

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY REPORT

FINAL SURVEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CITY OF HANNIBAL, MISSOURI

June 21, 2007



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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



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SECTION I FINAL REPORT

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, UNICOM-ARC conducted five focus groups in Hannibal, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Hannibal community in regard to the downtown area. The five groups included the following: 1) DREAM committee, 2) city council and city staff, 3) downtown business owners, 4) long-time residents, and 5) newer residents.

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

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

A. Questions Posed to the Business Groups

The following questions were included in a discussion guide that was used for business groups:

General Questions about Hannibal

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

Downtown Specific Questions

04. Generally speaking, would you say that downtown Hannibal is headed in the right direction or wrong direction? Why?
05. Why did you choose to locate your business or make an investment in property downtown (or not in downtown, for other business/property owners)?

06. From what you hear from your customers, how “user-friendly” is downtown? Are business hours and locations convenient? Is there enough parking and is it convenient? Is it easy for people to find what they’re looking for?

07. How do you communicate to your customers about information about what’s going on downtown (about shopping, special events, other entertainment and recreation) or with your own business? How would you like to be communicated with regarding what is going on downtown from the City of Hannibal?

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. Questions Posed to the General Groups

The following questions were included in a discussion guide for general groups:

General Questions about Hannibal

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

Downtown Specific Questions

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

Questions Regarding the Future of Downtown

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

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

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

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

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

12. What other downtowns in the area would you say Hannibal's is most like? What downtowns or areas of other communities would you most *like* it to resemble?

C. The Hannibal 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?

Hannibal is a town of just fewer than 18,000 people along the Mississippi river, with a large tourism industry, an extensive park system, two highways crossing through the town, a thriving art community, a good school system, a four-year private college, an extension campus of a community college, good healthcare, and a variety of different industries. As the boyhood home of Mark Twain, Hannibal is well-known statewide and worldwide, and attracts tourists from many different countries.

The participants described Hannibal as a safe community, a good place to raise a family, and a place with a nice, small-town atmosphere. One of the participants described it as "America's home town," and the others echoed that sentiment. The groups also felt that the natural beauty of Hannibal, including the parks, the

hilly landscape, and the bank of the Mississippi river, are unique features of Hannibal. The main street is thriving, and the community does an excellent tourist business each year.

Hannibal's major businesses, according to the focus groups, revolve around the auto industry and tourism. There are, however, other some plants, businesses, and factories that are focused in other industries. Since Hannibal relies heavily on tourism, there is a "season" for tourism that spans through spring, summer, and fall. There are a number of festivals: The River Arts Festival in May, the Juneteenth Festival in June, Tom Sawyer Days in July, and the Folk Life Festival in October. These festivals draw tourists, as does Mark Twain's boyhood home and the Mississippi river as Twain described it. There are also famous caves and a well-known museum in Hannibal that draw tourists.

Geographically, Hannibal is very close to St. Louis, and within five hours of Kansas City and Chicago, so it is a very convenient distance for tourists from these urban areas.

The participants felt that Hannibal is moving in the right direction, especially in their quest to beautify, diversify, and improve the downtown area. Many participants are excited about the renovations that are happening downtown and feel that a revitalization of downtown will take Hannibal in the right direction. Many groups mentioned the "potential" that they recognize, and an "excitement" or "hope" for Hannibal in the next five to ten years.

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

According to the groups, residents get do their grocery and general household shopping within Hannibal. Much of the regular shopping is at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Hannibal and two other Hannibal strip centers. In addition to Wal-Mart, these strips include a J.C. Penney and smaller chain stores such as Steve & Barry's. There are ample grocery stores in Hannibal where residents shop.

The residents, however, do a great deal of their shopping across the river in Quincy, Illinois. Quincy has a larger variety of chain stores and restaurants, such as Kohl's, Old Navy, Applebee's, etc. The availability and proximity of all these chains takes Hannibal residents into Quincy for a lot of their own shopping, and also for shopping for their visitors.

Quincy residents do come into Hannibal to shop at the antique stores and the smaller local shops, especially downtown. While Quincy has many larger chains, according to the groups, Hannibal attracts a number of people from Quincy who want more quaint, unique items that they cannot find in Quincy. The Wal-Mart and the strip centers in Hannibal also draw shoppers from neighboring towns.

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?

As far as entertainment options, in addition to Hannibal's major festivals, the participants mentioned music, arts, galleries, theater, performances, tours, riverboat rides, a skate park, and a variety of parks with hiking and biking trails. They felt that there is a lot to do in Hannibal, especially during the tourist season and the festivals.

For dining options, participants expressed that they wanted a greater variety of restaurants in Hannibal. While there is a diversity of restaurants, many felt that a Mexican restaurant and a steakhouse might be nice additions, and that the chain restaurants in Quincy do hold a strong draw for a lot of Hannibal residents. Residents, according to the focus groups, dine in Hannibal often, but also go to Quincy for restaurants fairly often. Quincy residents come to Hannibal for dining options, as well.

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

The participants described popular recreation, including the parks and all the recreation associated with the parks; the river, which affords possibilities such as the riverboats; and the YMCA. The parks have walking trails and bicycling opportunities which residents and visitors enjoy. The riverboats are popular, and focus groups suggested having more river-based activities for residents and visitors. The YMCA in Hannibal has recently expanded, and the participants are impressed with the expansion.

D. Downtown Hannibal: Describing the Present

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

The groups overwhelmingly felt that downtown Hannibal is moving in the right direction. The Mississippi river flood of 1993 devastated the downtown area, and the participants felt that not only has Hannibal recovered from that flood, but the downtown revitalization within the past few years has been far beyond what they expected. Buildings are being rehabilitated for shops and residential space, including the Mark Twain Hotel, which had been a building in disrepair and is now being transformed into apartments. There is talk about new things going in downtown, including an 8-plex movie theater, which the residents feel would do even more to revitalize downtown Hannibal.

There were mixed feelings from a few participants about the direction downtown Hannibal is moving, and these mixed feelings involved the need to more clearly define the direction. While all of the participants saw all the revitalization efforts as positive, some suggested that Hannibal should define its direction more clearly, deciding whether to improve with a focus on Mark-Twain-based tourism or improve with a focus on giving Hannibal an old, small-town look and feel.

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

The business owners group members located their businesses downtown because of the history, the beauty of the buildings, and the affordability of property. Property was particularly affordable after the flood of 1993, which devastated downtown Hannibal.

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

Participants indicated that they do not visit downtown very often, although they sometimes visit for antique shopping or gift shopping, dining, walking around, and showing visitors the town. They described a number of things they used to be able to do downtown that are no longer possible; they cited high-end clothing stores, shoe stores, dining variety, and drugstores as downtown destinations that they once frequented that are now gone.

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?

Parking was a major concern for all of the focus groups when discussing the user-friendliness of downtown Hannibal. They felt that there is not enough parking, that it is sometimes difficult to find, and that people have to park quite far away from their destinations. Some participants suggested angled parking, while other suggested additional parking lots, but all groups were in consensus that the current parking situation makes downtown Hannibal less “user-friendly” than it could otherwise be.

The groups also mentioned signage as an important element in the user-friendliness of downtown. For tourists especially, the participants felt that there is not enough clear signage coming into Hannibal from the highway to direct visitors into downtown. Within Hannibal, according to the groups, it is difficult for tourists and visitors to find what they are looking for, including the Mark Twain home, the museum, and the shops.

The groups were in consensus that the City should “revisit the historic codes” to revise some of the regulations on signage, making it easier for stores to announce themselves, for the Mark Twain home and museum to be found by tourists, for drivers to find parking, and for visitors to find their way around the downtown. In suggesting this, some groups also suggested kiosks throughout downtown Hannibal, constructed in a historic-looking way to match the aesthetics of the downtown area, which could hold maps, brochures, and other information to help people navigate Hannibal. One group also suggesting linking the Visitors Center and the Chamber of Commerce, making it easier for tourists to have a single stop to gather information.

Another concern in the user-friendliness of downtown, according to the participants, is the business hours of most shops and restaurants. Most business close at 5:00 PM on weekdays and are not open for much of the weekend, which makes it difficult for local people who work outside of downtown to patronize those shops and restaurants. While a few things are open into the evening or on the weekend, the overwhelming majority of businesses hold regular weekday business hours, which participants found inconvenient.

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

The Visitors Bureau in Hannibal does a lot to promote Hannibal to visitors, including radio and television advertisement in St. Louis, newspaper advertisements, and special events such as “Just Girls Getaway Weekend,” which is regionally promoted. The Visitors Bureau works especially hard to advertise the various festivals within the region. Locally, residents get information from the radio, television, direct mail, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Because it is the birthplace of Mark Twain, and because of Mark Twain’s level of fame as an American author, Hannibal also gets quite a bit of national press. It has been featured on the Travel Channel, and the *L.A. Times* and *Washington Post* have recently done articles on Hannibal’s attractions.

E. Downtown Hannibal: Looking to the Future

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

The focus groups all had suggestions for additional businesses they would like to see downtown, which included shops, services, restaurants, and entertainment. The suggestions for shopping were a clothing store, a pharmacy, a hardware store, a bakery, a meat market, a bookstore, a grocery store, a convenience store, art galleries and shops, and craft shops. For other services, they suggested that a dentist, an eye doctor, and a camping and bicycle rental place would be welcome additions to the downtown area. For dining, the participants wanted to see increased outdoor dining options, increased variety of restaurants (including a Mexican restaurant, a microbrewery, and a steakhouse), and more restaurants with a view of the river, either outdoors or from upper-level windows. All of the groups felt that it would be ideal if these shops, services, restaurants, and entertainment options were open late and open on weekends.

Participants discussed the difficulties in having all of these businesses downtown and suggested that it would be difficult for them to stay open late and make a profit year-round. The tourist season is only spring through fall and, according to the groups, extending the season would help all levels of businesses thrive. The participants made some suggestions about winter activities to draw tourists and visitors, including a Christmas celebration that would bring people to Hannibal. Participants agreed that brainstorming ways to extend the tourism season would be beneficial to downtown Hannibal as well as to Hannibal as a whole.

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

The groups felt that giving Hannibal a cohesive look and feel should be an important part of the downtown revitalization process. Some participants suggested a theme, making downtown Hannibal a sort of Mark-Twain-themed theme park, complete with actors playing characters. Others suggested a subtler theme, including bricks on the sidewalks, cobblestone-like streets (still made of concrete, but with a stone application or appearance as a border or interspersed), and creating an old-town atmosphere.

The participants also mentioned the aesthetics of the sidewalks, landscaping, trees, building facades, and even parking lots as concerns. They suggested sidewalks with brick borders and more landscaping as ways to make downtown as a whole seems more cohesive and aesthetically pleasing. Since building repair is a concern for many in revitalizing the downtown as a whole, one group suggested a revolving loan fund or some other way to make building façade renovation financially easier on building owners. Some participants discussed the aesthetics of parking lots; even if parking is convenient, according to the groups, it should also be attractive.

Parking and signage were concerns regarding user-friendliness, but also fit into the aesthetics. The groups felt that both issues should be addressed as priorities, but aesthetics of parking lots and signage should be taken into account in the decisions.

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

The groups felt the highest priorities include repairs, beautification, parking, and signage, as well as attracting businesses and residents into Hannibal. For the repairs, the participants prioritized street and sidewalk repair, and also felt that the City should provide incentives to help building owners repair façades and should more strictly enforce codes for people with blighted buildings. In beautification, the groups prioritized green space, trees, flower boxes, and a consistent look for the sidewalks, lighting, signage, and streets. The participants all felt that parking was an issue, though some expressed the idea that there is not enough parking while others felt there is enough parking, but it is difficult to find or to access. The groups were entirely in consensus that signage is an issue—the current signs, according to the participants, are small and hard to read, and there is not sufficient signage to guide people into downtown and to help them navigate once they are in downtown.

Concerning businesses and residents downtown, the groups felt that a variety of stores and restaurants are important to making downtown attractive to both Hannibalians and visitors. Staple stores such as a drugstore would make life easier for residents, and a variety of specialty shops would appeal to tourists and visitors, said some participants. Business hours, for all of these different types of businesses, were a concern, since the current downtown business hours of 9:00-5:00 on weekdays make it difficult for working residents to shop downtown, and make it difficult for tourists looking for shopping, dining, and entertainment in the evenings.

For restaurants, the participants felt that outdoor dining, a variety of restaurants, and restaurants with a view of the river, would all be good additions to the downtown area, and would appeal not only to tourists but to residents as well.

The groups also felt that the current efforts to build a walking and biking trail are positive steps, and support the walking culture that such trails might create. They felt it was a priority to make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, whether by improving sidewalks and crosswalks alone, or actually blocking off a portion from vehicle traffic for pedestrians only.

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

The three towns that almost all of the participants used as a comparison were Quincy, Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri, and St. Charles, Missouri. Since Quincy is a nearby town that attracts shoppers and diners, the groups felt that if a larger variety of shops and restaurants came into downtown Hannibal, Hannibal may begin to attract larger numbers of people from outlying areas for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Historic St. Charles was consistently mentioned as an example of a historic downtown that Hannibal should strive to be like—many participants admired the cohesive look and feel, the variety of restaurants and outdoor dining, the variety of specialty shops, the pedestrian-friendliness, and the user-friendliness in general. Downtown St. Louis was mentioned as an example of a downtown that has seen a resurgence in the last five to ten years, and much of resurgence has depended on residents moving in—some groups mentioned downtown St. Louis to highlight how downtown residents can drive business into downtown.

Other cities used as examples included: The Plaza area in Kansas City; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Bend, Oregon; Columbia, Missouri; Charleston, South Carolina; Branson, Missouri; Washington, Missouri; Naperville, Illinois; and a number of smaller downtowns in nearby towns such as Bowling Green, Moberly, and Palmyra, which have town squares as the hub of downtown.

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

The downtown business focus group felt that the City should improve parking, infrastructure, and aesthetics, and the overall improvement of downtown would help drive business into downtown, which would benefit all businesses.

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

Participants in the downtown business owners group indicated that they would not be willing to support an additional sales tax for the "business district," because they fear it would drive away potential customers, especially Hannibal residents.

F. Key Points

Key points about the Hannibal area:

- ◆ Hannibal is a safe small town, a good place to raise a family, and has a beautiful landscape.
- ◆ As the boyhood home of Mark Twain, Hannibal has a great deal of history that its residents take pride in, and a booming tourism industry based around Mark Twain.
- ◆ In addition to a large tourism industry, Hannibal has an extensive park system, two highways crossing through the town, a thriving art community, a good school system, a four-year private college, an extension campus of a community college, good healthcare, and a variety of different industries.
- ◆ Hannibal has four major festivals during the spring, summer, and fall months, and the tourism season extends from March through October.
- ◆ The participants felt that Hannibal as a whole is moving in the right direction, particularly in its focus of revitalizing downtown.
- ◆ People do their grocery shopping in Hannibal, shop for household items at the Hannibal Wal-Mart and other strip centers on the west side of town, and travel to Quincy, Illinois often for a greater variety of shopping and dining.
- ◆ Downtown Hannibal has a few specialty shops and gift shops that Hannibal residents sometimes visit, and that tourists, visitors, and people from Quincy, Illinois come to.
- ◆ People dine in Hannibal but, according to participant, do not feel that there is as much variety as they would like.
- ◆ Hannibal does have a number of entertainment options in addition to the festivals, including music, arts, galleries, theater, performances, tours, riverboat rides, a skate park, and a variety of parks with hiking and biking trails.
- ◆ The river, according to the focus groups, is a large asset to Hannibal and could be more fully utilized for recreation purposes.

Key points about downtown Hannibal in the present:

- ◆ The participants overwhelmingly felt that downtown Hannibal is moving in the right direction, but also felt that, from this point into the future, that direction should be more clearly defined.
- ◆ Business owners find the affordability of property to be a big draw in downtown Hannibal.
- ◆ Residents visit downtown Hannibal from time to time, but not often because of the inconvenient business hours, and because many stores are geared toward tourists.
- ◆ Downtown Hannibal, according to the participants, could improve its user-friendliness by increasing parking and making the existing parking easier to find.
- ◆ Signage is a concern for many participants, who felt that the current signage makes it difficult for people to find their way into downtown and then, once downtown, to find their way around.
- ◆ Business hours of downtown businesses, typically 9:00-5:00 on weekdays, make it difficult for local people to patronize downtown businesses and for tourists to enjoy themselves in the evenings.
- ◆ The Visitors Bureau advertises to neighboring towns in the region and focuses heavily on St. Louis as a market to draw visitors.
- ◆ Locally, residents get information from the radio, television, direct mail, and the Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ Hannibal gets a lot of national press because it is the boyhood home of Mark Twain.

Key points about the future of downtown Hannibal:

- ◆ Residents would like to see clothing store, a pharmacy, a hardware store, a bakery, a meat market, a bookstore, a grocery store, a convenience store, art galleries and shops, and craft shops downtown.
- ◆ Participants felt that a dentist, an eye doctor, and a camping and bicycle rental place would be welcome additions to the downtown area.

- ◆ The groups wanted to see more outdoor dining options, increased variety of restaurants (including a Mexican restaurant, a microbrewery, and a steakhouse), and more restaurants with a view of the river.
- ◆ Extending the tourism season would help businesses thrive year-round, making it more attractive for businesses to set themselves up downtown.
- ◆ Giving Hannibal a cohesive look and feel should be an important part of the downtown revitalization process, according to participants; some suggested bricked sidewalks and cobblestone-on-concrete applications, while others suggested bringing out a Mark Twain theme more clearly.
- ◆ The aesthetics of the sidewalks, landscaping, trees, building facades, and even parking lots are concerns.
- ◆ Building and façade repair are concerns for many, affecting the aesthetics and attractiveness of downtown, and should be prioritized.
- ◆ Parking is a major issue for many residents, in the amount of parking, the convenience of it, and the signage directing people to it; the groups felt that a parking plan should be a priority.
- ◆ The groups felt the highest priorities are related to infrastructure—repairs, beautification, parking, and signage; they also prioritized attracting businesses and residents into Hannibal and expanding business hours in the downtown area.
- ◆ Downtown Hannibal should be pedestrian-friendly, whether that means improving sidewalks and crosswalks alone, or actually blocking off a portion from vehicle traffic for pedestrians only.
- ◆ People admire other downtown areas, and in particular Historic St. Charles, because of their cohesiveness, their resilience, the variety of shops and restaurants, and the pedestrian-friendliness.
- ◆ The downtown businesses would not be willing to support an additional sales tax for the “business district,” because they fear it would drive away potential customers, especially Hannibal residents.

SECTION II

DREAM COMMITTEE DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Regina Faden, I'm the executive director of the Mark Twain Museum.

Bill Sharp, and I'm with F & M Bank and Trust.

Larry Craig, executive director of the Hannibal Chamber of Commerce.

Sally Poole, Poole Advertising.

Michael Ginsburg, we have Lulu Belle's Restaurant.

Jeffrey Garson, City Manager in Hannibal

Scott Meyer, with Gerber City Restorations.

Christie Turvathen, Prestige Realty.

Bo Hicks, Director of the Commission of Visitors Bureau.

Roy Hart, and I'm the mayor.

Moderator: I'd like to start of with a very basic question. Describe the Hannibal area to me, and give me a feel for the area.

Are you talking about the downtown area?

Moderator: Right now, I want to talk about the city as a whole, and then I'm going to break it down to see the role your downtown plays in your city. If I were thinking about moving here from St. Louis, what would you tell me about your city?

Hannibal is a community of a little less than 18,000 people in the incorporated area. In the regional area, the school district's about 22,500. In the two-county area, approximately a little less than 40,000 people. Located along the Mississippi about 2 hours north of St. Louis, 5 hours from Chicago, 4 hours from Kansas City.

It's a safe place, and a nice place. I'm originally from Seattle. Hannibal is a place where you can really make a difference. There's a lot of opportunity here, and there's really good people. It's a growing, exciting time to be in Hannibal.

We're at the crossroads of two major 4-lanes, 61 and 36, which all that will be completed from the East Coast to West Coast and from New Orleans to Canada by 2009.

We have excellent medical facilities, a cancer center... (unintelligible noise). We are now going to start doing some intervention, so there's just a lot of, we have excellent medical facility here. Lots of people come here, because they can get the state-of-the-art cancer treatment, and we do have medical facilities here. We have an excellent school system here, also. We have a school system, we have a four-year private college, Hannibal-LeGrange, and we're in the process of getting a new campus for the Moline Area Community College, so we have those, too.

We've got one of the most extensive park systems of any city probably in Missouri (noise, unintelligible).

We're a very vital arts community. The Arts Council's one of the oldest and most well-recognized arts council in the state. And we've also been drawing a lot of artists to our community because of our location. We're close to a lot of their market areas for art shows. We also can have a low cost of living here because real estate is fairly reasonable compared to metropolitan places. Taxes are extremely low. We're about a third of what Illinois taxes would be. So therefore, we're able to draw and attract people from all over the country because of some of these amenities.

We definitely are a tourist community. We're the boyhood home of Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) and the historical significance of that fact, the boyhood home and the museum...so we are well-known worldwide as the boyhood home of Mark Twain. Go anywhere and tell them you're from Quincy, Illinois, and they don't know where you're from, but if you say you're 25 miles from Hannibal, Missouri, they know where you're from.

When the State of Missouri markets its state, Hannibal is the number one asked question and Mark Twain overseas and around the nation. Hannibal is the most well-known city in Missouri as far as history is concerned.

The museum usually gets around 90 countries a year, approximately, in visitors, particularly Germany and Japan. From what we hear from the visitors, Mark Twain is very well-known there. The town itself drives about 450 or 500,000 tourists a year according to the state, and we get a large portion of that to the Cave, which is another major draw here.

As far as nationally-recognized landmarks, Hannibal is one of the top 3 in the state. Natural wonders like the Mark Twain Cave, items that are on the national register.

We do have lots of historic architecture. (noise, unintelligible). Hannibal is situated on the Mississippi river, and there is virtually no development on the eastern side...

Hannibal also has a well-diversified small or medium-sized industrial base. We used to be very dependent on the shoe industry and the rubber industry back in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. We have a diverse industrial base; however, it is dependent, several of our industries are dependent on the auto industry, and therefore those industries are having some difficulty right now.

Moderator: What direction do you feel that Hannibal is moving?

I see that we're doing a lot more business diversity here. It used to be that our downtown was filled with antique shops, and now we're getting a lot wider business diversity, and I think that's strong and good for our community, because we've got a strong foundation. I think we're going to continue with our tourism. Anytime two highways meet, there is expanded growth, and that's going to happen here.

And I haven't been here as long as many of the people at the table, but in the 2.5 years I've been here, I see a growing optimism.

And diversity, too.

Yes. Yes. Hannibal is an old community, and when I came in, there was people always working, but I think there's a growing number of people willing to work together. The DREAM initiative is a large part of that. I believe that something's going to happen, and something's going to change for the better. I think that's helping mobilize people.

I see a lot of potential in Hannibal. People are shocked that Hannibal has not grown past 18,000 people with the potential that's here, with the location, the history, the affordability of living here. The fact that it hasn't exploded...

(noise, unintelligible.) ...become more focused in the last three and a half years. Actually, it probably goes back 10 years, and each year, there are more action plans, we're seeing visible results from really diverse groups. Yeah, that's the optimism that everybody feels.

Another one of our strengths is that we have a very strong public school system that's further supported with a very good post-secondary education with a private four-year college and an extension campus of the community college in our community. But that whole process, the education, that's just some good-quality work.

(side conversation, laughter.)

Moderator: What are the different main shopping areas where residents do their shopping?

We did a survey with the Chamber in 2002 or 2004, and we asked people in the community, and we limited it to people in Hannibal, and we asked them where they shopped. A lot of them did go into the Quincy area to shop. They're actually kind of leaving. Do you remember some of the details?

I think most people do most of their regular shopping at the Wal-Mart Supercenter or the Huck Finn Shopping Center in Hannibal.

