

## Focus Group #2: Chamber and Downtown Businesses

<b>Name</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>E-Mail</b>
Suzanne Tinnian	Every Body's Clothing Company	suztinnian@kctc.net
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Larry Moeller	English River Antiques	
Mary Brenneman	Chamber	
Brenda Herington	Kalona Antique Company	
Doris Greiner	The Village Shoppe	
Sally Kerr	Chamber of Commerce	
Norma Yoder	Chamber of Commerce	
Lori Mostek	Kalona Furniture	
Doug Yotty	Freedom Security Bank	
Ron Slechta	Kalona News	
Larry Christanson	KCTC, Inc.	

## Chamber and Downtown Businesses

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### ***How long has your business been in Kalona?***

Casey's-manager has been there 7 years

English River Antiques-14 years

Everybody's Clothing Company-just opened

Kalona Antique Company/Country Collectibles-20 years

Kalona News-115 year old, most recent purchase was 15 years ago

The Village Shoppe/Art Gallery/Custom window treatments- over 20 years

Tuscan Moon Grill-5 years

Willow Creek Quilting & Gifts-15 years

Yotty's Hardware/Golf Carts-32 years

### ***What unique things does Kalona have to offer?***

Historical village, fabrics, antiques, crafts.

I think we should admit if Amish weren't here we'd be on a different path.

Let tourists find other things about Kalona in our downtown (besides the Amish).

The Amish have been handled with respect and we need them to promote our culture.

### ***What would the image/theme be to promote Kalona?***

#### **Amish**

The difference between our Amish than out east, the Amish around here are a lot less commercialized. Amish in Penn, Ohio are out there and want to be in front of the cameras.

People out here respect their difference from the Amish out east.

Think we are headed in a direction of commercializing the Amish slightly.

The Amish are promoted out east due to lack of land to farm.

around here.

We do have cottage industry that 25 years ago we didn't have.

to do Amish quilt thing and they were kind of concerned about that and I have Amish women working for me and I have relatives/friends that are Amish, they don't complain and actually benefit from what we do.

Different Amish businesses could not survive if we did not bring tourists to town.

Some Amish are actually advertising (i.e. Kalona Brochure).

Even though they don't want to be put on a pedestal or glamorized, they know that in order to support their businesses, they have to have people drawn to Kalona.

I own a restaurant that is not Amish at all and before I had a gift shop that was not Amish, but we fit in because not everyone loves to quilt and has other interests.

The thing we don't want to lose is the charm of the Amish because that's how it started.

The charm of the Amish is one of the reasons I moved here but there's more to who we are here and that's going to draw more people.

### **Downtown Retail Market**

the mall.

People are tired of the same big stores in every mall. People come to Kalona for the day because it's a unique experience.

With a small community, you know your customers by name, slow paced, we gift wrap, etc.

We need to be more well-rounded and have a variety of things.

that as much here.

### **History**

The buggy we've used forever.

The fact that Kalona resembles the way things used to be; the old life, historic.

### **Restaurants**

In a little town like this, we have unbelievable restaurants with their own unique charm.

### **Small Town Atmosphere**

We are so much different; people say I wish I would have come here first before they went to Amana because they are too commercialized and we have both.

You get service here. They recognize us as a religious community; all of us aren't open on Sunday.

We are set apart.

### ***How is the Historical Museum?***

A first class act for a town of this size

Quilt museum goes with it; also very unique.

Rock and gem museum is also wonderful.

Wonderful

### ***Are there any other historical elements/unique elements that define this commu***

Bring your family because we have a park, swimming pool and men love to go to Yoddy's while the women come to my shop.

For someone looking at community for a place to live, you can find and have every service you need right here in the community including medical and clothing.

Great hardware store I can go to.

at.

Kalona really has something for everyone.

Variety of stores.

shopping.

We have so much for everyone to see, whether it's a day to get away and relax.

### ***Are there any promotional efforts and/or plans?***

Always promoted the quilt show and fall festival and that brings a lot of people to town.

I think some catchy signage down by the Casino would be really beneficial to all of us.

People call the chamber that are considering relocating and we point them to realtors, but our school system is a great drawing card.

newspapers a year long event as we are trying to get better about each store doing their own thing and falling through the cracks.

***We have assumed a need for way finding; are there any other issues or concerns i***

**Appearance**

The way it looks.

Doesn't have any appeal, nothing there to draw people in.

There are no benches or nice flowers etc.

Weeds are left to grow during the summer.

Pella and Coralville; I can't think of two places I like more.

Pella especially, the brick streets and wonderful lights, we don't have any of that.

I'd like to see us go to old fashioned light posts in the downtown area.

Spring Valley, MN has lampposts 10-15 feet apart and night it is so lit up and looks beautiful and they are not much bigger than Kalona.

Flowers and trees.

**City Management**

***Do you have an organized business association?*** No strictly downtown organization exists. We have heard of Iowa Main Street association.

We would like some fancy light poles with some flowers hanging from them, but also we don't get the support from the city to maintain it, then it falls to crap.

Spent \$4500 on banners a year ago and 3 are flopping in the wind as I come into town.

I call City Hall and they say they will get to it in a few months; we can't afford to lose a banner.

We've complained about leaves in our alley.

We've complained about flooding in the alley due to water coming off the library.

which I mentioned it to the city a few years ago and they said they can walk to the end of the block and come back.

