mural; some negative perceptions come from the lack of public restrooms and from beautification issues.

- ◆ The public restroom situation makes the Riverfront Area less user-friendly than it could be, but overall, it is a fairly user-friendly area.
- ◆ Additional shops and restaurants would be welcome in the Riverfront Area, but there are limitations because of the train noise.
- ◆ A dock would be an excellent addition to the Riverfront Area, according to the group.
- ◆ While the Riverfront area is clearly part of downtown, it is distinct because of its natural beauty, the walking trail, and the river.

Key points about the Good Hope Area:

- ◆ The Good Hope area is moving in the right direction, due in large part to the University opening its new River Campus.
- ◆ The Good Hope area's movement in the right direction will take off, according to the participants, once the River Campus opens, but an organized master plan is essential to keeping this direction defined and effective.
- ◆ The River Campus will give students a built-in reason to visit the Good Hope area, as well as residents who come to performances and art shows at the River Campus.
- ◆ The transportation system the University has to shuttle students from campus to campus will also be available to Cape citizens, and will stop multiple places downtown.
- ◆ People still perceive the Good Hope area as a "rough" area, according to participants, though that perception is based a lot on the way the area used to be years ago.
- ◆ With all the redevelopment and the River Campus, the misperception of the area being unsafe may be slowly dispelled, and people might be more inclined to invest in the area and to visit the area.
- ◆ It is very easy to get to and from the Good Hope area, and in that way, the area is user-friendly.
- ◆ The streets and sidewalks are a major concern, particularly on Morgan Oak, where the sidewalks are uneven or torn up.

- ◆ The Good Hope Area would benefit from services targeted toward residents and students, as well as more residential options for Cape citizens; these services might include a bookstore, ethnic restaurants, a sandwich shop, a café, a grocery store, and a pharmacy.
- ◆ Residential options in this area should be available for people of all incomes.
- ◆ The Good Hope area will be tied inextricably with the University's River Campus, providing services for students and residents, and providing apartments and other housing options for citizens.
- ◆ The River Campus provides not only a nice anchor for the area, but also a clearly defined border for downtown that will make zoning and redevelopment easier than it has been without a clearly defined boundary.

SECTION II

BROADWAY AREA DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Teresa Wildman, I work at the University. I grew up here, moved away, and have come back in the last few years.

I'm Marsha Haskill with AT&T, same kind of story, Cape's my hometown, lived in St. Louis for 15 years, and moved back home.

Scott Meyer, with the University as well. Spent 22 years with the Department of Transportation, came to the University 2 years ago. I've lived in Cape Girardeau almost 10 years. I grew up in Southwest Missouri, and moved all around the state, and we just landed here.

I'm Scott Shivelbein, Shivelbein's Music, family owned business, third generation. I've been active with the Old Town Cape and Downtown Merchants Associations.

Linda Bonsack, and I have a garden gallery in Cape, and my husband and I have lived here all our lives.

My name's Sasha Gergene, and I've lived in Cape since I was 5... the Old Town Cape, all of this is very new to me.

Moderator: Thanks again for taking the time to speak to us tonight. Before we talk about downtown, I'd like to ask you to tell me a little about Cape Girardeau in general. Describe the area a little, as if you were talking about Cape to someone outside the area, perhaps someone who's thinking about moving here.

I think Cape's a great place to live and work and raise a family. It's very family-oriented. I think it's a safe community. And it's definitely growing.

You probably know it's become the retail and the medical hub between St. Louis and Memphis. Pretty much anybody who's sick from 50 or 60 miles away, they come to Cape to one of the two major hospitals we have. Seeing a heck of a lot of growth on the west end of town, and a couple steps forward and one step back for our downtown area.

I think there's progress, and I think it goes through cycles, but I think it's on the upswing.

Moderator: Would you say the area as a whole is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

I think it's going two directions. I think there's a split. I think there's a very prosperous side of the city, and there's a less prosperous side of the city. I think the community is,

and I use the word “community” purposely, there are people clamoring to help people who have needs in this community, and I think that there’s a lot of really heartfelt attempts to try to bridge gaps in the community, in terms of opportunity and access. I think it is going in the right direction, though. The Chamber and other people, they spend all day thinking proactively about the growth of the community and the growth 10, 20 years from now, not just next week, what would be good for the people who live here.

I think there’s a lot to work on, and that’s a little unusual compared to the places I lived... it’s hard to say sometimes, because I live somewhere 3 years, and it’s hard to get a feel. What we’ve seen in Cape is an attempt to work on a lot of different areas, and it’s been pretty immune to the ebbs and flows of the economy... not totally, but it doesn’t go through the swings that you see in some communities this size, and it’s a lot due to being a regional hub, those services, the University, the medical, that people have to have.

Probably the bridge and the University made Cape... or else we’d be Perryville or something.

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas in Cape, for people who live here? Where do they go for everyday household goods?

Mostly the west, now that it’s the new developed area. We would like it to be downtown. There are people that will look for niche shops, and that’s where I feel the downtown can be revitalized, because that’s what other downtowns are doing, and I’ve traveled quite a bit to look at what other downtowns are doing, and the smaller specialty shops, people will drive to those places, and in Cape, it’s not that hard to get around town.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment? What are popular choices for residents and visitors?

They always want to see the river. I mean, the people like it. I’ve lived here my whole life, and it’s no big deal, but everybody else wants to see the Mississippi. If you go down there, there’s a continual tourists walking down to look at the river. It’s a shame they had to put up that floodwall years ago, but it had to be done. (unintelligible)... we got a music store, an arts and crafts center, jewelry stores, some specialty ladies clothing, that kind of thing is what’s going on. We’ve got one shoe store left downtown, lot of antique shops, lots of them. Restaurants, too many college bars, in my opinion.

Few too many pool halls.

Yeah.

I think we can still have a good balance. I think it’s good to have a little bit of nightlife, and it would be nice if there were a few more restaurants downtown. The people that I deal with, they come to Cape for the first time, and I have a lot of customers that come

from small towns. They like to go to something different, instead of a chain restaurant. They like going to a local restaurant, and I always tell them to go to (name unintelligible) restaurant, because they like to go somewhere that's local-owned.

It's funny that you say small areas, because my friends from urban areas, I take them downtown because they don't care what's happening out west, because they have all that.

(many people agreeing.)

Well, going to the river, and walking around, getting a cup of coffee, that's what our friends from larger cities like.

That's what they're looking for is the charm, the quaintness, the things that a downtown can represent, because it has some architectural distinctions that, you know, and other things that make it a draw.

Moderator: Let's talk about Old Town Cape in particular. I asked about the general area, but do you feel that downtown Cape is moving in the right direction?

I think it's amazing the things that Old Town Cape has accomplished. There was a time when the downtown area was, not blighted, but really closing up, and I admire those downtown merchants for all that they've done, and how they've really resurrected that area. I think they've done a really great job, and we need to do more to support them.

Being one who is a 15-year veteran of the downtown merchants association, we were the same core group, 5 or 6 of us, and new specialty shops would open, and people would come to a meeting or two, but when it got down to doing the work, the auctions, the fundraising, the other things, it was just like 6 or 7 or 8 of us, more than that actually, but they kept the thing going. And then, we basically experienced a little bit of burnout. Everybody was, you know, some of these people have been doing it longer than I have, and so, when the River Campus thing started going and the bridge started going and the University got more interested in the Main Street program, and having a healthier downtown... when that all... when that all kicked in, we had three big things happen. We had the River Campus, we had a new bridge, and we had the federal building. And we also had the Marquette redevelopment, of that old hotel, which was very very close to the wrecking ball...so...

Those things helped change attitudes, I think. Then people started noticing, well, they started looking at downtown closer, I think.

If it hadn't have been for Charlie Hudson and my late uncle Bill Shivelbein and Marty Hech and some of the other people, I don't know what it would look like downtown.

(many people agreeing.)

There's definitely a tipping point, where all of these things are now starting to, it's an opportune time to sort of... that's why I referred to it as an upswing. I did feel like it got to where it could have gone the wrong direction, but it hasn't.

That's about the time I came to town, when it was at its bottom, but you're right. It was those folks that held it, and they may have held it for 10 years, keeping it from tipping the other way. But you're right, it's just built up, and it gives you some anchors to help those anchors that were there for so many years...

(many people talking at once.)

Are you all familiar with what they call a downtown redevelopment? They passed that in 75, 76, whenever, they got a six-block area... Main and Spanish...and they more or less added another 50% of their property tax. That went into the redevelopment fund, which had to be used expressly in that area for physical improvements. That's how we got the clock, and the brick sidewalks, and the cast iron park benches and trash cans and all that. All that's from redevelopment, and taxation on that area.

Wow.

...so hats off to those people for doing that.

You bet.

...and then, there's also, and a lot of people don't know this, and this truly an unfair thing. They have to pay an extra amount of tax because of the floodwall.

Is that a Missouri State law?

No. What happened was, when they built the floodwall, if the river gets up high enough, then they've got a pumping station that has to pump water out, or else it'll fill up like a bathtub. It'd be like, the sewer systems would back up, so they're assessed so much per square foot in that flood plain area that they have to pay, and that's been going on for years and years. What makes it unfair is the west, the town plaza people and all that, they got 5 or 6 million or whatever it was to put in all that project, and there was no assessments or anything to the property owners. So there's a little background.

Have you talked about the recent development downtown? Sorry I'm late. Have you already talked about Buckner's reopening, and Renaissance growing larger, and antique district developing, and the new lofts, and the shopping redone for law offices... there's been a lot of rehab. I've only lived in Cape now 12 years, but there's been a lot that's happened in the last 6, 7, 8 years downtown. I agree with you, Shivelbein's, Hech's, and Hudson's really helped.

The Old Town Cape has been really great, because it's been, rather than just, it was always just us downtown guys, and now we've got University people, people from the hospital, a whole diverse group from the different regions, so it helps. New blood. New enthusiasm.

Moderator: Let's talk about the Broadway area of downtown in particular. Would you say that's moving in the right or the wrong direction?

I think there's still a lot of work that needs to be done. There's a lot of buildings that look run-down. I don't think it has advanced quite as well as Main Street has. Except for my section and your section.

My section hasn't advanced!

Well, it looks good. Part of that is just maintenance on buildings. If the owners maintain them... but a lot of buildings aren't maintained. I have Garden Gallery, and basically, it's 4 buildings together.

I guess if you get past the 300 block, it starts to get looking a little rough. We're in the 400 block right now. Not the whole block, but parts of it. And then, the 500 block, you've got... there's some rough shops, there's a video rental store with adult videos, that type of stuff, which is not a positive.

(many people laughing.)

...and then there's tattoo parlors and that kind of stuff. We've got a couple of those. And then, when you get about to the 700 block or 800 block, then it starts picking up again, because it goes towards the University, so there's kind of some bad and good and... 400 to 800, I guess.

There's some gems mixed in with some duds.

Most universities, that strip right outside the University has a Gap and coffee shops and all the things that college kids want, all in one strip, so it's kind of like, I mean, we're not completely in that market...

I haven't figured out why Cape doesn't have something like that closer to the campus, because there's buildings that could be used that way, because I recently was at Fayetteville, Arkansas, and it's awesome how the campus, it just goes right into the downtown merchant area. Lots of places to eat, lots of nightlife, and it looks nice, and I just thought it would be nice if Cape had more of a connection with retail, I guess, catering to college students.

Moderator: In the Broadway area, what's the perception of the area? What positive things do people see, and what negative things?

I hear negative about Broadway, to be honest. From out-of-towners who come back into Cape, they go, "Broadway looks kinda rough." I hear that.

(many people agreeing)

Now, when they went through high school, Broadway was happening, and now...

What was on there? I mean, what kind of stores were there?

Well, the Rialto Broadway...

Oh, the theaters.

Yeah, the theaters were all there.

You had jewelry stores, men's stores, drugstores. You had restaurants, you had a grocery store where Dollar General was, an old shopper's warehouse, the first Baptist Church was still going then...

Back then, Broadway was the main street. And everybody would drive up and down Broadway, cruising. It was a cruising thing. And it's not that anymore. So, there's that, you know, change.

(many people talking at once.)

I think it does look rough, and a lot of pieces, I think that the good things that have happened recently, with the widening of Broadway, with the University building our gateway there to reach out and connect, you know, I think that's one of the biggest things, we finally reached out enough to the point where the community kind of have to come to us. We said, "Here we are." I think that's big. And I think redoing Halk, making it look nicer, or the First Baptist Church, and the look of that is going to change that pretty significantly...so I think there's, not as big as the bridge and all that, but that's kind of a place to grow and then connect to (unintelligible).

I agree. It's a more impressive entranceway to Broadway, to the downtown area. It's nice.

And now that the hospital has finished their part, I think for the people who come into town from the north, a lot of them come from Cape County Park exit, and they come down Broadway, and I think it's impressive. From a new perspective, it looks nice, when you drive and you see the park, the green, you know, like most towns would appreciate

the fact that there's a park in the middle of the town, and I think that's all a plus. Visually, it's very nice-looking, and... but I think there's still a lot of work from the University to the river on Broadway that needs to be improved.

Yeah, it's a lot of work.

There's so many great things like Gray's Café, and it's doing well, and it's like, that's the clientele, the students and the faculty go there, and push around a little bit the kind of...

I noticed a building on the 500 block that they're doing pointing on the brick. They were doing it today.

The 600 block.

Okay. But there's a bar there, and there aren't that many bars on Broadway except for close to the University...

I understand that that was bought by somebody in St. Louis. They own the two buildings and the bar, and they basically bought, I guess, the half block.

Wouldn't it be neat if...I'm thinking about, around universities, and you know, I've traveled to different universities, and they have these cool streets. Sometimes they're business incubators, though, for, let's try an idea, a modern furniture store, a design idea, something a little unusual, in this lower-cost square footage and see who's interested in it. I mean, I'd love to see that happen.

I think eventually that can happen.

I'd like to see really nice apartments on Broadway, too, on the upper floors on those buildings, so it becomes a cool place to live, and it's close to the University, and you might get students, people who want to walk to do things and not have to rely on a car all the time.

I think the people that own the buildings there would be much happier about doing that. A lot of people I've talked with would like to do that, but it's very difficult, because on a building that we did a couple years ago, we pretty much, well, we redid the whole building except for the concrete floor and the concrete walls that divides four units, but we spent probably a hundred thousand more than what the bank, or the appraiser, would appraise it for, because there's no comps in downtown for new buildings, so they could only appraise it according to old building prices, and so basically, we spend a hundred thousand more fixing the building up than we could get a loan for, and since we had other property, we were able to make that work, but that's a huge negative, because we would love to buy other buildings on Broadway and fix them up, but not at that kind of negative. You know, I know that in other towns, like Paducah, they actually have loans

for what it costs to fix it up, and I fought with appraisers in town, and I've had to go to different ones, because I cannot get a decent appraiser to appraise a property, and if we've spent 150-200 thousand, it should worth more than 140.

Moderator: I want to hear you all talk more about these issues, but let me ask you a couple more questions about how the Broadway area stands as it is today. What are the main reasons that people use that area of downtown? What sorts of businesses are there?

The music store, the newspaper, the restaurants, bars.

The government offices.

Places to go for lunch.

The license bureau, I mean, the courthouse, the small business innovation center at the University, the Baptist Church...

Antique stores. I mean, that has been a big change in the last few years.

I get my hair cut there.

Because I know dealers from small towns all around are basically buying booth space at the antique stores downtown, and they used to have shops maybe 50 miles from here, but say an antique dealer in Dexter has chosen to instead put in a booth in downtown Cape, because by clustering together, it makes it easier for all of them to sell antiques, because people will come and just go up and down the streets looking for certain items.

(unintelligible)...but that's really downtown, not just Broadway.

Moderator: So is Broadway the kind of place that people would come for one business and go elsewhere, or is a browsing kind of a place?

It's goal-oriented. If they're going to come to a music store, we're the only music store in town, so...

It's a really good one, too.

(many people talking at once.)

I don't hear people saying they're browsing on Broadway, but I hear people are doing that on Main. I think it's a goal to move it there...

I would only go to a specific place on Broadway.

And that is the negative that it has compared to Main Street, because Main Street is set up to where you can, in a two block walk, see a lot of shops, and Broadway is more spread out, but it doesn't have enough things that are clustered or together.

Do you all agree that we need for the Main Street area to fill up more in the buildings, to where there's not room to open up a new beauty parlor or a specialty shop, to where people will move here? If you were to open one, would you not want to be in the Main Street area? I think the more that the main street area is healthy, the better that will be for Broadway, as the spinoff.

But Broadway's cheaper square footage.

Main Street is cheaper.

Really?

(side conversation.)

...Main Street is the cheapest rent in town, and... the further you get to Kingshighway, the higher the square footage. The going rate for our area, we're getting 6 to 8.

You have new buildings.

They're not new buildings, but we've remodeled them.

Moderator: How user-friendly is the Broadway area? Parking, navigation, signage? How easy is it for people to use?

I think the parking's good on Broadway. Again, I'm a consumer, not an owner, but I never have trouble parking. Of course, there aren't many stores, but there's street parking and parking lots on Broadway that make it easy to park.

Parking's not a deterrent for me down here. I can't speak for everybody else, but on Broadway, I don't think it's a problem.

Moderator: How about business hours? Are they convenient for what people use Broadway for?