We have three strip shopping centers. We do not have a mall. We have the three separate shopping center areas. Two are right behind each other, and one is a little further down. You do have the downtown area, and it ebbs and flows, but I think with Mark Twain Hotel, which I'm sure we'll talk about more, the restoration on that, I think we're going to see some continued growth in the downtown area and some additional development.

We have some real holes, though. We have a lack of clothing.

No brewery.

(laughter.)

Are our retail sales higher than the state average?

I don't know... (unintelligible)... relative to the larger area, we lose a lot of people.

People go to Quincy or St. Louis. I don't buy clothes here very much.

You can get clothes at Wal-Mart or J.C. Penney, we've got a Goody's, a Steve and Barry's. But we do not have a men's clothing store like a Joseph A. Banks or something like that, and we did have a high-end ladies store until this last year, which, after 105 years, they shut it down. As far as buying clothing, a ladies shop, we're lacking both those. Probably we have some shoe stores, but I wouldn't say we have high-end footwear.

(many people talking at once.)

If you ask downtown merchants with higher-end stores, like your quilting shops or the antique shops, they'll tell you that the majority of their people come from Quincy over to Hannibal to come to the downtown. We'll go out to Quincy for retail shopping, and Quincy will come here for a lot of the downtown things.

We have a retailer here in town that had a shop in Quincy, and he tried to make it for a year and a half, and spent a lot of money on advertising and ended up setting it down, and the minute that happened, a Quincy person came in and said, "You ought to have one of these in Quincy." He was in their downtown, too.

I think the downtown is where destination stores are, and that's where I think we need more focus. If people will drive for a certain product, that's what the downtown should be. It should be a mix, but that's probably a good focus.

In some ways, they have specialty stores we don't have, and they have ones that we don't have. There's something we're missing.

A lot of ours are more home-grown. They're beginning to get all the chains, which can be boring, like Kohl's.

You talk to younger people in town, and you sit at a restaurant, and hear a Hannibal-grown waitress, 18 years old, and they'll ask "where is there to shop?" and they'll send them to Quincy because they don't appreciate the home-grown, just like the restaurants in town, but not the Applebee's and things like that.

I also thing there's a big hole in the high-end retail food options. It's frustrating to go to the grocery store.

You have to hit all three if you want to get what you want.

No specialty bakeries, no farmer's market in summer...

Moderator: Do most people stay here to do their grocery shopping?

We stay here, for groceries.

And the higher the gas gets, the more they'll stay.

You can get your basic needs here.

If you're creative.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment?

There's a lot going on here. I think we've got a lot of dining opportunities, and actually if you knew of everything that was going on in this community as far as entertainment, you'd be surprised. A lot of music, arts, galleries, theater, performances, tours, riverboat rides. There's a lot of stuff going on.

You'll talk to people in Quincy in the hotel or restaurant business, and they'll say, "Hannibal has us beat 10 to 1 as far as things to do." I don't think we appreciate, or even know, what all there is to do.

We have several great festivals.

Moderator: What festivals?

Riverfest, the River Arts Festival, is coming up. Memorial Day weekend.

A four or five day national Tom Sawyer Days Festival over 4th of July, and another 2-day October festival called the Folk Life Festival. The River Arts Festival and the Folk Life Festival are always downtown. The Tom Sawyer Days is in the general downtown area, but spread out.

We've got the Juneteenth celebration is coming up in June. It's a celebration of the abolition of slavery.

It was 1876 or something that they landed from Texas, and a lot of the minorities didn't even know they'd been freed. The minority community celebrates Juneteenth here. And it's real nice.

We have a really good music festival or performance that's starting to come into its own. The Wiseman does the down by the river, which has local bands, but we have a promoter now that's bringing in bands for like a Blues-type festival.

And a comedy club.

Yeah, there's more opportunities. There's still a lot that we long for, that we hope for.

Yeah, obviously the river is a big source of recreational entertainment. I'd say there's a big hole that could be filled eventually, that we've underutilized the ball diamond, a great spot for college-age baseball team, and that needs a ton of work. We have a ton of area in the front plain, in between downtown and the river, that's underdeveloped and is a big problem, because of the restraints on use.

I still think, though, that we could use some more higher-end restaurants for dinners and lunches. It nice to have some choice. I mean, the Frog and Lulu Belle's is there, but if you were there for a week or several days, I think you would have to start doubling up. Again, a higher-end kind of customer.

(many people talking at once.)

Just this past week the Hannibal Inn closed down, and also Pirate's Cove, another restaurant in town.

We've lost about a quarter of our town's hotel rooms in one shot.

Moderator: Did they close for lack of business?

Deterioration, economics, couldn't bring in the groups he once could, to be honest.

It's hard to fill that many rooms in this size community.

Especially when you have it invested in your property for 10 years. He wasn't franchised with any particular group, was he?

No, we lost Holiday Inn and Ramada.

On a lighter note, we have a really active parks and rec department that's started up a lot of activity for kids and people of all ages, to get people up and active, and that's been quite remarkable. Disc golf? Is that what it's called?

Skate park.

They've also been adding walking and bicycle trails and trying to, there is a master plan to interconnect all of our 8 or 9 parks at some point in time, but there's a very active local bicycling group that's pushing that, and the parks and rec is also adding more trails.

Well, part of that comes from a sales tax initiative that was passed back in the late 90's, so the half-cent sales tax increased the budget to 1.2 million. One of our parks is now on the national register, and it's been written up in several national publications, and it's a 400-acre park that overlooks the river. It was given to us in the early 1900's by a philanthropist, and that park is really a showcase piece, and that's where some of our trails generate from.

Besides improved recreational facilities, we have a great YMCA, and between parks and rec programs and the YMCA, there are just great opportunities for activities from youth all the way up to senior level.

The YMCA just had a 2 million dollar expansion on their current facility, and coincidentally, their membership has increased about 2000 people in the last year or so. There are over 6000 members now.

You know all those new subdivisions and families out there, who must have some money, I don't see them downtown. They just don't come downtown because a lot of them don't read the paper. It's always a struggle to figure out how to reach them. You have General Mills, you have BASF, professional people, lawyers, engineers, who come in and out two or three years at a time, and we have a problem getting them downtown and making them feel invested in the community as some place they want to stay.

I'd like to add to that. We've got some high-end professionals that come in here from General Mills, or doctors or technicians at the hospital, or BASF, some of our upper-level management, who are settling in Quincy and driving here to work. We've got to figure that out... I'm not blaming anything. Whether it's the cost of housing, the school system, the convenience of shopping and restaurants...

I think it's all of the above.

Because it's what they're looking for. A lot of times, if they want a better school... when they're coming from a metropolitan area, Quincy looks like an easy commute. So if Quincy looks better, or there's a lack of housing here... sometimes it's the schools, sometimes it's more cultural events. I don't think you can pinpoint everybody that's not settling in Hannibal.

I agree.

Quincy looks more familiar when you're coming from a metropolitan area. They have Kohl's and Old Navy...

If we could get a Target, an Olive Garden, and a Red Lobster, we'd start keeping people.

(laughter.)

When I go downtown in the evenings, it's pretty quiet down there. There's not a lot going on that I've seen. Lulu Belle's is open in the evenings, and a couple other restaurants maybe, but it's very limited. There's not a lot of nightlife that I've seen, as far as venues. There's a lot of neat festivals, but tonight, for instance, if you went down there it would be pretty quiet.

Larry and I probably are, I'm just sitting here and looking at the table—Larry and I grew up here, and I'm 32—

(laughter.)

I'm actually 31 twice, so... but we can remember, and I'm sure Larry remembers this too, when we had the railroad station down here, we had shops all up and down Main Street. You had 2 or 3 drugstores, and the Crown Drugstore on one corner, you had the Rexall on the other corner, you had Crow's across the street, and Friday and Saturday night, downtown Hannibal was the place to be.

Right. In reality, the creation of the shopping centers...

...killed us.

And being put out on the western side of town, along McMaster's Avenue, was the start of the pulling away from the downtown area.

That's just a natural evolution. That's every town.

(many people talking at once.)

And it's no different than any other community in America today who used to have a thriving downtown area and started getting shopping centers.

I do think it can be brought back, I really do. There's a lot of niches that we don't have. No offense to Mike... there's not a Mexican restaurant downtown. Not that that's a big deal, but just for instance... I mean, Sally talked about a microbrew or outdoor dining.

That's the other thing. We don't really take advantage of the weather here. You can sit outside here. I'm from New Orleans, and you don't sit outside much, but there's a nice long season here, and there's not really a place to sit outside and dine.

And that's a social thing.

That brings people down.

There's an increase over the last few months with some new things opening. The weekends are busy downtown now.

I think there's some potential (unintelligible), and downtown has a great potential. We're hoping, we'll see, the jury's still out, but I mentioned earlier about the Mark Twain Hotel Apartments. There's going to be 34 apartments for low- and moderate-income seniors to live in. They're going to need a pharmacy. There's no pharmacy downtown, and unless they get in a cab and go to the West side of town, they can't get to one. So there's potential for that. We have a 5-plex movie theater on the north side of town that's looking to create an 8-plex, and they're considering a couple downtown locations. If that should happen, I believe that that will really energize the downtown area on a nightly basis or afternoon basis with people coming to movies, especially in the evening, the matinees, and hopefully then there will be more interest in the downtown area for other activities, and then people, after they get done with the movie, they might be looking for someplace else to go. It would also be good for the retail folks... there's potential that way, and of course we've got a lot of buildings. Scott's mentioned that we have a lot of historical architect type buildings here and a lot of historic buildings that have second and third floor space that's not being utilized, so there's potential for second and third story lofts.

And some of that, we do have some of that, but it's very underutilized. We do have people who live downtown, but not a lot.

But we're getting a lot of good models down there. They're all trying to fix up their building and move down there. I think part of it is, when I moved to St. Louis, they were just starting lofts, and now there's the whole loft district down there. And St. Louis was kind of a town that wasn't feeling too optimistic... in some ways, Hannibal needs to feel that its downtown is a cool place to go.

Moderator: What do people use the downtown area for now? Why do they go down there?

I come everyday for coffee, to get away from the office. I come at least once, twice. There's a nice coffee shop.

I eat down there.

I do too.

And again, no offense to Mike, but the diversity, I feel, is not very broad. There are probably 3 or 4 restaurants total downtown.

There are lots of bars.

But you're not going to go eat lunch at a bar if you're going to be around people and smell like a cigarette.

There's really only 3 or 4 restaurants that you can go eat at, eateries, not necessarily restaurants, but places to eat downtown.

I go downtown because I work downtown.

Sally just made an investment, bought a building and renovated it...

When people come, we bring them down to the museums downtown.

Downtown is still the city and county seat for government. There's still a big professional pace from attorneys, banks. So those are all reasons people come.

Dry cleaning. Jewelry stores.

Moderator: Are there things that people used to do downtown that they can't do anymore?

Yeah... traditional downtown retail.

Clothing, shoes.

There used to be appliances.

Convenience...

Used to be a hardware store downtown. Used to be 3 or 4 drugstores, and there's none down there.

You can't get groceries, prescriptions, it's very impractical.

It's very embarrassing when people get off the Delta Queen, or the River Queen, or whatever, and they stop through City Hall and ask, "Where can I find a drugstore?" We don't have that around here. Some of the little shops are now trying to at least have Anacin.

We have them in town, but not in the downtown. No hardware stores, no dentists, no eye doctors... there's not a lot of consumer goods downtown. Those are what the shopping centers supply.

There are gifty and novelty and artisan things downtown.

Again, I'll go back to the Mark Twain Hotel Apartments coming up. There are folks considering some of those things, you know... where you can go and get some milk or convenient items and stuff like that. They haven't made final decisions, but they're considering it.

As a business person, are you really going to open a business for 34 low-income people, 34 low-income apartments? I don't know...

I would hope that different people that are moving down there, I'm sure that they're driving out to the shopping centers... with your hotel and these loft apartments, I think people are going to say, "Hey, maybe I need to put something here." I could see that maybe being the driving force to get somebody...

(many people talking at once.)

We're a residential neighborhood, you know. I live and work downtown, and you know, just drive around a little bit. There's a lot of activity, a lot of stuff going on. Which comes first, the business or the residents?

When we put our application together, we estimated that we had, since the flood of '93, experienced somewhere from \$15 to \$20 million of renovation and improvements in the downtown area. Once they saw the flood levy working, they started fixing up their buildings and renovating...

When the hotel's done, that's \$7 million right there.

And the Star Theater...

They worked on that for 5 years.

You go to other towns, like St. Charles, and the director down there, we were there this Christmas looking at their Main Street, and he said, "You know how much better our downtown would be if we could pick up Mark Twain's boyhood home and put it here?" I said, "We've got three blocks and we can't do what you've done here." I hear that all the time. We see the potential, but...

If we had the population base...

Yeah, if we were that close to St. Louis...

But, I mean, that is one thing that, and the museum is in the middle of a capital campaign to improve the buildings downtown, the museum, and I've been asked whether that's going to bring back downtown, and it has to be all of it, but we're going to be plugging multimillions into those buildings, and the city is working on the streets and sidewalks.

Well, the renovations are already... I've heard from people, the changes, people are like, "Wow, this museum looks like a Chicago museum," and I think as that word has spread, it's helped. People will say, "I came to Hannibal as a kid and I live in St. Louis and brought my family up..." I hear a lot, especially in the last year, we see a lot of development downtown. You hear that, not just from Hannibilians, but from people coming up.

Moderator: How user-friendly is your downtown for people coming in? Is it easy to navigate, park, see?

Wayfinding.

Wayfinding is an issue. The museum had some consultants from the East Coast...

And we did a survey last summer.

Well, their comment was, this one whose whole job is to develop wayfinding and exhibits, she said that they had a hard time finding the museum and the sites. We know we have some real issues of getting tourists because we have limited parking areas...

Yeah, finding the parking.

Yeah.

Where do you park, take the tour buses, unload? If we get the streetscape designed, we've got to build into it some great ways to get people around town.

You have historic codes downtown which are being enforced more now which severely limits signage, wayfinding, even Pepsi machines.

I got off work a couple weeks ago, and I was going to visit my family for Easter, and I stopped by a store down there, so I pop by at like 10 after 5:00, and they're closed... they obviously feel it's not profitable in the evenings, but it's an issue when your downtown closes at 5:00.

One business can't do it. They've all got to be open. It's very hard. I understand. I don't have to sit in that store from 8 AM to 10 PM, but it's a lot of single owners.

Even if 2 or 3 stores are open, people aren't going to tempt fate if they think nothing'll be open. I know different places for specialty items where you have to go... if you want camping equipment, or game supplies, maybe that's a niche we have down there. I don't know if a community of our size could support that kind of specialty, but maybe those types of stores would be successful because it's a specialty shopping area. I don't know.

The sidewalks are tough. Physically, it's a little difficult for people to get around on.

You can look at it as charming or you could look at it as decrepit.

I know that in the Central West End there, there's a lot of restaurants and bars open, but the stores are closed.

I get a lot of people coming in thinking there are things to look around, and they come in early to look around, and they come in at 6:00 and are there early because nothing's open. Who can shop 9 to 5? People that don't work! People who are retired.

Everybody works.

People that are unemployed. You know. We ran retail, and we stayed open later, but there should be some sort of rule. It's easy for me to say.

(laughter.)

...if people assume you're closed, they don't want to try.

And Sunday's a big day.

We've stayed open a couple nights last summer, and Christmas we made an effort, but we'd sit there for hours and there'd be nobody coming in, and after a while, you'd think, "Well, I'd rather be home. There's nobody here." And you end up closing at 7:00.

And the Wal-Mart's open until midnight.

I remember a letter to the editor about the holiday shopping season, and the person works here in town, only gets a half an hour for lunch, and she planned to do some holiday shopping after work, and the facilities were closed.

Moderator: Are they open on weekends?

Sunday there's nothing. We've been seeing people walking down that section, and there are things that are closed. Restaurants. (noise, unintelligible). If you're open on Sunday you're going to get the business. I see people coming into the Native American Trading because it's open. They get a heck of a business on Sunday.

(many people talking at once.)

We're open on the weekend, and our earnings are the same across the week. You get the people in all week long, and we do as well on Sundays as on the rest of the week. We're open in the summer 8-6 everyday.

There's a pretty good chance that once they hit your place, they leave town. There's nothing to hold them.

It seems like the marketing or whatever...we'll eventually do some analysis...we need to know what tourists like to buy. There are certain stores that do really well. You wouldn't think the Native American place would do, they do a heck of a business. And he has good stuff, but I mean, if you're on vacation, what's the kind of stuff you want to buy?

And the kitchen store? It seems busy when I'm looking at it. It's a high-end, gourmet cooking store.

But it might work this time.

It's a specialty store.

A destination specialty store.

(many people talking at once.)

A toy shop, a game shop, a book shop...

The prevailing wisdom when I arrived was the basic customer was Ma and Pa cattle. They're not educated, and they're just coming in here because they've heard of Tom Sawyer. And we did a survey, and we found that our typical visitors at the museum are better educated, higher degrees, older, more affluent. It's a typical museum visitor. I think the downtown has run on that assumption, not getting museum-quality items and focusing on the educated crowd. They're coming for a learning experience, at least to the museum, and I think the downtown has changed and our visitation has changed.

And our season, too. October is a great month, because the people that have money and travel don't have kids, and they like to travel when school is in, because they don't have to worry about it, and I was amazed when I looked at her sales records, it was very... October is one of the best months.

You look at fall and October is the number one growth. The fall Folk Life festival brings in more revenue as far as bed tax and sales tax than the national Tom Sawyer, but that fall, I think, it's the more affluent traveler for the fall colors, and...

They spend more money, more disposable income.

I'm seeing the same thing with the Internet usage, finding out about us.

Moderator: How do people find out about your downtown? How do you promote it?

We do \$300,000 worth of direct promotion through the Visitors Bureau. The visitors guide is probably the big thing, and we do about 350,000 of them and distribute them along the interstate, St. Louis and Chicago and Kansas City hotels. And the general knowledge, about Mark Twain. The Mark Twain Cave is our number one attraction, and we see a significant number of people a year.

I think more we're finding people are getting their destination plan through the web.

And there's a lot of billboards for the cave.

The Cave has 36 billboards, the Visitors Bureau has 12, lots of other advertising... St. Louis television. We increased our budget, increased bed tax. We did a survey last year focusing on downtown, and 60% of the visitors were from the St. Louis area. Kansas City and Springfield, Illinois were the other two top. They were the three top, by far.

So you're targeting.

Yes, we're doing radio ads on St. Louis's NPR, to get the NPR kind of person. When we have done surveys, "How did you hear about us?" it's brochure and word of mouth. It might have been something else, but those account for 95% of the people.

Also because of who we are and Mark Twain's history, we get nice little TV shows from travel channel and whistle stop and other national type shows that want to come in and do a story over Tom Sawyer Days or something, and they'll run it in the middle of winter, and people will be like, "Let's go there." So you can't pay for that kind of advertising, and because of our community and the history with Mark Twain, we get to take advantage of that, either through TV media or even the print media.

The Washington Post had a story on the boyhood home a month and a half ago, and the year before that it was the L.A. Times.

For good or bad, Hannibal gets plenty of attention.

And it was the new exhibits that the Washington Post was...

Yeah.

But is your question asking how do you get people downtown focusing on tourists or the residents?

That's a challenge, because, for example, last weekend, the Twain CBB and the Chamber, we host a Just Girls Getaway weekend, and we promote that regionally, and we get a lot of ladies in from St. Louis, the tri-state area, within about a 250-mile or 300-mile radius. We get some of our ladies from the community to come down and be a part of that event, but not nearly as many as you'd like to see. And of course, we're promoting it in the local media and on radio, TV... We haven't mastered that one yet.

There's not a lot for families down here. If you want to bring your kids down. We're trying to put together a children's museum, but I think that would help, too. The families that bring their children. What are you going to bring your kids down here to do?

Honestly, from probably the late 70's until the flood wall was finished, there was gradual deterioration, and that included maintenance, paint, trash pickup, everything across the board, and it was a sorry-looking downtown. People that would come in from out of town would comment on how bad things looked. It was like it was a blighted area, and the continued floods sure didn't help, and it was just hard for people to consider reinvesting in 2.5 blocks worth of buildings downtown, and that (sirens, unintelligible).

Moderator: As you know, the DREAM initiative is about coming up with a master plan for downtown. I'd like to ask you some questions about what you'd like to see downtown. What kinds of additional businesses would you like to see go downtown?

Well, we kind of made a list as we were talking, because we already mentioned some. Clothing, shoes, pharmacy, hardware, groceries, perhaps a dentist... I think there is one eye doctor downtown... maybe a brewery, maybe camping or bicycle rental. We've done studies through the Chamber, and we think a bakery would be a good fit.

A meat market.

Yeah.

There used to be a meat market at Center and Broadway.

Our problem is, we're seasonal. Extending the season, so to speak, is what we need to do.

(many people agreeing.)

You're from Missouri, and it's cold enough but it doesn't snow enough that you could use it, but we're just inbound all winter, but some winter recreation, some kind of a focus for wintertime activity would bring people in. I'm okay May through October, and then by December because of Christmas, but the rest of the time, there's not enough business.

People ask if you're open in January, and it doesn't officially close all day...

We're not like Branson where most of the hotels and shows close down from January to April.

So instead of bringing in another dozen restaurants because they can't fly because we don't have the people, we need to extend the season. We need more visitors other than for our current season for our downtown to thrive. It's a survival mode.

I would even expand (noise, unintelligible). We don't have a good multipurpose indoor recreational facility for indoor soccer or basketball tournaments...

Roller-skating, ice skating.

But then you try to say, okay, where can we build these, and every place that the city owns is in the flood plain, when you talk about South Main, and it's not protected by the flood wall. You can't build because of FEMA, and...

(many people talking at once.)

And we're all waiting for a theater.

A parking garage downtown. Retail.

We have a really neat venue, a restaurant (noise, unintelligible), but we don't really have anything like that in the downtown area that would be for the youth. They can go to the museum, but after that, there's not a lot of youth activity. Activity's not the word. Places, stores, things that would really interest young people, kids.

Yeah, maybe it would be more like, I don't know what teenagers do, but like a music store or something. I mean, where do they go?

They download on their iPods or something. The CDs and DVDs are going to be obsolete.

What do they do? Where do they hang?

If Forest Creek was in the flood plain area, that would be really cool.

We've talked about that area of South Main being a recreational facility that's green space, like soccer fields and stuff. But you're talking about ice rinks and rec plexes, and that needs a piece of land that...

(many people talking at once.)

You know, bookstores where people can come.

I can relate to what you're saying there, Mike, because I went to Houston, Texas, and while I was down there, we went to a shopping mall, and this was a big mall, and right in the middle of it, they had this huge ice-skating rink, and it was filled with people out there ice skating, and I thought, there were teenagers, there were older people, and there were some shopping around, some were getting their hair fixed, but there was a lot of them ice skating. And I thought, these people are coming down here for recreation, but they're shopping while they're here, and they're eating, but there's a reason to pull them in here.

(many people talking at once.)

And that, getting back to your summertime tourism... if you bring people in here with kids, they go to the cave, they go to the museum, they eat... what's left? So they pack up and head out. We've got to get them here for more than one day. We've got to keep people here, so they'll eat at the restaurants, so they spend their money.

(Train passing. Unintelligible conversation.)

...not like Orlando or something. No way.

You're talking about keeping them for several days. If it's worth keeping someone for three days, we'd probably have local people using it too.

(Sirens. Unintelligible conversation.)

...the Magic House, or a science museum. That would have a draw. That's something family oriented, and it would work for both the locals and the visitors.

And that's not a fair-weather thing.

No. That would be year-long.

And you also change the exhibits so there's always a rotation.

Instead of a canoe store or something, more arts, so people can come for cultural tours if we're going to go that direction. (many people talking at once.)

I think we do neglect the river, though. When we've gone down to Grafton and Pierre Marquette, the beautiful trails that you can bike, but also parasailing...the river's a little different down there, but people are on the river, and we don't have that interaction. You can't rent a boat here.

(many people talking at once.)

Our trails don't quite connect enough that you can say, okay rent a bike... we're almost there, though. We're getting our road striped, and we're trying to get back and link it to the parks. We're not quite there yet, though.