It rained really hard and the intersection between my store and her store was completely flooded. I called City Hall and they couldn't get there till noon; so, we, a couple of women were out there poking sticks down the drain trying to get the water to go down the plugged up drain.

I know we all pay property taxes and I feel the service we get for what we pay is not there. been cleaned.

Fall leaves.

I clean the street, I go chop off ice so my women that come into store don't fall and break their necks coming into my store.

**Infrastructure**

Sidewalks need repair.

time it rains.

More and more people are falling off our curbs downtown as you almost need a stepladder in certain parts of that block on B Avenue to get up the curb from a car.

When it rains, the water will come right in front of my shop and becomes a river when it rains because it has no place to go.

In the winter, if it melts and freezes an ice skating rink is right in front of my shop's door.

There should be steps with a railing so people can get across the curbs.

### **Publicity**

Signage on the highway and I-218 is important.

Even a billboard on Highway 1 would be good.

I-80 has a sign for Kalona historical village, but it's not enough.

Problem with signage on 218 is that DOT will not let you put up advertisement unless it's on a spot where signage already exists.

It makes a difference if you are going north or south on 218 because once you go north of 22 you are tied into DOT because that's considered part of the interstate, when you go south of 22 that's considered 4 lane highway and you can get away with putting signs south but not north.

We can have the most unique and wonderful businesses, but unless we get the message out there with signs or whatever it doesn't do any good.

On my way to K.C. in Missouri I noticed a small town known for antiques had a huge billboard that we did the same thing the first time we were on our way to Des Moines because we saw a big sign for a small antique town.

The city gets \$150,000 a year from the foundation, must be other grants available.

I don't know what a person does with the sensitive subject of residential; when you enter town there's a resident that has junk all over the place. Is there a city ordinance for that?

I visited City Hall about residences at what seems like every one of the town's entrances that look junky and I was told that as long as it is on private property there was nothing the city could do.

### **Tourism**

There are stores in Kalona that are hurting and on the verge of going under; we've lost several already because 10 years ago we got the traffic and we are not getting the traffic now.

Part of the lack of traffic probably has to do with gas prices because we had a lot of people on road trips and we don't have them now.

### ***What is your opinion about the mix of uses downtown?***

I hope that the new business that is coming in June, which will be using the same distributor, will be similar the variety store we lost.

It hurt us when the variety store, a general type store (Ben Franklin) that was there was there over 100 years, burned down.

More of a variety of retail might be nice.

The empty store fronts don't look good.

We all get along.

We have a new business going in next to our store the first of May.

### ***Regulations that apply to your business (permitted uses, building codes)?***

If they put in a new building code we all just as well pull out.

There aren't any.

### ***Do you have any comments about your town's recent growth?***

think would appreciate a sports store or sports bar because they are looking for those types of things while their wives are shopping.

There are some things I think the city could use; we have a used clothing store, but we have no new

Two restaurants have outdoor dining and we have live entertainment on the evenings.

We don't have the demographics for department stores.

### ***Do you see a lack of connecting trails as an issue?***

Chamber also talked about getting some kind of trolley or something unique for the town. We also talked about shuttles for the Casino and downtown.

going there to gamble. While husband is golfing and wife doesn't want to gamble she will be looking for something to do.

Wasn't there talk at one time about a trolley to get people from downtown to the Historical Museum? Freedom Security Bank was promoting that.

We've talked with the Casino about promoting an afternoon tour of Kalona, but they are concerned with their budget of keeping people there to gamble.

Yes, that's why we hired you.

### ***Other issues we should be aware of?***

#### **Local Markets**

People used to go to Iowa City to get something nice to eat, but they don't have to do that anymore and they don't because it's so nice to have good eating choices in Kalona.

To get activity going downtown on the weekend (a Saturday) would be a good thing.

#### **New Markets**

Interest level in antiques is just not there for younger people; they don't collect like our age.

The antique market is not what it was 10-15 years ago.

We like jazz and blues but we have done some rock and roll.

We don't have clothing, sports, music; maybe that's something we should be looking at.

Are we going to pull people from Iowa City to come here when they've already got that in Iowa City?

#### **Publicity**

Getting money out there and advertising further out than just the small perimeter around us because big cities that don't even know we are here.

There are folks in Iowa City that don't know we're here; those are the people we need to focus on because they are going to be coming back and back and back.

#### **Young People**

Like the idea of promoting live music because young people love to listen to music.

Getting good entertainers in town in brings in the young people that otherwise wouldn't come.

When young people get here what will they buy? They don't buy antiques or collectibles.

It's not getting younger crowds to buy something; it's getting them to come here.

What will young people come back for?

Our teenagers and they go to Iowa City for entertainment.

What does Iowa City have we don't have: a bowling alley, movie theatre, even something on a small scale

Maybe we could just have something small for them to do on the weekends, or maybe that is not even

We have nothing for our youth to do.

Do we have enough young people to do that or is it a thrill (like it was for me) to go to Iowa City and go to Proms in Iowa City; we are having kids come to eat at our restaurants before/after the prom.

Young people are coming here to eat on dates also.

Years ago we had a woman who taught dancing at the rec center and people would drop their kids off to learn dancing and come shopping then she took her dancing lessons to Wellman.



***nity?***

*relating to downtown?*



scale.  
en feasible.

get out of Kalona.