I think so. I mean, I'm open until 5:00, you're open...

9-5.

I mean, we don't really, I mean, we just, I mean, the times that I tried to be open longer, nobody's come in, so there has not been, I know that in Old St. Charles, you know,

there's lots of activity on Sunday. Well, there's not in our area. But I would consider it, if I felt like there were other stores doing it. Right now, I think the only thing open on Sunday downtown is the antique stores and the restaurants.

You know, it's hard for people who work to go shop, and to buy.

(many people talking at once.)

... especially if you work 5 or 6 days a week, and stay late.

But even 6 would help. I know a lot of places get out early here, but, I don't know.

I've sent out cards that've said, "I'm going to stay open," and not one person walks in the door. There's still too much of an attitude that everything closes at 5, so even if we try—there's a few on Main Street are doing it, but they have a little bit better way of doing that. I don't feel like I can do that. I'd be glad to stay open til 6, but I just don't feel like I can pay an employee to be there when nobody walks in the door.

I think your comment about there needs to be more people that're doing that, so people know...

Yeah, and that's where, with Old Town Cape and what used to be the Downtown Merchants, if we can get enough people that are willing to work together towards that, we can eventually make those changes, you know, if it's going to help the retail business side.

Moderator: Is it easy for people to find what they're looking for in the Broadway area?

Yeah, I would say it is.

Yeah.

I mean, it's just one street in a particular part of downtown.

I think because it's goal-oriented, that people go there with something in mind, so you know you can get it, that's why you go there. I go because I know there are things I want, and that's where to go.

And other places that are like mine, a crafts gallery, they will say they've become a destination, whether it's Old Town, Eureka, Missouri, the art gallery in Downtown Columbia or Springfield, I mean, they all become a destination because they offer something unique, and that's why I feel like if we can have more specialty shops, we will change and grow in a positive way.

Moderator: Thinking about downtown more broadly, how do residents and visitors get information about what's going on downtown, whether that's things businesses might be doing, or special events?

Tip off, probably. Tip off. I don't think, I mean, it's basically going to talk about what's going on in Cape that month. I don't know if a lot of people go pick it up.

We have those in our stores.

Do people pick them up?

Yeah.

I think that, since it's a monthly publication by the newspaper, I think that's one way of, you know, it'll talk about, then in May we're going to have the Tunes at Twilight start up, and that's been a very growing, positive thing, because it used to have several hundred people, and last year, I think, they had one of the outdoor concerts, and I think 500, they broke a new record, and the average attendance has gone up tremendously, so those things are all written up in Tip Off.

The Friday paper talks about all the art, entertainment, music, whatever's going on.

Those things are listed on the (unintelligible, many people talking at once)... we have a calendar of events.

The problem is a lot of people even in Cape don't pay for the newspaper. A lot of younger people that are busy with children or whatever, because I've heard many of them say well, they don't get the paper. That's how you find out what's going on. But...

The paper's looking for positive things to talk about.

Yeah.

...and something that's happening, rather than, you know, all the negative, negative, negative, so they love when positive things are happening downtown, and they've been giving it a lot of press. Generally positive.

Yeah.

But I think even they are concentrating on going towards the web contacts with people, because people tend to be buying less subscriptions, and the younger age consumers are more web-oriented, so I think that it's a good plan on their part to go more that direction. My daughter's a graphic designer for the newspaper, and they're doing a lot more things that, um, they're trying new ways to reach the young audience that they wouldn't otherwise connect with.

Moderator: We've talked a lot about where downtown is right now, and I'd like to talk about where downtown is going. As you know, the city is working through the DREAM Initiative to put together a strategic plan for downtown. Thinking ahead, what kinds of businesses would you like to see in the downtown area?

Just on Broadway, or in general?

Moderator: Generally downtown.

Restaurants. I feel like when the River Campus is actually open, and when the courthouse is actually open, there's going to be a much greater need for lunch places, and so I hope that that will happen.

I'd like to see a Panera Bread sort of a place, a bagel coffee place, or something like that. Breakfast.

An art supply store. Having an art supply store, a Cape Art Mart or something...

I'd like to see modern furniture. Not traditional. Modern. I want clean... I would just like to see it. It's hard to find it in Cape.

There's a neat one in downtown Springfield.

Uh-huh.

Moderator: What other kinds of things do you think would be a good fit for downtown Cape?

I think, when we remodeled several of our buildings, we immediately leased to a barbershop and a hairdresser or whatever they call it, and I think that those types of shops are great because people tend to, their clients tend to come wherever they are. They don't have to be in an expensive part of town, because their clients will drive wherever that person is, so I feel like that would be great, if we had more of that. But I also as soon that, a lot of attorneys, there seems to be a trend that they're moving their offices downtown because that will be convenient for them.

We could use a real supermarket, too. Right now, we have Sav-A-Lot. That's it.

A lot of people, Dollar General put in on Broadway, they have food items and just basic things.

And there's a little corner store here too.

I think that would be good, if there was kind of like a quick shop kind of thing that, cause a lot of people that, well, there used to be a problem with people that got off the boats, that there wasn't any place to get a bottle of water or a soda, and so several of the little shops on Main Street put a soda machine in, but I think it would be nice if there was a quick shop type person, type thing, that's closer to the river.

I think public restrooms need to be available.

I have a child, so I'll say a good destination type toy store or bookstore, somewhere you could bring children or that grandparents could buy, a really nice place, upscale type of thing.

On Broadway, it seems like what you were saying earlier about the types of positive college connections, that consider having everything (unintelligible noise), have some things that connect to college life, and it's more positive...

Books.

Maybe it is a place where you get a bagel and a coffee...

A place to buy CDs... I think the students would really like to not have to go to the mall every time, the students housed on campus.

Moderator: Are there other kinds of dining or nightlife you think would be a good fit for downtown Cape?

I think we've got enough nightlife, I mean, unless it's upscale dining or lunch, that would be good. You know... Hech's is going to be another bar. And the conflict has been that all of the bars, none of them belong to Old Town Cape, and they're a problem with the trash and the vandalism that has occurred, and they're basically, I mean, you spend 6, 7, 8 thousand dollars a year on trash pickup, and that is mainly their trash that all the other businesses are paying to clean up, and they're not contributing to the cleanup. They don't have to be.

It's a voluntary thing to join Old Town Cape.

Port Cape belongs, and maybe Ragsdale's, but a bunch of other ones don't, pool halls, I don't think we need those, too. So, anyway...I think we've got enough bars.

I'd like to see more ethnic restaurants, not just Saffron, but something Korean or Ethiopian or Indian. I know we have the Global Café, but I'd love to see that, and I think they'll do well as a lunch thing, with what's coming in to downtown.

Moderator: What kinds of things, as far as residential development, would you like to see downtown?

(many people talking at once.)

I think it would be nice to have a lot of the upstairs made into nicer apartments and lofts and...we have considered doing some of that to some of our buildings, but there's still the problem of getting it financed.

(noise, unintelligible.)

Existing places with apartments above them, they were grandfathered in, but when there's an ownership change, you have to bring it up to code.

I think that was, I lived in St. Louis, and (noise, unintelligible)... how to get St. Louis downtown going, but the one thing that struck me when I went to Chicago is down there, 8 in the morning, all these kids come out of there, backpacks on, and it was just a different, you know, you don't get any of that in St. Louis, and I think residential is really a great thing, a great goal, it's very difficult, but it takes a lot, you know, it's a long haul... You know, thinking differently, because you can't apply codes for these huge lots, it's very difficult, but I do think it's really... long-term vital, I mean...

(noise, unintelligible.)

They changed their opinion (many people talking at once)...

And a problem that we had where it was four units, four different storefronts with the same roof, and the first unit put in the electric (noise, unintelligible), even though we already had a building permit, they made us put in new things, even though we had put new things into place, and it increased our cost in remodeling the other three, even though it passed for a building permit. I felt like once we got a building permit, it should have been at the codes set then, not just because they voted in changes.

Moderator: What about the look and feel of downtown? Street repair, lighting, the look of buildings? What sort of improvements do you think need to be made downtown?

Well, we've already said that there's façade work that needs to happen, especially on Broadway. A lot is going on on Main Street. There are some rehab apartments and new condos built, but, I mean, people I know are concerned about living downtown because the bars are so loud so late, so who wants to live on Main Street and have to hear that and deal with those issues? If I was going to live there myself, I would prefer to live in the city center, but I would rather live on Broadway than live near the bars on Main Street, for example.

A consistent look and feel is very desirable and very important. The things you talked about, about down Main Street, it's the same brick walk and that consistent throughout, it really begins to tie things together.

Moderator: What about things like landscaping or green space?

More green space would be good.

Some green spaces, trees. There was sort of rapid anti-tree movement here a few years ago, and they just came through and hacked down trees because they didn't like the way the sidewalks look. Look, you don't hack down trees, you fix the sidewalk, you know, so they did that maybe ten years ago. I know they had to widen William, but they took down a beautiful row of trees by Indian Park there. I'd like to see more trees and attention to that, especially in a place that's as hot as it is here.

Moderator: We've talked about different kinds of improvements for downtown. What are your top priorities for downtown, in terms of keeping it moving in the right direction?

I think that we need money for façades. Even if they don't fix the inside that much, because if they even just fix up the façade, that would make a different impression.

Well, I wish that, and this is a wish because it's going to be difficult, but you know, they've got a lot of money to put in sidewalks and all kinds of things with a whole bunch of dilapidated buildings, and it hasn't done any good, but I think that for Broadway anyway, for it to see a beautification, it's going to take more than getting the Old Town Cape or the property (unintelligible), it's going to have to take some money from the city or some kind of grant or something to help... I mean, there's a few things you could do, plant a few trees, but those trash cans are \$800 apiece, and the park benches are expensive, and it's very expensive to put in those brick sidewalks and that kind of stuff.

The trash cans, pretty much, we have to pick up trash. We actually have a parking lot behind our buildings, and we have, and there's not even a bar close, but we still have beer bottles and trash and just, you know, it's always, you know, it's like every day you go to work, you have to look around for stuff that's left by somebody, whether it's Styrofoam cups or whatever. It would be nice if we actually had the \$800 trash cans, and they're made out of concrete and they're supposed to be indestructible, if, I think that would help, I think that would help on Main Street, if, we do have some there, and it would help up and down Broadway too, because I think people would throw their trash away, I mean, some of em won't, but some of em would, if there's a place for it, designated place.

From listening to your conversation about the appraisal issues and the regulation issues and the things that stand in your way of doing renovations on these buildings, I'm wondering if that's not a target for work, to try to bring these things more to really let the older parts of town develop.

It seems like there should be incentives to encourage people to upgrade the buildings and have it be a place that people want to invest in. If there were some incentives that the city could offer or something...

There have been issues with the building permit office for a long time. They're aware about that. But I guess they're trying to fix it, but it's not fixed yet, so...

But that and the appraiser and the loan agent and, you know, there needs to be a package that works together, just from listening to you guys talk.

I went to the Main Street conference in Paducah, Kentucky three years ago, and that's why it's working there, because the people that came up with the idea were the bankers and the downtown people, the building permit people, the people that had that say as to what happens, and there, some of the lots were donated to the artists that moved there. They might have paid a dollar for a lot. And we've toured those places, we toured the lofts, and some of the houses, they spent like 150 to refurbish a house that was, they bought for 5000. You know, so, it just makes sense, they're building up the property, it's going to be worth more, but they got 100% loans. They're not doing that here. It's a big problem.

It sounds like we have a one-size-fits-all approach, and that doesn't work for downtown redevelopment and rehabbing historic buildings and that sort of thing. Is that a proper assessment?

It would be nice if we have all of the right people working together on the same team. Then, I just feel like it can happen, it does happen, but I think that there's been, for some reason, things that have kept it from being as compatible, working organization. And I also know that they make exceptions, in other downtown, they just tend to make exceptions because if you don't, if you go just by the rules, then you're going to change some of the historical look of the buildings by making it up to code. Other downtowns have exceptions and a relaxed attitude, because they still want the history, the architecture, to be kept from being compromised. They wanted me to enclose my curved stairway with a fireproof door at the top and bottom, for fire safety, and luckily I appealed it, and won, but that would've cost me a huge amount of money, and it would've taken away the look of the history of the building that's over 100 years old to have the curved stairway with a metal fireproof door at the top and bottom. In Paducah, they had open stairways, and they were not making it a necessity to enclose the stairway. Here, they want every stairway enclosed. It just takes away the look. I think they had a problem there at the Dalhousie.

I bet they did.

Hech's is going to be a problem, too. And what about the Buckners?

They all had, you know, so, I don't know what they're going to be forced to do, but I know that it was a problem for me, and that was only four years ago.

Moderator: Thinking about the Broadway area in particular, how do you see that as relating to the downtown as a whole? Do you see that as something distinct from downtown, do you see it as an integral part of downtown, or ways that it could be?

I see it as distinct. I see a different clientele for Broadway and it's potential, and I think they could be the same people, but I just think that the sort of eclectic, funky things that I think could be right next to a university are a little different than the more sort of traditional things that I think will work on Main Street. I think that stores like Renaissance, I mean, it's like, that's a different kind of, you know, we just have different styles, so, I mean, it could be different, it could have a different feel, and still kind of move into it, but there's potential...

I think that public transportation system, when the River Campus opens, is going to tie these pieces together more. Students, however they're going to run the route... they could think about that in the planning of how that bus trip is going to go, to pull things together.

I hope that that could happen, that the shuttle, there would be a way to stop, get on and and off...

(many people talking at once. Background noise.)

I think that people in Cape would get used to it. See, a newcomer coming into town, he's driving down Broadway, he goes by the park, the fantastic hospital, this four-lane road, then 1600 block right there, that looks good, and then it deteriorates, you know, once you get past Blimpie's... it starts to deteriorate and starts picking up again. We've got this rough zone, and that's still going to have an impression on visitors... to me, that's one of the worst, you know, as far as empty stores... and no specialty shops.

What if some of those old storefronts were converted into townhouses. I mean, think of Georgetown, or Philadelphia, those row houses. What if we made some of that part, and I'm just pie in the sky here, tell me if I'm wrong, but what if that was row houses? They could be townhouses, they could be, you know, that valley if you will between commercially productive area, turn that into residential, that would be cool...

I think that could work.

You mean, like, kind of like in the same block as the Garden Gallery?

Well, past that, past the green roof place, but you know where the old reptile store is? That kind of place. Maybe turn that one to apartments, maybe take some of the other ones that are long, narrow storefronts, and turn them into, I don't know, turn them into townhouses or duplexes or urban residential dwelling, without the commercial there at the street level. I don't know if that's a good idea, or...

I like that idea.

If you're a residence, you'd have an easier time getting a variance to a residence...you feel like you have to protect that.

I mean, I don't know if that's feasible with the population of Cape.

I mean, you're not talking about hundreds of people, you're talking about a few people that say, "Yeah, I like that."

That does allow the critical mass to focus on Main Street and other areas that they do need to fill.

But it would put more people on the street.

Moderator: The last thing I wanted to ask you was what your thoughts might be on a new or modified special business district with an additional property or sales tax earmarked to provide services for downtown.

Would it be a citywide tax?

Moderator: I'm asking specifically about a special downtown business district within the downtown area.

So, kind of like a hotel or restaurant tax, or whatever, a specialty tax only for the shops and our area?

Moderator: Sure. It would be defined in a particular geographic area of downtown.

Is the profit margin big enough to support that?

Most startup businesses will start downtown, and they're struggling just to begin with.

I think we need more incentives to encourage people to open businesses downtown, and to me, a tax might be a deterrent to that.

Yeah.

I think prior to encouraging people to go down there, the façade work and doing some of that stuff maybe with other funding, I mean, I would be willing to pay tax to see downtown become, if it made that space attractive, you know...

If you were a business owner there?

No, I mean, as a citizen, I would be willing to pay a tax to see that area... which is not what your question was.

It would hurt some and help others. I don't think it would, like if you raised a half a point for Bella Italia, people would still come down there to eat, or New Orleans or Mollie's or the Marquette, but most of us are already facing Internet competition. There is no sales tax, and we're 7 and a half right now, and to take it up to 8...

Yeah, that would...

It may not affect Linda's business, because she's got specialty items there, and I don't know how much shipping she has, but...it's got pros and cons.

If you did something that allowed you more incentive, where it said, "Okay, the first three or four or five years, we're going to drop your tax, try to get you started."

We can't do sales at all.

But if you had something that said, "You can make a portion of your tax or all of it in the first two or three years, but you have to show you invest it in the types of things like the amenities and the façade, and if you do those things, you can use that money." By doing that, you're going to add long-term to the tax base of the city, and it's a good investment for them, so that way, you're really just saying, "Okay, we're going to give you an incentive to come down, use that tax money that you would be paying to improve yourself and the downtown area," and then hopefully they'll thrive.

The remodeling that we did, we did whatever was required of us, and it was, I mean, we were happy to do that, because we feel like it made the property more desirable, and we had no trouble granting it, and we actually attracted tenants. One was a new business, but one of them came from Town Plaza, so if we have properties that are fixed up, I think there will be more people move their business to downtown, if it's the type of business that fits in well with that setting, because they're just as willing, if it's a nice building, to go ahead and rent for a lesser amount.

Moderator: Thank you.

