

Episode 5: Realtors – A Source of the Source

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[Brandon] How are you feeling? [Laura] I don't think I have much more to say. [Brandon] oh, I don't know about that.

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Come join us, explore the impact of small business here in rural Arkansas.

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What challenges would you face if you opened a small business who can help you meet those challenges?

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How do you get in touch with others like you? This is Create Bridges Arkansas.

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00:00:23,310 --> 00:00:31,960

And we invite you to come cross these bridges with us. [Brandon] Hello, everyone.

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Thank you for listening to the Create Bridges podcast.

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I'm Brandon Mathews and in this episode I'm joined by Laura Sackett Clute, principal broker and owner of Ozark Gateway Realty.

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Laura and I sat down to talk about workforce and housing challenges that employers face when setting up a business in the region.

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Some considerations when it comes to owning and managing a vacation rental property and how realtors can be a trusted guide or,

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as Laura puts it, a source of the source. Thanks again for listening and I hope you enjoy.

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Well, hello, Laura. Thank you for joining us on the podcast. Great to have you.

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[Laura] Thank you for having me.

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[Brandon] Well, before we get started, I want you just share a little bit about your role, the business that you work with and kind of what you do in the area.

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[Laura] I'm Laura Sackett Clute with Ozark Gateway Realty.

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I am the principal, broker and owner, but because we're in a small area, I still do a lot of selling as well as managing my company.

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We currently have. My company was started by my dad, which I was lucky to enough to inherit in 2005.

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He's still working in real estate and then we have two other licensed agents. So we do selling, listing.

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We do property management and therefore rentals in our in our company.

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And so we're involved in a lot in the community. We have to know where things are.

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People ask us where they should eat at, you know?

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And of course, things along the real estate process, inspector views things and bank to use things like that.

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[Brandon] Yeah. I want to circle back just for a minute. You mentioned you have gotten into the rental market.

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[Laura] Is that the Gold Star tenant program? Yeah. When we were when my

dad started us managing rentals, that was about when the market crashed in 2008.

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We started doing rental property management and we did the Gold Star tenant program because it was run.

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The rental program was created to make more buyers. We want them to be able to own their property.

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It's that, it's the American dream own a home. And it's proven that people are more involved in the community if they own a home.

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It just it's better for everybody if you own a home. So the Gold Star Tenant program was created to help people take the steps for that.

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It's hard for people, especially now, to get their credit score up. So this just gave them to show a chance of a line of credit.

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If they've been regular payments and they took good care of the place,

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they could even take their deposit and put it towards their down payment or credit closing costs.

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And then that would help us, you know, show that there are programs available where they can do that without any money down with the banks.

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And so it would be us be if they're interested in mine, it would help them make that step to home ownership.

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[Brandon] Well, seems like a terrific program. In what city are you in again? Our offices in Highland.

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Our PO Box is in Cherokee Village. Our phone number is Ash Flat. So pick which one you want us to be in.

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But we call it. Well, ironically, I think call it the Quad Cities because we're certainly not a city, but.

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[Brandon] Well, great. Well, it sounds like you guys have been doing a great thing for the community.

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And it's just great to hear and see from someone who is, you know, doing great things,

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try to invest in people, not just sell homes, but trying to make the whole community better.

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[Laura] Right. [Brandon] And I think that ties great into the Create Bridges program and what we're trying to do with the podcasts and sharing

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business stories and highlights of whether it's successes or challenges or innovation that businesses have had.

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You know, we want to help support tourism, retail, accommodations and entertainment.

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And probably at first glance, people wouldn't think real estate is the first place you'd go to.

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But I actually think it makes a lot of sense to hear from your perspective,

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because businesses aren't getting into properties if they're not talking to real estate owners or property owners or somebody.

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So how do you think real estate ties into when we talk about tourism, entertainment and just those kind of quality life aspects of a community?

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[Laura] Well, and first of all, this. As far as the tourism, that is one thing.

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What we do is we mean as nightly rentals. So those are a lot of people that have vacation rentals in our area.

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And sometimes they use them and sometimes they just use it for our nightly rental to pay cover their bills really is all they're able to do.

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But that's only a tourism. People will stay there.

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Just visit the area of maybe visit the family, go to a golf tournament, you know, and again, all of that goes back into the tourism industry.