In terms of underutilized space, there's huge opportunity in both just seeing the river and recreational opportunities that have been addressed in a development action plan. Unfortunately, some of this plan is extremely expensive. And the flood plain... but I think these are things that can be overcome. One of the best speakers I ever heard was the mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, and his whole plan and theme was to bring the river back to the people, and they created walking space and great fishing piers and just all kinds of things, and it was really active, just a place to go be. So there's a ton of potential in utilizing green space development... just overall improvements to the riverfront.

And I'm like you. I think some of those restrictions could be dealt with. I mean, it would take legislation, but I mean...

Well, look what they're building down in Chesterfield. That's the flood plain! But they've got millions and millions...

But they invested in a protective levee.

(many people talking at once.)

I talked to someone from Chesterfield, and they were laughing. They said, it'll happen again.

You could build more recreational there.

I would love to see this whole riverfront down there. I can remember the old riverfront. You drove down, you could look at the river, the cobblestones, it was very pretty. And we put in a boat harbor, but then people quit coming down to the river if they didn't have boats. I think that we're missing... well, the boat... because I believe there are people from St. Louis that would come up here with their boats and dock and spend a weekend in Hannibal, if they had a place to park them. I had an uncle who used to take his and go to St. Louis, because it was a nice trip down. I think we could do that right here. Look at the, what is it, two rivers down in Louisiana? They get a lot of people from St. Louis coming in there, putting their boats. But we, like Scott said, that riverfront is underutilized. We've got a diamond in the rough, but we don't do nothing with it. But I don't know...

We have a riverboat that runs during our summer season, and we'll have people come and they want to see the view of the river. We had a group from Germany. I said, "where else do you want to go?" and they said, "We want to see Twain's view of the river." And literally, they sat down there in the park, and we have a beautiful river, and they wanted to get closer to it. They wanted more of an experience with the river than getting on the riverboat. They just expected something different. They're like, "Is there a walking path? Is there some...?" That's what they wanted to do.

They wanted to stick their foot in the river.

Yeah.

Our riverfront master plan addressed that, giving people the opportunity to actually put their toes in the Mississippi river, and we've got some other things in the works now because of the failed pilings on the riverfront of actually doing some graduated steps that would allow people to sit there, and have the ability to watch the river flow, fish from there...those are the opportunities we're missing. A lot of people want the natural beauty. They don't want to be entertained, they just want to enjoy the natural beauty.

I can remember, Christy, as young man, as a kid, a lot of people fished all up and down the river. Now they don't. Once in a while, you see somebody fish, but not often.

Well, we used to have boat races down there, too. They would come in those hydroplane boats, and I remember as a kid my dad took me down there, and these cranes would lift these boats out of the river and set them over at the side, those little hydroplane type boats, small but fast. They create a racetrack out there.

It's already beautiful at night. When we got here, we just walked the levee and down the river, and it's beautiful to walk around in the evening. I just don't think people realize, you know, I don't know...

I don't think we promote it.

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

When I moved here, we would go down to that pavilion, and it is nice, but when you're just looking through that floodgate...it's just a question of letting people know it's there, just like the boyhood home.

I think another thing we need to consider is when you drive through downtown Hannibal, there aren't contiguous spaces—there are gaping holes, vacant lots. And a city like St. Charles, and, you know, Hannibal used to be a city that had huge warehouse construction all the way down to the edge of the river, and we've lost almost two whole blocks of buildings from what used to be there, and the best we could do to get some density in the buildings back, that's I think a huge issue to make the downtown... instead of a gap-toothed, derelict bunch of buildings.

Well, on the east side of the levee, there's only one building.

That's it.

(many people talking at once.)

I don't think you can do much at all on that side of the levee.

Moderator: Let me ask you about the aesthetics of downtown. What else do you think needs to be included?

Definitely our tree plan.

Yeah. Nice, aesthetically pleasing and safe sidewalks. Maybe with a little brick border, and...

The city has submitted an application for an enhancement with MODOT to improve the sidewalks on the Main Street corridor, actually coming off Carter Hill down North Street to the Main Street corridor. If it gets through, that would help improve the sidewalks on that... but Sally mentioned earlier, there's still the issue of the side streets off the Main Street corridor that will need to be addressed.

And parking. Not just capacity, but attractiveness.

And I think a revolving loan fund for façade improvements would be good. I think that would be a great recommendation to come out of this plan.

Actually, we could go a whole lot further, like a development corporation in addition to that. But getting a revolving fund going would be great. I'd like to see people take advantage of low-interest loans for façade improvements, especially for new retailers going in. That's tough business, retail... Just grants and loans, between the financial institution and the city, to help lower the...

Moderator: We have one last question for you. I'm sure all of you have been to other downtowns. Are there other cities that you've seen that you think, "I wish Hannibal had that."

I think every single one of us has come back to the table with things we've seen. I came back from Washington State, from my hometown, and they had a heat-transfer decal that they put on their sidewalks that made it look like brick but it wasn't. You really had to look at it to tell what it was. It would be an easy thing for us to bring to our sidewalks. But people have brought in pictures of sidewalks, hanging planters off baskets. I mean, Hannibal Community Betterment has been a really good place for people to bring ideas.

Obviously St. Charles is a good, close example. A number of things. It's the density of the buildings is the biggest key, you know. You have buildings that have been there forever. Galena, Illinois is a pretty community, for that same reason. But there are a lot of small towns all over America that have that kind of continuity.

In upstate New York, I was up there, and the one thing that really impressed me was that there was a park where people could sit and eat, and then there was a permanent stage, bricked in, people could sit, and that was in the center of downtown. It was just all pedestrian. You could drive through, but it was very pedestrian friendly. They had art galleries and some of the things we have, and then an ice cream parlor, a lunch place... it was a little more upscale, but this was not a rich community. It was very visitor-friendly. Here, I've seen people in the heat of the sun, sitting on a bench, looking into an empty store. And I think, "This is really not the experience we want for our visitors." And St. Charles, which was not the St. Charles it was 10 years ago.

Last time I was in St. Charles... (noise, unintelligible) there was a lot of vacancy. Vacancy is a reality, but the perception of unity... my daughter graduates college this weekend in Warrensburg, which isn't spectacular, but they have uniform streets. You realize, this is downtown. We don't have that. And we did a traffic study, considering one-way streets. Folks are all stopping on Main Street anyway, they're looking around... if it was just one-way, perhaps that would be more tourist-friendly. You angle-park instead of parallel parking, you know... (noise, unintelligible)...and it would give a flow to it... "Well, this is the downtown."

I think having an outdoor space is so important. When you're in Europe, that's what you do—you're outside, you eat outside, you go to the market outside and there's flowers and all that just brings people out. It has a good feeling. And the buildings don't have to be pristine, because that almost masks a lot of that... you make exceptions for things when there's flowers and there's people outside dining and you're having a good time. I think we're really restrictive in our H-1 because we don't allow any kiosks... you want people out there. If someone had a cart and wanted to sell flowers or ice cream, it's against the rules. I like our restrictive ordinances to a point, but when they're so restrictive that we don't have the flavor and the ambiance that we're trying to achieve, we should revisit...

(many people talking at once.)

I think the other part of the long-range or master plan downtown has to address fringe areas that are outside of the immediately identified downtown area, because I think the context in which you enter downtown is as important as when you get in. It's neighborhoods, Market Street...

Or like the roadway in, if you could take Mark Twain Avenue from 36 and widen it, real pretty...

...planting, and....

...at least it's well-maintained.

If you could put some nice lighting so people would come in and say, "Oh, I'm going into something really nice..."

And signage, and everything would indicate you're arriving to a pretty cool place.

There's a lot of history that you can walk right by in downtown, a lot of historical markers, or like Springfield, Illinois did with the little talking kiosks, just to connect that it's Mark Twain, the other historical notables from Hannibal...there's a lot we can do down there, if there was a master sidewalk plan. They could be historical-looking. And you're talking about a lot of unique places. How many people come look for the old Bordello downtown? Finding those historical buildings that are known for something else in the past...

You know, we have the Hannibal's history exhibit, and we have the visual documentation, so in some of these places where we don't have infill right now, if we could be creative enough to do a little pedestal with the graphics so you could say, "Look at what this used to look like," it might be able to bring... I know in Soulard, there's a lot of infill that looks historical but it's reproduction. St. Charles has it too. Bring that density back, have the buildings look old...it can be new infill, but they can be wonderful in terms of not costing as much money in the upkeep. Sometimes these old buildings are so expensive to retrofit that when we

have these empty blocks, like Broadway on South Main, if we can envision something, maybe not the 8-plex, but a really nice... maybe just form a development corporation or put out a request for proposals for what other developers want to do...I did some research last night, and I learned that 100 years ago, we were in the golden age. 1900-1909, Hannibal was building incredible buildings. The Hotel, the MCM building, this building, the library... just think what 100 years ago what was going on. We were also, you were talking about the shoe factories, the demise of them. At that point, it was the demise of lumber, and they were attracting the shoe industry. And the investors in this town built the hotel, and they sold shares to build the hotel after the Park Hotel burned, so it's just incredible the flurry in 9 years, and that was called the golden age. Now we're a hundred years later, the hotel is going to open with a 7.1 million dollar restoration, we have all these buildings we're talking about with the possibilities. We just need to build that momentum. We're celebrating the 100 years since Mark Twain's death in 2010, and this is the kind of focus we need to be on. These next three years offers some incredible opportunities. We have to leverage lots of things—the hotels, tax credits, MHTC money (noise, unintelligible). Hannibal residents used to think that way, but we just somehow have to engage a lot of people in this community that, rather than buy your stocks, let's just think about Hannibal.

I envision a place similar to what Kansas City's Plaza area is like, or Bend, Oregon's downtown area. Lots of flowers, park benches, sculpture on the sidewalk, outdoor eating places, it's all cohesive, and it works together, and it walks well.

I'd really like to see more outdoor art.

Yes.

I'd like to see the city or private investments take a look at municipal parking, multi-level, in a building that looks good, like a historic building. We're going to have all kinds of problems with code-related parking issues and development on all these downtown buildings with not enough parking spaces to go around, so the city needs to revisit that portion of the code.

Well, Scott, what are they doing in cities like Boston, New York, where there just aren't spaces. What do they do with something like that? Do you always have to have a parking space per person?

I don't know what they do. I know that you can't look at the downtown the same as you look at a 2500 square foot Walgreen's building. It just doesn't work in a downtown. But it's something to look into.

I'm just asking. I came from a place where you don't own cars because you can't park em.

I know in Charleston, what they do, they'd do a three-story parking garage, and the upper windows for heat and air were metal shutters that was configuration windows, and then one to two sides was first-floor retail, with all the entrances, and that's how they...they'd have one garage that would take care of warehouse loft development and retail for like a two or three square block area. That's going to be an issue... instead of strip parking, which is just ugly... and the city has parking lots. They could easily...

Quite a few.

It's not like we don't have the land. It's just (noise, unintelligible)...

They're not very attractive, are they?

You know, Scott, I was over in Columbia with my son and we went to a football game, and we went to eat at this restaurant, and we went into this parking garage, and I said, "I thought we was going to go eat," and he said, "We are." I said, "We're not going to eat in a parking garage," and we pulled into the parking garage, and here's doors going into different levels of this restaurant, and from the side it's a parking garage, but then the doors are going into this restaurant, and you come in on the second floor the third floor or the first floor, but everybody parks there and then they use the restaurant, too. And I thought it was really neat, because you wouldn't realize that's what it was until you got in. I can't remember where it was exactly.

The Plaza uses some of that. You get out of a parking lot, you walk indoor, and you're in a movie theater. And the Modessa program that's on the books in the state of Missouri, Kansas City's the one that pushed for that, because they wanted to use Modessa's funds to develop a downtown parking garage.

And you know what we're really missing? You can't eat anywhere and see the river. I mean think about it. They come from all over... We have a nice building for sale right now with a fifth floor.

(many people talking at once.)

Fifth floor is a 360 view of downtown. I mean, just think of it. In Springfield, Illinois, I hate that building, but the restaurant at the top, you can see all over the city.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Thank you very much for coming.

SECTION III

CITY COUNCIL AND CITY STAFF DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Leroy Park.

Second Ward council member, Jason James

Jamie Page, city engineer.

Chris Eckinson, the director of the parks and recreation department.

Jeffrey Carr, city manager.

Angel Zerbonia, city clerk.

Connie Quinn, assistant building inspector.

Lindell Davis, Chief of Police.

Moderator: If you were describing the Hannibal area to somebody from out of town or somebody that's thinking about moving here, how would you describe Hannibal?

Small town feel, don't you think?

(people agreeing.)

A lot of history.

A great parks and recreation department.

(laughter.)

The best parks I've seen.

It does have great parks.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What else would you say about this town to somebody you were talking to from outside the area?

It's very hilly.

I think there is a...people ask me all the time, because I'm new...people have been very accepting of me, very positive and welcoming...people make you feel at home. You don't feel like an alien when you're here.

I like its extremely low cost of living versus Washington and other places.

Easy to get around Hannibal. There's not a lot of traffic as far as, you can get from one side of Hannibal to the other in about 10 minutes. I've have several people that have moved in the area from St. Louis, and the locals say something like, "Golly, we have to drive clear downtown after the shopping center," and people told me, "You know what, it took me 30 minutes to get out of my subdivision and to the highway, and another hour to get to work. Here it takes 10 minutes to get across town." It's very easy to get around town. Hannibal is, I think, some of the things we got going for us is our school system. We have a good school system.

We do have a good school system.

We have a good school system, a good hospital and cancer center, we have some good industry here, we have affordable housing—the housing market is reasonable—and our taxes our low, especially our city taxes. Our crime rate is, contrary to what you might read in St. Louis, our crime rate is not...

We have our problems like every other community, but we're attacking those problems. We're very proactive. And we still have a good quality life in the community to raise children.

You feel safe.

We don't tolerate things that might be tolerated in a big city. We tackle it head-on as far as law enforcement goes.

You talk about industry...when I worked in Mexico, they used to live and die by A.P. Green. We don't have that. We have a pretty good diversity of industry and different economic clusters. They're not all subsections of auto...

It's not all focused on one thing.

And we have industries that cater to pretty much anyone (unintelligible), and I'm not knocking education (unintelligible), and you can a job, we have a high school education, and we have other factors that require a higher degree of education. There's work here for about any level. You don't have to be a master's degree to get a job in Hannibal, but there are jobs that do require Master's degrees. We have a pretty diversified workplace here.

The secondary education opportunities are very good here. Hannibal-LeGrange college has a four-year plan, and the community college.

They're on to a capital campaign now that, they're going to add a lot of stuff.

That's something that we tell a lot of officers we're trying to recruit from out of town. Not only is our department improving, but the city as a whole. There's potential growth for the colleges, the hospitals, the highway...

We're at the hub, we have the hub of two major highways. East-west, north-south...there's also...we've got the waterways and railroad system, airport, transportation in general options are very good.

It's interesting. A lot of these things are going to come to a head within the next five years. I think the Hannibal of 5 to 10 years from now might be vastly different than what we've seen. More growth than we've probably seen in our lifetime. And these things look like they're all coming to a head at the same time. Those highways are major arteries for growth—connecting them all up, you can see dramatic changes.

Moderator: Let me ask you specifically about shopping. What are the major areas for shopping in or around Hannibal?

Quincy.

Wal-Mart.

(many people talking at once.)

There's specialty shops downtown that cater more to tourists than the general public, which I think is a mistake.

They close too early.

(many people talking at once.)

There was other shops, and now it's...

...it's more...

...trinkets.

As our city clerk just said, we've lost our clothing stores. We had a good men's clothing store, you could go down and get fitted for a suit, it could be tailored...we had a ladies apparel shop down there, and it was over a hundred years old...it didn't go out of business because of lack of business, but the lady just got tired of running it. She'd been in it all her life, and she had enough money. She really just got tired of working.

It seems to me that the downtown area has changed dramatically over the last few years, too. You're seeing a lot more of these type stores gone or go west...

They used to have a dime store...

(many people talking at once.)

The focus is now, the major shopping is out in the Northwest part of town in two different shopping center.

You have two different types of Hannibal—the old Hannibal, and the new Hannibal out west. I remember when the downtown had more culture down there. It used to be kind of old-town Hannibal. Now you go down to the festival, and you got people who make jewelry and art, and people like it...you're bringing people in, and it's probably a good thing to get some new blood in. They come here with new mindsets and different ways of looking at things...that might help with the stagnation. We encounter about everybody in this place, good and bad, and you kind of get the feel of different types of people.

(many people talking at once.)

It helps with taxes.

Clarksville, they're a nice area too.

We've lost the type of stores we used to have down there. The Famous, the men's store, Klein's big department store on the corner, the Tuxedo Store, the hardware stores...

(many people talking at once.)

We still do have restaurants, but not the ones that just have, you go in at lunch and you can get mashed potatoes and gravy and meatloaf. Now it's more pizzas and...

Wouldn't you say, too, and I'm maybe overestimating this, but 80% of the stores are catering to tourists?

They are. All of them are.

I'm not so sure that what you're seeing in Hannibal isn't that unique. I think we've done a better job of holding on to some of that old-time stuff, but I think it's more just the changing of the times. You're losing some of these stores, in a lot of communities. The Wal-Marts are taking over, and you're losing the mom-and-pop type places.

But we need something to pull people back, and in order to do that, we've got to have something... a Bass Pro would be nice.

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

They'd put that on the interstate. They've got to get that volume. Maybe if there were some sort of financial incentive somehow to get the mom-and-pop stores started, to build a client base... I hear a lot that people like Wal-Mart, but they don't like it because it's too big and it's not as personalized as Famous or Hayden's.

(many people talking at once.)

They knew what you liked, what your sizes were, what you got last year. People miss that personal touch.

I miss the Famous, because that's what I used to do for Christmas.

Now it's just Bath and Body Works and the Wal-Mart.

(many people talking at once.)

It does seem, though, that more of the shopping has moved to the west side of town, and there's a lot of room for growth...

I think of downtown a lot, I think of it as touristy. I don't even go there. We don't even think about it for shopping.

(many people talking at once.)

There's no reason for us to go down there.

You'd have to expand the hours. I don't know if it's fiscally possible, but it's the thing I constantly hear. "They're closed right when I get off work."

They don't sell consumer goods down there, just tourist stuff.

I always think aesthetics, too. You look at it, and it's gotten better, but it's still pretty run-down, the streets are in bad shape, Main Street's big-time bad shape, the sidewalks are okay, but...

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: In terms of changing character of downtown, somebody said it's more tourist-oriented than in the past. Do you think that's the right direction or the wrong direction?

I think there needs to be more of a balance. We had, I mean, the dance studio, and it used to be, you could go down there and name a bunch of stuff that catered to the Hannibal residents...

I always thought, though, Hannibal on the tourist park...we kind of have to...well, Branson, they're whole hog, boom, but our tourism... we're just kind of playing with tourism. I'm not downtalking the people that have invested, but there's not a big serious investment in tourism. So I think somebody, maybe the city the government or the city as a whole, needs to make up their mind... do we want to seriously have a powerful tourism machine down here, and let the everyday people who want to shop go out west, and we pile our efforts into downtown to make it tourism? Can you really have it both ways downtown? Can you have it like the old hometown and tourism?

I like downtown St. Charles. It's pretty much geared to tourism. You don't go down there to shop. You go and visit it once in a great while if you have someone come in from out of town.

The cobblestones...

Haven't you visited other towns where they say, "That part's for the tourists, and everybody else goes here." I think we need to make up our mind—well, not just us—but decide what course to take, because I think you're going to have conflicting ideas here.

I would agree with you, but at the same time, them shops can't survive 12 months out of the year on 3, 4, 5 months worth of tourists.

(many people talking at once.)

The thing is, though, you know, I look at these other tourist towns like Branson, and you notice how they get creative. Even the ski resorts now get creative—in the summertime, come out and hike. You've got to think outside the box. How do you get an extra three months out of them? I don't know. Do you have some sort of Christmas big blast? I don't know.

I think Branson has a big Christmas, but they shut down after that.

In those 9 months, they're generating big bucks, and that takes serious investment.

I think... the guy who just bought (name unintelligible) restaurant, one of his goals was to provide a quality product and price the restaurant in such a way that he didn't need the tourists. He's going to cater to Hannibal residents, and the tourism is just gravy. Now, when you have a mini-golf course right there, that's pretty good gravy. As far as the stores down here, I don't know how to cater to the typical Hannibal resident and provide a novelty for the tourists at the same time, unless it's specialty goods and items like the train store or the, what was it... Bass Pro's huge, but that type of shop, that type of specialty shopping.

I could see that, growing Hannibal residents and impressing the tourists, too.

How many stores need to sell a Mark Twain bust?

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about cameras or leather goods or toy stores... things, non-Wal-Mart-type competitors that you can draw a good market in.

But why does a Wal-Mart flourish in a town like Hannibal? Convenience and price. You can buy 99% of everything you're going to need, and then you buy things you don't even need. To get people to come downtown—I'm just throwing this out—could it be a cheaper tax break? Some people will drive 10 miles to save a nickel on something. If you get at that mindset... yeah, it'll cost me more to buy it, but it'll save a couple bucks on taxes?

Should the stores try to compete with Wal-Mart?

(many people talking at once.)

I'm just saying, there's got to be an incentive to get you down there. If you've got some people out there on a limited income, they've got just enough time to get to the store and get what you need, how are you going to get your everyday people downtown when Wal-Mart has everything?

But you also got to keep in mind that now we're opening up the Mark Twain hotel here, in a few months, and you're getting more people now that are looking at loft apartments over these stores. We're beginning to draw people back into the downtown, and if they want something like drugstore or a grocery store or a barbershop or a nice specialty shop... you know, and the people on the South Side, they've got to come all the way out to Wal-Mart...

Just the avenue to get gas...

...so, you know, I think as we see more and more buildings fixed up downtown, I think, because who (noise, unintelligible).

We're doing surveys, trying the market, so we're going to have more people who're going to live down there, and they're going to need something besides a picture of Mark Twain.

I think the Chief was onto something there. You've got to have an incentive. I don't know about lower taxes or whatever, but...

(many people talking at once.)

...but I really think an important thing, especially for the city to do, is that infrastructure's got to be—it's not attractive. I mean, you can throw paint on a building, but you look out on the street...

The street part I think you're going to see a change in. Everything from the construction that we're going to do, some funding options to complete some projects and put more repairs in and take care of all the sidewalks the full length of Main Street, and then Main Street itself is in a project schedule to be redone within the next two or three years.

Then are we looking at the full length of Main Street?

Yes.

Now, is the Mark Twain Hotel going to cater to senior citizens?

(many people talking at once.)

They're going to start at about 275...

That's probably a good thing that you get a more senior crowd, more stable, less police involved.

You don't want a fraternity house down there.

(many people talking at once.)

You can bring all the elderly people in you want, because we love that, because they don't cause us as many problems.

(many people talking at once.)

How many people are we talking about?

35 units, right?

(many people talking at once.)

42 units.

42, so, maybe a couple people to a unit?

Some are one-bedroom, some are a couple.

(many people talking at once.)

That might be a catalyst to start something down there.

There's some loft living down there. It's not real prominent, but there are people that—there's some neat places.

(many people talking at once.)

That's a major investment. 7 million dollars. I was impressed. We used to kid around, "That would take millions of dollars to fix up," and we never dreamed it would happen.

If you could just see it...

We're hometown boys, and we go down there, and we're like, "Wow!" We've always heard from our grandparents how great it is, and now we'll get to see it.

I wonder if the downtown area can't compete with Wal-Mart and it's futile to try. If there's people that live down there... any healthy downtown has to have a healthy housing element. I think they can compete with Wal-Mart if they choose to, if the products are higher-end, or if there's people living down there you can compete with Wal-Mart, because who's going to drive out to Wal-Mart when you can walk next door?

(many people talking at once.)

The nice thing down here is, as a small shop owner you want to keep low overhead, and there's some spots down here that are hole-in-the wall, micro-shops that could operate reasonably if they had the right thing to sell.