SECTION III

RIVERFRONT AREA DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

My name Kent Zigfield, and I own Zigfield's Jewelry, and we've been in business downtown since 1939. I'm a lifelong resident of the town, high school, college, and I raised my family here.

Hi, I'm Deb Mavers, and I have Pastimes Antiques downtown, and I grew up in the rival town of Jackson.

My name's Barry Robinson, (unintelligible shop name) and we've lived here since 1994.

Brenda Newborne, Mid-America hotels is where I work, went to high school here, college here, and lived here all my life.

My name's Natalie Sandibar, and I'm a social worker here in town. I've been in Cape about 4 years, so I'm kind of new to the area.

I'm Diane Reilly, and I'm with the Historic Preservation Interior Design students, and this is my home away from home for 4 years.

I'm Katrina Powell, and I have lived here a total of 8 years now, 4 years for college, moved back, and I live downtown and I'm Rich's fiancé, and you'll understand once he says who he is.

My name's Rich Downey, and I've been in downtown Cape for a little over 8 years now, and I own 116 Bemis, which is between the clock and the courthouse. I work for the City of Cape, and I do all the mapping.

Mark Derenberger, Bella Italia, been in town all my life, about 25 years... (laughter)

I'm Alex Ogburne, and I moved to town a little over 2 years ago, and I work at one of the hospitals here in town.

I'm Brandy (name unintelligible), I work at Broadway Prescriptions South, it's in the downtown district, and I've lived in Cape about 7 years.

I'm Jeff Martin... (unintelligible)...we've been in town about 10 years.

I'm Judith Ann Lange, my husband and I own Lange Jewelers, which has been around since 1916. Very involved in the Old Town Cape area for a long time. I moved here from Chicago in 1977.

Moderator: As I mentioned, we'd like to talk about the downtown area, and the riverfront area in particular, but before we do that, I'd like to hear about Cape Girardeau in general. How would you describe this town to somebody from outside the area or somebody who was thinking about moving here?

It's a great place to live, raise a family, raise your children. It has a lot of amenities, and yet it's close enough to the big city that you can go up there... well, pretty soon, you won't have to go up there for (unintelligible)...

In my capacity at St. Francis, I recruit doctors, and what has rung true time and time again with all of these families is that Cape is so much more than what you expect for a town of 35,000. Superior healthcare, nice sized university, the school systems are great, and this is a family-oriented community, and those are the people, I think, that tend to be the lifers in Cape. There's enough to do, the restaurants are great, I think the town's really the character of what's going on. More than anything else, that driving force, that you still kind of have that Southern, friendly feel, but you kind of have that Midwestern work ethic, and that resonates with a lot of people. So, Cape is a very unique town. I think its friendliness is what brings people here, but the amenities are just as important.

In my line of business, I talk to people out of town, tour groups and that type of thing... the big city amenities but the small town feel is what we usually hear when we talk to them about the area.

Moderator: Generally speaking, is Cape Girardeau going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right direction.

Mixed.

I would say, if we all felt that Cape Girardeau was going in the right direction, we wouldn't be having this meeting. There's a lot of different viewpoints about the whole city. My personal opinion from living in town, being 75 years old...we used to be a town caught between St. Louis and Memphis, the safe small town to bring your kids to to grow up... we have the growing pains of...St. Louis has grown, Memphis has grown, the cities have grown. Jackson's grown, Scott City's grown... we're coming to a different realm here, and we're starting our own metropolis sort of thing, and we're kind of getting lost where we're at. We try to do things from a big city point, doesn't work out, we get blamed for doing that... a lot of people in town are trying some different things. If it doesn't work out, we get blamed for it, and if it does work out, it's like "holy crap, that's great!" That's the deal! We want to see Cape grow, we're scared to death of what's happening to us, and please, anybody, butt in. SEMO is doing some great work. We deal with everything that goes along with it, though. We got the west part of town growing so fast, the south part trying to grow, the north part of town going to Jackson...a

lot of things going on in the last 10 years, although Cape has been a city to sit back and say, "Wait 5 years." Most downtown operators buy into downtown, but here we are, and the town is growing, and we have this conception about, "Okay, here we are." All the restaurants in town, all the mall things, all the new strip malls coming in, it's a big thing happening.

My grandmother used to tell me "be careful what you wish for," and I think that can apply to this. We want growth, but, you know, along with growth comes...we don't want to become a big city. We want to keep that small town feel. I think you have to just be careful with planning the growth.

We want to grow in the right areas.

And that's hard to do, to say, "We want to grow in this area," supporting downtown and things that aren't just a bunch of new strip malls...

I think the thing we have to be careful about, though, is people in the past have had certain agendas and wanted to see their agenda pushed forward. We live downtown, in the residential area, and through the course of time, they have created such a mess. I just found out today that we live in a commercial zone. Who knew that right behind City Hall was commercial? But it is. You know, we need a plan. I don't think there ever was a major plan that was stuck to. I think it was, people got on board, and "Well, I want this subdivision out here, so we're going to bend the rules to do this, do that." I think this is probably the first time in a long time where this city has looked at a plan for the whole city and said, "Okay, we can't keep doing this." We've got neighborhoods that you can do anything! You know, we have a six-flat down the street that's full of drugs, and as we're working to get the drug problem fixed, and that's a problem... I can't sweep it under the table, because it's in every town, and as they're moving west, the people out west are going, "We don't want this in our neighborhood. Put em back on the south side." I think we're finally as a community coming together and saying, "We're not going to deal with this anywhere." It's still going to take time, though.

When I look at Cape, I see a town that has had tremendous growth in its retail sector. We've added the mall, Sears Superstores, Wal-Mart Supercenters, all that type of thing, but the base population of Cape hasn't grown any, which means that the manufacturing sector, the jobs that support the retail sector, hasn't come to this area. Retail growth does not give high paying jobs. Retail jobs are traditionally modest to low paying jobs at best. We have not developed in this area the manufacturing sector to support the retail that we have, so it's made it very difficult for small-time businesses to stay in the fight, because of the fact that there isn't the population base, and the reason is that there's no good paying jobs for them. So we've got, Dana's closing up here, and that's 163 jobs going out that was good paying jobs. How do you replace that? There's nothing coming in to replace it. That's just my outside opinion on the scenario.

I work for one of the major manufacturers in the area, Rubbermaid, and we have had to fight to keep the business in Jackson, and a lot of people who live in Cape or Jackson work there. I think we employ about 500, and that's actually, hopefully growing, but as being a manufacturer in the area, we had to fight to keep our plant in Jackson from moving our business to Asia, so I agree with you.

But I think that's part of, when we talked about mixed feelings here, I think that's part of our mixed feelings, is the growth... moving into Asia, whatever, we did the same thing, like Kent was saying when they moved out west, they took all of the good neighborhood and never replaced any of it, and when the housing or businesses became bad, they tore em down, and there was nothing to replace it, it was all "go west, go west," and yet, your infrastructure is struggling. Years ago, I read a little quote about downtowns, and it's basically like a tree. If you let your roots die, your branches are going to die. We've got to keep what we have, Dana, Rubbermaid, whatever, to support the rest of this growth out west.

Moderator: Let's talk about shopping. What are the main shopping areas in town for everyday household stuff?

Wal-Mart.

(many people agreeing.)

I go up to Fred's.

(many people agreeing.)

We don't have a major store downtown. Quik-Trip is there on the west part of town.

I think people who own a small business don't go to the mass merchants. Like, we like to support the small businesses, so we tend to go to them. I mean, I love Fred's.

But Cape Girardeau as a whole, major retail stores.

As a student, I didn't have a car my freshman year, and it was awful living in Cape, so I relied on my parents coming down, and we'd take a big shopping trip.

Where did you want to go that you couldn't go?

Shopping, just... (many people talking at once). Everything was too far away, and that was awful for me, because you need to get stuff and there's no way to do it.

Whatever you say, we don't go to the big stores...I'm sorry, where do you get your food? I can only afford Wal-Mart.

Shop 'n' Save, Sav-A-Lot. Schnucks. But not Wal-Mart.

Well, I agree, but I mean, I can't afford Schnucks. I can't do that.

Do you go to Sav-A-Lot?

They don't have anything there!

Just be nice. We own Sav-A-Lot.

You own Sav-A-Lot? Well, that's fine, I'm just saying. Schnucks is on the expensive side, and Wal-Mart's on the inexpensive side, and rehabbing an apartment, I don't have money to go to Schnucks, so where am I going to go downtown to get the kind of food, drink, downtown? I really respect that little guy, that guy down there, that little corner store down there. We go down there for milk and stuff like that. But where am I going to go... I mean, I know, you guys have all the staples.

I don't think we have enough residents to support a downtown grocery store.

Then can I ask why the downtown merchants, with spacious, huge upstairs, don't improve them. And I'm not saying you guys. I would like to see more apartments downtown?

I'm telling you, we have a huge apartment over our building, and it would be great, but it would cost us an arm and a leg to come up to city codes to put an apartment up there, and it's not feasible. That's why it sits empty with storage up there. As far as, I mean...

You need residents downtown, you need people living downtown, you need people that care about it and want to clean it up. The biggest problem the city has downtown is the glass, the amount of glass, ridiculous.

We can barely walk our dog downtown. It's scary. I actually got a beer bottle through my foot once.

(many people talking at once.)

The bulk of the shopping is done in the mall, west. That's where the bulk of the shopping is done.

And that has been a trend, if you think about it.

(many people talking at once.)

Kingshighway west is where the bulk of the shopping is.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment? Where do you take people from out of town when they visit?

We have franchises and ma-and-pa places.

Any of us would take anybody we know somewhere downtown, Bella, or New Orleans, or Mollie's, or somewhere downtown.

We have connections on the outside of town, west, and they do their best...if you don't want franchise, they send them downtown. We get calls all the time, "How do you get to...?" "Where's Main Street?"

Unique places to eat that make us stand out. If you want to make people remember Cape, you send them downtown for eating, because if they eat out on the west side, it's just franchise, and that is not a unique experience.

Most outsiders come to downtown...They're impressed by the fact that we have a historic downtown, because theirs has vanished, and they say, "We've seen the west end, and it's the same as every other place in the country." I try to tell everybody, "That money doesn't stay in Cape. It goes out the next morning by transfer. The only thing you're getting is \$3.15 an hour for servers."

Moderator: Let's talk about downtown in particular. Do you feel that downtown Cape is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

It's slow.

I think it is. I've been down there for 8 years, and I've seen a lot of good things go on downtown. There's been so many businesses that have started, and there's been a lot that have failed, but if you're good, you stick, and I think that's great. I think there's a lot of people that come in downtown that think, "We'll put in something and it'll be great! Everybody will love it." But they don't have a good business plan. I think that so many people need like Small Business 101 that come in down there, because they just, they need a better plan. I've got examples, but I don't want to call anybody by name.

(many people talking at once.)

... they open, and nobody comes through the door. You just got to react in a split second.

We're caught on the brink, if you want to call it that. One day, you don't know what's going to happen, next day, it does. So you know interest's down there, but how constant it is you never know. We're just in that area where we don't have the draw, the time, we're right there, 5 years ago, Cape's always 5 years behind the major metropolises,

sometimes 10 years, but it's kind of catching up to us, but it's not, but the downtown owners, we believe in the theory that things are going to happen in 5 years, and some of us have been there for 5 years and say, when's the next 5 years coming, but there's enough going on to keep us alive.

That's an interesting thing, though, because we've been down there coming up 5 years now, and the downtown merchants are a real stubborn group.

NO! *Really?* (laughter.)

That's worked to their benefit, though. They've been very resilient, but I think on the part that it's a little bit scary, is I think that it's a real fragile financial group. I think there are a lot of merchants... well, we could not live on what we make in our store if we weren't both realtors, too, but I think that there are a lot of folks that their finances, like you say, there's, they don't know whether they're coming or they're not coming, and I think there's a lot of folks who are doing a lot of good things down there, but the scary part is that I think there are a lot of folks that are one bad Christmas season away from saying, "This just didn't work."

There's a fine line between failure and success.

Absolutely. I don't think that there are a plethora of downtown merchants that are making money. I think that there's a lot of downtown merchants that are making a living, and they work ungodly hours, but they're not getting rich downtown. That's a little bit of a concern.

Well, but I don't think that's germane just to Cape Girardeau. I think if you look at any community where there's a downtown with small gift shops, unless they're a major tourist destination like Kimswick or St. Charles, I think owning a small gift shop or a store that sells lower-end goods, not furniture, not jewelry, it's becoming that's a hobby, that's a second income, that's not the first income anymore. Used to be, I mean, when Kent's dad started and all that, that was, downtown was the only place to shop. They were making a killing, and now it's not the only place to shop, and you're competing, so Cape, I think, we're trying to draw some of that tourist income, because that's going to help all of us, I mean, like you said, they don't want to go out to the west end to eat. They want to come downtown, to see the real Cape Girardeau, where it all began. I think, a lot of times we miss the boat by being stubborn or whatever and not developing more of what we have downtown, and a lot of it comes from the community. I think everybody gets stuck in their little corner. I mean, I lived out in the west end, and my first husband worked at Thorngate, and we never came past West End Boulevard. And now, I live downtown, and I don't go past West End Boulevard. I think you tend to live in your little bubble, and it's what you get used to, whether it be shopping at Wal-Mart...you don't know what else is out there. But having a small store is definitely a challenge, and as downtowns become "the place to be," those rents are going higher. Well, when you're selling \$1.75 cards or an \$8 bottle of wine or whatever, and you're paying a rent of \$750 or \$1000 a month, there's no take-home pay.

If you look at this city, and you look at the blend of businesses, the corporate stores and the franchise stores have a tendency to go to the west end. Very few of the so-called retail establishments that are individually owned are on the west end of town. People who are the little guy, the little husband and wife that own their own business, have a tendency to go from Kingshighway east, and the reason is because you can rent for less money, you can operate for less money, and you can start for less money, but you also have a higher rate of failure with those people, because those are the people who have the least amount of money behind it, so if you have a bad year or two, you're out of business, where corporate stores are, "So what? We had a bad year." When you have little mom and pop, if they can't make a living out of it, they have to close their doors. I think that's why you see in the downtown area more, because your startup costs are less. You can rent a building for \$500 dollars.

I look at the downtown area, and I say, look at me. I'm in my 30's, have kids, work too many hours...why should I ever go downtown? (unintelligible)... it's not to be just myself, but my friends, we come downtown for entertainment, so in that perspective, Tunes at Twilight, the restaurant, the offerings, success comes with entertainment. I think the area is lacking in having enough offerings that would draw people downtown. All the other successful downtowns I've been a part of, they're really vibrant during the day, and they have nothing at night. And here, we kind of have that converse problem. For me, things are going well, if you ask me, but the real future is going to come with attracting tourists.

What makes those little towns vibrant during the day?

They don't have a west end, most of em.

If you fly into Dallas, you fly over a town called Grapevine.

Grapevine's over 100,000 people.

It's populated area now, but they've put architectural restrictions on historic buildings, and they've maintained their character. You look at Galveston, Texas...

That's like comparing us to Laclede's Landing, you know, right in the middle of a metropolitan area.

What draws people down there?

Laclede's? There's nothing there during the day. It's all nightclubs.

Talking about, there's specialty candy stores, there's different types of barbershops with spa services, you just have a variety of different mixes of businesses.

...you need to have a diverse business mix. It can't just be jewelry, furniture, restaurants. You have to have things during the day, in order to keep people coming.

That's a Catch-22, because you have to have people coming down to have the businesses supported, but you have to have businesses to get people to come down. So which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Moderator: What about the Riverfront Area of downtown in particular? Are things going in the right direction there?

Are you talking about the actual river?

Moderator: The Riverfront Area.

Inside the wall, on the other side of the wall? The park?

From what I hear, I think that's headed in a very positive direction, especially with the things they're doing with walking trails and cleaning it up. You can only go sit there so many times. Until there's more to do. Now, if they start getting the bike trails that are possibilities, and if they have the walking area wider... I mean, I like how they cleaned it up, and it's come a long way, but there's still... it's just a riverfront.

(many people talking at once.)

I go walking on the river everyday, because I live down here. When you get on the other side of the river, you can forget about everything on the other side of the wall.

But there's only so far you can walk.

(many people talking at once.)

My point is to get more residents into the downtown area. Then you'd have more activity downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

So if I come, there's a little something to do, something active.

If you had the Corps of Engineers here, they'd tell you it's a pretty difficult situation with that channel. The reason Grandpa Woo didn't dock there is because there wasn't a dock there. Most of the docking that I've been able to understand from different sources has been north of Broadway, further north, up there is where the Corps of Engineers has said, "If you're going to put in docks or any type of marine services, this is the area you have to do it in," because the channel is so close to our wall at certain times... so, is it

going in the right direction? I don't see *anything* going right now. They need to really light that area up. There's very little light on the other side, so I wouldn't go back there at 11:00 at night.

Moderator: I'm talking about the riverfront area in general, and you all know the area better than I do. On the west side of the wall.

It's been cleaned up quite a bit. I mean, we need a lot more greenery, parking's always difficult...there's not a lot of retail businesses along that street. Right now, the last I heard, there's one business down there contracted to turn into condos, so you'll have 2 businesses on that side. 2. An entire block.