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They go shopping, they go downtown, Hardy, and they may buy a place here. Not all the time,

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but lots of times it comes back and then they're investing in the community, which therefore then they can support other businesses.

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And then, like you said, of course, then they would most of time they're going to contact a real estate agent to be able to find a property.

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And they're going to want to know if they can make money.

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If they start a business here, we can help show them the economics of the area and give them resources to find that,

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to make sure that they can make it a profitable business.

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[Brandon] You guys are doing a little bit of everything. So you mentioned you manage, you know, nightly rentals.

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Do people ask you, you know, how to get started in that area? Yes.

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What what do you tell people who think, hey, you know, I've got a great place, you know, riverfront view here in Ozark foothills.

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I want to make some cash on it. What what would be some general advice before getting into that?

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[Laura] Well, I would definitely look at the area because I've talked to people and they wanted to do it and riverfront lots of times.

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The riverfront, you can get pretty far out there. And I'm like, yeah, that place is really nice and probably would be really cute and private.

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But think about how long those people have to travel that gravel road to get there.

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I don't know if you're going to get return customers, and that's really important in that area.

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And you're yeah, you're going to want to look at not only the area, but, again,

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the neighbors and what amenities are going to be seen so that they can get good ratings.

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Everything goes off ratings. They need that rating and that feedback when they get a reservation.

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And so all of that's going to play into that. And they're going to want to make sure that they're going to even be wanting people to

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come here and they're going to want to know there's things for them to do in the area, too.

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So all of that would input come into play for them to be setting something up like that?

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We get a lot. They do, of course, on the lakes in Cherokee Village. They'll get a nightly rental.

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But we've also got some down in Hardy, even in the old Spring Beach Club.

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[Brandon] All right. So a lot to consider having them. Property is only one small piece of it, but location, how to get there, what to do once you.

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They're all really important factors. Thank you. I want to transition a little bit to the topic of workforce.

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That's one of the key components of what we're doing is, you know, how do we support the workforce in those industries in our area?

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What are ideas and topics of business owners and industry should be thinking about specifically?

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You know, when when a business or industry moves to an area,

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one of their top priorities is seeking a location for the business and making sure that it's obviously affordable for them,

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that there's a quality housing for their employees and affordable, too.

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How do you work with industries that are reaching out to move to the community and

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businesses that want to set up in our region to make sure that those needs are met?

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Well, and I think that really goes back to being the source of the source.

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You know, I might not have know the information about what property is right for them,

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but knowing to direct them to who can tell them how many cars go down the highway or other

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things that are going to be important about where they decide to build a commercial place.

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But then, of course, the housing. I definitely think that's important that they talk to real estate agents in the area because like.

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Right now, most people are like, oh, we can rent until we can find something to buy.

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But right now there's not any rentals. Even around here, we have people calling us daily for rentals.

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So I definitely think that's something that they should look into and make sure that the

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housing there is going to be housing available when they think about moving into the market.

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[Brandon] Yeah. My family moved up here a little over two years ago. My wife accepted a job up in Mammoth Spring.

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And we thought, oh, we'll just get a place to rent and figure out if we want to buy,

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if we're gonna be in the community long, you know, make sure everything works out.

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And we couldn't find anything even two years ago that could meet our needs.

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And fortunately, we were able to work with a local bed and breakfast and we're able to rent that out kind of long term.

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But my wife started work in July and we were moving out of a house in Little Rock trying to sell a

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house or buy a house here in the area and then living in the bed and breakfast with a three month old.

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I tell you, it was a it was a transition that I don't wish on anybody. [Laura] Right.

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[Brandon] But it you know, that's a really good point that, you know,

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knowing what's available and being able to have a plan or to be able to reach out to realtors in the area about your needs is is key.

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So what questions about housing? Should businesses be asking, you know, getting in some specifics when they're talking to a realtor?

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[Laura] Well, as far as about housing, I would think something I would want to know.

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And a lot of this you can Google, I guess, but like the housing price range, what it would be the average house.

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And it's so hard to tell because we have lakefront, golf front. And then other homes with average prices going to be.

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But. So they know if people that they they know how much they're paying their employees.

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So they have an idea of what price changes are going to be looking in.