Parking is a problem.

(many people agreeing.)

I think it was mentioned in one of the other groups, and I agree with it, that we've got checkerboard buildings down there, two or three buildings and a vacant lot, two or three buildings and a vacant lot. Looks like a guy who's got his teeth knocked out. We need to get that back together. We need to make it more attractive so that when you look down there, you don't look like...

(many people talking at once.)

...and revolving loan funds and things to encourage people to want to put some paint on.

Is the theater thing a reality, or is dead?

They're wanting a lot... (many people talking at once.)

They were looking at the Main and Broadway property, and then the treasure chest property, and they're very interested.

Because that's another catalyst to draw people.

An anchor.

Well, a lot of people go...you tie that in with Mark Twain Hotel, a big cinema, now you're getting different demographics. A lot of us go to the nice theater in Quincy, but if Hannibal had a nice theater, a lot of times you're going to hit that.

I'd go to the one right out here if it was nice.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

They have an issue with parking, too. They're short on parking. And they'd have to be convinced to go from a 7-plex to a 5-plex or something.

With treasure chest?

No, treasure chest might work. But down here.

They're going to have to build a big parking garage.

You can do one that looks like a building.

(many people talking at once.)

If you turn that into parking, if the city bought Bravo's.

But it would flood.

(many people talking at once.)

To see the growth, the city needs to invest in the parking, so at least you have the foundation for the growth. That's always been the problem, people never find parking. Try to go to the Carrier Post sometime. You go around and around the block, and there is no parking.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Along the lines of parking, what other ways would you describe the user-friendliness of downtown?

They need more signage.

It's a little off the beaten path.

The officers get asked a lot of questions about where things are.

A kiosk... we don't have a kiosk anywhere down there, I don't think...

You know, if you can have something on the street down there, like the ice cream vendors or the hot dog stands, people could...I think as a council, we're going to have to look at that historic district and see if we want to continue to restrict things, or are we going to loosen up to make that more user-friendly down there?

We would keep the historic aspects and modify some of the things that would bring culture to it.

Right now, you can't even put up signs!

That's going to be a big fight.

(many people talking at once.)

Everything has to be built within certain specifications, and the signage—you're not supposed to have anything but wood signs. You can't have a regular soda machine down there.

You can't put nothing on the sidewalks.

You can put sandwich signs, but you have to take them in at the end of the day.

(many people talking at once.)

I think we need to keep it a historic district, but what I'm saying is, try to make it where the tourists walking up down there can get something...if they're walking along and want to sit down or get directions...

The zoning...

(many people talking at once.)

We got to be honest, you know. There's some people that like it the way it is, and they don't want the change, and that's the big thing.

That's the big thing in Hannibal in general, because they don't like change.

It's the unknown, it's the way it's been for 50 years, so they don't see why it should change now.

(many people agreeing.)

But I see that changing a little, too. There's some new blood out there, new ideas. The city's more progressive than it used to be, in a lot of ways.

We are. I'll be very honest. I think, as time goes on, age and mortality rates are changing the way people think in Hannibal.

Some of the old ways are—

Some of the younger people coming in are different, they're used to change.

Some of the buildings they're tearing down, you can't live there anymore. We used to have problems that aren't there anymore.

(knocking noises, unintelligible. Many people talking at once.)

I know, my mom has been a waitress at the Mark Twain down there for a hundred years, and I've always been involved in that situation. It seems like the people down there are really willing, a tourist will come in and ask my mom where something's at, and she knows right where it's at. Anybody that works downtown, if people ask, they'll always tell them.

They'll get them there.

I'm a direction-giving fool, man.

(many people talking at once.)

You talk about friendly vs. unfriendly...I've experienced it living here, just as a shopper going to pick something up, and the store is closed.

I've walked down through there, but it seems like there's too much of the go-buy-the-little-toy-Indian thing. There's only so many stores you can go to. There are some specialty stores that are awesome, the whole thing with the art stuff and a couple other, but there's a series of about a dozen down there, there's dust on stuff.

Trinkets.

The trinkets, that's a good word. Are people going to come down there at late hours to look for trinkets?

But even if you have a tourist here, and you got something to keep them busy during the day, then in the evening, let's take a stroll downtown. Wouldn't it be nice if the stores are open? Like Lake of the Ozarks.

A lot of people make a 7 pm reservation, and they'll show up at about 5:30 to walk around, and they end up coming to the restaurant at 6:00 because there's nothing to do. That's not friendly. It's not intentionally unfriendly, but it doesn't help matters.

That's changed a lot, though.

Especially some of the new store owners, like Julie and them, they know that they have to be open.

You know, when you have a busy schedule, you can't even get down there to even know what's down there. Every now and then, a shop will pop up, and if you're off a day and wander around...you could advertise that to death, but until you modify those hours, I don't know how you're going to get the local people down there. The people that are working to have enough money to buy something down there, they can't shop down there.

If you were going to see a movie, and there was an 80-90% chance that it isn't open, would you even try?

I'm just saying that, I've found that, through the years you go down there and you didn't even realize this little store was there, and it's got something unique... something that they sell and it would be neat to put in your office or home, and you would spend more money in Hannibal, but how are we going to get down there? We're busy people.

Mainly to cater to the locals, too, I don't know if you have a local discount or whatever...if you could have a steady flow of locals, but who wants to go down there and pay 80 bucks for a picture of U.S. Grant instead of go out to Wal-Mart and find something...

(noise, unintelligible) used to have a frequent-flyer punch card, and I would go down there and spend on birthdays and Christmas. I'd go down there on my lunch break, I'd walk downtown, and look for gifts...that's about the only time I'd get down there.

Is this incentive for us to come down there or the people to go down there, but an incentive for the business district to stay open later?

(many people agreeing.)

If they could stay open until 8:00, at least to 8:00...

I bought a lot of my Christmas gifts at Wal-Mart this year, because of the selection, but I think if there was a broader product mix downtown, you know, I gave some gifts that people already had and I didn't even know it. But you go to a specialty store, and there's a very small likelihood that'll happen...

(agreement.)

...you can't go, you can get the best gifts at specialty stores. I saw some neat stuff down there... (noise, unintelligible). It was 10 after 5:00, it was a beautiful day out, and I couldn't go. But gifts, I think, I don't know if you can survive on holidays and gifts, but they seem to be surviving on tourism now anyway, and it seems to me you can cater to the Hannibal people if you do something beyond what Wal-Mart can do. You're supplementing what they can provide.

(many people talking at once.)

When do you work? 8-5. When do all of you work? 8-5. People work 8-5. If they want to go down to shop at 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening...that's when people shop. You run down there and everything's closed.

(many people talking at once.)

Excluding retired people, I don't know too many unemployed people that spend a lot of disposable income between 8 and 5.

Moderator: Let me shift just a little bit and ask you—how do people get information about things that are going on downtown, whether special events or sales or promotions?

Marketing on TV.

The Chamber.

Some people hear it from the Chamber, on the radio or the TV.

Mailings.

They mail some things out.

They're pretty good about getting the word out.

It seems like the TV's been a lot better lately, too. They've paid a lot more money...

(many people talking at once.)

I get stuff in the mail at home sometimes.

Moderator: Is that information getting to people well? Do they see it, and process it, and act on it?

I don't know that I ever get anything in the mail.

Again, is it aimed towards tourists, or... I don't know. I don't pay much attention, but is the information on TV and billboards and wherever, are they catering to us, too?

Well, they advertise special weekends.

(many people talking at once.)

But the majority of stuff, and I want to be honest, the majority of stuff when I get it, I get a whole handful of junk mail, and when I pick it up, I usually throw it all in the basket. I don't even look at it. You get a lot of papers about, you know, and it's just something else to clutter up, so I just throw it away and don't even look twice.

If it's anything local, I always read it.

I don't.

(many people talking at once.)

If it's on TV, I'll watch it.

There are some things local people look forward to, and it's ingrained in them. Tom Sawyer Days, and the Folk Life festival, those are two major things. You go down there and see half of Hannibal walking down the street.

They always know there's something in the spring, the summer, and the fall.

They'll start calling and say, "What dates are the festival?"

We've been pretty fortunate. We get flooded with calls about the Tom Sawyer Days, and the J.C. people supply help for us.

(many people talking at once.)

I heard it pointed out, all the chairpeople for Tom Sawyer Days who takes care of the park because we will be flooded with phone calls, do you know who takes care of the park and does the parade? And I'm always ready for it.

We go on the J.C. website because we get so many calls here.

I don't know if the downtown retailers do a lot of marketing. I don't know.

Famous used to do direct mail.

(many people talking at once.)

Rampey's, they had some stuff, too.

(many people talking at once.)

Crescent's will advertise in the paper, too.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

I don't know how many local people even know it's down there (store name unintelligible)...

Sometimes they open up and you don't know.

I visited them on Saturday down there, and one of the things they told me is that the downtown is a lot healthier today because of the artisan culture. We're not trying to be critical of anybody else, but when it's just trinkets, there's a lot more artisans down here and that really brings people down here.

I agree.

I think you're right.

Those type of people, they're the ones who want to live above the store, and redo the loft, and...

...they may be more likely to stay open later, too, if they're right there.

Some of them have money to invest, and they've been in the corporate world, and they just want to make quilts for a living or something...

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

The bars are too noisy. You're going to hear all kinds of complaints. Those'll be issues that the city government will have to face, and you're going to have to be stricter about that. As you bring more people downtown, you'll be seeing that, because we're already hearing it.

Moderator: We've been talking about the future of downtown as we've been going along tonight, but if you were making a list of priorities of things you'd like to see downtown, what would they be? What kinds of businesses would you like to see that you think would help move downtown in the right direction?

A Type-type place. Somewhere where you can run into and grab milk, or go to the pharmacy. Something along those lines.

If it would fit into that area...

I'd like to see a movie theater down there. I remember when I was a kid, the movie theater was down there, and there was a lot of people down there then. I think that helped.

I think an old ice-cream parlor type of thing.

They tried that... they had the soda fountain, but who went on South Main? There was no traffic down there, except into Welch's place, and they went in to buy curtains and stuff, they didn't want milkshakes.

When I was a kid, South Main was a bad part of town, and then later it was lined with bars. It's not like that anymore, but it still has that reputation of being a bad part. But if you go back way back when, it used to be that North Main was a really bad part of town. It takes a few generations to get that out of people. I think the Mark Twain Hotel is going to change that, and if we get a theater down there...the theater's going to bring in people that would never come downtown, but they'll go.

And we'd bring in people from Quincy.

And you're going to stop some of us from going to Quincy. I go to Quincy to the movie theater, and then I want to eat. With a movie theater, you might get a restaurant down there that might survive.

An ice cream shop downtown, with the movie theater...I'd like to be an ice cream store owner if there's a movie theater. I'd like to see—I'm big on outdoor dining. It totally changes the concept of eating out. Somebody mentioned like a microbrew or something. I think that would be great! If it was done tastefully. I keep saying Mexican restaurant, and I keep thinking that because it would be fun to have funky fiesta music, something that's an experience... something with pizzazz, atmosphere, that's fun. I think we could really use something like that down there.

(many people talking at once.)

Fun, family-oriented.

The funnest event that I think downtown has, is the Folk Life Festival. There's just something about that. It's really neat. It's more than just Mark Twain stuff. Everything from the raccoon-skin hats, and everything. Everybody's getting along, and the churches are making kettle-corn...if you could put that in a bottle and keep that year-round, that would bring in more than just the history-buffs. You'd just have a huge crowd. I mean, look at the streets...

They could actually extend that all the way down South Main...

That's extremely popular.

That might get taken over by drunken boaters, but...

(laughter.)

Do you think jet-ski rentals or something like that would play well?

Why the river has never been developed...

...underutilized...

...the jet-ski rentals...

(many people talking at once.)

...boat rentals would be cool, but jet-skis are more affordable...

(many people talking at once.)

I've had the advantage of hearing another session, but a lot of people...I hear people say, "Where's the Mississippi? I'd like to put my foot in the Mississippi?" You could almost sell bottled river water.

We don't think of it as that, just kind of like we want to go to Florida to the beach, and they don't give a rat's about the beach.

People probably at Lake of the Ozarks could care less about the Lake, but to us, it's nice.

If the parks department could fix the ramp...

(many people talking at once.)

You talked about incentives for businesses, but I think the more people you can get to live downtown... could there be incentives for people to rehab the old places, to live downtown, for the businesses to stay open later... then it goes back to the other thing. Hannibal people like convenience and cost, but if they realize they can walk a block down the street because they live in a loft above the shops, like it was 100 years ago, you gotta get back to that and get the population built up. It's a somewhat residential issue, like in St. Charles.

(many people talking at once.)

Our zoning is set up for that, what is that called? It's a combination zoning or something.

Historically, when all those old shops, the merchants lived above their business. You almost got to get back to that. But why do I want to invest \$200,000 in an old building? Throw an incentive in there, and I'll throw that money in. When you bring these people with culture, they're just in love with these old buildings and our town and the friendliness.

Chief, I would agree with you entirely, because we would assume we're not collecting tax revenue on those vacancies now, and we still wouldn't with tax abatement, but we'd be stimulating downtown. It's a win for us.

If I'm from Minnesota, how are you going to get to me. Make me aware, Hannibal. Give me a reason to come here. Get me here. Have a weekend where you pay for prospective people, give them a free hotel stay, a free meal, a tour, let them meet you... you know what I'm saying. And once they get here, you say, "Hey, this is the package we've got."

(many people talking at once.)

It's hard to say what business you want downtown, because you don't have a population to support it.

Along those same lines, I remember... there was a hardware store, and he had two stories above him. My grandmother lived on the third floor, and there was other people that lived on the second floor. They had, I don't know, two to three families. It stretched halfway up 9th street, but people lived upstairs in those days, and they'd walk across the street to the restaurant, they bought stuff there at the A & P store.

I bet there's a number of people that live out in West Hannibal that aren't from here originally, that probably have been downtown once or twice. They don't know...

(many people talking at once.)

They don't even know what's down there.

They run out to Wal-Mart.

Well, I'm never downtown.

Somebody could build a new building downtown, but make it look historic. To me, that would be a city government thing.

If new construction was there, it would have to kind of fit in.

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

There's got to be a return. They're going to be in the driver's seat, because they've got to sell a product.

There has to be an incentive. It's more expensive to build that way. We're Americans. We always try to find cheaper ways to do things. Nobody builds them that way anymore, and if somebody's going to, there needs to be an incentive.

You're going to get away from people renting buildings to buying and living above them, watering their own plants, mowing their own grass. It's like, hey I live here, and it's more personal.

The street and sidewalk program I was talking about... since we're a DREAM community, it behooves us to do Main Street. It seems more important now, because people have to have a reason to go down there, and it has to be attractive. We can take care of a third of that with the infrastructure.

Once you get the momentum going, you'll draw people because of the momentum.

Moderator: Let's talk a little about the look and feel of downtown. What else do you think would make downtown more attractive?

A theme.

Cobblestones.

I've heard that before. Isn't St. Charles like that?

(many people talking at once.)

You can make it a concrete street and stamp it to make it look like that.

St. Charles is actually trying to get rid of some of theirs.

(many people talking at once.)

People really eat up that old-time feel, that atmosphere. Make it look the part...

(many people talking at once.)

Just have actors walking around...

...next to Mark Twain...

Somebody could even say, wouldn't it be need to have people in old-time uniforms...

(many people talking at once.)

People would really like it, kids and older people. Like Jason said, make it look good, and sell the package...get serious about this.

How many people, when Tom Evans was down there, and he dressed with the black vest, and Buck Potter was down there...they've got a picture of him hanging at the, lots of people would get their picture taken with him.

(many people talking at once.)

...just somebody they can take their pictures with...

...like in St. Charles...

The cobblestones, I like the look. And St. Charles has at Christmastime, they have like 13 different Santa Clauses from 13 different countries, they're roasting chestnuts, and everybody's in character. It's really cool. We actually pulled an ordinance off the internet from another community that has downtown character actors...we could run into some H-1 issues with it.

(many people talking at once.)

Hannibal has so much more historical stuff to it, not just Mark Twain, but Civil War issues. If you had people walking up the street in Civil War outfits...

If you think of looking outside in, though, if you hear, okay, Mark Twain is a huge author, and I'm thinking I'm going to go to this town and see that, I'm going to take my picture with Mark Twain, almost like Disneyworld...

(many people agreeing.)

Another thing would be a transportation museum. He'd like to get a locomotive, I mean, we're so tied to years of... I mean...

You get half of a big train or something...

An actual steam engine...

A piece of track on a piece of land...

(many people talking at once about transportation museum.)

The first time I was on council, I played around with a new idea, I was thinking of approaching the residents down there and saying, "Let's get together and let's do this." I had it laid out, and it won't work obviously, but I thought about doing one-way traffic on the outside and then closing, if we had the parking situation solved, you could close Main Street in the summertime and make it an open walking mall.

Downtown Denver—

Yeah, not—

I mean, that's just an idea.

(many people talking at once.)

But you look at downtown St. Louis, on Laclede's Landing, that's how some of those streets are. That might, I don't know if that's even possible, but that's just one think I was looking at.

(many people talking at once.)

Why don't they just hand out free t-shirts to the kids saying something like, "Hannibal. America's Home Town." That would be advertising all over another town. Don't charge them \$20 for them, but give them out. That's t-shirts leaving Hannibal with your advertisement all over them. Just hand the stuff out. Give some of that free, and the kids, you know...

Moderator: I've got just a couple other questions for you. How do you think parks and recreation or green space would be part of the future of downtown?

I mean, parks are already an integral part of Hannibal down on the riverfront. There's a section where we need to redevelop...

...keep walls from caving in...

You could make the downtown more of a walking area. If you've got more and more people getting into fitness, at least get some downtown...like in the mall, where they walk.

(many people talking at once.)

We're trying to develop a bike trail to get people on the West End to come in. Then you don't need to get in the car, you can get on a bike or walk downtown.

I think that'll be very popular.

It's pretty difficult to do, but if we get creative about it... The issue we have all the time is that a lot of the parks are on the wrong side of the flood wall, so you don't want to invest that much money in something that's guaranteed to be flooded at some time. That's always in the back of our minds...

I think everything downtown that's not structural should be green. I mean, not necessarily *green*, but landscaped of some sort. We definitely need that.

I made a comment a long time ago about the marina, because the marina idea's been around for 20 years now, and I said, "We've got black thunder power boats." One of the biggest manufacturers in the United States. They make them here, and then they take them to the Ozarks and down to Florida... maybe we can get with them somehow and say, hey, let's make a Black Thunder Marina, and get them together to do this with us. I think the number was like 10 or 15 million.

(many people talking at once.)

There's a lot of other geography, geographical issues...

We need some kind of arena for concerts, an amphitheater or something. That's one of the big topics.

And solve the sound complaints. I agree. I wish they did have a downtown amphitheater.

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

We just went down there the other day, and we're looking at it, thinking, "What a shame. It's such a waste." You drew in some big names, big entertainers down there back then. You can go to a County Fair and they'll have some big names, but Hannibal can't do it during a festival? There's a problem with that, especially when you've got all these people down here.

(many people talking at once.)

We used to have, we had some big names.

(many people agreeing.)

Moderator: The last thing I want to ask you is, what other downtowns have you seen that you would like to see Hannibal resemble?

St. Charles.

Branson.

Washington, Missouri.

They don't have the poverty level we have, to some extent. I mean, people are going to—

No, I agree.

It's a problem, but you're never going to get people to keep stuff painted and glass panes put in when they're below poverty level.

If you bring incentives in somehow, and you get people in from Minnesota and all these places, they have no clue about how Hannibal used to be. They're bringing in their culture here. Those are the people you can get to change the downtown. Give them some incentives to get here. Or for local people to invest that have the money that can do this.

Make it look nice, too.

I agree. You got to make it look nice. More than a bucket of paint. And I know you're trying to do that. In 5 to 10 years, Hannibal's going to be majorly different.

It sure looks that way.

Moderator: Thank you.

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SECTION IV

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Julie, and I have a kitchen store.

Debbie, we have a jewelry store in Downtown Hannibal, and we actually make jewelry.

I'm George, I'm a developer for the city and the county.

Ron, president of HMB Bank.

John, I have a restaurant in Downtown Hannibal, the Mark Twain Diner.

John's wife, Kay. We also have Trainline Express Sightseeing tours.

I'm Michelle, Star Theater.

I'm Jerry, American Décor.

I'm Mike, Mid-American Trading company.

Rick, St. Petersburg (name unintelligible).

Moderator: This is my first trip ever to Hannibal, and if I were thinking about moving to Hannibal, what would you tell me about your town?

Safe, friendly.

It's a good town.

It's a very friendly town.

Quality of life.

Diverse, for a small town.

Great main street. Obviously, as a business on main street!

It's a great Main Street. We have everything.

It's got people from all places and all walks of service.

I like the schools.

... we've got a great town.

Everybody around, Quincy included, they have problems with the school system, keeping it funded. Hannibal hasn't have a problem keeping the schools funded. They're building new schools constantly, they're adding on, they've got good staff, the people are paid on whatever scale... I have to say that I'm not in the school system, but I can see it.

I'm on the school board.

Oh, you are?

(laughter.)

I guess that it takes the reputation of "America's Home Town" and it's perfect. Everybody...it's very diverse, and everybody likes each other, and everybody's happy...

Diversity has increased. It wasn't always real diverse. I'd say in the past 10 years, it's become much more diverse. It's brought us out of our comfort zone sometimes in discussions and topics and things like that, but that's helped us.

With that said, I agree with you. I'd almost go so far as to say we're starting to become progressive for a small town, and I like it. There's some push for some bigger better things going on, and that's good.

Somebody said one day, (unintelligible)... I read (book name unintelligible)... I said, "Give us a chance."

The past ten years has been dramatic change and mix of folks.

Hannibal Lector didn't help.

(laughter.)

It doesn't help in Google, by the way. Hannibal Lector.

As a merchant, we have people come in from all over the world. I mean, you never know who might step in your store, because people visit from all over the world. They come from further away, and the locals don't take advantage of the downtown too much, but we do have a lot of people—Mark Twain... a lot of people Hannibal. I think they're still taught Mark Twain in Japan.

When the web first came out, we had a little typical web page, a little sign-in like log book, and we had a little visitor log. There were hundreds and hundreds of entries, and sometimes you'd read those things, and strangers coming into town would say the friendliness, and how clean it was, and the critical comments were almost always from people locally or close to home. Strangers almost never made a negative comment about their visit to town.

Every once in a while you'd get one that has a bad experience in one of the shops. The first place they go is Chamber of Commerce and start writing letters. Very few and far between, though.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: What are the main shopping areas for people who live here?

North Main and South Main.

(laughter.)

Are you talking about the locals?

Moderator: Yes.

We have a Wal-Mart Superstore and we also have a little shopping center with a J.C. Penney and grocery store.

Two shopping centers.

Actually three.

The Steamboat, the Huck Finn, and the Wal-Mart are the three main ones.

We're pretty well covered with the big chain retailers. Pretty diverse there.

Like they said, a huge amount of our population drives across the river to Quincy and spends millions of millions of dollars every year.

(many people talking at once.)

I was talking to the manager and some of the local people in Quincy, and the Home Depot manager said that 70% of their business came from our side of the river. And then, when Mr. Sutherland spoke to us on the phone, he knew that number. I was just really...

We're all do-it-yourselfers.

I was just really surprised about that. Give people an alternative...

(many people talking at once.)

We've got lumberyards here in town.

I do more business from Quincy (unintelligible...)

People in Quincy don't just shop in Quincy, whether eating dinner or otherwise.

We have a huge customer base not just from Quincy, but from across the river in Illinois. I think Illinois's responsible for about 30% of our income.

Thing is, we've got so many people here... I think we've got more people here spending money over there than (noise, unintelligible). Now that we've built up a critical mass now of things we can buy, and as we start to develop a critical mass of options up at Huck Finn, we're drawing them from a further radius on our side of the river, they're traveling over to Hannibal to shop.

I don't know how much (unintelligible)... Their worry is that that Wal-Mart will close.