A lot of those businesses have crumbled due to the trains. I mean, it wasn't too many years ago, I remember a wall coming down in the middle of the day. It's like an earthquake. But the constant train traffic down there just...

(many people talking at once. Side conversations about trains being noisy.)

There are a lot of nice they've done with the wall. The painting of the wall is gorgeous, they've done a great job with the sidewalk so far... I do think there's beautification issues that some of the owners of the buildings are doing some things, too, and I think that's positive. I still think there's a trash issue that has to be resolved down there, because it's not very pleasant.

There's no public facilities.

(many people talking at once.)

I do think we have parking issues.

I think moving the CBB up to what is the 400 block, 300 block, was a big mistake. There are people who would utilize that for the restrooms, for the information, and now there's no place to go. They really need to have a presence in that area, because that's the heart of our community, and that's what they want to see. You just said the train, the river...should we put the CBB out there. We had a boat in over the weekend, and we went down and saw it and saw some of the people, and they were all elderly, which I found strange...

(many people talking at once.)

...they were here on Sunday morning when nothing was open.

...they run on their own schedule...

...there was no facilities for them to use, and the CBB was gone... I think there needs to be some sort of a public...

We do have a sign down on the riverfront that says "restroom" that points to a port-a-potty.

(laughter.)

I gotta tell you, that just looks bad.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What are the main reasons that residents or visitors go to the Riverfront area of downtown?

To get a flavor of Cape.

For something different than you can get in St. Louis.

A lot of them are day trippers.

They come for the antiques.

The wall is a big draw.

When you look at downtown Cape, you can't go to the west end and walk around. (noise, unintelligible.)

There's not enough advertisement for downtown... I mean, is there not enough? I'm just throwing that out. I mean, I went to college down here, and I wouldn't say that I came downtown for anything but a bar, so I didn't even know what was really down here other than the bar, and you didn't come here during the day, and I mean I never ate here when I was in college, and I don't know if that's because a lot of the college kids can't afford it or don't know about it or what...

I think a big problem we've always had is communication. Getting the word out. I don't know where you got your news when you were in college. TV? The Arrow?

It's now Facebook or MySpace. That's where a lot of it is.

So are you asking the businesses to take a page out on MySpace?

Facebook?

They're network things where people get to talk to each other. And you can rent advertisements on there, and that's how a lot of us get it.

Even the student organizations have trouble getting it out unless they put it on our portal page, which is the new email system, or through facebook and myspace. That's how we get it. Because even the flyers, when you have a gazillion of them up, no one looks at em.

Moderator: How about other people? Where do residents in Cape get their information about downtown or the riverfront?

Tip Off.

Email.

Email?

It's a small town. It's a lot of word of mouth. You can buy the advertisement you want, but this is a town of 45,000 or close to 50,000 and 200,000 during the daytime, whatever they're going to make up, a lot of it's still by word of mouth. You can buy all the advertisement you want in the paper, radio is widespread, a lot of local stuff is going to be word of mouth. You've got to believe that. Because everybody comes into our places, it's mostly local.

Not ours. The biggest majority of our business is out-of-town, and I think that's all the antiques. That antique...

But it's still that word-of-mouth going back to those towns.

I wish I had a nickel for every time someone, you know, around my age, in their 40's, we'll say...(laughter)...will say, "Gee, I didn't know all this was down here." Is it an advertisement problem? And if it is, how do you...? You're saying, "Well, you know, it gets lost in the paper, it gets lost in the flyers, nobody's listening on the radio." How does downtown advertise? What's the best way for us to advertise that might get more business downtown?

I don't know that it's so much advertising. It's a way of life.

I agree. Because if I didn't live downtown, I don't think I would've ever known how cool downtown could be.

We've raised a generation of children that only know how to shop at a mall.

(many people talking at once.)

I think that's what we're all saying, is that people want to live downtown, and if you provide, there's so much space somewhere downtown. I understand it's expensive to do it, but I can't tell you how many people...we had a garage sale one time, and we had 7 or 8 people ask us, "Is this place for rent?"

(many people talking at once.)

...those people are the ones who are going to give them the word of mouth...

...I have parties, and so many people come by...

I think you have to get more people like yourself, that have families that grew up on Lexington, you have to give them that downtown experience that makes them think, "Wow, Downtown is cool."

What you're talking about, we have all these mall kids, let's bring em back down here and show em...

(many people talking at once.)

Well, we have some apartments, and we rented to some of the mall kids, and they tore the bathroom away from the walls, they had parties hanging from the rafters and all that.

(many people talking at once.)

From a realtor's standpoint, I think that you're right. There are a lot of folks that want that downtown experience. But I'm here to tell you, it's not the young crowd, because of the cost of...

(many people talking at once.)

The cheapest condo downtown is about 130. New ones that are going in on Main and stuff, they're well in the 2s. There's been some others that have sold in the mid-2s. You just need to understand that, while it's a cool place to be, it's not the young first-time home buyers that think it's cool.

I'm not talking about that either. We're 30's age people that don't have any kids, and we love living downtown for that reason, and I think, you know, if you get more people interested that, I mean, yes, this is a great place to raise your kids, and if you want a house in the suburbs, wonderful, but if you want to live downtown, somewhere cool, and you want to walk to the coffee shop in the morning in your pajamas, I can do that. I think there's more of us out there. I just don't know where they are.

Yeah, they're not down there, because there's no space.

Well, part of it, you talk about the income of people living in Cape. My friends could not afford to work in this town. I have a job making this much in Cape, and I have an offer somewhere else, and I'm going to take it. I have student loans, and I need the money.

I think when you don't have jobs that pay enough to keep the kind of people that we want to stay here...

(unintelligible)...advertisement. I put an advertisement for downtown Cape in St. Louis Magazine. I can't tell you I got what I put into it, but, you know, we had 3 full pages or more, and it was an article about Cape, too. Did it bring everybody out of St. Louis? No.

I think that's key. Who do you really think we should market to? You know, St. Louis, they're not going to come to Cape.

Actually, we do get a lot of people from St. Louis, but that particular magazine is targeted towards a certain level of people that aren't the ones that are going to come.

I still think that you require the bulk of the bread and butter from our local residents. Maybe you don't do it just because of what you sell, but I think the restaurants and the other small shops, the jewelry stores and so forth, I think the bulk of their business still comes from local residents.

We need to somehow make the locals aware, "don't take your money out of town." My father, it used to piss him off so bad when someone would go to the City to buy furniture. He'd go, "There's 3 furniture stores in town!" Or car dealerships...

I went to a leadership presentations this Friday in Cape, and one of the groups' presentations was just what you're talking about. It was talking about spending your money in Cape, and it related it to, if you spend your money in Cape, we're able to provide, because the city runs on sales tax. You spend your money in Cape, we can afford the kind of amenities that Cape wants to have, and that was their whole presentation, and they did a real nice presentation on exactly that thing.

Moderator: I want to ask you a little bit about how user-friendly the riverfront area in particular is. Is parking convenient? Business hours? Can you find your way around? Is it easy to get there?

Parking's a challenge.

I wish we could change people's thinking on that, because nothing makes me more upset, if I go to the mall on a busy day, or if I go to Wal-Mart, and I have to park way back here, and I see all those other people walking further than they would...they want to park in front of the store, and it's just in their mind.

(many people agreeing.)

It's because of the buildings.

I know, but it drives me nuts.

(many people talking at once.)

When I ask my friends, "Why don't you come down to my store?" They say, "Oh, it's the parking." Almost everyone says that.

Well, the other night, we left the store late, I guess it was Friday, and the parking lot at the CBB, people were trying to park in front of crosswalks, yet that parking lot was empty, and I said something to Roger, and it was loud enough that the guy heard me, and all of a sudden he made a U-Turn and pulled into the CBB. It's like, "There's a whole lot there you can park at." You know, they don't utilize it.

(many people talking at once.)

...people don't realize that those lots are there, and that they can use those. We need to educate people that that's an option.

There's still signage that says handicapped or "no parking, CBB employees only."

What would happen if you couldn't park downtown? There's a lot of really cool downtowns that are actually blocked off, and you can't park down there, because it's a walking zone.

(many people talking at once, arguing, disagreeing.)

...I think that would be the kiss of death...

...a pedestrian mall type thing, bricked streets...

...I don't think Cape's ready for that...

I there's a lot of people that live here that are just not walkers. They just don't want to walk.

(many people talking at once.)

What I think is funny. Am I wrong, or is there not a handicapped parking spot in front of Billiards?

It's directly in front of the art center.

Tell me why there's a handicapped parking spot there.

Because the way the street laid out, when we laid the parking there, that was a longer spot than any of the others, so they turned it into a handicapped spot.

(many people talking at once.)

A lot of people ask why we don't have a handicapped ramp in front of our restaurant.

(many people talking at once.)

...I look at them, and say, that's because the city planned it that way...

...these people are *pissed off* and they won't be back...

...just a ramp, not even parking...

I think we do have an issue of when the stores are open downtown. Our stores are open when everybody's working. And come 5:00, they'll close.

It's true.

(many people talking at once.)

Living downtown and working way over in Jackson, there have been times when I have literally had to make a point to make time when there was, like, Brown Shoe, I want to go look at some shoes, and I really want to go downtown, but I have to make sure that I make time between this time and this time on this day to go there, and I live right there! I can't imagine people who live on the other side of town that work, you know, I mean, they would have to make a concerted effort.

(many people talking at once.)

I tell you, we've been opened for the last 2 or 3 years on Friday evenings. Did you know that?

(many people talking at once.)

Actually, yes. I have noticed...

I think you miss a lot of the boat when businesses aren't open after hours, because people go down there to eat, and you can't just hang out because everything's closed, and you don't feel safe because everything's closed and dark and...

But I've been open on Friday nights, until 8:00, but I get people that have gone out to dinner and are just browsing around the store. They're not buying. I can't afford to have my store staffed and have the lights on...

(many people talking at once.)

...it's always been 8-5, 9-5 with downtown...

...If more people did it, maybe you'd have...

...At one time, all the stores were open on Thursday nights...

Moderator: I wanted to make sure we had some time to talk about the future of downtown. As you know, Cape is working on a downtown master plan. What kinds of businesses would you like to see as part of that plan? What businesses do you think would be a good fit for downtown?

I think you need family entertainment downtown. As much as we talk about families in Cape and all that, there's nowhere really for kids.

(many people talking at once.)

...nobody wants to take their kids downtown, because it's dark, and there's no police presence...

...I can't stay in my own store past...

...I watch this happen in my back parking lot on a nightly basis. People take leaks and throw bottles and do all kinds of who knows what. There is no police presence down there until 1:30, because they want to catch all the DWI people. How about all the people that are doing all the crap during that time? During the entire 8 to 1:30?

The question he's asking is what kind of business we want, not what kind of problems we have.

You're not going to get a family business unless you get some people watching out for downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

...I wish instead of the strip mall...

...Where's the children's museum going in?...

...Florie's...

...That's great...

(many people talking at once.)

I still think we need more shopping. I still think, I would've wished that Coldwater Creek, Talbot's, and all them would've looked at the downtown area rather than building the strip mall, but they're looking at traffic, you know, and they're not out to help us. They're out to make money.

(many people agreeing.)

You know what the scary thing about that is? It's the hardest doggone place to get into. That is the most horrible spot to get into to go shopping...

(many people talking at once.)

Back to the question, I'd like to see a theater downtown.

We've got em. The Esquire.

(many people talking at once.)

Somewhere downtown, maybe Broadway, they can't put a theater back in there because the cinema's out here.

(many people talking at once.)

An old-type ice-cream, drugstore type thing.

Well, that's been done down there.

There's been a couple times...

(many people talking at once.)

...we need a deli...

...a wine and cheese shop. It was a deli. You could buy sandwich meat and specialty bread and...

A grocery store with fresh baked bread, meat and cheese trays, to be able to go in and buy a half pound of something sliced up. Why not bring it downtown? People go out all the time for that.

(many people talking at once.)

The new corner grocery store has started, and good for them, but I know that there's a lot of residents that are looking for some convenience kinds of things as well.

A place to get aspirin. You know, I had to call one of the neighbors to get some Tylenol.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

I'd like to see some type of...

Cigar shop. There's nowhere anywhere near downtown you can get a cigar. I think you have a lot of restaurants downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

One thing that I think works, too, is clustering. You know, we could use more gift shops. People say, "how come there's 5 jewelry stores downtown?" Well, when you give people more to choose from, you get more people down there. "Why are there all the antique stores?" We could use more gift stores.

We enjoy like a Whole Foods kind of place. I think that would be cool downtown. Something that's different. It's not that traditional grocery store, and it has a little charm to it, kind of thing.

I think the art gallery thing has come a long way in the last few years.

(many people talking at once.)

I mean, I would like to see more of, what they said, like a day to tour all the galleries.

It's First Friday. It's the first Friday of the month.

I don't know anything about it.

They advertise it hard in the paper.

If you check it online, you don't catch any of the ads. I have to go looking for that, to know what's going on. I don't get off until 6:30 at night, so by the time...

Well, I always send out an email for open mic, and we put it in conjunction with First Friday.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What about the look and feel of downtown? Where do you think improvements need to be made on that front?

Big planters. They're on the other side of the river wall. They can be moved back with a forklift.

(many people talking at once.)

Let me tell you about planters. In the times that I've been down there, and I've been president of redevelopment, we've put planters hanging from the poles and people stole em. We have planted trees, and this time, I specified that they had to be a minimum of an inch-and-a-half to two so they can't just break it off, and they still do it. I wouldn't plant a damn rose down there for anything.

(many people talking at once.)

Doesn't that go back to the idea that there's not enough police presence down there. I don't think that so many people would get away with this stuff...

And where are all the bar owners? I mean, you know, they don't want the police presence down there, because that would run away their customers. Their customers are the biggest problem with downtown.

Well, we talk about the bars, and, gosh, I live in a glass bowl down there, and I'm there 95 hours a week and see everything that goes on, and it's not the bar that is the issue. We have a young environment down there that are not parental controlled between 11 and 3 in the morning, and those are the individuals that are doing all the malicious damage. I won't put anything outside. My first awareness of this was when they stole my "now open" sign, so I said, "okay," and we planted flower pots and put those back in 3 or 4 times, and the mums got ripped out the first weekend...so we haven't done anything this year. They're still beating up the ivy, and the ivy's surviving... you honestly can't, until we get some surveillance or some patrol. We can't stop the vandalism with that kind of stuff.

Going back to his original question of what we would like to see downtown, I would like to see uniform sidewalks. Especially on our side of the street, our utilities are in the sidewalk. I can't tell you how many times they've been dug up and worked on, and there's a patch here, and there's a patch there...to have a uniform sidewalk going up

and down both sides of that street would make such a difference. I think people have a way of acting the way they are perceived to act. You put somebody in a dirty old alley and they're going to throw a can and they're going to throw a cigarette butt, and if you have a nice, clean environment, then maybe the flowers can grow.

What's lighting like, too?

Low.

Lighting is low.

(many people talking at once.)

The side of the wall that's painted is doing fine, and the unpainted sign has a bunch of graffiti.

Everybody would be upset if we had huge glow-lamps.

We don't want obnoxious light.

So it's vigilance on our part. I mean, why don't you hang out the window and say, "Hey, quit pissing on that flower"?

(many people talking at once.)

...then they'll vandalize our house...

...same situation we're in...

...it's not just our own people. We've got some outside participation in the vandalism...

...police presence...

...the police say they can't afford it...

...well, I want a Ferris wheel downtown, overlooking the river...

We just need more day things, because you can go to the bowling alley or golfing, but other than that, there's not much to do, and it gets really old.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: I did want to ask you a couple other things. How do you see the Riverfront Area in relation to the rest of downtown? Do you see ways that it can be or should be tied in with the rest of downtown better than it is? Do you think it's got unique needs?

I think it's got some issues with, you have to go down Broadway to get downtown, and I don't know. It's ugly, it doesn't feel safe... you've got people walking around...

Broadway's ugly?

Yes.

The buildings on Broadway, they're not attractive.

Once you pass Southeast, past the University's new entrance, there are a few nice buildings... then things start to deteriorate, and then they pick back up around the Marquette Hotel.

As you come down, you notice all the empties.

(many people talking at once.)

I wonder what the perception is about it being unsafe. I mean, I wonder why, I mean, do you get that a lot from other college kids, that they don't think downtown is safe? I don't feel that way at all. I'll take Miles walking in the dark, and there's this one guy that walks around that I'm afraid of, but other than that, I don't feel unsafe downtown...

(many people talking at once.)

He's talking about Water Street, and the riverfront, though.

Now, if you want to make a green area, I would take that nifty new parking area on Water street, since there are only 2 businesses on Water street, and one of them's going into condos now, why don't we make that street green and plant grass there, and have sidewalks, and open up some lot somewhere else?

Parking.

(many people talking at once.)

Nothing's been brought up, too, about the one-way thing...

Let's not go there.

You don't want to go there.

The one-way and the non one-way.

We're not going there.

Moderator: Let me ask you one final question. We've talked about a lot of potential improvements. If you had to pick one thing, what do you think is the highest priority to keep downtown, the riverfront area moving in the right direction?

Security.

Yup.

I think there's two, side-by-side: security and parking.

I think the Ferris wheel's the biggest issue.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

Green space and cleanup, making it a place that people want to come. You can all talk about how people think there's crime and there's this, and they think that because of the way it looks. We clean it up, we spruce it up, we put more green space, and people will come.