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And of course, you're going to have executives that are going to mean higher price range homes or something,

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you know, bigger and see if that market available. And they're also going to want to know the area amenities like most people that come here.

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How far away is the grocery store or how far away is the hardware store. Where are the churches, you know, things like that.

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And that is definitely something, again, that we can be the source of that source and say, well, this is what's here.

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And there's here, too, you know. So all of that's important as well as finding a place to actually put the business.

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[Brandon] When we were looking for housing online, when the realtor could share that with us, that was really important to know.

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I'm how far from the grocery store or. Oh, good. It's right in my backyard.

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And even, you know, I work from home a lot of times.

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Just the fact that if there is or isn't high speed Internet I'm at.

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That's key to whether or not we're going to move. And that actually played into some of our move as well.

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So having access to high speed broadband was key for us.

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[Laura] And there are still some areas here that like there's not even hardly sometimes basic Internet.

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So when you get into the real rural areas. So, yeah, that that is definitely one that we hear a lot.

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What's the Internet like in this area? [Brandon] So. I want to shift to the topic of small business and entrepreneurs.

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You know, when I moved up here about two years ago, specifically talking about Mammoth.

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But I saw it in a lot of towns area like Calico, Melbourne, Hardy, Ash flat, too, all the towns here.

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You know, there's some vacant storefront on the main streets.

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You know, there's some opportunity for businesses in there. And as a as somebody who works in real estate,

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what are some ways that we can connect people who want to start a business to maybe the owners of those buildings?

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You know, how do we get people into those businesses to try.

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You know, opening shops or what are some of those questions that you think people may need to answer before doing so?

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[Brandon] Well? And one thing that to me is second nature is, like you said, getting in touch with those property owners.

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I can tell you who the owner is in a second and their mailing address.

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I may not have their phone number, but just to give them that access to that data and tell them where they can start and who they can talk to.

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And, you know. Oh, so and so. He knows everybody, you know,

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and get them in touch with somebody in the community that can get them started and maybe even somebody else that

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does something like they do in a neighboring community so that you can really get them in touch with the people.

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Like you said, like Hazelle was telling me it, you know, if you need to get your face out there and know people and realtors really get around,

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so we know people in the communities to get them in touch and we can get them in touch,

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they're going to need to talk to the city and say, OK, this is the regulations that you have to follow.

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And can you even do that type of business here? What are the state regulations?

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You know, and again, just be the source of the source and help them walk through all that process and like, oh, I didn't think about that,

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you know, as well as actually finding the property and seeing if the space works for what they want to do.

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I definitely would like to see less vacant properties on Hardy, on Main Street, any of the main streets.

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You know, people will come. We got a lot of people that come down there just to go down through Hardy and Main Street and

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see all those little shops they like all the different variety of stuff they have down there.

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So I think we've got some new places in recently. So I hope that they

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can continue to work through this difficult time. [Brandon] When you've when you've traveled, in your experience,

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have you seen any examples of good, you know, a shared space or something where, you know, a business owner had an empty building front on Main?

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Or does that to be downtown or Main Street?

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But you just saw a building that wasn't being used and they turned it into a place for people to just try and see if they succeed or fail.

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Do you have any examples of those you can maybe share with our listeners? Well, the best one I can think of is the Chamber of Commerce.

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You know, we just moved. We made an agreement with Ruby's on Main.

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You know, they had their history museum and they let us open up a desk in there so that we can be able to talk to tourists.

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You know, that that was not what they had designed until we met with them.

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And I think through the work of our president of the chamber efforts that we were able to work that out.

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You know, we figured we would have to rent our own space and that wasn't really feasible for us.

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And so that's really good for a lot of people that are starting out.

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They need that shared space that way they don't have to take on all that liability. And I think shared spaces a great idea if we can get people to work together.

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[Brandon] Definitely. Yeah. I've heard of even in some other examples in the area of people who put in some sweat equity, you know,

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you know, doing maintenance and building some spaces for, you know, multi-year lease agreements, too.

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So definitely a lot of different opportunities to to bring some life back down to the some

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00:14:41,990 --> 00:14:49,560

of the downtown area and really just bring back some vibrancy that we've had in years past.

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[Brandon] Kind of reflecting on Create Bridges process and our work and strengthening and developing those four sectors.