Do you pay lower tax at Wal-Mart?

You pay more tax. Every shop at the Super Wal-Mart, you pay 1 cent more tax on the dollar. That's because it's a transportation district that pays for the streets and the infrastructure that was put in.

People in Hannibal, not nearly as many shop downtown as could shop downtown.

There's a lot of things we don't have, though, like a grocery store.

I say, give it a chance.

Not being from Hannibal, we were astounded. People come in and say, "I haven't been downtown in 10 years. We do all our shopping on the other end of town." I'm like, "It's a mile away! What are you talking about?" We've lived in major metropolitan areas, and it was 20 miles just to get the kids to school, and here driving from Wal-Mart to downtown is like a major coup, and it's like ridiculous.

That's what we need to start changing. If we change the landscape downtown, the residents of the Hotel...

The way to do that is what we've been discussing all along. It gets right down to what we, as a group downtown, think, is sidewalks, streetscapes, sidewalks, streetscapes, sidewalks, streetscapes. It's got to be made ADA... we're not ADA, the way it should be. The hotel across the street here, they've got it going on.

It used to be welcoming when you just walked in. Make you want to stay, not just drive by.

You want to make it pretty. I know, right after the flood of '93, they had a group of people come in here to stroke the people downtown and tell them how good they did and what they could do to better help them out. And...they decided that we should have the mall effect downtown, the mall effect being that whatever one store did, everybody did, so Jerry and others got together and they built trash containers out of barrels. Jerry built the tops themselves, did a good job, and we used that for a long time. (noise, unintelligible)...they also put in these half-barrels for flowers, and everybody put a flower or wreath on the front of the building, same colors, same ribbons, same everything, to get the mall effect going. That's what these people were saying. Lights on the buildings, the historic lighting that we have now. Those people like the look.

They feel like they've arrived somewhere special.

It's a destination.

It's a look that we've been after all these years, and it's working.

Don't you think we're heading in that direction?

Yes, we are. I'm just explaining some of the things we've gone through in the last 10 or 12 years, since the flood, and... 14 years, actually... and some of the people who have worked hard on this thing downtown. John, I know you've done a lot of work down here. It's been a real program to try to put together what we've got so far, and we need to improve on this streetscape.

Let me ask you , what should be the focal point of our downtown? Should it be Mark Twain theme, should we redo the streets and make them cobblestones?

My answer's economics.

I'm just trying to figure it out. What brings people to Hannibal?

Mark Twain brings people to Hannibal.

And the artists keep them here.

The question, just last week, a person said to me that people come in, check into a hotel, stay here for three nights, and then mid-afternoon the second day they're gone. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm here to promote Hannibal, but...

You're right.

...that just struck home for me.

Hannibal used to be a stop-off. Now, Hannibal's become a destination. We were a stop-off to Branson for years, and now Hannibal has become a destination, I really believe that. I've been downtown long enough now to believe that. We've lost some things that brought people to stay, like the theater down there...that was a big draw. We brought a lot of people.

Evening choices, I mean, the dinner theater, the boat, we had evening choices back then. A variety. Something that, when they ask you, "What do you do in the evening?" if you don't have anything to say, they might not stay there the night.

Downtown, too... you know, you say, "What brings people to downtown?" it's been Mark Twain. Now, we have so many diverse people down there, we have people coming here for those people as well. We have people coming here just to go to the (names unintelligible), the Star Theater, and like John was saying, they've got people coming in from all over Illinois. Everybody loves (name unintelligible)...

(many people talking at once.)

I think it all boils down to the shopping experience. Women shop. Women want shopping experience when they go on vacation... and the man might not shop any other time, but if he's on vacation, he's going to go through the stores with her, or he's going to sit in front of the ice cream shop or whatever, but he's going to find something.

This last weekend will convince anybody that women shop. It convinced me. Fantastic weekend.

Moderator: Where do people in Hannibal go for dining and entertainment options?

I wonder how to attract more locals. We're 100% local. I realize that others in this downtown are not. I think we ought to become more diverse, but we should also... I can see a drugstore and other stuff, I can see local people using all of our businesses downtown and expanding on that. I don't think that tourists for a season of 6 months affords everybody a great living. I think we have to start to get the local... I think we're missing a huge area. Our downtown neighbors. Somehow, we have excluded... up to Grand Avenue and Broadway, and that's downtown, it's not the historic downtown, but it is downtown, and it's the economic downtown... like the loop in St. Charles is a great downtown, very diverse because they have that draw. We have the same draw, but we're not taking advantage of that (unintelligible)...we're not pursuing those people that are so close they can walk downtown.

I think we need to focus on an area, and once we get it done, let's expand out. We can't run until we learn how to walk. Sure, I would love to see Broadway... when we first came to town, we came down Broadway, and it's a wonder we didn't turn back, and that was three years ago. We're like, "This is deadville," and we came downtown and went, "Oh, that's kind of cute." The thing that brought us to town is we could afford a building. And that's what bringing a lot of artists to town, is that the buildings are affordable, especially if you're stupid and you don't know how much it's going to cost to fix it up!

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

...that's what's bringing people from California, Wisconsin, from all around, to the downtown, is the buildings are still affordable. I want to see the whole town of Hannibal get better, because that's going to be better for everybody, that's going to be better for other...in whatever part of town. I don't, you know, I think everybody has to work together. It's not just all about downtown. But I don't think that we can spread the focus too big on what this DREAM initiative is trying to do, when the downtown is going to generate more sales tax, more income, more draw, and as downtown gets filled up, it's going to go up Broadway. Where else can it go? It can't go that way. It's going to go this way.

As the buildings fill up, they have to go that way.

Yeah. We can't do it all at once. You have to focus on an area and get it going, and then it'll spread to other parts of town.

You specifically asked about restaurants... people that eat out, locals, locals eat where they like to, but they do eat in town. The restaurant business is tough.

If the restaurant's still open, they do.

People like chain restaurants. Tourists do not want a chain restaurant.

They want the unique experience.

Moderator: So, do you go to Quincy for restaurants, or do you eat in Hannibal?

Restaurants, when they open in Hannibal, they capture a portion of the Quincy dining population. There's a group of folks locally who eat out—whether Quincy or Hannibal—multiple days of the week, maybe never have dinner at home, and there's a percentage of folks in most communities when a new restaurant opens in Hannibal, the Quincy folks will come out here. Then there's the locals who will always be on the same stool on Tuesday morning... those are locals, because that's where I always eat breakfast, and no one better be sitting in my chair. There's that component.

And low prices. The prices are not...

No. The locals do eat, well, we have a good diversity of food service in Hannibal, and certainly if you want to eat out. The locals are good about patronizing restaurants. Where we lose a lot of food service is what we talked about (unintelligible noise) people shopping got to eat, too. And that, particularly in the Christmas season, a lot of... for some businesses, Christmas is the busiest time of the year.... (unintelligible) increase the Christmas shopping. And there are certainly people who dine in Quincy just because there's a particular restaurant they want to go to, but that's not our major (unintelligible).

We need the saturation of restaurants in Hannibal that there are in Quincy.

There's not the population for it.

You know, people joke, "What are they asking for now," because our citizens tend to say, "When are you going to get that Red Lobster or Olive Garden," Jim says people ask him. You know, restaurant chains have demographic data and population counts, and they simply don't go to markets that don't reach that threshold.

I know you've brought up that, more of our thoughts behind building the new theater downtown is because we feel it'll introduce people, citizens that say "I haven't been downtown in 10 years," it'll introduce, they're not going for shopping, but the theater... so it's kind of a wasted effort. They'll go for the show, but they're not even thinking about where they're going to eat before the show, whereas if they come downtown and it changes, they're going to see the changes, and they're going to be thinking of the options. They'll be like, "well, 9:00 show,

maybe we could do this beforehand." Even if the stores are closed, folks will see them, and they'll be more likely to have dinner downtown before walking down the street to the show.

Moderator: Is the theater definitely opening, or is it in the works?

No. We have a commitment that the theater company is considering the downtown location in addition to others. This particular theater company has done this in other communities and realizes it does change the neighborhood. It does change the atmosphere. It does bring people in.

Moderator: Let me ask you specifically about your downtown. Do you feel that downtown is heading in a positive direction or a negative direction?

I think the backslide stopped in '93.

Again, comments that I've read over the years is that residents that have left Hannibal in the 60's come back now and go, "Why have you let it go down this much?" They don't realize that we've already been through hell and we're coming back. We've already gone through the worst, losing buildings and investments, and the real benchmark day was April whatever of 93 when the flood hit for the first time, and people knew that investment...

And then October 13 of last year is when it really...

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

I'm at least 98% positive about things going on downtown. I think there's been a, I guess a feeling of anticipation downtown, more recently in the last 3, 4, 5 years, it just seems like we're just ready for something to happen, something to break loose, and it's just about there. It hasn't quite come yet, but you keep thinking... it's getting better! Slowly, but it just seems like it's time for something big to happen.

I think in the past several years, somebody's come, they've hit their head up against a brick wall, and they've left. But I think there's enough people at this time, enough people are hitting their head up against this wall that it's falling down. There's enough new people coming in, revitalizing buildings downtown, and the buildings that are in the middle of being done...

And the downtown people are supporting each other, encouraging each other. I send people to you, you send people to me, we're working together.

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

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

Ours has been there 65 years.

I built in 1989, and it was... huge building, and very run-down and in poor condition and poor neighborhood, and didn't really the first three years, didn't really need the flood wall. And they finished the flood wall just in time, because the '93 flood would certainly have finished the downtown.

Had the flood wall not been finished, there would have been water 5 feet deep in the buildings on Main for 6 months.

And they wouldn't have come back. The reason that I bought it was because it was \$14,000 for it. I've been able to over 17 or 18 years fix it a little bit at a time.

Beautiful building.

It's the same way with Mike and Michelle. You talk about... (unintelligible.)

(many people talking at once.)

Many of us live above our buildings, and it's becoming more acceptable or trendy or whatever to live downtown now. That's a double-edged sword, because then parking is a problem. I mean, people still want to put their hand over their ears, and they don't want to think about it, but as more people live and shop downtown, that's the biggest complication of downtown. You guys live on the south end, so it's not as bad, but we run into it everyday. We're on Center Street, and people park on Center Street, because they can't park on Main Street. That's something that's got to be addressed eventually...

(many people talking at once about parking.)

Everybody parks up front, though. They don't want to walk. Downtown has become much better in the time we've been here, everybody's been great and helpful...

That parking issue is the number one objection.

Going way down to the 50's, every block had solid buildings. Where the heck did they park? The population was actually larger. But still, the businesses were filled. But you're right, parking is definitely an issue. A local suggested to me recently to turn Broadway back into 45-degree parking. And how do you take this big, wide street and turn it into 45-degree parking? At first I said to someone, I said, that's

kind of a backwards idea, and they said, "Have you been to downtown Columbia? They've got angled parking, and it is one lane to travel." And I thought, you're right. Thousands of students, a town four times as big as Hannibal, and their downtown is diagonal parking and it works, and you can pack a lot of cars in when you don't try to parallel park.

(many people talking at once.)

The one suggestion about the diagonal parking, that was actually not a bad thing to think about. Thousands of students and residents, and they all manage to make it through downtown with the diagonal parking. That was a very, ever since that example...

What about parades?

You know in the parades, you just block off the parking for the parade.

That was, I've been thinking about that ever since that.

I think the issue with Hannibal is you can come up with the good ideas, but they'll go, "It won't work."

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: From what you hear from your customers, how user-friendly is downtown? Consider signage, parking, lighting.

Part of it's a convenience factor. If you come down for a festival, like the Folk Life festival, I go straight for the parking lot. People will walk 4 blocks to get to downtown.

There's no signage to show where anything is, where the shops are.

We made a stab at organizing some of this, and we're working on some of this, but I think...

We still have signs up there that say "no skateboards."

Part of the historic area of the street, they have restrictions, and I think they go a little overboard. It's not going to kill you to have a sign in a historic district that doesn't meet up to somebody's historic standards of what signage should be downtown. If you're going to have real people coming into town, you need to have signs to say, "where are the museums?" I mean, the guy at the car

dealership said that people come into the car dealership at the very north end of town and say, "Where's all the Mark Twain Stuff?" There's no sign. They don't know that that *is* the Mark Twain part of town, and they're right there. He said at least everyday he sees people.

Everybody assumes that everybody else knows where it is because Hannibal's a little town. But people will come, I mean, the signs are pathetic here. I mean, I had, I was working with MODOT for getting a grant down here to get the signage, and they said, "We gave it to Hannibal before and they didn't spend it, so you can't have it."

You know, our Hannibal brochure has a wonderful map in it, but do our visitors use that map?

That the exact map that I wanted in a big kiosk, 5 of them down main street.

We not only use the brochures, but we print out different maps, directions that go to 100 miles outside of Hannibal... we get so many requests for directions to all over. So I've got a row of sheets of paper that I hand out to our customers with downtown information, information for other cities and even other states, but we need... I would suggest that each store have maps available to give people, a good neighbor policy of directions... we just try to be so helpful with the people that come in our stores. If all the shops, along with the brochures... there are plenty of maps out there, but the people just don't use them.

If there was another map that was just like the one in the brochure on the street, in a kiosk...

Like in a mall...

(many people agreeing.)

You wouldn't believe the number of people in our restaurant that ask us where the Mark Twain home is.

(agreement.)

There's no signage, there's no map to say...

They've sent any number of people my way, and that good neighbors, and I think we're all getting together about what's downtown. With me, I'm on South Main there, by myself there, and I don't get a lot of tourists in my place, I don't know if maps would be beneficial to my customers or not. I think that...

Your end of the street has changed, too. Just more inviting visually, people will see things, and they'll be more likely to your area.

So are we tourist-friendly?

I think we're tourist-friendly, but I don't think there's enough signs. There should be signs on 79 saying "downtown: next 3 turns" or something. You can drive right through like 79 and not even know that the downtown, I mean, in reality, unless you're really paying attention and thinking, "oh there's the river," you...

Should we maybe...

I mean Mark Twain Boulevard, you need a blue sign coming off the ramp there that says "1 block to historic downtown Hannibal." Otherwise, you're on Mark Twain Boulevard, and the bridge is not there. Look at how dead it is. It's hurt Hannibal a lot, with the bridge. It has really crushed it. You're going East on 36, thinking, "Oh, we missed it. Oh, well, we'll catch it next time."

We definitely need signs. Hospital, bridge...

(many people talking. Side conversation.)

Moderator: How do you get people to your business? How do you advertise?

One thing we use is the brochures, they have them in numerous places, any gas station or restaurant. We have people come in everyday clutching one of the brochures, and say, "Show me this (unintelligible)." That's been probably our most effective, least expensive way to advertise. And that's done through the Hannibal Visitor's Bureau.

We're looking at a sign traveling north, just south of Hannibal in Palmyra, that says, "First light, turn right, shortcut to downtown" with maybe even a picture of downtown.

People say, I mean, it is confusing to come to downtown Hannibal.

Where is downtown Hannibal?

How did you get here when you came up?

No, where is downtown Hannibal?

By the river.

Okay, that's fair.

(many people talking at once.)

If someone asked "How do I get downtown," we didn't want them to go down Market Street, so they'd end up going through a very unattractive part of the town. (noise, unintelligible).

Moderator: As I'm sure you know, the DREAM project is to come up with a master plan for downtown, for where you would like to see downtown go. Let's talk about that for a few minutes. What kinds of additional businesses would you like to see downtown that would benefit downtown?

Drugstore.

A bakery.

Red Lobster. (laughter.)

Grocery store.

Little convenience store. We get a lot of requests from people wanting wine and liquor.

The everyday things that you need.

Our population is getting a little senior, so I think, um... a drugstore.

A drugstore would be great.

Other things that cater to seniors as opposed to...

A drugstore/convenience store, maybe.

A clean convenience store.

More craftspeople that actually make stuff, artisans.

Except they don't make a living. Truthfully, they don't make a living.

But as you get more people to town, it'll be easier for craftspeople. It depends on what you're selling.

I mean, I like the way it's going now. We're getting away from crafts.

What I'm talking about is quality crafts.

The ultimate target was to find a person that sold their things in other markets but had their shop there, but didn't have to feed off of tourists walking in buying pictures of whatever. That was the ideal.

If you're including... I don't consider in what I'm saying with crafts, when I first got down here in 1989, you could be a \$45 teddy bear from 45 different places, and that was making a living.

I'm talking about what we need, okay, is unique items. It's to me a bonus if the person that makes them is there or is, you know, that you can't get every place else. Just like St. Charles. You know, first time you go there, gee it's cool, it's fun, but if you go...we used to live in Memphis, and we would go to St. Charles, Missouri every year, and after you've been in the stores once every year for 5 years, you've been there and done that, they all have the same stuff that's bought overseas that everybody else has. I mean, so why should I come to St. Charles to shop... I don't. And I'm a heck of a lot closer than I was in Memphis. The stores have to have unique items that you don't see everywhere else. They can say, "I can get this at Wal-Mart, why would I go downtown?"

A lot of the artists that are I here, I haven't been able to see them open, because they're like, "Here I am, big artisan," and the stores aren't open.

Because they can't make it here because nobody buys their stuff. Some of the craftspeople that have moved here came because they can afford a building, but they didn't really intend to open a retail store, it's just centrally located. I mean, you know, it doesn't matter if they improve the appearance of their building and it's tidy instead of run-down and garbage all falling, I mean okay, um, it just, I think Hannibal needs kind of a flavor of, wow, look at all the unusual things that are here.

(many people talking at once.)

Too bad none of them are open.

One thing that's going on right now is it seems like a lot of the property is either residential or commercial, and I like that. I think that's good. There are a few, still, there are a few properties that I wish that we would address. I'll name them for you if you'd like.

(many people talking at once.)

...and I think that we're far enough along that I'd like to go on record to force the issue with these properties.

On Main Street, you mean?

Yeah.

South Main?

(laughter.)

How about the one on 7th street?

Yeah.

I think we could, I mean, okay, I think...

(many people talking at once.)

If we could get these buildings fixed and attract some high-caliber...

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

I think there's some buildings available down there, and we've got to get them fixed, and I see it coming. I'm happier now than I have been in a long time.

Yeah. I think you still have those people that own a building downtown that are just waiting for the cha-ching, they think, "I haven't done anything, I haven't done a repair on my building in the past 20 years, and I don't have to, because the building, you know..." Nobody.

She's just...

There's buildings downtown that have not had anything done to them, one right behind us and until the Addisons took over was falling in that was just a nightmare to us because of just the garbage on the back of the roof that was, you know, and then the drainage, I mean, it was just a problem, and, I mean, everybody has these buildings around them have just been neglected and nobody does anything to them until they fall in. Hopefully, as the bar gets raised, that maybe the city will have some grounds to talk to them about it, to step in and, you know, when they came into my building, the floor was sinking, the building was very close to collapsing in on itself because the floor had no floor joists left that were attached to the side of the building and it had sunk 3 inches and it was just a matter of time

until the floor collapsed. We rewired it, plumbed it, jacked the floor up, put a new roof on, and the city comes in and inspects it, and I'm thinking, I mean, and you know, and they're like, "Oh, it needs a cover on that."

(laughter.)

... and it was open, and fine for business, and that's the way it had been for years and years and years waiting to collapse.

(many people talking at once.)

...excuse me, I mean, it's like, okay. It's amazing to me that these buildings that aren't open, nobody does anything about them, and the side of the building is falling in, it's going to collapse into the alley....

The city should be doing something. They should not have to wait until so many individual merchants... something needs to be done.

I think people think I'm crazy, because I go down the street, looking at all the buildings...

Is that what it is?

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

...you use the ordinance to connect the buildings, and all of a sudden, the attachable buildings get swallowed up by the condemnation procedure. I mean, someone thought they were doing the right thing, and all of a sudden, the whole block is condemned.

A lot of these people are just waiting because they think they're going to make a zillion dollars on this building that they've done nothing to.

Moderator: If you could come up with one thing that the city could do to help you, what would that be?

Improve normal services. Trash pickup, street cleaning, snow removal.

Sidewalks.

Signage.

Of course, parking.

They could be very helpful after 5:00.

The Broadway racetrack, I mean, it was...

(many people talking at once, describing people cruising/racing on Broadway, arguing.)

If there's a theater, and there's a couple hundred people, and there are cars occupying the spaces, it's part of changing the neighborhood.

What's going to happen when somebody's drag racing, these kids are drag racing, and they get, you know, I mean, why aren't local police enforcing?

Because without parking, we can't do it.

I mean, I would hate to see some innocent bystander get killed, you know, when these kids are jacking around, they hit a family with four kids or something, you know, this is America's Home Town, and you're in your hotel room, and you drive downtown, and you see them drag racing on Broadway, I mean, what message does that send, I mean, not a good one.

(many people talking at once.)

There's something to that. If you change the desirability of doing it, and you improve enforcement...

You can't do the side-by-side stuff.

I think of the city itself, and when you come into the door, there should somebody that you can go to that tells you the entire checklist of what you need to do to open. I mean, we've had a business for 8 years, and when I opened a building downtown, there were all the things I thought I knew, and then I get a big bill of something I missed. There was nobody here. When they sent me the bill...

There needs to be a checklist.

There's no checklist. I did the city and I did the state, but I didn't do the county.

(many people talking at once, agreement.)

I mean, the merchants try to help you, and the HCBB brochure is very helpful, and I found about it from somebody just talking, and they were like, "you need to be in this brochure." Nobody comes and says, "Hi, welcome to Hannibal." Somebody should say, "Oh, you're opening a business? Here's stuff you should know."

Moderator: I have one last question. There's been talk in other communities of having a business district with extra sales tax, and all of the money would go to provide services for downtown. Do you think that would work in Hannibal?

I think a tourism tax would be great, a tax that would not affect one single local. Maybe something like at the cave, or the boat, because generally speaking only tourists go there. Not putt-putt because the locals go there. Just to the tourists because that's who we're trying to attract.

I get complaints about sales tax being too high here.

Not for nothing, though. I had a lady today who looked at a \$350 Cuisinart, and she said she'd buy it when she got home. Not another tax.

But a tourist tax... we should have a tourist tax...

But then you're taxing the people you're trying to attract. You don't want to punish them for staying overnight or for spending money at your place.

But you don't want to tax the locals. Don't hurt the locals.

(many people talking at once.)

We could do something that involves a property assessment, sales tax, a TDD where pennies collected in that district help pay for the infrastructure improvements. The theater, for example... the problem with a tourism tax is that there's no legal way to implement it.

The whole state of North Dakota has it.

But it's not legal in Missouri.

I know, but that's what you make new laws for, so that you can, you pass it, you vote on it.

We've, we've tried to find some ways of having a tax on the tourism-related...

No, they've looked at that.

I mean, we did, and we kept running into limitations from the State of Missouri. For example, Hannibal doesn't have a bed tax...the reason is that you can't enact a bed tax for a community. It has to be created at the legislative level, and they can't create it just for Hannibal. The way they get around it is, say, you can enact a bed tax in Missouri in doing it this way, you create a law that you can tax a bed if the town is less than 30,000 in population, and the way they do it is they describe something, it's not Hannibal, but they describe something that only Hannibal fits, and they found a way to do that. The problem is that Hannibal

straddles two counties, and that's a problem... making a law that you can apply across the board, and so, and we just, I mean, we had all of our legislators working on angles on how to do it. You can't discriminate tax. If you do a sales tax, it can't just be on certain kinds of businesses. It has to be across the board.

But I mean, instill these laws. If you have entire states that have done it, there isn't a reason that Missouri can't do it.

(many people talking at once.)

I mean, other states have done it. I mean, Missouri isn't that far behind the things. There's going to be ways around it to have it done. But they don't want it done. If they wanted it done, it could be done. But when you have people sitting on a board and it'll affect their business, they won't do it. It's small-town politics.

We got a group of people in the room from a diverse group of businesses, even restaurant, and people said, "I don't mind," but then it was a matter of how do you apply the tax law... if a store sells a hot dog, is it a restaurant? We came into technical barriers. We were trying not to affect the locals going out to eat, but to somehow grab a portion, we were trying to generate more revenue without just piling the tax on the hotels. It wasn't for a lack of desire. All the tourism-related businesses, but of course, everybody doesn't want their business taxed.