I think the key is to get people there.

I think a shopping environment. Retail.

I think the problem is more perception than reality. We have parking...where else could we put parking? It's perception, it's not reality.

(many people talking at once.)

I think security...

You know, when we have Liberty Fest, thousands come, and where do they park? They find a place to park when they want to come in.

I would say cleanup and security. I lump that together. The not breaking of the bottles will be because there's somebody there.

I have seen them get out of the car and take the bottle and put it on the curb.

We have an entire 12-pack thing with bottles in it left in the parking lot.

That isn't coming from the bars.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION IV

GENERAL DOWNTOWN DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

My name's Sam (unintelligible).

Jim (unintelligible).

Dennis Vollenck.

Phil Greenson.

Grace Ollibacher.

Dave Stearett.

Natasha Applet.

Ryan Humphries.

John Ryan.

Moderator: My first question is really broad. Tell me a little bit about the Cape Girardeau area. What would you tell me if I were thinking about moving here?

I'd say you've picked a great place.

I'd say it's a river city with a university and a strong medical community.

Friendly people, easy to get around.

Very scenic.

Low crime rate.

The river city is one of the really big things, I think. I think it's an attraction we have that we take advantage of, but maybe not as much as what we could.

Did we mention the schools?

The University.

The school system, it's a really good school system, and we've got several private schools, so there's a broad array of educational opportunities. We've got a very functional Chamber of Commerce.

Our president is a little lacking right now.

(many people talking at once.)

Just kidding.

We have a lot to offer as far as medical services.

One thing that people overlook, especially folks that live here, is the tremendous human assets that we have, whether they're local businesses or our workforce. I feel like it's one of our strongest assets. And our university, which is turning out graduates twice a year that we're having a hard time keeping in this area, but I really feel like they're a strong asset that we need to work on keeping in the community.

Pretty good music scene and nightlife.

(unintelligible)... smaller town.

We have a lot of restaurants in the downtown area, and downtown is a fun area.

(unintelligible)...a great number of outside capabilities. The one corner, and the other corner, and Bella, and five different choices you have for outside seating. You know, outside now, it's the right time of year.

Moderator: You said music scene. Is that Cape in general or downtown?

Cape in general, but a lot downtown. You can go downtown several times a week and find a good band.

Different genres as well. You know, blues...

We're pretty good on arts in general, you know, because we got a monthly art show, and we just had the last show of the University's performing arts, and that moves to the new River Campus, and the next season starts there. That's a big deal.

That's exciting.

(many people talking at once.)

I think for a town of, what, 35 to 40,000, we're really a bigger town because we attract from a broader area, so that opens up to a lot of things that maybe a town that size wouldn't have. The surrounding area... they come in from Southern Illinois, and even throughout Southeast Missouri. I think our daily population jumps up to about 100,000.

I think those numbers are even bigger now. I heard like 175 or something like that.

As far as your safety, we've got a fire department that just got into a brand new building, plus we got the university police. Since we're in Cape County, we've got the Sheriff's department. So that could be where the low crime...

Walk downtown on a weekend night, and the main downtown area, you feel pretty safe about yourself. You don't have to worry about anybody coming up to you, like Downtown St. Louis, shady people asking for money or bugging you or something else. We walk down the street and see friendly faces, don't have to worry about anything.

I have to say, I'm doing the Leadership Cape program, and I got to do the ride-along with the police, and I was tremendously impressed by our police department. I felt that everybody was so professional and appropriate. I was very, very impressed.

Moderator: We've talked a little about nightlife, but tell me a little bit about your dining, nightlife, and entertainment. Do people stay in Cape?

There's a lot to eat.

We're hungry people.

You could probably go to one restaurant a night for a month, if you go all over town.

There are a lot of chain restaurants, but there's good independent restaurant.

Every type of food: Thai, sushi, whatever you want.

There's also baseball and... and Tunes at Twilight.

And you got soccer, baseball...

Great soccer park...

Isn't there some sort of football league?

We have one of the best golf courses in the state.

Moderator: Where do you take visitors that come to visit you?

I take them to Trail of Tears park, and that overlook... whatever... I always take people there.

Horseshoe Lake.

I usually take them to Grace's café, or a café where they play a little music...

Moderator: Where is that?

That's actually on Broadway, downtown.

If they want to go to a movie, there's easily 14 different movies playing in, what, two different venues.

I take them down to see the murals.

Yeah.

I think our people do a great cross-section of things. If My Little Pony tours the Show Me Center, it seems like they had a great array for several different, everybody... (unintelligible). That's one the campus.

North Spring Street.

Several festivals, there's City of Roses music festival, an annual music festival featuring local bands and several others.

(noise, unintelligible.)

Moderator: What about shopping? Where do you do your retail shopping?

We shop all over town.

We have a mall.

Our west end of town, the middle of town, and the east side of town.

We do have the major chain stores, and Wal-Mart.

And we're developing more retail on the north end. I personally like to shop downtown.

Moderator: Do people generally stay in Cape for dining, shopping, and entertainment? Or do people leave Cape to do things in other cities?

I think people make trips to St. Louis, to have some different things to eat, to do some shopping.

You also have people who actually come to Cape from the outlying areas (unintelligible)...

The same way that people come to Cape from a 50 or 60 mile radius, I think a lot of people from Cape go to the next bigger town. A lot of people in Cape go to St. Louis for shopping and entertainment, baseball games and football games, and for dining.

For something different.

Obviously not once a week, probably, but I think there's a lot of movement out to St. Louis.

And a lot of it comes to Cape because they work here, or whatever, and they all meet maybe for dinner before they go home or something.

We're kind of go north, and we really don't go down to Memphis. We go south to Sikeston, but that's about it. I sometimes go down to Paducah, to see what they have, shopping, or just eating, so it's not always the big city you go to. It's sometimes the smaller cities.

What's nice is, where we're located means we can go somewhere.

I think that's true.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What are the perceptions of the Old Town Cape area?

I think they're getting better all the time. There are still some people that still say, "You can't park downtown, or you can't find a parking space," which I think is untrue, but it's a negative perception. I think people find it safe, and think there's good choices in entertainment and shopping.

I feel that people are just starting to, with the help of things like this, to learn what the actual Old Town Cape area is. When Old Town Cape became Old Town Cape, if you asked 5 people where they thought it was, most of them would tell you it was smaller than it is. A lot of people don't realize that it's bigger than what the initial thought was.

I think on the south direction, I think the River Campus is really going to help open that up. It seems like, that kind of seems to be the stopping point, I don't know if that's the right word, but I do think that's going to improve with the River Campus.

It's really not the stopping point. If you lived on the other side, there's already new development there. And in between, there's development. So it's working its way, it's slowly just engulfing the whole area, but it's a little bit here, a little bit there...

Well, we never had a southern boundary, and the River Campus gives us a southern boundary. For the first time that I can remember, we can say, "You can safely develop down to this point and know that your money's going to be somewhat safe."

I think those floodwall murals have just been an incredible draw for downtown. I guess they've been up about 3 years now?

Yeah.

And you can just go down there, and right now, there's probably 75 people walking around, sitting, watching the river, getting an ice cream cone... it's just been fantastic, those murals, the new sidewalks.

And even that front park, I was down there last week, and the river's coming up, so more and more people are watching the river, because there's more stuff floating down there, I guess. With all those benches and all that work down there, it's just great, and there's more people there.

Yeah, it's a neat area on the other side of the wall. I'm glad they've expanded in both directions as far as it has.

We still hear that our friends downtown are limited. We don't have, we're not quite, our retail hasn't really fully developed yet. That's something that'll come on in time. We're starting to get more residential developments or projects downtown, which is helping us out a lot. As a city, we really need to focus a lot more attention on the surrounding residential districts, in order to get some more people living in that area.

And that's gonna happen. I really feel that that's gonna happen. If you look back 6, 8 years ago, look at all the people that have done something downtown since then, and...it's going to be better, because there's going to be more to offer once a lot of this stuff that's halfway finished, once all that stuff's totally developed, more people are going to want to go downtown.

As far as the downtown, people are doing it more in the last four years... people would ask, "When's a good time to buy downtown?" We're seeing a want to be down there, residential. It used to be people stayed out on the west end, didn't even come down once a year, and now we've got some attraction. Just driving down Broadway, on Sunday morning, there's nothing, no one moving, except for the churches, St. Vincent's, and a few of those. We got the Marquette now, and started back up with the restaurant... we need something a little more fuller on the weekend, and the morning

through the evening. The evening's good. In fact, Friday night, there's a good collection of people on Main Street with the art galleries, and Saturday and Sunday mornings, it's really quiet, which may not be a bad deal, because it's kind of peaceful...

I don't know what they're going to have to offer at the Marquette, but the last place always had breakfast food.

Well, let me tell you, it's Pat and James, and they're setting their base with the dinner is what they're doing. If they move into something, it might be lunch, but not breakfast.

If you go on down the street, the new one there on the corner, they do breakfast.

You know, they had a great Sunday morning breakfast, a great turnout, and I'd love to see something like that again, just for a brunch.

And then, they still had... you guys open up for lunch at 11:00? Not on weekends, though.

(many people talking at once.)

I don't think that's too surprising, for Sundays. I mean, even St. Louis doesn't have a lot going on Sunday mornings.

But that's when the residents are milling around. That's when they're out getting a paper or a cup of coffee or whatever. That's one part that we are missing. I mean, I see Sam milling around on a Sunday morning down there, but...the residents are few and far between right now. We need more.

(unintelligible)...we need to develop residences down there, but it's tough getting people moving into some of these, even if they are developed.

Right there on the corner, those people just bought that place to move into a single residence. They've been working on it, and they're just about to kick the tenants out, to make it a single home again. That's a big deal.

That's a very big deal. But one of the problems that we have right now, especially with single-family homes, trying to get folks into the area, is they don't feel like their investment is safe.

(many people talking at once.)

We need to figure out a way to make them feel safe about their investments.

What we've done is to find some properties and upgrade them, and make them desirable.

You know, we haven't. I haven't even gotten around to upgrading them. We've just gotten around to kicking out the...

(laughter.)

That is kind of upgrading them.

What that does that shows there's something available, there's potential for people driving around that don't even go through the trouble and look for a realtor. Some people just go around on their own, and that's the stuff they look for. "Why's that empty? We were here a month ago. What's happened? There was going to be something there."

I think that's what people are saying when they're looking at Main Street now, because there isn't much empty on Main Street anymore. As we're facing that situation, which is really good, when these properties do become available, hopefully, the businesses will ratchet up, and we'll get better retailers and better businesses in those storefronts.

When we were looking for homes, and we looked downtown, they kind of seemed overpriced for what they were going for and compared to other homes that were in better neighborhoods. When you get the square footage and things. And then they weren't really developed, or they didn't have the upgrades that you would want for the money that was being asked. So we thought that we would want to invest in a home downtown, but it was just...some of the prices were outrageous. And then, some were commercially zoned, so we didn't know, is it residential or commercial? Should we invest now, and are we going to see the return in the next 5 years? So it was just kind of up in the air. We were just really unsure of what we wanted to do because of that.

That's exactly what I'm talking about. You're not sure if your money's safe. That's where our city needs to help us out...with good zoning, so we don't have to worry about what could happen to the property next door. The flip side of higher prices, in some cases, I know we're sitting on some properties that in order to purchase them... they used to have deviant landlords renting these out as HUD housing, and they're substandard. By the time you buy it, and then tear em back to a single-family home, then you're sitting on a big pile of money for even less than you started out. So I think if our city comes in and offers in these districts either some type of tax incentives or property tax abatements and so forth, something that kind of offsets that initial cost of getting into the property, because moving the bad landlords out does come at a price.

A lot of times, and this might not apply to you, but there's a lot of times that people understand that to get started on something like that, you have to put a lot into it. (unintelligible noise.)

And we found some things, but they were just... I mean, they were more than double what the homes around them were, so it was the highest priced home, and of course you're not supposed to buy that, and some of them were upgraded and the amenities were good, but for that price, to go somewhere else in Cape, it would've been a better investment. So that's kind of what residential homeowners are looking at. We didn't mind putting a little money into some stuff, but we found things that were ready to move in, and it was really... you know.

(many people talking at once.)

Sometimes there are people that are willing to spend that money. It's just a broad spectrum.

Yeah. And there's not really a whole bunch to choose from.

That's the other thing.

I mean, our whole home searching was old Victorian, two and three story, and we looked at every one available, and there wasn't that many. The ones that were ready, I mean, wow. The ones that weren't, like you said, it's a lot of money to put in. There's some homes now that are still for sale from them, and you've gotta ask, "Why isn't it moving?"

It's people like you, saying, "I like that house, but..."

Like John said, maybe the city could help with tax credits.

There's got to be something that will help offset the cost. It's not even the initial purchase price when you go to remodel.

Yeah. You want to maintain integrity of the homes, or at least try to, especially if it's an old home.

In our market, it has been recently that remodeling is extremely expensive. It's just the way it goes here.

Well, when we work on those older homes like that, it's not like you can just buy something pretty for it. Everything made today is newer stuff, and you get in those older homes...

I tell you one thing in defense of the city. When we renovated that apartment building, they worked with us, and some of the historical preservation and interpretation, so we were able to accomplish it without gutting the whole thing and starting from scratch.

(many people talking at once. Unintelligible background noise.)

If you had anyone in the city, the inspectors, say, "You're not up to code, but let's talk about it," it's better than the attitude we had before where they said, "Tear down."

... people speculating that the River Campus is, you know...

You know, this is a little bit German, they need to see it before they really get excited. It's not really happening now as much as you would think, but after there's more activity, then there'll be something, a little more activity there.

Moderator: I know some of you own businesses downtown, so I don't want you to think of these questions with that hat. What are the major reasons that people visit downtown?

I like the buildings. Just the look and feel of downtown. You feel comfortable when you walk there, safe... you look out and see the riverfront, the walls... it's really beautiful, and I think it has a lot of potential, and it's captured a lot of that potential.

It's the only thing that's really ours. The rest is the interstate and chain restaurants and big retailers and the same stuff you see wherever you go.

It has a lot of character. We moved from St. Louis to Cape, but we're staying because of the history of Cape and the character that Cape has, and downtown shows that. And we know it's developing, but I think we know more than even some people that live here about downtown.

What we like about it is, maybe something negative, is that it's slow-paced. It's not as hectic, and after we eat, we can walk down Main Street or Water Street or wherever, and you'll see people walking, but it's just comfortable.

(unintelligible)...the old parts, where the town actually grew and came from, are the parts we're going back to.

I don't think people really understand how much they miss walking in their lives, you know, because so many folks in the neighborhoods... we do have an extremely walkable downtown right now. It's easy to get around, traffic isn't bad, it's safe... we see a lot of people come downtown to walk.

The walking trail gets a lot of folks. You know they talked about trying to connect it down by, to run it... it goes all the way to Shawnee park, now...

That's all in the works.

(many people talking at once.)

...everything's been planned, but it hasn't all been funded. I think the next thing they're going to build is east of the wall up to the Redstar Boat Land, but the bridge is in 2008, that's the funding of the bridge across Sloan Creek.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

...the next big thing is getting that bridge across Sloan Creek...

If they did something more with that green area around Sloan Creek there... right now, it's just open.

That will just be park space, as soon as that trail goes up to it. It's gorgeous.

(many people talking at once.)

I used to live until just recently just past university, and I would walk through the neighborhoods and down to the river, maybe get an ice cream, and then walk back up Broadway. It's a nice walk, and you see so much more stores, and the businesses. In fact, we learned what was lurking and what wasn't. Things come and go. Now I'm assuming you're going to ask downside questions, and I do have a lot of comments along those lines.

Moderator: So, you know, we've talked a little bit about the way you feel about downtown, but I want to ask you about the practical uses. Why do you come downtown?

To eat.

Moderator: I know some of you have businesses, so you're down there all the time.

Walking right up to look at the river, and spend some time at Riverside Park, and looking at those murals is bringing a lot of bodies downtown.

And the music scene, the music that's played downtown, those sort of things draw...

There's a younger crowd...

The Tunes draw an older crowd.

(many people agreeing.)

It's really a neat deal. I mean, most of the other ones are older, but...

You know, you can hear that music pretty much throughout the downtown area. You can just sit on the patio and listen.

Which I think adds to the downtown feeling and character. Even just walking down the streets and hearing music, it's a really nice atmosphere for college students, and people of all ages.

You feel like you're connected pretty easy. And we have a lot of employment opportunities downtown. Hopefully, we'll have more. Good ones.

Moderator: Are there any things that you used to do downtown that you don't or can't do anymore?

We need a dress shop.

We lost all of our clothing stores.

Right now, as far as apparel, we just have a shoe store downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

Retail type...

(noise, unintelligible.)... it's just a national trend, and if, you know, I think what we'll see in the next 10 years in our downtown, and in most progressive downtowns, is the boutiques will come back in. But at this point, the national retailers pretty much did it in, and we don't have enough of a high-end market that shops here in town to support boutiques at this point. They go to St. Louis.

If you want antiques, though, you have no problem.

I was going to say that. We hadn't mentioned antiques.

But those are place holders. They're good place holders.

That's a good draw. A lot of folks...