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What changes do you see that are necessary maybe in the world of real estate to better support, you know, industry and small businesses?

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Are there any things that like, hey, if our profession changes or thinks to invest in this, we can really do a lot to support communities like ours?

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[Laura] Well, the one thing that usually comes to mind is we've tried to pass it a couple times was natural gas.

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You know, a lot of commercial businesses say that they need that to be able to come to the area.

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And again, high speed internet. Both of those are things that businesses need to work.

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And then just like infrastructure that goes back to a lot of our systems are still on septic tanks and commercial businesses,

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they want that city sewer to be able to use that.

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And I don't even know if those cities that do have sewer, if they have the current infrastructure, that they could handle something new like that.

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But all of that, the utilities, I think, are all important.

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And I know that we have a lot of commercial space that is available for people to use if we just had the ability too.

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And I think that's part of our problem, too, is getting it out to the right people.

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And where are they looking, you know, to find that commercial space?

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It's different than how residential housing, you know, that they just go to realtor.com or Zillow.

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You know, it's it's there, but they don't necessarily look there. They probably look more in their industry for that search.

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[Brandon] I mean, knowing where to search is important. I mean, if you're.

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I've seen a few lots in properties that could be business space listed on, you know, Zillow or something like that.

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But, yeah, those industries have their own specific.

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I mean, I think AEDC has a listing just for commercial law to have criteria telling you everything from square footage and acreage.

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And who knows how far is it from the highway? Four lane to lane, et cetera.

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00:16:47,300 --> 00:16:53,870

Knowing where to look for that is really important. And again, like you highlighted, a realtor can help you figure that out.

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You all play a tremendous role that people sometimes maybe overlook because you're in more than the business of just, you know, selling homes.

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00:17:01,640 --> 00:17:05,410

I mean, if you're in this because you believe in the community, too.

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00:17:05,410 --> 00:17:11,600

Right. And so it's really important, I think, to bring you know, we think about the Create Bridges process.

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00:17:11,600 --> 00:17:18,860

We've had lots of listening sessions, lots of opportunity to hear from business owners and employees and industry.

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00:17:18,860 --> 00:17:22,940

But at the root of that is every voice matters. [Laura] Oh, yeah, definitely.

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00:17:22,940 --> 00:17:29,600

[Brandon] And and even if you think somebody is crazy in the room, the crazy voice matters because always gives you a chance.

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00:17:29,600 --> 00:17:33,050

Reflect on. Okay, what am I saying? Am I still being true? [Laura] Or just

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00:17:33,050 --> 00:17:38,410

think of outside the box. You know, they might think of something. You never would even cross your mind.

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00:17:38,410 --> 00:17:41,660

[Brandon] Well Laura, is there anything else you'd want to share with our listeners?

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00:17:41,660 --> 00:17:47,810

[Laura] Well, I think I can think of is that, you know, Arkansas tends to have a bad name.

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00:17:47,810 --> 00:17:51,890

Sometimes (thought of) the redneck area. But this can. This area is so beautiful.

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00:17:51,890 --> 00:17:57,200

There's so much land that's untouched. And, of course, we're talking about commercial and tourism.

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00:17:57,200 --> 00:18:05,060

But tourism, obviously, there's so many state parks does beautiful areas that people can come to look and lots of people.

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00:18:05,060 --> 00:18:11,060

That's what happened. They come and they tour it as just a vacation spot and they're like, oh, we need to stay here, you know?

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00:18:11,060 --> 00:18:18,440

And that's all I'm saying is that this is a really nice area and low taxes, low crime rates.

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00:18:18,440 --> 00:18:23,150

You know, there's just so many great things. And I think that a lot of people would really enjoy the area.

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00:18:23,150 --> 00:18:30,050

They give them a chance. My guest today is Laura Sacket Clute, principal broker and owner of Ozark Gateway Realty.

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00:18:30,050 --> 00:18:34,670

Laura, thank you so much for taking the time to visit with me today. I really enjoyed it.

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00:18:34,670 --> 00:18:53,110

[Laura] All right. Thanks for having me.

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00:18:53,110 --> 00:19:02,940

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201

00:19:02,940 --> 00:19:08,680

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00:19:08,680 --> 00:19:13,690

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00:19:13,690 --> 00:19:22,161

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