(many people talking at once.)

We're going to have positive things...

They'll be able to put gas in the, in the, ambulance that drives around town. They'll be able to afford that.

Would anybody else like to see the walking path go on? I think they should include Main Street as part of the walking path.

(people agreeing. Side conversations.)

It's not just a tourism issue. Local people want it. I wish the path didn't stop here and start again somewhere else.

(many people talking at once.)

That's an element that would be attractive to the tourism side but also very much to...

You know that Quincy has had such popularity with its bridge run that they're thinking of doing a marathon. We've got a bridge run that's probably enjoying a lot of popularity on its own.

Moderator: Thank you very much for coming.

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SECTION V

LONG-TIME RESIDENTS DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Bob (name unintelligible), and I've lived here my whole life. My family's been in town since 1842.

I'm Rob Wilstein, I own Hartmann realty services, and I've lived in Hannibal since 1989

My name's Kenneth Burke, I operate Mark Twain Printers, and I've lived here most my life.

I'm Jack Martin, retired from an architecture company. I'm an architectural engineer. I've lived here for 81 years.

I'm Jeanne Vincent, I was born in Hannibal and spent most of my life here, and my family's associated with a long-time business, Griffin's Flowers, been in business since I can't remember when...90 years.

My name's Todd Aarons, I'm the in-house council for (unintelligible) at the hospital. Except for college, I've been here my entire life.

I'm Arcine Burton, here in town since 1970, primarily in the medical world but I'm a volunteer, and so I've enjoyed seeing what happens downtown and with schools and all that sort of thing.

I'm Dave Dexheimer, born and raised in Hannibal, was gone about 10 years and moved back. My wife was also involved with Griffin's Flowers, she's a Griffin, so both of our families have been around quite a while. I'm director of Douglas's Community Services, which is a not-for-profit corporation and has four or five different programs.

I'm Carl Brown, born and raised here, like Bob left school and that was about it. Last 36 years I spent at Murphy Motors, and I'm general manager there, so I've had a lot of time viewing Main Street out the window. Interested to see what we have to talk about.

Moderator: Before we get to downtown specifically, I wanted to ask you about Hannibal in general. This is my first time in Hannibal. If you were describing Hannibal to someone from out of town or someone who's thinking about moving here, how would you describe it?

Well, it's a great place to live. It's a place where you can raise your family. I think it's a place you can feel somewhat secure in, more so than a larger area. We're located where you can go and visit St. Louis or Kansas City or Chicago, and come back here for a slower style, pace, and we have that going for us. It's just, sometimes we have folks move in from larger areas. There's been a cultural shock, but that's coming from a large area to a small town. Good place to be.

It's great for fine arts. We came from California, and part of the draw was that there were opportunities to hear and see good things.

I see it as being a small town, good values, I think we're going to be seeing some greater progression soon with the highways, with the medical facilities that we're seeing develop and those kinds of things. I think we're going to see some growth. We are seeing growth. We don't see it in the population of Hannibal, but I think that we are seeing growth...we're going to see, I think, some of the same things Columbia's seen with the senior population growing...I think that's something that, I'm already seeing downtown, the Mark Twain Hotel...we're going that direction, and that's where, those are the folks with some spending money in some cases, and those are also going to be one of the largest population groups, so we need to be ready to accommodate those needs... I also, one of my interests when I think about Hannibal...we are a river town, and I'd like to be able to take much more advantage of that, our downtown riverfront.

Hannibal is very fortunate to be as geographically diverse as it is, with the recreational opportunities at the river branch and also the lake that was developed, about 20 years ago, which my grandparents fought long and hard to see that become reality and never lived to see it, so... the hilly terrain, the picturesque views with our bluffs, and a nationally recognized historical town, the boyhood home of Mark Twain, is much to our advantage as far as drawing any kind of cultural visitors.

I think probably our best asset is our citizens. I think we've got the finest people there is around. It's a fact.

Greet a tourist on the street, "Hey how you doing this morning?" and they're like, wow.

I think a lot of the points we brought up are confirmed by the fact that I keep hearing about more people moving in from distant cities, mainly because I'm interested in it in the art world, but I'm astounded that the numbers of younger people who have chosen to move here.

Moderator: So would you say that the city in general is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Well, I think that one of the reasons people come here is we're a very friendly city. I've known an awful lot of people, having lived here all my life, that I'd call transients. For years, we didn't have transients, same people lived here, worked here. And all of a sudden they're here, and you ask them, "Why'd you come back here?" and they said, "Because you're so friendly!" A lot of them have retired here. Where we're disadvantaged is that our average income is below par, and we need to get that up some way. It's always been that way. The other good advantage is that when there is, our economic business sort of curves, stays straight... when everybody else, we stay straight, when everybody else is going up, we stay straight, so it's easy to predict economically.

That's reflected in the housing market.

We have more artists coming into town all the time, and I say, "Why in the..." people coming in from California, and I say, "Why in the hell have you come to Hannibal?" "Because we like it here!"

It's reasonable living.

I don't think anybody loves Hannibal more than I do. I just think we lack leadership, and going to meetings with Jack when I was real young, and I went to meetings with John, his son, and I just, I don't think we have as much dynamic leadership as we've had in the past. I know we haven't done much in the way of infrastructure for years...the only way we're going to survive is to grow, and I don't think we've had much leadership in that respect. I think a lot of times I don't think... I think everybody's working along a little better, and I think it's happened all over America is that you cut out a lot of small business because of Wal-Mart, so you lack individual entrepreneurs that are enthusiastic. It's sure is hard to be here for 51 years in my store and still be excited. I mean I am, and I love Hannibal, but I think we're in trouble. I think if we're not prepared for an influx of people, we're going to get it with the two highways that are coming through...we're going to have warehousing, we're going to have a lot of aliens, and we're not ready for it. I don't think we've made much preparation at all. It's scary, but I think if we have growth that we don't control, it could lead to a lot of problems in this community...I think it's going to, and we have a lot of people coming up from the cities, they've taken over some of the nicest neighborhoods that were steady and strong and old. It's scary. There's a lot of crime that we didn't have before. It's not going to get better, it's going to get worse. We're easy pickings here. I just don't think we're prepared for it. You go down to Columbia, and you go clear to Rockport before you see the end of city limit. Quincy, if you have a new subdivision outside city limits, it's built to city code, because the county won't enforce the nearby rule. As much as I dislike some of John's actions, our city government...they'll just put the hammer on it because it's historic, and then

they'll let somebody else do whatever we want because it's the next block. I don't think city government works together, they don't know what the other parts are doing...the parks gave us permission to put the stage up without checking with the historic district...we need to safeguard our historic buildings. (unintelligible)...they told me to go ahead, and I've done it my store, and some people get away with stuff and others don't...we need to tighten that up. You need to protect your history out there... And I don't usually agree with John—he's a troublemaker, he's usually after it's done, and you just can't have people doing that in a historic area.

Going back to something you were talking about, about the leadership, as you talk about Quincy and what they've done with areas like the riverfront, and the leadership...we've never had a Joe Bonazega or someone of that caliber in the community who took the initiative on their own and put the money behind it of their own, and those kinds of things, to really provide the example and the drive to do some of the things we're talking about. We have the resources, we have people that have the capability...I was in fundraising with the College for 18 years, and honestly, Hannibal, or this community compared to other communities, is tough to raise dollars, big dollars, for the most part from the folks that have it. How do I say that? The folks that really have the capability, with few exceptions...

(many people talking at once.)

You don't have a third of your community that's living under the poverty level. A third of the people in Hannibal make less than \$25,000. They just can't afford to give you big dollars.

I'm talking about the ones who *can* afford, don't.

The ones who make \$500,000 and above, we don't have near as many as most community.

We've got more than you think.

We just don't have...

I can't think of any donations that wealth has done in Hannibal, the city of Hannibal recently, except for the wheel down at the (unintelligible) and the flower garden.

I think you'd have to go to the parents for all the Mark Twain Museum.

And the YMCA. I mean, that's a 2 million dollar deal. I guarantee you, they're not getting that money for the community college. It's going to come from small people. If you have to wait for rich people to move in and do it, you can pack your bags, pack your shorts...

That's what they did in Quincy. That's my point.

Quincy's got manufacturing that we've never had.

I understand, but even on a scale, Hannibal to that scale...

(many people talking at once.)

It's pretty well proven that in any financial campaign in any community, that 10 percent of people produce 80 percent of the money, and 90 percent of the people produce 20 percent of the money, and if you look at the campaigns we've had around Hannibal, that's pretty much what happens, and it has to be that way. You're not going to... one more thing I'd like to add... what Carl was talking about is our geographical location. We're in a great location, except for one thing...we're on the Mississippi river. We can manage to be on the river, except it also means we're only 180 degrees, we don't have 360 degrees to work with. We only have half a circle. It's difficult to grow with just half a circle. Years ago, 1964, I was president of the Chamber of Commerce, and we tried at that time to bring in a community college. We couldn't do it, because we didn't have the population, and we were unable to count anyone across the river. I think that's changed now. They don't have those rules anymore. But there's no question about it, that when you only have half a circle to work with, it's a whole lot harder than if you've got the full circle.

It would seem that our discussion doesn't center around the financial backing of things as it does the DREAM initiative, which is a real vision of what things could look like and be like. I'm so pleased to see the trails group that has tried to start the initiative of the trail from the park downtown, and ultimately around and out on highway, and out to the outlying areas. I think that that vision is really what we need to see happening. There are so many people who don't have a voice or don't care to have a voice, but if you gave them an opportunity to see progress in a development of a trail that was safe, it would just mushroom, and people would be so excited, even people that are coming with the food companies out there that have lived in some of the subdivisions west of town, would love to see a bike path and trail from their subdivision all the way in, so that they could, you know, have their kids out and doing and traveling. I think one of the hardest things about Hannibal is getting around in the town, safely, and I just think we really need to make the downtown the focus for that, so when travelers or our own citizens want to be downtown, they can get here, and people that ride bikes are really anxious to happen.

Did you ever turn right on 3rd street hill? You can't do it!

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

One of the greatest assets we have is the hospital. You've got a campus out there that no one can match, particularly a community of this size or a region of this size, if you want to call Hannibal regional, but I've got a very good friend that was a surgeon in St. Louis. Worked at Barnes, all around. He came up here to visit one time, and he couldn't believe what we had out there. You're not going to find that anyplace. I don't care how big the city is, you're not going to find a medical campus as beautiful as that.

That's one thing that retirement people look for too in a community, is health service.

Moderator: Let me shift gears...

(many people talking at once.)

I just started out there, and I had nothing to do with the planning of it, but it's clear that how they got there was with people just like the group that's city here, thinking on a visionary level, and I don't think we have that in city government. I don't see what we're doing, you know, we're going to be a major transportation hub, with highways and trains and the river, and I don't see where we're doing anything to aggressively pursue bringing business to our area, and I think that's where we're lacking. I think if we had the same sort of visionary thinking that we had 15 or 20 years ago in the medical community, we'd be a lot better off.

Moderator: I'd like to ask you two more questions about Hannibal as a whole. First of all, what are the main shopping areas in Hannibal? Where do you go for household goods?

Quincy. St. Louis.

West of 61.

West end of town.

Sure.

There's no retail east of 61 whatsoever. Very minimal.

Furniture stores are a mile out of town in both directions.

Moderator: What about dining and entertainment? What are popular places?

I think we're, it's fairly spread out around town.

(people agreeing.)

There's some nice places around.

I feel like downtown could use at least one more upper-class type steakhouse, personally. It ought to be right on the Square.

The dining and all...

A full-service restaurant, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with steak, seafood...

I think that one of the visions has to do with our industrial council or the people who pursue companies. I've done a lot of writing to restaurants that I have liked and said, "Come take a look," because I think that anybody from a city cannot understand that in a rural area, how many people drive for miles to go have dinner out, and I think they're making a big mistake not to assume that Hannibal is about triple the size, based on the number of people who are always here, and that we could support better than even Quincy, because Quincy has things that come, but they go quickly. They do not stay. Even in the mall up there, things come, but they go.

That's true.

How many people drive to eat?

You know, it's interesting though, Spike Earhart, the others would know who I'm talking about, he had tried to get Olive Garden to go into Quincy and they turned him down. They couldn't begin to operate and make a profit in Quincy. So, you know, to me that doesn't make much sense, but I can't challenge what Olive Garden thinks. He's, all over the Midwest, there are places with restaurants, hotels, started out with Hardees and he sold all those, and now he's into others, and he's always looking for something, and yet, it's like Olive Garden won't go to Quincy because they don't think it's a big enough community.

That's a mistake of those chains.

Radish garden? Onion garden? We're talking about big, nationally-recognized franchises. I'm anti-big-businesses, because I think that the small businessman has just forfeited all of their dollars to the brightest neon sign along the highway, and I don't believe in it, and I don't think that belongs.

Why do you eat there?

I don't.

Well, Fiddlesticks is a good example of that.

It's homegrown, and they do well.

Moderator: I asked you earlier whether you thought Hannibal was moving in the right direction or wrong direction. What about downtown?

It's moving much too slowly.

Actually, it's, I can remember as a kid, downtown was the place to be. Shops open, every Friday night was a big shopping night.

(many people talking at once.)

You didn't have a Wal-Mart to go to back then.

It seemed like there were things happening. I remember playing in a band that played a street dance, right down at the foot of Broadway. Nobody does that anymore.

Have you been to down by the river where the Wideman is. It's the same thing as a street dance? We'd get 600 people down there.

But you can't get the teenagers, because...

No, you can't.

Well, you know, when I grew up, there was nothing but downtown. There wasn't anything out that way, other than the high school. And we had all of the, everything was a small basically home-owned retail shops. And we're sitting down there looking at a complete empty block of red sand, and that block at one time had every kind of good shop in it that you could imagine. They had a J.C. Penney. Wasn't anything like what you'd think of one now, but it was big to us. And there was H. Higgins, and the Heiser Jewelry, they had a restaurant, they had a hotel which is now a parking lot. Drugstores.

Hardware stores.

But anyhow, that's all I remember. I remember as a high school, when I was in school, I worked at H. Higgins, and that's all we could think of. When they decided to build the shopping center, even before Wal-Mart, they built a shopping center, Huck Finn, and I made the statement which was the wrong statement to make. I said, it'll never go, because I never saw a town without a downtown.

Unfortunately there are a lot of cities that have no downtowns anymore. They're trying to build them back. St. Louis included. And Hannibal's that way. And now, I would love to see individual shops instead of the big department stores, stuff like that, back to the specialty shops. Shirts in this shop and ties in this one and suits in... like we used to have.

You won't get em back in the same type of stores.

No.

But that's what I grew up with.

I would say, yes it is moving positively. There's a new little kitchen shop downtown, there's a wonderful fabric store that draws women from all over the country to come to the Hickory Stick, there are a number of shops and restaurants in the little mini-mall. I think there are a lot of good things. Every time I have friends come, they are so excited. "Wow. Didn't know all this stuff was here in Hannibal." I'll even take my friends on a little tour of town. You just don't realize how many good things are downtown.

Then you look around, and see the dumpsters...people are fixing up their buildings. Several years ago I thought it was worse than it is today, definitely. And I think people are a little more enthusiastic about it, but it's going to be difficult.

I think it's a learning process, and you've got to start young. If you don't have something down there to draw young people, you're not going to get into the habit of going downtown.

Moderator: What are the reasons you all go downtown now?

Work.

To eat.

Yeah, to eat.

I'm a boat enthusiast, so I go down for the riverfront.

Occasionally, someone comes down to buy a car.

Well, we're destinations. You know, years ago, I used to carry a lot of merchandise, because people would walk in and want to buy something. Nobody walks in my store anymore.

Window-shopping.

No, there's no more of that window shopping. If I don't advertise and I didn't get them when they were kids, I can't get em.

We have hometown enthusiasm on North Main. From the foot of Broadway to the Sav-A-Lot, the same atmosphere is not being carried through South Main or Broadway, either one. What we have in this town is a T, and we've got one leg of that T that's doing something now, and Mark Twain is what they're banking on to bring em in. We need to develop the rest of the T.

You have to hand it to the Theater, to the renovation they've made. I know last week, there was a concert, the performers from St. Louis just could not say enough about the venue because it was wonderful.

It is an awesome place to go. It's a nice place. A great facility...

(many people talking at once.)

The Star Theater.

There's more positive aspects on South Main than there probably ever was.

(many people agreeing.)

There will be potentially a theater. I don't know where that stands.

Good grief. Years ago, you had a railroad station too.

Didn't have much vision when that was torn down, did we.

I agree with you there, but we, there was a huge railroad station. Across the street was a hotel. The railroad station had a hotel, typical of a lot of communities in those days. All trains stopped in Hannibal. Every passenger train, St. Louis through wherever. We had a huge railroad yard with car foundries, I mean, everything else down there at one point, when I was a kid, it was all down there.

That was a long time ago.

The south end of Main Street was the part of town, it was the downtown. There weren't as many shops, other than the Famous, north like there is now. It was everything was south.

If you were a lady, you didn't travel north, or you'd go around the block. All the bars were there.

(many people talking at once.)

Everything was from Broadway south, and down to the railroad station. It's never going to happen again, no matter what.

A lot of things, you look at why we go downtown, it's for our favorite restaurant or some shop we're going to. That's why we go there. The people that come here from all over the world, they're coming here for one reason, and that's Mark Twain and the historic district. If we just want to talk about that...because I've sat on that corner for 36 years and seen a lot of things and wondered, "Why don't they do something about that?"

We have not taken advantage of Mark Twain as other communities have of their heroes.

Well, infrastructure, the streets, terrible...I've watched tourists trip, fall, stumble in the road, stub their toes in the sidewalks, fall. The street! I know they keep talking, oh we want this cobblestone street, but then they don't want to have to plow it in the winter. Why don't we just put a nice new street in there and put in those nice new forms and make those impressions? Why haven't they done something all these years about these things?

To add to that, there is businesses who may or may not be counting on a profit, some retirement hobbies, and they close at 5:00, and I don't understand that at all. If you're having a retail environment and you're expecting people from out of town to come down and shop, and it's all closed?

And the people getting off the boat...

It doesn't make sense!

Moderator: Well, how user-friendly is downtown? Business hours, parking, navigation?

It's terrible.

I don't think it's good at all.

I think the idea of it not being available after 5:00 or 6:00 is the thing that most people complain about.

That and, it's so obvious to us where people are when they get there, but we have people come in the showroom, saying "Where's all the Mark Twain stuff?" "Folks, you're there!" Just amazing! Some simple signage would make a big difference, things like that. Just the infrastructure, if it were better, and if folks were in their shops...the biggest thrill, these folks that get off the boat, first of all they're on the boat, or let's say you were here on the 4th of July, wow, here's Tom and Becky and all of this going on, and here's a riverboat and a couple of trains, man they think they're in heaven. It's just amazing.

It's just for the 4th of July, though.

Well...

Moderator: What about things like streets and sidewalks?

They need work.

The city actually is fairly aggressive with sidewalks, they'll tear it out. They are willing to do something with sidewalks, and they're not like they used to be. Somebody said parking's terrible. There's more places to park next to my store than any place, Wal-Mart or that, but it's just not in the line of sight. You're going to walk a half a block if you park down at the corner...you'll walk a block at Wal-Mart. You'll walk six blocks by the time (unintelligible). And they don't even care about you, that's the sad part.

(many people talking at once.)

Most people downtown want to park right in front of the front door.

If my mother couldn't park in front of the front door, she'd come home.

It was different back then.

Moderator: How do people in town, or visitors, get information about what's going on downtown, whether that's special events or businesses? How do residents and visitors find out about that kind of thing?

A lot of the visitors go to the Chamber, they've been on the Internet. A lot of them come into town and know where they want to go.

Especially the riverboats, because those are pre-planned.

The Visitors Bureau is located conveniently.

I think that people in Hannibal would be astounded if they looked it up on the Internet and found what they could learn about what's going on in Hannibal.

Oh yeah.

Yeah.

They have no idea!

There's too much going on. You can't get to it all.

I mean, you try to get a meeting with 8 people, and you want to schedule it for another month and another month, and you can't get em there because they're too busy. There really is a lot of things.

And now with Hannibal Inn closed all of a sudden, boom, there's 240 rooms gone for the summer and other events. It's going to be a crunch.

I think our newspaper can play a better part in notifying the community of events. Just a weekly. I mean, they have a little section for that everyday, but there's rarely...

A lot of people don't put it in.

I'm amazed at the number of people who say "I don't get the Hannibal paper." It's a good paper, and I think they are making great progress.

They've done a lot of local things. I give them credit. They're improving rapidly.

But their calendar of events I think could be a little more reliable. I mean, nobody gets the Hannibal paper for national news. I mean, I get the Hannibal paper to know what's going on locally. I mean, if they could divide one column, even let an advertiser sponsor it... you know, something like that might work.

All summer, they have a weekly insert, and those inserts are always available for anybody that wants to know what's happening during the week.

(many people talking at once.)

...great work with the Arts Council, and I don't take advantage of it like I should.

Newspaper, website.

They do a good job.

I like to fiddle with the paper, I just prefer that medium, I'm not seeing what... a more comprehensive list of things to do, especially for young people and for nighttime activities, even for older people.

What about this concept of getting more housing downtown? Living in the lofts, and of course the hotel is coming up... but I think that that's a very interesting concept, if you... it sounds like it's the same thing they're trying to do in St. Louis with some luck, but if you do get a population that's based downtown, I think it's going to create more activity downtown, and encourage other people, influence other people to come downtown, but there are things that residents in downtown need before they're totally comfortable living here, I think. Different kinds of, like a drugstore or sundries shop or something like that.

I think it's coming though.

Is it?

I thought so. That's what I thought the Turvathans were doing, working on that.

It's kind of hard to say exactly what it's going to be.

I think a lot of it's going to be, it's chicken and egg. You have to have the population before you can have those, those before the population. Now with the hotel, that will create a population that will spur—

How many units are in the hotel?

33 or 34.

So if they want groceries, they've got to at least go out to Grand Avenue.

They're part of a particular economic level right...

Anybody can be there, but not everyone can get it subsidized.

It's 55 and older though.

Is it?

Yes.

The other side of that is, and we've, as the United Way has done their surveys, not just here but in all 5 of the counties that they're in, but the biggest issue is always transportation. Transportation. That comes up time and time again, and everybody you hear, it's transportation. How do we get... if you've got a senior population and no groceries, how do they get out to the grocery stores and pharmacies? Many of them have to rely on someone.

I'm amazed at the number of marginal-looking people are running around in taxis. They use that.

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

A part of that equation is the group home industry that's in Hannibal. There's an overwhelming ratio of collective group housing that is in downtown Hannibal, which brings in not only people from all over the country to live in Hannibal, and there are probably 30 of them.

Over 70.

Over 70 group homes in Hannibal. And that has given me a very skewed impression of what the Hannibal Joe really is, because that's not what Hannibal is.

(many people talking at once, side conversation.)

They're lucky to have a town like Hannibal to have people open up with them and help them.

Yeah, but there's a certain amount of people that won't go near them.

Their loss.

I'm more concerned about an element that's not popular to discuss, but I think if you want families and clean living downtown, that you're going to have to watch some of the business that advertise the opposite and introduce things that you don't want your kids to be around. I know you can't...

You've got to go after the media and MTV and the internet...

Moderator: Looking to the future of downtown, what kind of businesses do you think would be good for keeping Hannibal's downtown moving in the right direction?

Drugstore. Sundries.

Well, you know, I don't know whether it could happen or not, but I think you need one major store that brings people down.

An anchor.