Typically, that's a higher-income group, and the buildings are all maintained and operated and full and they take up a lot of square footage, and those are the types of businesses that we're going to see go... the antique stores might end up going to Broadway or some maybe slightly lower-rent districts as Main, Spanish, and Water Streets ratchet up.

I remember going to the dollar theater when I was a kid. There were 2 theaters on Broadway, neither of which are in operation right now.

I remember that.

I think there's definitely potential up there for a theater, independent films or plays or anything.

We have 3 theaters, the Broadway, the Esquire, and the Rialto.

I've heard a lot of people at the college especially say if those theaters were open again, they'd go there. Lots.

Students, you mean?

Students. Because they wouldn't have to go too far. They don't have transportation, a lot of them. They're staying in the dorms. If they could walk...

(unintelligible noise.)

Does a movie theater have to be all the high-tech stuff?

No! (people agreeing.)

And plays...

The indie theaters are getting very creative with their spaces. They might just be in the back of an old grocery store or something like that.

Well, you can't create spaces that are not cool. Those were built long ago.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

There are so many great spaces.

What are the plans for them?

(many people talking at once.)

I really wanted to make some comments about the river. I understand there's some very legitimate constraints. Our section of the Mississippi... I understand, but there's such a wasted opportunity there to capture some pleasureboat traffic, or create some pleasureboat opportunities, some kind of docking. There is an opportunity to get fuel down there now, but there's really no... yes, they go up and down the river, but they don't stop because they can't stop.

Just last week, I saw a big one pull in just for fuel, and if they would've had a little spot to actually dock, they could've checked it out a little bit.

A person that's been on a boat, you want something to eat, you want the things we have to offer.

I'm all for his thoughts on that. That's a big, big thing we're missing out on.

And I understand, there's a lot of limitations and constraints with the river, the speed of it, how it rises and falls, how it kind of narrows, and the barges, but I just can't help but think there's some opportunity, something we could do there to capture some traffic.

(unintelligible)...I tell you, if you walk down the south side on the east side of the river wall, they almost look like they're supposed to pull boats there and tie them up.

(many people talking at once.)

I just don't think that's been a focus. I mean, come on, Nova Scotia has 20 foot tides... I mean, we can handle the ebb and flow of the Mississippi. That's just something that this community hasn't focused on yet.

How far do those restrictions run? Are you talking about coast guard or navigable water restrictions?

I think those are all the things that get bantered about, but I believe that there are all kinds of possibility.

You look at San Antonio or Los Galenas...

There's been a coast guard flag and a Corps of Engineers flag and a railroad flag, a financial flag, but I agree with John.

Whenever we want to, we put a barge out there, and it just sits. It doesn't seem too complicated.

Moderator: How user-friendly do you feel your downtown is? Parking, business hours, navigation? Do people find it easy to get around?

I think if you get the employees out from parking in front of some of these businesses and get them to move to the side, that would help.

I don't think it's any harder to get around our downtown than any other downtown that's had some sort of redevelopment. Anytime you... all your old towns, all your older parts of town, no matter where in the country, they weren't designed for cars. They started out with horse and buggy. Once the streets are laid and the foundations are there, that's what you got. It's no worse than anybody else, I think.

Has anybody ever thought about doing something like what Memphis does, with that cable car looking deal. It's a retrofit. It would make things easier for the college kids.

I tell you, I saw in Tucson this week...

(many people talking at once.)

...they had the streets blocked off and all that, but they had built these little buggies behind bicycles, and they were hauling 4 to 6 people on them.

Rickshaws or something?

San Diego does that.

These were just basic seats, two wheels hooked on to the bike, and the guys had those bikes geared down real low, and they were running people up and down.

There were bicycle taxis in San Diego, and a lot were driven by college students, and they were charging 10 bucks for a couple people.

There was probably three of those different vehicles in that area, in Tucson.

I think parking is an issue, and while it may be better than other towns, the fact is it's not as good as parking at the mall or Wal-Mart, so it is a discouragement to people. I wouldn't say it's the most family-friendly place. I think we have kids, and we've gone there, and stay away from... when our kids were younger, because of the bars. It's got a seedy feel to it, and that turns people off. I think of the Main Street area, and there's probably 3, 4, 5 bar or pool-hall kind of places, and that detracts from a family shopping orientation.

What's the direction? Are we going toward a business district downtown, or more of the family-friendly downtown feel? Because those are totally different for me. If it's more high-rise business type, you know, I'm not walking down there...

You know, we've got an interesting mix of the media, TV, radio, newspaper, and a little financial district, too. That's true. Which direction do you feel like it should be going? We raised 5 kids downtown, and we didn't feel threatened by just walking around the area, but the perception for someone out on the west end, probably picked that up somewhere.

That's how I feel about the parking. I don't think the parking is the problem, as much as there's a perception that there's a parking problem. It's talked about a lot, so the feeling is there, that it's a parking problem, but other than 4th of July, when it's crazy, I don't know that we weren't able to find a parking place. Maybe it wasn't right in front of the door, and you may have to walk a block...

And for 4th of July, you find a place to park.

Well, behind the Marquette, you got all that parking. But they look for something on the street, not behind the buildings.

And our parking's not all necessarily flat land. Let's say you go to the mall, so you park 2 or 3 rows from Famous's door, and by the time you get to the other side of Famous, you've traveled pretty far, and then you go to Penney's, which is far. Because you're inside that building, it doesn't seem like you're traveling very far to get to your car.

But does it seem friendly? It doesn't. If you're an outsider, then you really don't know where to go, what to do. We don't have good signage that points out the parking. There's a lot of parking lots that could be used that aren't utilized. The courthouse parking lot could be used on Friday and Saturday nights, and you're at the front door of a number of places. But nobody uses that. I think that's something that our city could really, could work on, is establishing good parking, and lighting too.

Yeah, lighting. We need lighting.

I would go downtown, and I would love to shop there, if there was anything there. I would do Christmas shopping there rather than the mall, where you have to park a mile away, but there's nothing downtown to buy, so that's my whole thing. There's nothing to do unless you're going to eat or look at the river.

Moderator: What about business hours? Are they convenient?

We don't really talk about it, because we're all pretty involved downtown, but it's an issue with everybody.

(many people talking at once.)

There have been some complaints that the hours are not extended. The community feels...

...it's always been a pretty tricky subject.

(noise, unintelligible.)

...it's like anything else. If you really want to have a shopping district, believe me, West Park Mall doesn't let their merchants leave whenever they want to. It's for your customers. That's something that's a little difficult to do when you have 374 business owners.

I do have that outside perception, and after dinner, 6:30, 7:00, there's nothing open. If you got lucky, you'd go into the furniture store on Thursday night.

That Thursday night deal, there's more to that... at one time, there was unity that Thursday night was the... of course, it's flip-flopped over the years. Friday, Thursday, Thursday, Friday. The last official, when the majority of the people got together, Thursday night was the late night.

(noise, unintelligible)... new folks operating businesses will keep their businesses open a couple extra hours. They see it as an opportunity, whereas a lot of our shopkeepers now don't see it as an opportunity or a benefit.

People don't know what the evening is. I mean, a 24-hour operation doesn't always make money in those hours from 2 to whenever, but people know they're always open, so if they get up at 6, they know it's open. Again, it's something you gotta...

Right.

(many people talking at once.)

If they knew for sure what it was...

Now, the majority of the people still think it was Thursday. It's been Thursday for so long. But a lot of that... if there are any core businesses, they're usually well-rooted in the downtown, and they're probably still in the mindset of "This is how we've always done it." Maybe it's time to look at what everybody else's life entails.

Our downtown hours is definitely a negative. We hear it all the time.

Now something like Shivelbein's... it's got a 9-5 store hours, so sometimes it's hard to get to.

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

I don't think there's enough advertising of the things that are going on downtown.

In St. Louis, they have the Riverfront Times, and you can pick that up and pretty much find whatever's going on.

Part of the problem there is that your downtown businesses, retailers, restaurants, bars, they're independent. Their money comes in everyday, and they might have a \$200 day or a \$500 day. It makes advertising and publicity very difficult, because they don't have the funds. When you're looking at advertising rates, for a small business downtown, it's the same for a business operating out of West Park Mall. You have to just be a little bit more creative with your advertising, because you can't do the regular things, radio or television, so forth.

I'm not sure what options you have, but if there were someone to inform college students, you know, they're very close, within walking distance. If college students were more aware...

We could make much better use of the Web.

I the Missourian does a great job of covering what happens downtown. On Thursday or Friday, they have that little "getting out" or whatever it's called... I think they're covering it real well, and they're doing it at no charge, which is an enormous benefit. My guess would be that college students are not big readers of the daily newspaper.

Yeah, at one time, there's been 2 or 3 of those Riverfront Times type papers.

(many people talking at once.)

The online thing is a good key, because young people are *so* connected. I don't know if we could link something up to the University website.

Have you seen the Cape Scene website? It has exactly what you're talking about.

Who runs it?

I don't know.

Moderator: As you know, the City is developing a plan for the future of downtown. I want to ask you some questions about where you would like to see downtown Cape go. What kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

A bookstore.

That would be very nice. I'd like to see less bars and more bookstores or, I guess, just something besides a bar. Coffee houses with music, something more relaxing, which I think would give people more of a family feel, but also college students... there's more to do than just get drunk.

One of the bars is an old bookstore.

(laughter.)

...you're right. That kind of stuff. Any unique little stores would be great, as far as a cornucopia of neat...

Well, it's going to have to be that, specialty shops, because the Wal-Marts of the world have changed shopping. I mean, that's just a fact. I don't know that having all of those things downtown, we're not going to be able to compete price-wise. That's always going to be a problem or something yet to deal with, so it's going to have to be specialty shops....

Instead of school supplies, it's handmade paper.

It needs to be things that price is not the issue.

And most people right now think of Penney's, and it's a big department store. They don't remember that it used to be a 5 and dime. Those kind of small operations that had the unique thing, the special paper...

It comes back to what we want to see, it's an evolving thing. Just like you were saying on the antique places... they're there now, because those places were available. If we can get people downtown, there will be businesses coming in. Which comes first, the customers or the business?

Someone needs to see opportunity. And in order to see opportunity, you've got to be able to see customers.

You've got to have something that's going to attract them.

Well, who would have thought a motorcycle dealership would be in the downtown area? I mean, that's something...

Nobody. Nobody can believe it.

That's a destination spot, and that's what we're kind of looking at. Give them a reason to come down. Clothing or something that's very unique, that they're drawn to that.

Isn't part of that having people already there all the time, living there?

That's part of it, but I think, when you're looking at specialty stores, you have to have a customer base that isn't afraid to spend money, and right now the folks we have here that aren't afraid to spend money, they're going somewhere else to spend it. We still don't have enough high-end offerings downtown. We've got jewelry and furniture, but as far as the high-end little clothing stores or specialty shops, we don't have that, so there's no critical mass, there's no reason for them to go down there.

You're asking what we'd like to see, and granted, the closest one to the river is the Sav-A-Lot, but to have a grocery store or a market type store of some sort closer to the river...

(many people agreeing.)

Even a little market... so what if they don't have every kind of soup, or everything Campbell makes or whatever.

Same kind of thing... even the grocery stores, the smallest they'll do right now is 14,000 square feet, and a lot of those are experimental, but they're just now figuring out about getting back into the urban areas. St. Louis is, there's a couple different retailers that are experimenting there...

Somebody wants to walk in and get a can of sliced ham and maybe a loaf of bread that's not in a bag, something like that... that's a niche that's there.

So going back to a little bit smaller footprint?

They're trying to. They need to, as St. Louis has built that residential area along Jefferson, all those condos and so forth, there have been 2, 3 grocery stores that have opened up, and folks are looking at a little, small footprint. Real small, though, is mom and pop, and there's no money, and nobody's going to work that hard to do something.

That's a problem.

And that's a problem with small business now anyway. Once people really figure out what it is, they're not so interested, but then, they have to have a certain sized store to be able to have economies to scale and make money, and they need certain demographics. This stuff is a science. I mean, they can look at our demographics and they'll know exactly what'll work here and what won't work here, and if they think it won't, they won't even think about it.

When you look at the surrounding residential areas, most of the people that live in those areas are not the ones shopping downtown anyway, so what kind of store could you bring in?

A co-op would work, maybe, something where the community actually buys into it. In Carbondale, their co-op is a really good example of a store that we could do here.

We did a farmer's market last summer.

There are areas you see around the country that are successful, they're a blend of a lot of things. Downtown areas, people from locally shop down there, but you probably can't support those specialty stores with just people in the area, so the ones that are successful are really a blend of getting more residential down there, but they have to have the tourism people, and it has become a destination. Some are extremely successful, and other ones... you know, you really have to have that blend. Extra residential down there...

Another thing that would be neat to have is, not that I wouldn't be thrilled if Marquette got developed, but if it would be developed as a hotel again... other than your B and B's, which are nice, and a lot of people like those, but it doesn't have to be a big one, but a downtown motel/hotel or whatever would be a plus for the tourist.

And the Marquette is very close to the riverfront and the University.

There's still other buildings, and there could be a new, something new.

With the River Campus, you'd expect that they're going to have more people coming for events, and the set of students moving back and forth through the downtown neighborhood from one campus to the other.

I have a question about your paper shop. Whenever I go to New York, there's a paper shop I go to... would a paper shop like that be able to survive here? Are there enough people like me?

It would have to be an Internet-type business. It could be a combination of Internet store where it ships out paper, or you wait til you get that critical mass of tourism...

It means people are spending money just to spend money. They're somewhere where that's the point. I'd have to answer your question by asking, "Would I do it?" and I would not do it. I would not open a paper store. If you're going to open a paper store, there would have to be all kinds of other things as well. Maybe other...

(many people talking at once.)

A lot of folks that come into this area, they're not high-end shoppers. Our high-end folks leave town, and the folks coming in, we're sucking up all the retail out of Southeast Missouri and Southern Illinois, and for every new store we get, the surrounding towns are drying up. So those folks, they're at a different level as far as...

(noise, unintelligible.)

But they're excited about Kohl's, or Sears, or Wal-Mart.

Moderator: What else do you think needs to be done downtown in terms of aesthetics?

Landscaping.

(lots of noise, unintelligible conversation.)

...St. Charles...

...We're lacking drastically in treescapes, and our sidewalks are...

...curbs and sidewalks...

...landscaping is huge...

...could be enhanced...

I personally would like to see, and it's slowly going in that direction, is buildings over the years have remodeled this way and that way, and to get them back, get all of them back, to some sort of norm that's more to the era when they were actually built. That's not an easy thing to do, because it's a big expense to do a façade... the ones that have done it have done good jobs, but the ones that I don't like (noise, unintelligible)... I would rather see the old bricks with whatever had been done to them, but that's what gives it that uniformity through your area. They're all not going to be the same, because some burned, and there was new ones built.

If you look at some of those, they used to have balconies, and I'd love to see something like that.

Most of the upper-level, if you look around, the windows, they could probably be filled with apartments at some point. I'm sure there's just been, over the years, just left to go...

That might be a residential thing, but then you also run into the deal (noise, unintelligible).

If the city were just about the part of code that deals with existing rules for structures, that would pretty much make all the difference. That would really help open up a lot. All of our sidewalks downtown, curbs and sidewalks, a lot of them are in rough shape, so just the city's infrastructure.

Moderator: I have two more questions for you. Some other communities have established a special business district, which would have an extra sales tax that goes to some of the things that you're talking about. Do you think that would be a good idea? I know you already have something similar.

The problem is the boundaries...

And that's just on property tax, too. I think we would benefit from all of those, any of those communities, a special business district or redevelopment district, any of that.

All these good things that we'd like to see take money, and you've got to have a way of getting and raising some funds.

And the people that want to do these different things need to understand at the front end that it may not be the best deal for rent or the special taxes that we would vote in, but they need to understand what they're getting into to be sure their business plan is going to be what they need to succeed, and that's an education issue that I don't know how to address.

It addresses, it almost addresses itself, if the cost of entry is so low, then you get somebody that might have \$600 in their pocket, and they might rent out a cheap building and they don't care. But if the cost of entry is a little higher, you're dealing with somebody who's thinking their business through better.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

Those are the people you want, because they're creative, and they've got a new idea, but it has to be able to work. That's where having it be a special business district tax with improvements being made, it almost protects their investment. It helps assure them that the area's going to be nice, and we're going to be attracting customers and so forth.

If it's a property tax, it's tough, because now you're just throwing more on top of the people that are trying to make things happen, whereas if it's a sales tax, then you're competing...

We've already got a property tax.

Yeah, right now it's a property tax.

When it was set up, it was good money, but now that money wouldn't plant 20 trees a year.

Moderator: My last question is about some of the current events going on downtown. Do you think that the planners do a good job of planning events throughout the year? What do you think about the events that are going on?

I'd like to see more.

Absolutely.

I know at least one coming up that's just moving to downtown...

The car show?

The car show. They asked to come downtown, so that could really...

(many people talking at once.)

20 years ago, there was a car club that did some car shows downtown (noise, unintelligible). I think it was just the afternoon or weekend, and it was probably 2 or 3 times, but it fizzled after that. This is a different group, but some of the same people. I love all that kind of stuff.

It's a double-edged sword. We should have as many events down there as we can, but I'm sure some of the events that they come down for are not going to be beneficial to businesses that are there. They're just coming down. How do you say yes to this one and no to this one?

