***Question 1a. You need to convince Round Tops Planning Department that the residential component will be a benefit and that it should grant a variance or special use permit for the residential element. How would you approach the Planning Department with this request? Draft a short, persuasive pitch to the Department.***

Thank you for the opportunity to propose the re-development of the vacant building on Washington Street. We are excited about the prospect of revitalizing the downtown space and bringing additional economic opportunities to Round Top. However, we understand that the residential component of the development doesn’t comply with the current commercial zoning and will need a special use permit or variance. As such, we certainly want to establish transparency, open communications, and trust with the Round Top Planning Department to accommodate any questions or concerns.

Our plan for the mixed-use development includes ground floor retail and restaurants, office space on the second floor, residential condos on the third floor, and short-term hotels on floors four and five. We believe the overall project will promote a thriving community in the downtown area and provide economic opportunities and growth for new residents, current small businesses, and future companies alike.

Furthermore, we believe the development of residential units will reduce automobile dependency to the downtown area and create a walkable environment. Our track record of successful mixed-use development shows our commitment to overall project design, delivery, and incorporation of local community values by aligning closely with planning departments and their overall comprehensive plan for growth.

***Question 1b. Obviously, there is concern about the fuel tanks and endangered species. Prepare an internal memo for how RT should go about researching whether the fuel tanks must be removed and how it should address relocating the golden-cheeked warbler.***

RT Development also understands the presence of underground fuel tanks and the golden-cheeked warbler nests currently onsite. We take these environmental concerns extremely seriously and will implement the following plan of action to address these:

* We will provide for a thorough environmental assessment of the property including conducting Phase 1, 2, and 3 to EPA standards which will include comprehensive soil studies and testing to identify any known contaminants and a plan of action for mitigation/ removal.
* After completion and review of the above reports, qualified consultants and contractors will be engaged to safely remove and dispose of any contamination (including the fuel tanks) onsite.
* We will also engage qualified endangered species experts to develop a proper relocation plan for the golden-cheek warblers. This plan will likely include coordination with local conservation authorities to identify a suitable habitat for the safety and well-being of the birds.

Our team will communicate and provide frequent updates to the planning department and community stakeholders to ensure transparency throughout the process. RT prides itself on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and responsible development of our communities. We hope to establish trust throughout this process and show commitment to our word.

***Question 1c. You are RT’s spokesperson tasked with promoting the project and the owners have asked you to pitch the project to the city, the local businesses, and the community to allay the concerns and generate support. How can you gain buy-in from the other parties? Draft your pitch to the public sector and community members.***

RT Development is excited for the opportunity to work with the City of Round Top, its residents, and the overall community in revitalizing the downtown district. Our core value has always been to develop communities and opportunities, not just real estate. We hope our track record of developments in Houston, College Station, and Brenham and future collaboration with Round Top community stakeholders will instill a sense of trust and commitment to our word.

The proposed mixed-use project will yield a variety of uses including retail/restaurant on the ground floor, office space on the second floor, residential condos on the third floor, and short-term hotel space on the fourth and fifth floors. Our vision is to create a vibrant downtown scene that harmonizes growth, the local character, and architecture already established by small businesses.

We hope to resolve and address all concerns that neighboring homeowners, businesses, and the local planning department have already raised related to traffic, noise, shadows, inconsistent architecture/ design, and the overall sentiment regarding the impact on the “small-town” feel of the community. We hope to engage and form solutions to mitigate these concerns and provide for sustainable development of Round Top’s growing economy while maintaining local culture.

***Question 2. What are the community concerns? What can RT and the City do to assure you (as a Round Top citizen) that everything will be okay? What do you want to say at the meeting?***

As a citizen of Round Top and community advocate, I’d like to address several concerns with the proposed development. While we understand the need for development to accommodate growth and economic opportunities for our citizens, it is imperative that we establish a careful balance with short-term disruptions and long-term impacts.

RT and the City should provide a detailed plan to address all the following concerns:

City infrastructure (small roads, traffic lights, stop signs, turn lanes, etc.) are still designed for a small town, which could substantially increase traffic and congestion. Likewise, the relocation of companies and increased resident population could put a strain on utility infrastructure, local service providers, and schools. Pollution from fossil fuels, additional trash, and contaminants from development are also a major concern. Finally, noise during and after construction, shadows, and the effect on neighboring property values must be addressed.