A Penney's or a store of some kind like that, a department store, that has several departments for men and women and children and everything, in order to bring people down there. Then you need the specialty stores around it, the drugstores and whatever, but there's got to be one store that brings people in. The shopping center out there, when they built it, they had Kroger on one end and Penney's on the other end, and all the small stores built in between. That's the way they brought them in. They could work into the middle. I think you have to have something like that. Then when Wal-Mart built out there, everything moved, because they sold everything. To get people to go, you can't just have two or three specialty stores, just a drugstore and a soda fountain and stuff like that. You've got to have one major department store—I'll use that term. You have to have one major store that will bring people in. Not just specialty, but everybody. And then they'll spread from there. How are you going to do that, I don't know. But I do know this... when Penney's and the major stores downtown moved out, the downtown died. The specialty stores closed and they moved out to the shopping center with the big stores.

I think there's an element that's reversing that tendency. If you appeal to people in Hannibal who want relatively nice things, you could still do it with a locally-owned business, and have them come down, and it not necessarily draw all of Joe Public. Then you get everything that makes the local business... I'd rather come down and shop downtown and know the store owner and have nice products... if Rampey's hadn't left, but a store like that, and a women's store like Marilyn's would just be great, but I think the competition in any place prohibits a new person from starting a business in clothing because they'll just cut prices on the same materials elsewhere, and Marilyn was really struggling with that.

Not only that, I mean, her case, she was looking at other issues too, but the thing of it is, she could not find a buyer because someone else coming in that has to put up the capital and make a go of it can't do it.

Could the city offer tax abatement to offset that?

They don't get enough taxes for all the services they need now.

Could state income tax be waived to offset that?

Talk to the governor. I don't know.

For enterprises, for downtown.

It has to be new employment, it has to be in certain areas...it's not enough money...

Isn't that part of the DREAM initiative?

Yes.

Isn't that what we're talking about?

Can we make the downtown a TIF area?

You know, we already are at the moment, in a sense. You know (unintelligible) and at one time, we were going to pay off 100% of all our bonds early this year, and we're not going to dissolve, that would be another meeting we'll have to see what we want to do with our tax base and our tax rate. I mean, we want to probably reduce it by 90%, but we don't have to. If there would be a project that would be really nice, the district might support it. We could reduce everybody's district by 30%... (unintelligible)...you know, different things that we have to do, because I don't think anybody else has the funds to do that at the moment, and there's a lot of other things going on, but we have a district, and actually we're the most powerful taxing district in the state of Missouri.

(many people talking at once.)

We can tax the city and the state. The largest land-owner in our levee district is the City of Hannibal, and they don't pay any taxes, but we have the power to tax them.

(many people talking at once.)

I mean, we have a vehicle down there that would be good for most of them down there. Those plugs need to keep be replaced... (unintelligible). We want to finish paying off all our bonds first, and then we'll set a tax rate.

Moderator: Are there other kinds of dining and entertainment options you would like to see downtown?

What is Abbey Rose?

A tea room.

When you talk about entertainment downtown, looking around the room here, you ought to be talking to younger people. Most of us aren't the ones, you know, they got... (unintelligible) you have all kinds of music and dancing and stuff like that that I don't think most of us at this table go to.

(many people talking at once.)

I'm not so sure there isn't enough entertainment downtown, but it's more for a younger crowd. So you're talking to the wrong people.

What we have now is for a younger, alcohol-related crowd. There's not enough non-alcoholic entertainment in downtown Hannibal.

(many people talking at once.)

In most cities and communities, the entertainment is alcohol-related.

It's just not cool anymore to go to the theater if you're in the 20-40 age group, which is wrong, it should be. That used to be the thing to do. Go see the theater. Well, my idea is to put a steakhouse downtown and make the Orpheum Theater (vehicle noise, unintelligible). Get the Orpheum doing something. But there has to be something else to do, like a place to eat on the Square, which they could be.

Well, there were. There was one on the Square that didn't last.

(many people talking at once.)

Well, that didn't fit Hannibal. It brought a New York style element that people just didn't buy into.

They thought they'd bring something new.

Moderator: What about parks and recreation, green space?

Well, you've got a whole park down there if we can get the bridge fixed, if we could get to it. Really, nothing is happening, and that was supposedly geared to being soccer fields and those kinds of things, where all those houses were torn down after the flood, and it's sitting there.

Well, they've got the fields and the baseball diamonds and the horseshoes and the green area... we have quite a bit of green area.

I've seen quite a few kids playing out on the Burlington Northern courts... I think, I wonder what's going to happen on South Main below Bear Creek. When that bridge is finally corrected, that could open up a big area.

(many people talking at once.)

As part of recreation, nothing's being done down there recreation-wise like they talked about doing.

Hannibal's a town without a fairground. It does not have any outdoor entertainment venue, as far as music, acting, theater, drama, orchestra. There's no outdoor amphitheater.

We had one.

(many people talking at once.)

There was a lot of entertainment that was okay, that wasn't yelling "F" at the top of their lungs. There could be country entertainment. We could be a stop on their circuit, without a doubt.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

Moderator: What about the look and feel of downtown? What are the priorities on that front? Buildings, streets and sidewalks...

It's a shame to see the empty storefronts, and some of them I know are in process of being renovated, but it's depressing to walk along the street and see a blank window.

I think North Main is doing better, but if you go up Broadway, there's an awful lot of sad-looking buildings and broken-out windows and stuff like that, which shows a lack of good economics.

I've been looking for someone to ask about this. What do you remember about Hannibal when the parking was not parallel.

Angled parking.

Yeah, angled.

It ruined the drag racing back in the 60's.

(side conversations.)

This is the answer to a lot of the problems we're talking about, is if we want to preserve the historical aspect of Hannibal, we need to preserve historic Hannibal, and the day Broadway changed to a 4-lane boulevard was a sad day. I don't know, because I didn't live here, and I didn't see it.

There weren't many cars back then. If a family had a car, you were lucky.

(side conversation about the old speed limit. Many people talking at once. Sirens.)

I brought some visual aids. A lot of what we're discussing is relevant to what I've been working on. I brought out the commissioner, and asked him to draw Broadway for me, and he did. What I've done with that highlighting is I've identified things that we could change. I counted how many parking spaces there are right now, and there's 144. Currently 144. Now, if we turned back this way, running it from the courthouse to the square where we're sitting, we can end up 233 parking spaces, which is not quite doubling the parking capacity, but it certainly would allow for more people to get downtown, have an easier time parking, and be able to spend their money.

We'd lose 2 lanes of traffic, wouldn't we?

I think it could be a 2-way street with a turn lane down the middle. So you can make a left to go where you want to go. Otherwise, it's 15 miles an hour, and we park side-by-side to each other just like we do in the shopping center. In my mind, that's the biggest obstacle preventing people from shopping downtown is they don't want to parallel park. That's what everybody, everybody frets about it in their driver's test is parallel parking. Whereas, that would eliminate that objection.

I've seen some cities where they do diagonal parking in groups of 6, and then there's a little island with a tree planted, and then there's another group of parking spaces. But anyway, that would add to...

(noise, unintelligible.)

...it wouldn't have been feasible then, but now it is. We can get around Broadway now.

I have to tell you, 97% of the time you come to my store, there's two places right in front. I don't have a parking problem, I have a customer problem. Now, when you start filling the lofts, then you have a parking problem.

I don't think you have a parking problem, I think you have a perceived parking problem.

I perceive the parking problem at your store. I do.

90% of the time, there's 2 or 3 spaces.

It's not what the reality is. Perception becomes reality. If you say, "I'm not going downtown because I don't want to have to parallel park." You're not going to go because you think you might have to parallel park.

Interestingly, this picture, I didn't realize it either. I've got that same picture. One side is parallel, one side isn't.

I don't remember that.

Even what that shows is not what I'm suggesting. It does show parallel one side and angled the other.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation about "how it used to be.")

This may not solve the problem, but it would eliminate a perceived obstacle.

What would you say about the trolley concept?

A bus?

I don't mean a bus bus.

There already is one, but it doesn't run up Broadway. It goes up North Main.

We're talking too much about Main Street, and our historic district is T-shaped.

For your downtown, you need to build back on Broadway.

Or you at least need to get up to here. Even if you can't project much beyond here, you could get to this street.

With a tie-in to Central Park, which is always pretty nice. It's been kept well over the years. And the riverfront, we've got a lot of parks, and those are nice areas, and people come in to comment on it.

(side conversations. Many people talking at once.)

People talk about the boat harbor and say we need to get rid of it, but they don't remember what it was like before then.

You know, you're talking about retail business in the downtown area, but I don't ever remember retail going past 3rd street. We had retail up to 3rd street... there basically was no retail, I'm talking about men's stores, women's stores, that type

of thing. There wasn't much of it. It was the first block of Broadway and basically the first block of South Main and the first block of North Main. After that, there wasn't much retail. There were some bars.

Railroad station.

We always had more bars than churches anyhow. There were drugstores and different things like that on North Main, but the basic retail business was in three blocks, one of North, one of South, and one of Broadway.

(noise, many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

Okay, how does that affect our DREAM initiative?

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: I have one more question for you. Are there other downtowns you'd like to see Hannibal take after?

Williamsburg.

St. Charles.

St. Charles has done a great job.

But they don't have a lot of retail retail. They're all specialty stores.

The thing about the St. Charles historic district is that their architecture is far superior to ours. We have a few good architectural featured buildings, but very few. St. Charles has got a slug of them. It's just one after another...

How many architecturally significant buildings have been demolished?

Well, that may be.

But thing of it is...

Well, you go the old gas company, Speedy Print, right across the street here.

You can talk about developing...(unintelligible, vehicle passing.) If you think about St. Charles, right across from the historic area, they have a huge park along the river, and they've developed that for walking and for exhibits.

They have more population.

A larger tax base.

The point is, it's chicken and egg. If you have things that draw people, they'll pay taxes.

I have another drawing. This is an RV park, a county fair grandstand sports arena with an outdoor amphitheater, and a railroad and steamboat museum... (noise, unintelligible).

It's too bad...

(many people talking at once.)

The museum you'd have to raise up about 4 feet, or it will flood.

An RV park is easily enough hosed off, the grandstand, the parking lot. It's just the museum.

(many people talking at once.)

I bet you could get some real assistance from the trail groups. They've negotiated with all kinds of railroad companies and they sometimes work with them to change things, and it's a wonderful climate right now for talking, through the rails to trails groups. They're nationally organized and ready to go.

There is a master plan, it's leaning over on the wall over there, but it's not the same as what I have over here. Has anybody looked at that? The master plan that was... it's sitting right here.

Moderator: While we're doing that, are there other downtowns that you've seen elsewhere will elements that you'd like to see here?

Naperville, Illinois has a riverwalk, on the Fox River which is nothing compared to the Mississippi, but they've done a beautiful treatment of walking along the river, and different kinds of seating and covered areas and places for entertainment and... it's just, it's really a lovely thing, and I wish that we could do something like that. We need to. We need to do more with the river.

I'll add to that. When I'm going to a town who has a town square, like Bowling Green, like Moberly, like Palmyra, like almost every little town around this whole region, still has the courthouse with businesses all around it, and Hannibal's town square is right here. There's not one business on it.

(many people talking at once.)

They're all going downhill. It's not... it's not what it used to be.

It never was that same deal that there was in Bowling Green. It's just not, that's not where the stores were. You had the YMCA, and theaters, and the shrine.

That's because we're not built on a circle or square.

Moderator: Anything else?

I'd like to pose a question. 20, 30, 40 years ago, it just always seemed like there was something, someone, some group holding us back. We just weren't making progress like it seemed we should.

(many people talking at once.)

There's always something. There was never, the City never funded Main Street, never funded most of the things I've ever seen in the past. You started with a lot of good ideas, and then you went from private funding, and eventually the director's job turned into the fundraiser and you couldn't get anything done, and I think we need more taxes. We need to raise city taxes so that they might be able to fund something like this, because until you get an entity that's not greedy or who's running this because of their own self-interests, I don't think it's going to get there. You need to get the city involved in it to maintain the leadership so that... the gentleman who's going to help us, is going to be begging for money to pay his salary, and that's what everything got to before...everything I've ever seen.

To go back to what Bob said in the very beginning, there's no group trying to hold us back, but we don't have the leadership that we need of the City officials, I'll put it that way. We haven't in the past, anyhow. And we need that if we're going to get anything taken care of. We can't have the Chamber doing one thing and the City doing something else and another community group doing something else. There has to be one leader, and that leader has to come from the city council.

At one point there was that. In my experience, we've tried to eliminate that form of government and go with the city manager. I think a lot of the town's attention has been focused on the changeover, and I think our budget has been primarily focused on new development, new streets, new subdivisions...

(side conversation.)

I want to mention the fact that I'm involved with the group that's going to develop the children's museum, over there in the old... funeral home... and we have some great ideas for that. Hope it happens before too long. I think that would be a pretty good draw for downtown.

Moderator: With that, we're right at about 9:00. Thanks again for taking the time to speak with us.

SECTION VI

NEWER RESIDENT DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

I'm Candace, and I've lived here since 1994.

I'm Barbara, and I've lived here since the late 90's.

I'm Megan, and I've lived here about 2 years.

I'm Jim, and I've lived here since 2000.

I'm Linda, and I've lived here since 2000.

I'm Emmeline, and I've lived here one year.

I'm Michael, and I've lived here 14 years.

I'm Gail, and I've lived here almost 14 years.

I'm Barbara, and I've lived here (unintelligible).

Moderator: Great! This is my first day in Hannibal. Tell me a little bit about Hannibal. If I were looking to move to Hannibal, for example, how would you describe Hannibal?

Well, people ask us that question all the time, and I always tell people that this is a very family-friendly community, and that our downtown area has begun a development, and in my mind, that could end up very similar to Old St. Charles, because everybody sees the importance of revitalizing that area, letting artisans and crafters come in, and make it a place where people can come in year-round and not just in summer and find lots of activities to participate in, and also with the development of the highway systems, the four-lane 61-36, I think we're just at the brink of expanding. Exponentially.

I agree with what she just said, but I would question whether everybody in Hannibal sees that vision. My impression is that there are, this is one segment of Hannibal, but there are big areas of Hannibal that have no interest in the downtown and almost never come to the downtown, and the Arts Council for instance tries to pull people from outlying areas, but I see really a separation, and I suppose most communities are like that, but I'm wondering, you know, how much of the whole town has to be involved whenever they come up with...

I know for a fact that everyone shares the downtown appreciation in this room, and I would concur. There are people moving in from the outside world...Hannibalians...

(many people talking at once.)

...I feel it's definitely there, but I hear all the time, I never go downtown. I have no desire to go downtown. What is there for me? I hear that a lot, but mainly from those that have probably lived here a long time.

I hear that there was a crime focus downtown.

In the 1970's.

What we hear all the time is "you can't do this downtown anymore, you can't do that anymore, you can't have concerts downtown because the amphitheater is closed." Well that was in the 1980's. People are like, "Oh, there's nothing to do downtown?" Well, when's the last time you were down there?

We have a great combination of tourism and locally-based businesses.

The divide between the downtown and the rest of the town is hardly economic. I mean, native locals will go to Thatcher's and they'll go to the dinette because they remember that, but nothing else downtown now is what they remember, and nothing downtown right now is geared towards them. It's geared towards people coming in. It's not geared toward what they want to do. Why would they want to go to the museum? The museum is working on that image, but for all the years I've been here, everything seems to be geared towards people visiting, you know... stores aren't open late. Everybody in this town are blue-collar, and they can't get downtown before everything closes, and that's part of the problem. On top of it, again, what's down here, there's nothing, why would you go downtown to get groceries? You can't, for one thing, but there used to be a Schnucks, there used to be a really nice rather upscale grocery there...

And it wasn't that long ago. 10 years ago.

...it's been quite a while. If you're thinking about historic downtown, that's not exactly downtown. Everybody from 5th street down, it's just as easy for them to come down to 3rd and catch the Mark Twain and head out to Wal-Mart, and the prices are better.

Back to your original question, what would I tell a person who is interested in coming to Hannibal... I would just remind them about our great historical factor, and the arts program, the fifty miles of art and all the artisans downtown. To me I think that's extremely important.

I would say property taxes.

(many people talking at once.)

...and the school districts here.

I would say the river here.

The river.

I think we're getting to the point of regionalization. I think we're going to become a fine regional medical center, we've got a college here...and of course, regional as well is our historic data and all that sort of thing that we deal with, and I can see where those areas seem to really be growing, and I think it's something, well you have your real estate, but it's a saleable product, you know, I mean...

The schools are considered good.

They are good.

Very good.

That's definitely an appeal.

They are. They're very good.

When I came here as an artist, I've loved the traffic on Main Street (unintelligible), but I was real impressed with the...there was enough diversity for me, other artists, other intelligent people. I was really happy to hear that there was a gay population that seems to be well-accepted, that was very important, because it means that this is an accepting town. And the river, well, yes, it's a nice town...

Having only lived here a year... actually, I was here in 93 for the flood, so it's interesting to be back years later, but the thing I have noticed having lived in cities and just across the river, I find it as very friendly. I can be in a grocery store, and people will talk to you. I think that is very, that's unique. You don't find that everywhere you go, even in some other small towns. That is what's unique to here.

I think we have the city services as well, I think we have a fire department and police department, I think the park department is really doing its thing...

They're doing a really good job.

...and I think as far as city services are concerned, that people are interested in that aspect. We don't have a crime rate. Sure, you have the natural crime thing that's going to happen, but we don't have a *high* crime rate... (unintelligible)...people moving into town, you know, cities that are class 3, that's really excellent, but 10 being the worst and the best being a 1, and for a town this size getting a 3... there's only one city in Missouri, and that's in southern Missouri. So I think this speaks well for our community.

I think people are going to start coming from the coasts. People talk to me a lot, and they're very impressed with property prices, and I think people are going to be forced out of the coasts, and the Midwest in general will become very attractive, but Hannibal's got a lot more history and a convergence of a lot of things.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: Well, what would you like to see improved?

I'm concerned about the infrastructure. I think of myself as a newcomer, but around this table, I'm an old-timer. I've seen the streets disintegrate since I've been here, because money hasn't been spent on streets, curbs, sidewalks...I feel they're doing their best to try to keep up, but there's clearly not enough money being spent for infrastructure. It sounds as if our new city manager intends to try to address that. He's talking about a bond issue, but that really is concerning me, because, and I'm talking about this downtown area, I don't know about other parts of the city, but this area is really deteriorating, and I mean, you can't walk—there are blocks where most of the sidewalks are disintegrating, so you're walking along and you're suddenly in the dirt. Since tourism is an important part of our income here, and I suppose you do know what percentage is... the last city manager didn't know. I asked him, "What percentage of our income is from tourism?" and he didn't know. The last I heard from Noah Hicks is that it was the second highest source of income in the city. But the tourists come here, and if the tourists can't walk safely—and they do like to walk, and they buy—that's important to know right away. They come here, I've had three friends come here to visit me, and they bought houses because they couldn't resist, but I see people, as soon as it gets warm, driving along, and they're not just looking at the interesting architecture, they're looking to buy in this historic district.

And just for ourselves... I mean, not as a tourism slam, but we just as a community deserve good sidewalks, good streets.

There's nothing downtown, sidewalk-wise, and the minute you cross Country Club, there's not a sidewalk.

I come from California where sidewalks are...

There's no place to safely walk. I live on one of the busiest streets in town, and I can't let my child out in the yard, let alone trying to take a walk from her. If we want to walk, we have to get in a car and drive and then go walk somewhere. Parts of the town are not conducive to that sort of, um, get-out, meet-and-greet, type thing, and the downtown can be downright dangerous. You know, I have a friend who lives up here on 5th street on millionaire's row, and went to visit her, and almost broke my neck trying to get to her house, because the sidewalk was like this, like that, missing here, and it was dark, and there were no streetlights. I mean, especially in the downtown older area, the sidewalks are a hazard, and when we get out west of Country Club, I know that's not necessarily a focus, but if we're talking about it, there's just nothing there to...

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

The staircase to the lighthouse is just filled with mud. It comes off the side, and I told them, it needs to be fixed because tourists are going up there, it's one of the main attractions, and the mow the grass so tight that all the grass dies, and they do that on purpose because they don't want it to come back to mud. It's dirt, dirt, lawn, dirt. And people are slogging around... and there's not a single view until the lighthouse. They don't even cut views through the trees.

(many people talking at once.)

I think in general, she's touched on one of the biggest problems... that the city doesn't seem to know how much of their income or revenue comes from tourists. If they knew how much money they got from these tourists, from these visitors, maybe they would appreciate them a little more, and they'd fix the sidewalks, they'd fix the stairs to the lighthouse, and they'd do some other things to get the area that's drawing the tourists that are spending the money, if they knew what type of money was coming in because of those things, they'd...

The sales tax, sales tax is...the second-largest business in Missouri is tourism. I think that could be related to a lot of communities as well. And the sales tax, so how many people pay sales tax—well, you do, and I do, and so do visitors coming to town, but how do you...

(many people talking at once.)

...now we count restaurants and gas stations also.

(many people talking at once.)

Nothing about this town's Main Street... it has four bars. If you have four bars on Main Street and no really good restaurants, what does it say about what we want in Hannibal? People who drink and throw up on the curb and glass bottles and upturned flower pots. That's what we get.

(many people talking at once.)

Every business down here...if my customers have no place to park, my thrift store does horrible. There's no place to park. You'd think that people being over here, they'd come shopping, but it really doesn't happen. So...

Some downtown businesses are saying that the business owner next to them parks in front of their business.

That happens a lot.

The businesspeople park right in front of their business.

Moderator: Well, I'm going to get back to parking, but before we do.... Where do people in Hannibal do their shopping?

Wal-Mart.

Quincy.

(lots of agreement. Many people talking at once.)

There's a little bit of everything here, but you're limited in your selection. If you want to go to a big store, in Hannibal you've got one. If you want to get stuff in Quincy, you've got Wal-Mart, Sams, all these people. So if you want to go to a clothing store, you have J.C. Penney and Goody's in Hannibal. So, you have stuff, but you're very limited if you're looking for variety.

And the Wal-Mart there is a low-grade Wal-Mart. It's not the more up-grade Wal-Mart that most of them have now, upgraded and fixed fixtures and added different products, where this one...I can see some changes, but not a lot.

You can still smell the sewage when you go in.

Exactly.

Well, there isn't a men's store in town other than J.C. Penney, and that's a third-class...

And there was when we moved here in 1994.

There's no men's shoe store.

Dress shop.

(many people talking at once.)

They used to have some specialty shops down there, and they still do—they have the Hickory Stick—I mean, for a local who wants to go to get something they can wear, it's a specialty thing, that's about it down there. Otherwise, you have a lot of artists, and I think that's great, but I shop there for birthday present and Christmas. That's it. It's not something where I'm going to go down there and blow a lot of cash.

Now we have the kitchen store, which has a variety of things.

Yes, but it's high-priced. Let's be honest. Julie is going for a certain dollar price, and I can go shop for fun, I mean, but if I want to get a new blender, I'm going to go to Wal-Mart. This is a blue-collar town.

I will say, in Wal-Mart's defense, I think the young families truly appreciate Wal-Mart, because they can drive there and unload their children one time, and they can shop for their needs, their groceries, their gas, their carwash, and not have to leave again. So I think it has a purpose, but I think then we're lacking, for those of us who want an easier way to maybe run into a grocery store, not have to go all the way out there...

Although it's only a mile out there.

But it is a hassle to get in my car and to deal with ... traffic, and the nuttiness out there, when it would be just the same distance and easier if there was a place on this side, where I could go east instead of west, but there isn't.

Moderator: Where do people go for dining and entertainment?

Having moved in, I've lived in Chicago and Detroit, and then I went from Chicago to Quincy, and I thought that was bad, and then moving here, I'm just like, so, I mean, I'm happy to go to the Steak n Shake, but there's too many smorgasbords and buffets here. I love going to Becky Thatcher, that's a great place, but it is true, it's all locals.

(many people talking at once.)

It's very unhealthy, to be honest. If you only ate in restaurants here, you probably would not last very long.

We have lots of fast food. But I think that's it.

(many people talking at once.)

But yet I know people from Quincy who come over to go to Fiddlesticks, Lulu Belle's, T.J.'s, Pirate's Cove, or Corral.

That's what I was kind of saying, is there's not a whole lot of variety...

(many people talking at once.)