The way we've got Water Street set up right now, there's only two businesses. It's going to be residential. So now you've got Water Street, and since the backs of all those buildings have been cut into for parking garages, the potential to be able to develop Water Street with retail, which we were kind of hoping would happen, is over with. So that might be a good place for that.

(many people talking at once.)

One of the situations we have downtown is that the same group of people is planning and working on all these events. The City does not do it. The burden has been placed on Old Town Cape. Until we kind of get, get the program just a little bit more formulaic and we're able to invite other groups in, we can lay it out, and let them take charge of their own programs. Right now, it's just Old Town Cape and the volunteers of Old Town Cape.

But the City has laid everything out, where all you've got to do is go apply to get what you want with the streets and whatever. They've got that all laid out. All you've got to do is fill out the forms to block the streets at whatever time.

I thought that was great, when they blocked it off like that (unintelligible)...

The City of Roses music festival is great. Different businesses come out, and people cook hot dogs and hamburgers. It's in September.

That's another thing. You never really know when it's going to be because of the amount of work.

Is that what happened to Riverfest?

Yeah.

It used to be a giant festival on the river, with rides, and all that.

(many people talking at once.)

Tunes at Twilight is probably the best portrayal of what we can do downtown.

The amount of work is minimal, but what it's accomplished is such a positive that it seems like such a big deal. Riverfest actually got to the point where the media talked so much about the people that showed up.

(many people talking at once.)

4th of July celebration is huge. The fireworks is the big thing, and we've had the cars down there, lined up on both sides, but you don't get the crowds until the fireworks.

The thing with these festivals is you have to bring in new blood every year and rotate your organization, so you get a group of people in that just don't care.

(many people talking at once.)

It has to be an economic benefit, because you're relying on your merchants. If they don't see a benefit, they tire of it.

But people in business in a certain area need to see the benefit of getting people down there, just to see the stores.

I agree.

If we have events, it might not be much for your business, but it increases exposure.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

SECTION V

GOOD HOPE DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Chad Hardell, I'm a real estate developer, and I live in Jackson, but I do some development in Cape. I've got an old school that I'm getting ready to purchase, which falls into this area.

I'm Tom Adell Meyer, a realtor. Been here since March 17, 1946, and I watched the town grow, and I've met several times with many people regarding this area. Along with Chad, I used to do the same thing he did, develop subdivisions and so on, but I'm very much interested in the growth of the middle of the town, and hopefully there will be a lot of good things come out of tonight that might lend credence to growth potential.

My name Louisa Ward, and I am with Central High School. I'm been living in Cape for about 13 years.

I'm Kim (name unintelligible), and I've been in Cape about 14 years. I currently work at the Boys and Girls club.

My name is Phyllis Adams, (unintelligible noise), came to Cape going on about 14 years, and since I've been here, I've watched Cape grow even in the little amount of time I've been here. I would really like to see where this is going to go, especially with the courthouse coming here, and the thing they're putting down through the college.

My name's Geri Wyman, and I'm with Merriweather Investments, and for 30 years my husband I and have lived here. We're in real estate development, we own four restaurants and houses and buildings in the downtown area. Our first restaurant was Mollie's.

I'm Mark (name unintelligible), born and raised in Cape Girardeau. My father was born on Farmer's Street 90 years ago, and the house is still there. (unintelligible noise)...the River Campus, and it's cleaned up, old houses down there, some redevelopment. That's brightened up this end of town quite a bit. It's a long way from what will be soon 20 years since we bought the business, and it's like night and day. I've seen a lot of progress, and it's fantastic.

My name is Gary Miller. I'm the interim director of the school of performing arts, River Campus. I've lived in Cape 27 years. My wife and I have raised all 4 of our children here, and I've been employed at the University since 1980. Obviously, I'm very interested in seeing the development of the area as an administrator. As a citizen of Cape Girardeau, I'm also interested in that.

I'm Paul Minacre, was born and raised in this area down on South Ellis. My parents home is still on Middle Street. A couple businesses over here were run by my grandfather's brothers or their kids. I'm the co-chair of the arts, culture, and leisure committee for the Vision 2020 committee, and the City of Cape, and I'm interested in furthering the arts in the area. I've seen this area change to become kind of a retailing area for the neighborhood. We do some volunteer work and teaching couple classes down there, and it seems like people have to go along, do a little shopping... (unintelligible noise)

My name is Charles Ritchie, and I was born and raised here. I spent a lot of time as a kid on Main Street. My aunt and uncle have a jewelry store on Main Street, and I spent a lot of time there. And my mom lived on Spanish Street, about 15 years ago, and I love the area, the whole area, so the opportunity came to buy two buildings, and I just kind of went in and rehabbed and...

My name is Scott Blank, I operate Bi-State Southern Oil Company, and I own two convenience stores, one in this area. Been a lifelong resident of Cape, and we have some property, and we're looking at development opportunities.

Moderator: Thanks. My first question is a broad one. If I were looking to move to Cape, what would you tell me about your town?

Restaurants.

Banks.

(unintelligible noise.)

Great university.

I think the location's great, because if you want the big city life, you're in great proximity to Memphis and St. Louis, so you get the small town atmosphere, but for luxuries of a larger city, they're close to us.

Nashville is only 3 and a half hours.

It's on the river, so it attracts a lot of people.

Let's not forget Cape itself is pretty. It has good hospitals, and it's a pretty city. It's well-maintained. Cape sits on the river...

A diverse economy. We've got a lot of different industries—farming, manufacturing, etc.

This area is ripe for tremendous growth. North of this, we've got the Federal Building, and to the south we've got the bridge, and you've got Broadway with the Marquette Hotel, so you've got about \$250 million worth of money that we'll spend, plus the \$60 million or more that the University has invested. The Good Hope area has the potential of a tremendous expansion in the area for apartments or small retail. In my opinion, Morgan Oak should be a marketing district, and the Good Hope area should be the residential, and through the south of Morgan Oak, it's pretty well established what'll be there, but those three blocks, from Williams Street where they up the new street in, beautify the area and extend it, and when the University is probably going to tear down some of those buildings pretty soon, and property adjoining it will be available pretty soon for removal or some other kind of growth, for redevelopment or parking or whatever it might be. The history of the area itself is, I go back to 1934, and I remember the streetcars and how busy Good Hope used to be. That was the marketing center of the area. You had supermarkets in those days, you know. And it's going to come back to that. All we've got to do is make it available and romance it.... Some of people know what the potential is. My problem is I'm too damn old. But I can still think, you know. But, you guys, it's there for you. You guys got a lot of property over there that could be developed into a real good apartment district or recreation. Recreation is something that this end of town needs, too. The City has done a good job on the outskirts, but they haven't done anything to it in the inner core, so they ought to be encouraged to do that, because many people can't travel that far to play ball, so we've got to do something in the area. I talk too much.

(laughter.)

We have an incredible medical community here. We have 2 hospitals, and we have a huge plethora of services for all surrounding areas. I think there are almost 670 doctors in this area, which is pretty outstanding for a community this size. There's incredible growth in other areas, you know, subdivisions, outlying areas... Cape's a great place to live, and it really is centered in proximity of all these other places. 30 miles south of here is Sikeston, and that's a pretty Southern town. And 30 miles north of here is St. Gen, you start getting closer to St. Louis, and get a little more Northern.

Several things they mentioned... we retired in 2001 and settled here, and I've run into other retirees that have done the same thing, and in looking at Cape, there's plenty of services, medical services, nothing was very far away, they really don't have traffic here... we moved here from the DC area. (unintelligible)...you don't have the ups and downs, the swings in the economy that are happening nationwide, because there's a lot of support here. You just don't have that. You won't get really rich, but you're not going to get hit really hard when something's bad. The City is making adjustments towards making it a better place to live, dressing up the wall to put the historical mural on it, to make it (noise, unintelligible), quality of life things that people talk about. I've talked to other retirees, and that's one of the things they looked at, and they see it as a really good place to live.

And a big middle class. I think Cape has a very large middle class. Unlike a lot of communities you see, on one end and the other, we have a more broader middle class.

Moderator: Where do you shop in Cape? Retail, grocery, anything like that?

See, you don't have any good retail in this area at all, you don't have a grocery store.

Unfortunately we've been taken over by the big chains, and we've seen that in the last few years, and it's just destroyed our small mom-and-pop stores, and they have a hard time competing with that. That's pretty basic to any community. I think that that's pretty standard. But it's certainly happened here, and it's taken a toll on small mom-and-pop businesses, taking it out of downtown. I could probably name 10, at least, in the last 10 years that have gone by the wayside. As far as grocery stores, we do have a Sav-A-Lot, but we don't have one for people who want (unintelligible), it's not hard to get to, if you have a vehicle, but it is if you don't. We have small boutiques that are popping up here, and they're doing a pretty good job. It's mostly our riverfront and some of those side streets. Other than that, it's the mall.

Town Plaza.

Strip centers and such.

(many people talking at once. Background noise.)

...I remember when they took the movie theater, and they took everything out as far as shopping for people our age, and people I know, they have to go out of town to go to get some shirts or some shoes or something.

We do have (unintelligible)...

For some reason, you can't buy a prom dress in Cape.

(laughter.)

...you have to go to Poplar Bluff or St. Louis.

I think there's such an attraction toward the I-55 traffic, that even Wal-Mart's trying to capitalize on that. Of course, we'll get more shopping centers where the Wal-Mart goes or Target, it's just going to keep breeding.

You know, when you stop to think of it, there's no coffee shop, no sandwich shop, no men or women's clothing store, except the, I don't know of any... it used to be a lot of em. And I have a particular question. What is your projection on people and movement in the area? I'm talking about tourists, for example.

Well, first of all, don't forget the students, because we need much more diversifying possibilities downtown. On Morgan Oak, I can imagine exactly what you're saying. A small place for a student to get coffee or water or something. The University will bring down sandwiches at noon, because we have to do that because of meal plans, but...

But you're doing that for your students.

We have to. In the evening... there will be students who need to grab a quick bite between a 3:00 class and a 7:00 performance. The museum, which is part of River Campus, is an interactive museum which will have busloads of people coming in to visit it. That's something good, and a lot of people don't know about it. We don't have a place to say, we've got a busload of people down here who would like to have a sandwich and a soft drink.

You got to drink in the west end.

So the potential is very much there.

Mr. Miller, how many students will be...?

Okay, I sat down one day, and tried to figure out how many people would be in or on River Campus at any given hour of the day, and it's hard to predict because that changes every semester, but we're thinking that during the course of the day, we've got 210 art majors, 145 music majors, and we've got about 125 theater/dance majors. Those people are not there all together at any one time, but that gives you a rough idea. Peak times are going to be 9:00-11:00 and 1:00-4:00 in the afternoon, and that clumps the evening performances. If there is something planned, if people want a bite to eat after a concert... (unintelligible)... go a street over and say, as you're coming up Spring there are small restaurants, and there's real ethnic diversity.

I suspect that in your planning, that there's some thought in this direction, that we will build, that someone will eventually build services, and it will probably happen, but there's another thing, too. Until it does, they still have to take a bus or drive 10 or 15 minutes to go...

You don't need a bus. The way we've got it worked out now, original plans were to have a bus two times an hour each way, traveling between the campus and the River Campus with no stops. But after having discussed it, we will have three stops intermediately, courthouse, up on Broadway, and at Fred's, which means that this brings the community much more in to us, and that's great. These will be 36-passenger buses... Cape citizens will be allowed to board those buses and ride to our cultural events, too.

(many people talking at once.)

... I don't understand why there's no public transportation in the city. I know they've got that little, what is that thing, the CTA? I grew up in the city of St. Louis, so it's always easy if you didn't have a car, you go get on a bus. Here, I don't see that as being available, especially in areas like this one, Southside Cape. I know here is this not as well economically as other areas, so this leaves this side underprivileged, because if they have no transportation, they can't get anywhere. But they're going to bring the bus from the campus to there, to a lot of the citizens. That's good for there, but what about the whole vast majority?

There's a unique partnership between our city and our taxi services, just recently, so I think that that, in essence, obliterated any mass transit systems in our town, and you're right. There's absolutely nothing...

We have two buses.

(many people talking at once.)

But look how little it is.

It goes a few places, and they'll be expanding that service hopefully.

It needs to grow.

It will grow.

I'm a social worker here in town, and I did have clients that ran into that same problem, had no access to transportation, but what we have now has helped excessively. It's been a great thing. I think they're just up and running, so I think that we'll see them expand their services. They run from 6 am to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday. Doesn't cover everybody, just starting out. For clients that I serve, it's been incredibly helpful, and it'll get better, we hope, because we're pushing it.

(technical problems...gap in conversation.)

...a combination of efforts, the artists, the people who already live here. Something like the Loop in St. Louis on Delmar. I don't think it'll ever go back to what it was, the German heritage, but...

The perception I had of Old Town Cape when I came back here is that there was some success stories here and there. Restaurants seem to be the most successful things. In talking to people about buildings and things, they were unclear on what they could do if they bought a building, and it didn't seem like there was any preparation for success. You've got buyers that are kind of interested. Some people just don't have enough information.

I was surprised that there wasn't kind of an Old Town Cape office, where you could pick up a...

We're in the middle in a change in our codes, and you might be able to tell us a little more about that. But, you know, there's been real problems with people trying to buy older buildings and bring them up to code. They insist that we do things that are not financially plausible for us. You sit there with this huge albatross that no one wants to rent because no one can pay the lease on the property after you've put half a million into it.

What's the code change?

We're looking at adopting a different code that's going to incorporate more lenient measures.

Lenient in what way?

For instance, we have to put handicapped services in any building, and if it's over two stories and doesn't have elevators... someone that wants to sell soap downtown is not going to pay 2000 a month for a storefront.

If you do, under the 2003 code, if you do a certain amount of renovation, or if you change enough of a building, that triggers you bringing the building up the current code. Part of that is seismic construction techniques, which are extremely cost-prohibitive. Electric, plumbing, and all that, too. You go in and do a little work, but as long as you don't change the use of the building or do major renovations, you can't change wall and things like that...

(unintelligible)...

So is that limited to the retail shops and the restaurants, because you don't want to do so much work to it. If you wanted to make it apartments...

That's a whole new ballgame. That's why we don't have any downtown residential living, because to get the upstairs rented in such a manner that will satisfy the code for our town, it's just, people cannot afford to pay the rent.

Exactly. Apartments and making the downtown area livable for people...what about the people that are already living in these areas? What's going to happen to them? Would they be pushed out because everything has went up so high that they can't even afford to pay taxes on their property anymore? Please address that for me, because that's a concern to me. My property falls right into that. That makes me wonder, okay, you're going to fix all this up, okay, now what's going to happen to mine? Am I still going to afford to stay in? Or will I be pushed out, have to sell it, because the taxes, they went too

high? Now, I'm forced out of my home because of all the renovation that you've done here to make the downtown area look nice. What about the people that's already living here, owning their homes? What's going to happen to them?

This isn't about displacing individuals. It's more about creating a place where diverse walks of life can live together.

But when it happens, it forces them...

I don't think your taxes would go up dramatically, though, because they reassess your property from time to time...

But it's still in that Old Town Cape restructuring.

You know, the county assessor does that. It would be small. But you would benefit because your property value would go up proportionate to what they'd reassess, so if you did sell—

I understand that, but still, maybe, some of those in this area may not as fortunate to be able to continue, what's that reassess thing on the property? What if right now, they have this property, and they can pay all the taxes at this moment, okay, and now we're talking maybe a few years down the road, and now it's built up so much and everything's so nice, then what happens? That's my question. I understand what you're saying, it makes the property value grow, but does it make it too high for the people that's living there?

(many people talking at once.)

It's only gone up about \$500 in 20 years. The only way your property would really realize the big difference is if you sold it after the development began. You would realize it then, and the new property owner would pay much higher taxes.

But that's still my concern. What if I don't want to sell?

The taxes aren't really going to take a huge jump.

I know we say this now, but will that be really wrote somewhere so that it does not affect so greatly?

(many people talking at once.)

But that's really a concern of mine.

Moderator: Let me ask you a little bit about the Good Hope specific area, since we've talked a little about Old Town Cape in general. What do you think are people's perceptions of the Good Hope area?

My notes here say that we have to overcome the reputation of the area. You got to address that first, you got to romance it, you got to...

I think it's better now than it was.

(many people agreeing.)

It's still having issues, though.

When my partners and I first bought a building 20 years ago, most of the comments that were made was, "We don't want to come down there..." (noises, unintelligible). I go down there at 2:00 in the morning now, and I'm not afraid. You say romance it, and if you continue to talk about it, for the most part, in 20 years, we've had two little break-ins, stole our candy machine, and that's essentially all we've had. The people have been good, the neighborhoods. We've had some issues with people in the streets, and that's kind of improved in the last year or so...

Yeah, it did. I agree.

You have to continually keep telling people that it's really not that bad. Come down and see.

The thing that's so important when you bring somebody in, we start at the Marquette Hotel, the Federal Building, the bridge, and the development that the University has, and we drive right down Spanish Street, and we show them the town, and it's one heck of a ride. Again, there's a stigma there that has to be overcome. There's a couple blocks in the area that still need attention, and it can happen, but getting back to one of the questions on value, even in the area over there, the history of growth has been about, on value, it's been about 3% a year increase in value. It's never been below that. In marketing, we watch that pretty close, and so the area has improved a lot in the last 5 years. At least, especially since the University and the bridge and the Federal Building and the Marquette. So when that kind of money is spent in there, it has an effect, and we know why...