RT should be able to address how to mitigate disturbances during construction. The City should collaborate with RT on impact fees and dedications for improvements to local infrastructure. Ultimately, the community needs to feel comfortable the City is planning for the impact to service providers, school facilities, and parks/ recreation to not impair the culture and character of Round Top.

***Question 3. You are part of a local business group that wants to meet with both the City Council and the Developer separately. What will you say to both groups?***

As a local business owner in Round Top, we are encouraged by the development’s impact to foot traffic and increased revenue to local businesses. However, we must carefully consider some key issues to the local business environment both during and after construction.

The City Council must consider the impact to local utility and street infrastructure, the need for increased service providers such as trash cleanup, congestion of downtown streets, and the need for adequate parking in and around the downtown area to not disturb foot traffic or create safety issues. The City Council should also consider the type of retail businesses that occupy this development and future developments as to not impact downtown culture and aesthetics. Proper landscaping and harmony with local architecture should also be carefully reviewed.

The Developer must consider noise, pollution, and environmental contamination during construction. The construction site should be controlled and cleaned to prevent build up of trash or dirt on downtown streets and corridors. RT should work with the City Council and the Planning Department on design, architectural congruence and integrity, and approval of appropriate businesses to occupy the commercial space as to not create unhealthy competition or disruption to local businesses.

***Question 4. As head of the PD, you’ve been invited to a meeting with RT’s representative and a liaison from the city council. Consider how you will be open to ideas while honoring the City Codes. What do you plan to say to each party?***

To RT Development’s Representative:

As head of the Round Top Planning Department, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss RT’s proposed development and explore solutions in creating a project that aligns with City Codes and our long-term comprehensive plan for growth. We are certainly open to considering variances or special use permits for the residential component of the development but must make sure certain elements comply with city regulations and ordinances. Some of the factors to consider are parking requirements, the mix of residential condos and hotel units, height of the building, FAR/density, and architectural/ design congruence with neighboring properties. We look forward to working together to deliver a project that enhances the city of Round Top.

To the liaison from City Council:

The Planning Department appreciates the excitement around this project as a catalyst for economic growth and new development in the future. However, as the first large mixed-use development in Round Top, we must carefully consider the precedent we set in regulating this development to align with local community interests and our overall comprehensive plan for the growth in the next 10-20 years. We must plan and work with developers to contribute to city infrastructure improvements, parks, and recreational facilities for Round Top. We must also plan on how to distribute additional tax revenues for improvements to schools and local service providers as the population grows. We must consider community values and input throughout the process to garner buy-in on future developments and organized growth.

***Question 5. Your task is to write a press statement for the local newspaper striking a balance between the City’s excitement about the project with the community’s concerns. Draft a short press statement that strikes this balance.***

City Council is thrilled to announce plans for a new mixed-use project in downtown Round Top. This new development will replace the now vacant two-story building on Washington Street and consist of the following:

* Retail and Restaurants on the First Floor
* Office Space on the Second Floor
* Residential Condo Units on the Third Floor
* Hotels for short-term lease on the fourth and fifth floors

RT Development will spearhead the development alongside input from the community, Planning Department, and City Council. RT has a long-standing track record of successful mixed-use projects in the smaller Texas towns of College Station and Brenham. They pride themselves on community engagement and involvement, environmental stewardship, and sustainable urban planning and design. Although the city is excited about the prospect of revitalizing downtown and economic growth, we understand that community members and small businesses have expressed concerns that we fully intend on addressing throughout the planning process.

Our city has become known for our vibrant culture, local customs, and small-town charm that we all want to preserve. However, to accommodate our increasing population, we must collaborate to create new developments that provide for additional housing and job growth without detracting from Round Top’s values and character.

City Council invites and encourages any affected members of the Round Top community (abutting neighbors, small business owners, community advocates, etc.) to contribute thoughts, concerns, and ideas at upcoming Town Hall Meetings and Public Hearings that will be posted on the city website. We look forward to developing a community we can all be proud of and that serves the prosperity of the City of Round Top.