I was pleased to see the coffee shops that have come into town.

Yeah, when I arrived, there was no coffee shops.

And I'm saying there's only one coffee shop, and if you don't like their coffee...

(many people talking at once.)

Restaurants with ambiance. A little atmosphere.

I find the service lacking. I finally got used to it... at first, I was shocked, then I would laugh, now I don't even notice. I do notice, that when you go someplace, they look happy when you walk in the door, and they greet you and see you, and then I realized that's really lacking in the restaurants here. The Country Kitchen was one we went to frequently, and they would look like, "Oh no, a customer walked in," and they would all run to the back. That's maybe a regional thing here.

And there's not, entertainment-wise, there's no place for those of us who are not out to get plastered—wants to go sit in a nice, not-smoke-filled...

(many people talking at once.)

A place you don't have to scream to be heard, and have just a nice quiet drink or three or whatever with friends. There's not a single place in this town where you can do that.

Quincy has that.

(many people talking at once.)

...someday a Blues and Jazz place...

...a cheese and wine bar, but there's entertainment, too...

...things that are opened again downtown, and they have music, and they're having comedy nights and things, and that's great, and it's fabulous to have music, and this is a nonsmoking event, but making it nonsmoking one night when the other 6 days of the week are smoking, you come out reeking anyway.

(many people talking at once.)

I've been wanting a tea shop forever, a place you can sit down and have chocolate, coffee, other things too, but just a nice ambiance.

(many people talking at once, unintelligible.)

The loft is doing some of that, that new place, isn't it? And then there's the one down here by the library, one down there.

And there's Serenity on Broadway.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: I'm going to ask you a few specific questions about downtown. Do you feel that downtown is headed in a positive or negative direction?

We think it's improving.

It's moving in a really good direction from where it was, say, 10 years ago.

(agreement.)

It's definitely improved a lot.

(many people talking at once.)

...we've had rising gas prices and other factors that have come in to really dent the tourism industry, wouldn't you agree?

(many people agreeing, talking at once.)

But downtown used to be empty, there wasn't anything in there before. There was foot traffic at one time, a simple thing... when the theater was there, there were a lot of bus tours coming in here, and there are now no bus tours, and I think we're really missing out to not have that.

(many people talking at once. Side conversations.)

...and the Mark Twain theater off of 61, which apparently had a Huck Finn play about Jim. Now that we have a bit of evening entertainment, I think bus tours are on the rise.

There was no music until just a few years ago, no music seen at all, that's amazing. Now we have several...

(many people talking at once.)

I think the town could develop a reputation for music. It just seems like it's got some potential.

Until you get people talking about the amphitheater...

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

People need to quit complaining about it.

I think it's funny, because Poison was the last concert. It was the eighties!

One thing I would like to see, and I've been a member of the Chamber's ambassador organization, is when the riverboats come in, they dock, and it's in the night, and they'll leave the boat sometimes between 7 and 9 am—

These are the big riverboats.

...and when they leave and walk down Main Street, nothing's open yet, and I know it's hard to have people come to work early, but if I were a business owner, on those days I would be open, because those people that ride that riverboat have lots of money, they ride it year after year, it's almost like a social club, and they would love to walk up and down Main Street and walk into the specialty shops and buy their souvenirs, but most of the time they window shop.

(many people talking at once.)

If you're open til 5 o'clock and a bus with 60 people comes in at 10 to 5, people turn out the lights and run down to the basement and hide. I mean...

(many people talking at once.)

I used to work downtown, and I'd get off work, I'd have to take off work early just so I could get to one of the stores I needed to go to pick something up there, and you just kind of wanted to go (unintelligible).

I just think we need to think outside the box and be available for the tourists, not 365 days a year, but when the tourists are there, adjust the schedules. Most tourists want to come into the businesses, they like to look at this and that all up and down, but they can't. They can just look in the windows.

That has been such an ongoing issue forever and ever and it never seems to happen, and that would just be so wonderful, if the downtown could adjust their hours, that would just make all the difference in the world.

I think this is going to start changing. What I'm reading, because I have loved to play tourist and wander around, and what I'm reading is that there are many shops there that have been occupied for many years, and making more money isn't a goal for them. They don't really care if tourists come in or not, they really don't. I'm not making a judgment about it... I come from a state where money is everybody's goal, and I kind of like this, but those stores are gradually being replaced by newer people who have different ideas. So I really think that's shifting. Because I can think of at least one shop here where the owner has said, "What are all of these artists doing here?" and she just comes from another time where it doesn't have any meaning to her. I also hear, "Oh, I'm so sick of hearing about Tom Sawyer and Mark Twain. Why do we have to hear about that?" There's a lack of education, a lack of information. It doesn't get out there that a lot of their livelihood or the tax base is based on Mark Twain's name. That's what's bringing a lot of people here.

I think one of the interesting things is every meeting you go to, you talk about this same thing, and nothing ever changed. We've talked about what you're mentioning here, we've talked about the stores not staying open later, we've talked about getting the riverboats not to leave at 1:00 in the afternoon...but every meeting that you go to, these same things that we're talking about keep coming up, and nothing ever changes.

I think, in the time I've been here, I'm seeing change gradually happening. It's really the tipping point... I think we're reaching the tipping point, where there are enough people in the downtown who want more changes, want amenities, and if they have businesses...

Downtown merchants, it's kind of new again. Stabilizing and establishing a merchant's association...

There's some real go-getters down there with young, new ideas.

If we get the movie theater on the other end, that could anchor and bring in new people.

(many people talking at once. Speculation about whether they'll get the movie theater or not.)

There's also an attitude that tends to be the old-timers, and they're not necessarily old, but they always have a reason why... "there's not enough parking," well, all of that can be solved. There *is* parking...many people are just unwilling to walk a half-block after that park.

(many people talking at once.)

I mean, there are solutions to a lot of these problems. I mean, anywhere you live, you're going to run into challenges, but rather than seeing, while there could be a solution, people see stop signs.

Or it's, "Oh, we tried that." Well, when did you try that? 1976? And it didn't work then.

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

I can also say that I would love to see a block of Main be pedestrian only, just one block. "Oh, no, that doesn't work because they tried that in some town somewhere in Ohio or somewhere in the 70s, and it didn't work."

(many people talking at once, agreeing.)

Are you talking about the locals not appreciating the history or the tourists or Mark Twain or name all the stuff we like about Hannibal? Do you ever get a feeling that the people that are here, sometimes they just feel that maybe they were born here and they were stuck?

Yeah.

Yeah.

They got their factory job, and they're, I don't know if it's bitterness, or if it's "Oh, I've lived here all my life, no big deal."

I see that for some, but I also know that a lot of people stayed here because they want to. They believe in and love this town to the very fiber of their being, and they don't want anything to change. Therein lies a lot of the problem. You know.

(laughter. many people talking at once.)

It's true, I mean, these folks just live, breathe, eat sleep, and go nuts for... not go nuts, but solid loyalty. They're just satisfied here, and they see no reason for things to change. "We don't need new taxes for roads, we don't need to spend money on this..." you know, it's not, especially when you're talking about downtown, going to affect them. They live out wherever now, but nevertheless, they're very loyal to this town, and they don't want it to change, and when things do change, they get cranky.

I think that's why you'll see, for many many years, our population's been static. Our outlying counties have gotten subdivision and they have raised in population, but our Hannibal proper has stayed static because everybody wants it to stay just like it was.

When I moved here in 93, they'd just done the census, and the population was 17,799, and in the 2000 census, it was 17,797.

One of the things that did happen, though, and I'm not originally from Hannibal but have been coming up here all my life to visit family and this sort of thing, riding the train in, is the fact that I can remember a time when the sign used to read 22,700. What happened? They lost the railroad. There was 2000 jobs that went to Quincy, left Hannibal, because Hannibal didn't fight for it with the flooding, so they moved to Quincy, and it flooded out the first year they moved there. I know those are blue-collar jobs, but they're jobs. 2000 people that were employed which are no longer here. All you got to do is drive down, there's where all the shoe company and the railroad... all of a sudden, we lost 4000 people that we've never been able...

(many people talking at once.)

...but now, all of a sudden, we haven't been able to replace them, you know, and so not in defense or anything, but those were big items that really hurt this community.

But we also have other businesses that are still closing now, you know, just...

(many people talking at once.)

...their roots are so deep...

...generation...

You know, I grew up in a small town in Minnesota, but I've never experienced quite that much of an attachment to a place like that, you know. I don't know, it's just really hard to describe.

(many people talking at once.)

...when I tried to talk to my then-husband about looking for better jobs elsewhere, there was *no way* he was going to leave. The residents won't leave. There's just like this taproot that goes way down deep...

That doesn't bring progression.

(many people talking at once.)

There are returning people, people who did leave when they were young, and now come back and appreciate... I'm one of them. I'm not from Hannibal, but I lived in the area when I was younger, and then I lived in Los Angeles and all over, and I'm now happy to be in a small town and enjoy a quieter life.

(many people talking at once.)

Moderator: You've already answered a few of my questions, but I'd like to talk about how user-friendly downtown is. I know you've talked a little bit about parking and business hours, but what about signage, lighting?

No. The signage is horrible. There's no way you can find the signage. If you're driving down Main Street and you're trying to find the museum, the Cave, the riverboat, parking, the signs are 2 inches big that you can only read when you're walking. If you try to slow down enough to read the signs, you get honked at. There's not nearly enough signage. The Visitors Center is on 3rd street and hard to get to, and there's no parking.

It's horrifying to me that if you're in the Visitors Center and you want to visit the Mark Twain sites, you're in the most dangerous part of town. There's not a crosswalk even, let alone...

...it's amazing no tourists have been mowed down, or not just tourists...if anybody wants to cross there. That's really foolish to me.

And people get really up in arms about signs, they don't want a bunch of signs, but I'm talking about wayfinding signs.

But the rules of the historic district...

That is not the problem, because I've been on HDDC ward, and I'll tell you, some of these poorly-visible signs came from when in 1994 or 95, when we got the first grant that came through, I was on that commission, and they were the ones who

did the streetlights and did part of the approach where...what's it called...and they talked about the signs, and they chose those little brown signs, and I remember wondering why. So that was a commission which is federally granted that made that decision, and there was no rule...they just sort of made it up.

The problem at like the tourism bureau is the fact that that's a state highway, and the rules are regulated by the highway department and not Hannibal. But it is, because you've got 79, you've got the access off 72.

The upside to that is you're more able to get some funding if you want to get something in there. They have more money than the City of Hannibal.

I think, didn't some, someone tried to apply for a grant for a pedestrian overpass. I don't know whatever happened to that.

I don't recall that ever coming up.

(many people talking at once. Side conversation.)

Back to your question about the amenities, I think that tourism has really been slighted, financially, there doesn't seem to be enough money spent on tourism. The Chamber, I mean the Visitors Bureau does the best they can with the funding they have. Maybe there is funding...

Well, I do know that there's a lot spent privately, and as far as some of the private industry around. I can certainly speak to that. And, this is the first time last year that our business, who has the most signage anywhere around, and I don't mean that to brag...but we teamed up with the home to get signage out, so we were able to get signs on 61 and on 36 and things with more than just one thing. Our business has 36 billboards, and that's more than anyone, but that's private industry. Hannibal's not putting anything toward that. They're not pairing with us.

They just raised the bed tax.

Yeah, that's going to help. Then, you turn right around and you lose...

(many people talking at once. Unintelligible noise. Side conversation.)

At the same time, too, it seems like that there's the feeling that we have enough hotel rooms, and that we don't need any more. There's a difference between rooms and rooms that you'd let your family stay in.

That's one thing...there's all the signs in the world getting them into Hannibal, but if they don't have anywhere decent to stay...

(many people talking at once.)

...billboards...

Amenities, like more trees, and a place to sit downtown in the shade.

Beautification. And the parking issue.

(many people talking at once.)

There *is* parking available on the east side of the levee that nobody seems to realize is there and they don't want to park over there and walk a block or two, but it's there. There's lots of parking there. We spend 10s of 1000s of dollars to put in that fancy parking area.

But there's no signs for it!

(many people talking at once.)

Well, I was just thinking, downtown and the riverfront area, when I couldn't go through riverview to walk my dog, I had to bring him downtown, and you'd have a real nice area and then a real rugged area... it's really not conducive for walking from one place to another.

The cobblestones are dangerous.

Right. They're beautiful, but where the boat docks are, you could just fall in.

There needs to be beautification kind of thing. You've got more problems on the riverfront right now from erosion. The river's sucking up the riverfront.

The city manager, oh my god!

(many people talking at once. Laughter.)

Moderator: So, you all know that part of this DREAM project is to come up with a master plan for downtown. I'm going to ask you some questions about a variety of different things that you might want to see, and one of the first things is, what other kinds of businesses would you like to see downtown?

Restaurants. (Many people agreeing.)

A pharmacy.

A small food store.

A pharmacy.

I don't expect a supermarket.

A place you could get even just milk and aspirin.

We did some surveys, and if you're downtown and want to buy aspirin or Tylenol, the only place you can purchase it is at the cave, because we have a convenience store there, and milk is another one...

From my own personal experience, coming into town, I didn't know how to connect from downtown out to Wal-Mart, you know, and they're like, "Oh, just come up Grand." Well, try coming up Grand now. I haven't been able to do that for a long time. But if you don't know that, you're just... you know...you're just stuck.

It would be nice to see no cars in the center section, and people walking, maybe trees in the middle, and some sort of overpass from the Visitors Center to the historic area.

St. Charles does that.

You've got to have good eating, it's just... Mark Twain is a historic figure, but there's so many more things that we could build on.

(many people talking at once.)

People come to town and they say, "This is it? This is what you've got?"

At least we're creating an art scene now.

As a general philosophy, we settle for mediocrity.

We can't do with excellence.

Yeah.

I think, too, with downtown, you need things for people that are more educated. Our last visitors survey...the Hannibal population is 12% college educated, but our visitors are over 40% with college degrees and over 20% with graduate degrees. These are well-cultured, intelligent people, and you need to give them the types of things that they want.

It's Mark Twain that's bringing that here.

Certainly.

But once they get there, people are broader-minded than just that.

If they like literature, they're going to like art, a coffee shop, a bookstore.

(many people talking at once.)

If we have that 40% of people coming in here that are educated, what are they going to do overnight?

They're smart. They'll think of something.

(laughter.)

They could go to Wal-Mart.

(laughter.)

They want to walk, they want to bike.

(many people talking at once. People agreeing.)

...paddleboats or something...

...bikers, or something...

I wanted to bring that up. I don't know if you're aware that we just got funded for recreation trails, and the first one should be completed by the end of summer. It will be a continuation of a bike trail, and this group formed on our own, because nobody else was addressing that need, and we discovered that a lot of people want biking and hiking trails, and somebody that we had represented through the hospital, they were pointing out that one of the questions the employees ask is "what amenities do you have for fitness?" and they're turning down the job when they hear that there isn't that much.... But they've begun getting new biking trails. It's so exciting! There are very few towns where you can ride your bike along the Mississippi, and this is one if they can create some trails.

(many people talking at once.)

I know people with B and B's who are starting, had guests asking "Where can I ride my bike?" and quite often we would tell them to cross the bridge, because there are some interesting places there, but here there's not that much yet.

But the potential is awesome, because they've been trying for a long time to get this trail system in, since I first started here in 2000.

Yeah, they had a master plan, and then somehow the money didn't get spent.

(many people talking at once.)

We're on a great river road, but we're not specifically designated, because that's something that, you have to be voted as a scenic byway in order to get great river road money. A lot of people in Northeast Missouri see "scenic byway" as land grab, so they're afraid that if it's a scenic byway...

It's a local thinking here...they don't want the government telling them what to do, so they'll vote things down. Clarksville voted that in, and when the flood came, they didn't even have to call Washington DC. DC was calling Clarksville, because they were a scenic byway.

And they just got a million-dollar grant to do trails along the scenic byway, in Clarksville and Louisiana.

The community we came from is the Katy Trail, and that's where it started, and it comes clear across the state, and...however, I would say that that reaches a certain group of people... you have the walkers, the bikers... (unintelligible). But one thing I think we saw there...had we not had as much state funding to help out on that...that was a real popular thing, when that Katy Trail started, and what have you. I don't think we would've been able to have supported it without the state, because...I'm not saying, there weren't the numbers, I guess is what I want to say, the numbers of people. Of course that grows over the years, things of that nature, you know, what have you, but it took...they reached a certain group, and that group, believe it or not, studies show with a group like 20-38, was one, and then there was the 60 year olds, and then there was the group between 38 and 60 not using the trails. Of course people in their 60's were doing it to become physically fit, this sort of thing, and what have you. I would like to say one thing, that I think we lost the industries as far as the railroad, and what have you, and I think the healthcare industry is really growing in this community.

(many people talking at once.)

...and I think before long here, you're going to see a really fine...

(many people talking at once.)

That's going to bring personnel, regionalization...it's not going to bring your out-of-town visitors, but it'll bring regionalization. The cancer center...there aren't many towns of 17,000 that have a cancer center. And with pediatrics and everything else.

(many people talking at once.)

There are folks up there at the hospital that are working to expand aspects of it within the next 10 years.

And how will we connect them with this area?

I think it's getting people into the community.

Maybe providing stores, maybe not just real specialty shops, but a few little more general shops downtown for those people to come down, and then they'll go next door to the specialty shop. Bring that mercantile in, perhaps, whatever that is, and that drugstore in, and a men's shop and a women's shop, and (unintelligible).

What about something like what Mackinaw does...if you're a resident, you have like a card, and so you get the discounts, because, you know, even in South Dakota, you know when tourist season comes up there in Rapid City, gas prices go up, everything goes up, you know. I was expecting that to happen here. Do I get something resident would drive the discount?

(laughter. Many people talking at once.)

But then it might bring those who have lived here forever to go downtown for a discount, and the places would be open.

(unintelligible)...the idea that this is the place we come for exciting, creative times, and the ideas that ours are starting to get together. We would try to get people to come in Friday through Sunday, and it would be a well-programmed package with an artist talk Friday evening, art workshops all day Saturday, performances all night, and it could be really a posh, high-end thing, and get the Bed and Breakfasts involved, and make it a Friday night through Sunday lunch sort of thing. We feel like 10 years from now, what do we want people to say about Hannibal. We want them to say, "Oh, it's historic and cultural. Mark Twain was creative, and there's creative things for our children, and creative things for us." The wife wants to do art, the husband wants to do welding... you could have a whole town come alive on that.

Let me just mention something, too...the word "creative." The creative people are not only people who have arrived in Hannibal recently and writers like Mark Twain, but there's a lot of creative talent right here, and I've seen a lot of that come out of the woodwork...I'm amazed, especially at the music scene. So something that would encourage that even more, as a focus...the creativity didn't just arrive here. We have creative people.

And the kids. Anything we could do to get the kids downtown. Let the kids create something and have a parade downtown, if the kids do something it will always get the locals in.

(many people talking at once.)

I have heard that the library is very good for children.

I agree.

For small children.

For middle school and teens, there isn't too much to do.

Did I see something in the paper about...

It's very, it's like middle school really, but it's a good idea.

(many people talking at once.)

Well, we have had people come in and say, "Our children, they're not artistic or athletic, but they love to read." And they've been very impressed with the library, especially for small children.

Moderator: I want to go back to some things you started to talk about earlier. We've talked a little about the kinds of businesses you'd like to see, but I'd like to talk a little about the look and feel about downtown. Tell me a little about the aesthetic issues.

We need trees.

Less trash.

More flowers.

Medians.

On Main Street, I think we're making great strides, but on Broadway...

And anything off of Broadway, too...

But if you look at the actual road surface, and it's hard to avoid seeing it...oh my goodness, that is horrible. The road itself which is years overdue to be resurfaced, and the sidewalks which are now denuded of trees, and the flowerpots that aren't planted, it just drives me crazy.

Tourists started, March 1 they were here, and it's bleak. That's the word I kept hearing this year.

It really is.

Send down some paint, and have people work on the fronts.

If there were trees downtown, that makes it cool and refreshing on hot summer days, who wants to go downtown and walk on the hot asphalt or sidewalk or no sidewalk to go shopping.

Facade repair.

(many people talking at once.)

It's the ones that aren't electing to do facade renovation.

There are a few buildings that actually should be condemned. They're horrible.

There's a lot of...I would say a lot...several blighted areas, not just in historic downtown, but in that whole corridor that I believe this whole thing covers, which is about a 12-block area, that, you know, people shouldn't be living in those places first of all, and if they're not living in them, they should be torn down, because they're nasty. Not just looking, but they're a danger to kids and everything else.

It's amazing that the aren't...that I know of...any rules...or the code is not enforced. I don't know about the code, but if there is one, it's not enforced. You go certain places, and if your grass is too long, you get a note on your door.

(many people talking at once.)

Since I lived here...when I first moved here, 2 different houses burnt down because of electric problems. These were neglected houses, and no inspections were done.

If you come into town on Warren Barrett, and you go up past the fire station, and take that street by the antique stores, those houses right there are deplorable, and you can turn left to go downtown, and if you turn left to go downtown, and that's the absolute worst street.

But Warren Barrett is still better than Market, and Market used to be the only way to get downtown. It's like a war zone.

It makes me wonder if it's come up before, and they didn't want government interference.

(many people talking at once.)

The codes are very lax. But I think that's going to start changing.

Warren Barrett is easier to give directions from.

Let's get back to Broadway. It's getting more and more desolate.

(many people talking at once.)

What is left is bars.

...I don't know what kind of shops those were, but they're just sitting there.

There are sections of Broadway with several banks, a couple copying places, civic buildings—the police station, city hall.

Something aesthetic to tie them together...

When we moved here Broadway was the better-looking street.

(many people talking at once.)

Once you hit the, after the churches by Sav-a-Lot, from then on, it just goes...

And we have a wonderful park. If we could just get more activities in our park.

And protect it from vandals. The fountain used to be very nice-looking, and slowly but surely, the girls go their heads lopped off. And the racing up and down Broadway, and all the crazy stuff downtown.

You know, that's improving. I can really hear a lot of noise on Broadway, and starting last summer, the noise has decreased. This new chief of police is great. I would call and they'd do, no we can't do anything, but now they're doing something. They're stopping them, warning them, finding them. It shows that things can change here. If somebody has the right attitude, they can get things done.

Moderator: What other downtowns do you wish Hannibal could kind of feel like?

Paris.

(laughter.)

Most little towns that I go to, or medium-sized towns, I know just their Chamber of Commerce, and even the smallest of towns has something unique at their Chamber office. That's where these people are going to come in, and you want to impress them. Our Chamber has absolutely no personality. It is the drabest, ugliest place in town.

(many people talking at once.)

I asked three months ago for an application to be part of the Chamber, and I have yet to get it.

It's very unappealing.

It would be nice if the Chamber and Visitors Center could all be housed under one roof, so when people come in, they could find all the answers.

(many people talking at once.)

One of the places is up around Chicago, and it's a little place where you park, and you just walk, and it has all the little places, and there are bicycles going, and every year there are people that sign up just to go do that the whole day. It's the little places you can sit and eat, and you can walk, and craft places...I love the park of closing the downtown so you can walk through.

Outdoor eating.

Old St. Charles. I see that Hannibal could be like it. We have the location, we have the history.

(many people talking at once.)

Outdoor eating, a winery.

Minneapolis. Eating, and shopping...pedestrians there in the middle of half a million, they've blocked it off for pedestrians.

Every Friday, concerts.

(many people talking at once.)

With the completion of these highways, I think we're at the beginning. I just foresee growth and new people, and we need to keep promoting it.

(many people talking at once.)

You could package a weekend from Indianapolis, Springfield, Illinois, Hannibal, Marcelene, Laclede on Pershing, and end up with the Pony Express in St. Joe...all on the highway.

We should do a new Mount Rushmore.

(laughter.)

By the way, I sat in on a meeting, and Quincy was talking about marketing the Mississippi area and creating packages to promote what we have here. The west coast, they didn't have a clue about the Midwest. To them, it's just some flat nothing. And even people here are discovering the history.

Moderator: Thank you very much.

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