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

When you say "we know why," what do you mean?

It upgraded the neighborhood, and things have gradually improved, haven't they? Come by the office, and I'll show you.

I've been in parts of town where you didn't stop your car, and Good Hope is just not like that. You have a bunch of old buildings, and again, people aren't going to do the work until they know that somebody's going to lease them. It's a Catch-22. As far as restaurants and retail, it's ripe for development. There's no way that people are going to sit back and not want to develop the areas around the college, to give people the services that they need. People are just hanging back, you know, this lawsuit that the city had with the River Campus... people were feeling very very engaged on getting down here and doing something with this area, but when you've waited for 5 or 6 years, you lose a lot of steam. People are just waiting to see what happens. Some are still skeptical. You'd be surprised.

I'll have emails come in saying, "I own some land near River Campus. Tell me what I should do."

(many people talking at once.)

I say, "Are you willing to step up?" A number of populations that some would call high-end, we've got to have things for people in the neighborhood and the students, and I see that as being a key. There's never been any talk about putting dorms down at the River Campus, but a lot of students would live downtown. My own kids say, "It would just be fantastic to live downtown." People *want to* be downtown.

Yesterday, we had a call from St. Louis, people that want to do some investing down here in that area, and so they'll be down probably next few days, but we've sent all the information up to them, and then there's another group that's interested in the motel that's over there, to convert it to efficiency apartments, but from the area where you're living, where your home is, from there south... (unintelligible)... it's clean. It wasn't exactly several years ago. And that's due to what has happened in between, I mean.

But to me, the thing that, and you're talking about the entrepreneurial spirit, and the thing that really kills us is we go down to City Hall, you don't get any cooperation. There's no cooperation.

I appreciate you saying that, because I was going to bring it up. The City's got to get involved if they want it to happen.

My husband and I own every single building on that block between Merriweather and Independence...we had to buy them, because we couldn't get any police force to break up the fights, people were selling drugs in front of our house, so we were finally like, "This is not going to work." You're right. We get very little interest in this area, and maybe that'll change...

With a plan, we can make it happen, because they want to be reelected.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

The city needs to get behind the developers, that's for sure. I've built in 30 towns, and Cape is one of the toughest.

They seem like they're trying to decide how they can make it more difficult. I wanted to put a flat roof on my warehouse building, and they said I had to get an architect, and the inspector said, "you have to do the bathrooms, too." So I just still have a leaking roof.

(many people talking at once.)

We need a place to start, and if the City does there part on those three streets that are going to intersect this new fountain street extension, you can take Morgan Oak, and they've not doing anything since they tore the bridge down. The sidewalks are all gone. If you're going to bring people in this area in buses and try to get them to walk up the street, then we've got to get the streets right, the lighting right, and the sidewalks, and hopefully the developers will say, "The city's investing here, so..."

Moderator: That's a great transition to my next question. We've talked about some specifics of this area, but how user-friendly is the Good Hope area? You've talked about sidewalks and lighting. Tell me a little bit about the user-friendliness.

It's antiquated. It was a small, working downtown up until about 15 years ago, and there were lots and lots of businesses down there. There was an older culture that lived down here and did business down here for all of those years. Slowly, I think as they got older, lots and lots of mom-and-pop businesses closed when younger generations didn't want to take over. Rather than sell the business, they just closed it. Lots of those buildings need to be repaired. It was easier to condemn them and shut them down than to repair them. That why you see so many parts of buildings and empty lots. It's easy to get to, we've got a great highway running right to it and lots and lots of arterial streets, the neighborhoods around it are good.

Moderator: Are there any specifics about the Good Hope area?

We have a traffic light... (unintelligible)... I do not go down Morgan Oak, especially on a bicycle.

It's terrible.

It needs to be redone by the City. It's not a state highway.

Where's the main entrance going to be?

(many people talking at once.)

You will come in off of South Fountain, and that will likely be a one-way which parks in front of River Campus and comes out on Morgan Oak.

And the plan for Morgan Oak and Fountain is a roundabout. That's the plan that I have. And it'll be extended to Williams Street.

That's what I understand.

And Scott, or anybody else, I plan to set up a meeting with the mayor, because I want to talk to him about this eyeball to eyeball.

Don't mention my name. I'm in enough trouble down there.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

But the attitude at City Hall is, instead of, "here's my plans," okay, you got a real problem, let's see what we can do. Instead it's let's throw up some barricades.

You know what's worked really well for me, is doing a predevelopment conference with the City and all my subcontractors and all the heads of the departments in the City, and we'll all sit around the table and talk about it, and that works really well, getting everybody on board up front. But there are some huge things that the City has done that are extremely positive, with the Community Development program, and Steve Williams has gotten this state money and gone around area to area and done all these, brought millions of dollars worth of money into this exact area, fixing up homes and other things. He's just done wonders. I think that's one big reason—

But they still don't have any services.

I think that, one big thing when the River Campus gets going, it'll be like Towers. Remember, they first did Towers, and all of a sudden these quick shops and Subways, all this stuff sprung up. That'll happen.

And that's a selling point (noise, unintelligible)... security down there, because they're not about to leave that campus wide open. In our area, we'll just start branching out with security.

Well, I'm still trying my best at saying, "We've got to have university security down here," but again, we have to rely on the city. The department from the University will be primarily concerned with just the grounds right there and the building. We would have to have more of the city police presence in the area.

Are you going to have to furnish your own security? Would there be nothing in the surrounding areas?

(many people talking at once.)

I live on William, and as far as being over there, there used to be a lot of crime there. Nowadays, crime...

I talked to a girl from Kelso who spent the evening at Nick's, and anybody from the out of towns, they hear "ghetto," and she said she felt safe the whole time.

Being a social worker here in town, Good Hope isn't really the troubling spot. It's moved. It's still here, it's just at a different location. It's still around, and it's still in the same area we're talking about, and I think things move, the problems just move. I know Lorimier was a big hot spot for a while, Good Hope was a big hot spot. When I got here 4 years ago and said something about Good Hope, people would say, "You mean 'No Hope.'" There's rough parts here. But, not to bring up the same subject, but I deal with housing. I work with a lot of homeless and low-income individuals, and this area is a significant area of town where I see a lot of my clients in housing. I do worry a little bit as far as what will happen to that housing stock down here. Will a lot of that old housing go away? What are the plans? That is a concern for me, because there are tons of people living in those old homes that need a lot of work, but I do worry about displacing some people, and I guess I might need a better understanding of the boundary of what the University is going to do... but the majority of my clients are right here. What is going to happen to them? We talk about business, and that's great—they need employment and services. You want to go get milk, you pay out the wazoo for it. I'm excited about the development, but I am nervous about displacement.

I think that's one thing we're looking at right now. There's part of this whole plan for housing. Old Town Cape is doing a... (noise, unintelligible)... did that plan ever get put together?

You know it did, but (noise, unintelligible). So it's still there, and I think all the preliminary studies and work has been done. We have a whole different set of criteria for the DREAM initiative. I think that stuff got put on hold, for now. But for downtowns to be what they need to be, we need that diversity. We cannot let developers raise everything and build these fabulous townhomes and whatever. We've got to have diversity within the boundaries, the shops and the retail experiences. Otherwise, your downtown will die. It literally can't, it becomes not a traditional neighborhood development, but something similar. Where you have one specific income range that people can afford housing. We have that problem right now. What I'm afraid of is that so many houses down there are in such need of repair that if someone gets everything up the way it needs to be, you're going to displace people because you're not going to be able to rent them cheaply. The University doesn't have any plans for doing anything. They have no involvement in our residential area whatsoever. They're hoping and realizing that the private sector's going to move in and do what they need to do to get housing down there.

Moderator: Let me switch gears. We've talked about the current standing of the way things are, but I'd like to talk about where you'd like to see things go. What kind of businesses would you like to see in Old Town Cape, and particularly in this area?

If you want to build, you've got to have some services you have to offer, laundry, groceries, whatever. My thinking is you would design a commercial area, maybe from Morgan Oak to Good Hope to Williams Street, so it could be a three-stage thing, but is there a plan to that effect in the Old Town plan?

I think they're working on it. I think they have some plan for affordable housing and, you know, the retail and the services, but I guess that's kind of been put on hold.

Moderator: What other kinds of businesses?

With the experience you have here from the different developers, there's something that comes first, and we need to look at the logical progression of the steps. This first thing has to happen, and maybe it's the anchor in the area, but there's something that continues to draw people to continue to invest money, so if the plan follows a logical progression... I don't know what that is.

Well, zoning and districts are a good start. If you have certain housing districts and retail districts.

They're just all over the board, so getting some of that laid out. That's actually what Old Town Cape was working on, as well.

I keep hearing you all saying Old Town Cape, Old Town Cape, but I really hear more reference to this lower half here. What's going to happen to the town, then? I'm hearing more reference to this area with the campus, and what happens to the top half?

I think that whole area, it's planned for different uses.

I understand that, but what is the, okay, we hear what the bottom use is for...

(many people talking at once.)

Do you have meetings over other areas?

Moderator: Yes. This group is just for the Good Hope area. We're talking to focus groups in other areas.

When you say Good Hope, where does Good Hope begin and end? Because, see, Good Hope is over there... what is the block off for it?

Can you define Herrick for us?

(many people talking at once about what the boundaries might be.)

Moderator: So, I've heard a few different businesses you'd like to see down here. What else would you like to see come to this area?

Back to the services. Up until 7 or 8 years ago, we had a pharmacy in Good Hope. We don't have a pharmacy on this end of town, which we need. We need a little clothing shop.

A grocery store.

The only eating place you have now, for dinner, is across the river.

Well, once you go downtown...

Unless you go down to Main Street, you have one restaurant on Morgan Oak that's open until noon or 2:00.

(many people talking at once.)

...service, retail-oriented...

...Rose Bed Inn, just across...

The one thing I travel to St. Louis for is Trader Joe's. That's a small grocery store that is not expensive, but not a dollar store by any means. It's kind of a neighborhood-type store, it's small.

We have to have a population base of 150,000 to bring one in.

(many people talking at once.)

...Grocery...

For instance, we tried to recruit a Starbucks downtown, and they had to sell 900 cups of coffee a day before they would even think about it, and, we just don't have that. I think it's pointless for us to try to go backwards and think about how we want all these businesses here. We're going to have to think about what businesses can be supported by the demographics that we do have, but it almost doesn't work the other way around.

The other thought to that is what businesses would actually draw people down here.

(many people agreeing.)

I don't know how you would convince a hotel/motel developer to come down here, but a nice 4 or 6 story hotel/motel...

Well, the catalyst is there, it's just a matter of how we market it.

We got a nice 4-lane highway that's 5 minutes off the interstate, and if you had a nice hotel... before, there was no way to get to downtown except for a two-lane street.

Everybody knows Morgan Oak, and it should be commercial. Good Hope could be residential, it could be high-rise apartments, good-looking stuff, and would improve the area tremendously and bring a lot of population back into that core area. They could have the services on Morgan Oak or Good Hope or Spring Street, for that matter, and go down as far as where the new bridge rolled in, that's already being developed, with a service station on both corners probably doing very well. They look busy. And even the stations on Morgan Oak, people are drawn to go get gas and then go back across the river wherever. There's no reason to stop there. Now, there's a new building being built on Morgan Oak, and I don't know what's going in there.

Cape Restaurant Supply.

Oh, good. That's a good idea, that's a good area for it, for what they're going to do. So it's a commercial tone there. So, we're doing all this talking here, and there's a lot of good ideas, but you've got to set the tone to develop a master plan for it. What do you want where? What will grow there? There's a lot of people out there that could probably help a lot if they only knew about what we wanted to happen, and it's going to take a master plan, believe it or not, like it or not... it needs somebody that has the intelligence and wherewithal to do it. It's probably going to come in stages, though. If you bring in the River Campus, you'll probably see things spring up that cater to the college kids, and then housing, and then it's going to be kind of a springboard, but you've got to have a plan.

I don't disagree with you.

...if you don't, with the zoning screwed up like it is.

I think you've got to look at what can be supported first.

They need to be zoned.

(many people talking at once.)

That sounds like a good starting point, just to go back and get the zoning. If you want to be successful, you do want to segregate the commercial...

We have some bigger issues than that, too.

But you've got to have the residential that has to have access to that commercial area.

...for the developers to have an idea, where can I do this...

There are parts of our area zoned for manufacturing, right in the middle of a residential area. It's crazy. It's so backwards. It's never been redefined or...

Moderator: Are the aesthetics that you feel need to be worked into the master plan? What kinds of things about the way things look?

Well, like the Delmar area of St. Louis, where you have a theme, and the whole area just draws on this theme.

For me, I just see, as a community member looking at the Loop or some of those places. Sometimes when I hear commercial, I know what it means, but I also think that mainstream stuff... I so don't want to see mainstream stuff down here, that would totally bum me out. I can go out to Wal-Mart and go out to all the malls and all that, and I can't stay in that. I would love to have this area be more unique. I don't know what that means, but I love Trader Joe's, I would love little things like that. Here's the River Campus, an artsy community...the commercial stuff, we can get that out there. I would love to see this be more mom-and-pop. I know that would be idealistic, but that's what I like to see. Have a sandwich shop that isn't Subway.

We don't even have the demographics to get any of what you call commercial. Commercial is any business. It seems like you're talking about the big chains... We hate that stuff. What we've always envisioned was like the Loop on Delmar. (noise, unintelligible)... artists and stuff. Hopefully, you're going to be taking those buildings and houses, using their artistic creativity to make that area something that it needs to be, and that would include the commercial venues that we hope for, the boutiques, the eateries. Diverse little eateries, from Thai noodle houses to Vietnamese cuisine, an international food store...

Little places you could sit outside and have lunch.

(many people talking at once.)

You know what I would really like, when I go downtown to sit by the water, I wish they did have tables. The same things I was asking for with outside eateries, when you're sitting outside, enjoying the day, and having a nice little place to sit and have a coffee or dessert.

Or just sit there and just enjoy it.

That's what you're looking for?

Yes.

(unintelligible)...I really don't get out during the day, a whole lot.

Would you, if there was a place to go?

(many people talking at once.)

...Wider sidewalks...

...Trees...

...Sandwich shops...

A couple restaurants where you might just...sandwich shops and cafes are really where it's at.

Ethnic restaurants.

What you said, the Thai restaurants...

You know, probably across from the University, there will be service-oriented... Video stores, convenience stores. Morgan Oak is prime for a strip of some sort, not a strip mall, but retail spaces for small businesses, people can afford...

Like a Walgreen's, maybe. Or a coffee shop with Wi-Fi, or a Barnes & Noble or something. I drive downtown to that...

Moderator: There's been some talk in other communities about a special business district with an additional sales tax or additional property tax, and all of the proceeds go to do all of the things you're talking about, sidewalks, etc. Is that something you think would be successful here?

It would be great.

Yeah, it would definitely be... (noise, unintelligible). We do have one, but it's for Main Street, and all the funds go for particular improvements and such. There's actually one in place, and it's been there for 25 or 30 years...

Moderator: This would be for the whole area.

The restaurant and hotel tax goes toward tourism.

CBB. It's to fund the CBB.

(noise, unintelligible)... would have a special tax that the city can recover property tax... I don't know of anything...

I think the Marquette has an agreement, too. They...

(many people talking at once.)

Something else I've heard about having down there is a little open-air market. We presently have that out there in front of the Galleria, and it would be perfect to have one downtown. Perfect for people to bring in produce, things from artisans. I think that could happen, and I don't think that needs a whole lot of work in terms of code.

(many people talking at once.)

Whatever happened to Riverfest? It seemed like it was doing really well.

I cannot find a person to tell me about what happens... I hear it kind of fell apart. The City would like to help...

Regarding Riverfest?

It got to be almost like a carnival.

It got real disorganized last year. It's been really frustrating, things falling apart. I agree it's a good idea. The premise of it, to showcase local talent, is great.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: We've talked a little about the Good Hope area and about Old Town Cape. What role do you think the Good Hope area should play in the Old Town Cape district?

I think it's an integral part...

The history of this area has been that they were divorced from the rest of town.

Actually, it was the original downtown.

(many people talking at once.)

It's where the German immigrants migrated, and that was the whole area, it was designed for German-speaking people. So that's where all the German people lived, as far west as Benton Street, and out to Linden Street, and as far north as Merriweather.

There's one other thing that we need to think about to make this thing happen, and that is to prevail upon the City or the County or somebody to develop a tax incentive plan for developers.

I think this area's main role would be to offer services to the River Campus and to provide housing for the entire area.

While respecting the heritage and the culture of the area... I mean, it'll never be what it was, but there's no reason we can't point out certain interesting notes of what it used to be and how important it was 200 years ago.

It's just the next step in developing the downtown area. You can't do it all at once.

The River Campus has been incredibly valuable, because it gave us a boundary. This has given us the opportunity to start from a specific point and to fill in the blanks. Let it grow from there. As far as all of Old Town Cape, we have Broadway and the Waterfront and Good Hope. Good Hope could live on its historical qualities. I think it'll be a pretty ethnic-oriented area.

Moderator: Thank you very much.