

First Impressions



Canton, KS

K-State Research and
Extension

- Canton asked for First Impressions, Leon agreed to be its partner; approximately a 95-minute drive.
- Volunteers in both communities were trained. Photos of Canton were taken August 8, 2023.
- Three visits took place – 2 on July 18, one on October 13, 2023.
- Results presented today 3/14/2024.
- Canton uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

Why: First Impressions?

- **Feedback:**

How does a first-time visitor view my town?

- Evaluate successes,
- Set goals and priorities for next steps.

- **If you don't agree with the observation:**

- *Be curious*, Why does the visitor see it this way?
- Is the observation worth considering?
- What can we do to change it– or the perception?

Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

We need to change the narrative about rural.

- Rural is *changing*, not dying.
- Brain Gain (30-49 year olds moving to rural) is a “new trend” that has been happening since the 70’s.
- People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.
- Rural is in the middle of ***everywhere***. You live one place, work another and play another. With transportation and internet, it’s all accessible to you.

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

- In a survey of newcomers to rural areas, the reasons they come are:
 - Simpler pace of life,
 - Safety and security,
 - Affordable housing,
 - Outdoor recreation,
 - Quality schools
 - ***“A job”*** *isn't in the top 10 reasons.*
- Communities can work together to attract newcomers and create quality of life for everyone.

- “In small towns everyone knows each other.” *false*
- *Get to know each other*, invite them to a newcomers’ meal.
- If you bring 7 people to a 700-citizen town every year in 10 years, you’ll have a 10% increase. It matters! It is a challenge with housing, but it is achievable.
- We are our own worst enemies. We have to monitor our customer service and what we say. It matters.
- Don’t say, “You have to live here twenty years to be an insider.” And don’t act like it either.

- 75% of rural homeowners are Baby Boomers and older. 30% are over 75.
- Housing will be freed up as the baby boomers retire and move closer to medical services.
- Rural communities need retirement housing (not nursing facilities, but maintenance free) to retain seniors.- *Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota*



*Ben Winchester was our guest on the
First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>

- 2022 KS Certified Population: 667 ↓ 10.8 % since 2010
(2.6% if using 2020 to 2022 data)
- 2020 U.S. Census: 685
- 2010 U.S. Census: 748
- Median household income: \$61,167 \$68,925
- High school or GED 95.5% 91.6%
- At least a B.S. Degree 10.5% 34.4%
- Median Age: 36.1 years 37.6 years
- Persons 65 and Over 11.3% 17.2%

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

- Moved since Last Year
(2021/2022):**

9.6%

14.6%

Consider the margin of error. For example, the Census lists 526 lived in the same house, but give a +/- 131 margin of error for that total.

- Poverty rate**

(% of people below poverty line)

8.9%

12%

Race/Ethnicity

White: 84.8%

Black: 4.7%

Asian: 0%

Other: 0%

Not Hispanic or Latino:
91.6%

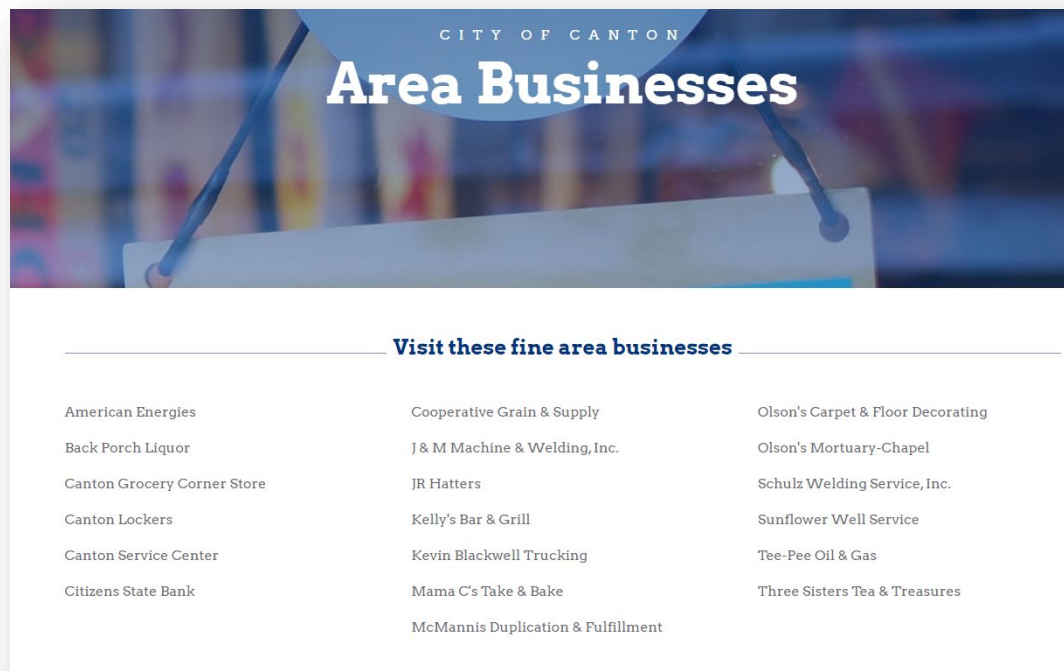
American Indian: 0%

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific
Islander: 0%

Two or more races: 2%

Hispanic or Latino:
8.4%

- City of Canton website had 3 businesses listed. There was a link to “Other Businesses” that took you to a list of more businesses. It would be nice to have links to those businesses on the other page to obtain hours, locations, etc.



- The History and Hess Pool portions of the city website were popular with visitors.
- Church photos and water tower photos were available on the site, but not many other photos to compare with what was seen on the actual visit.
- The jail looked really cool on the website, but there was no address listed or at least easily noticed.

Early Canton, Kansas



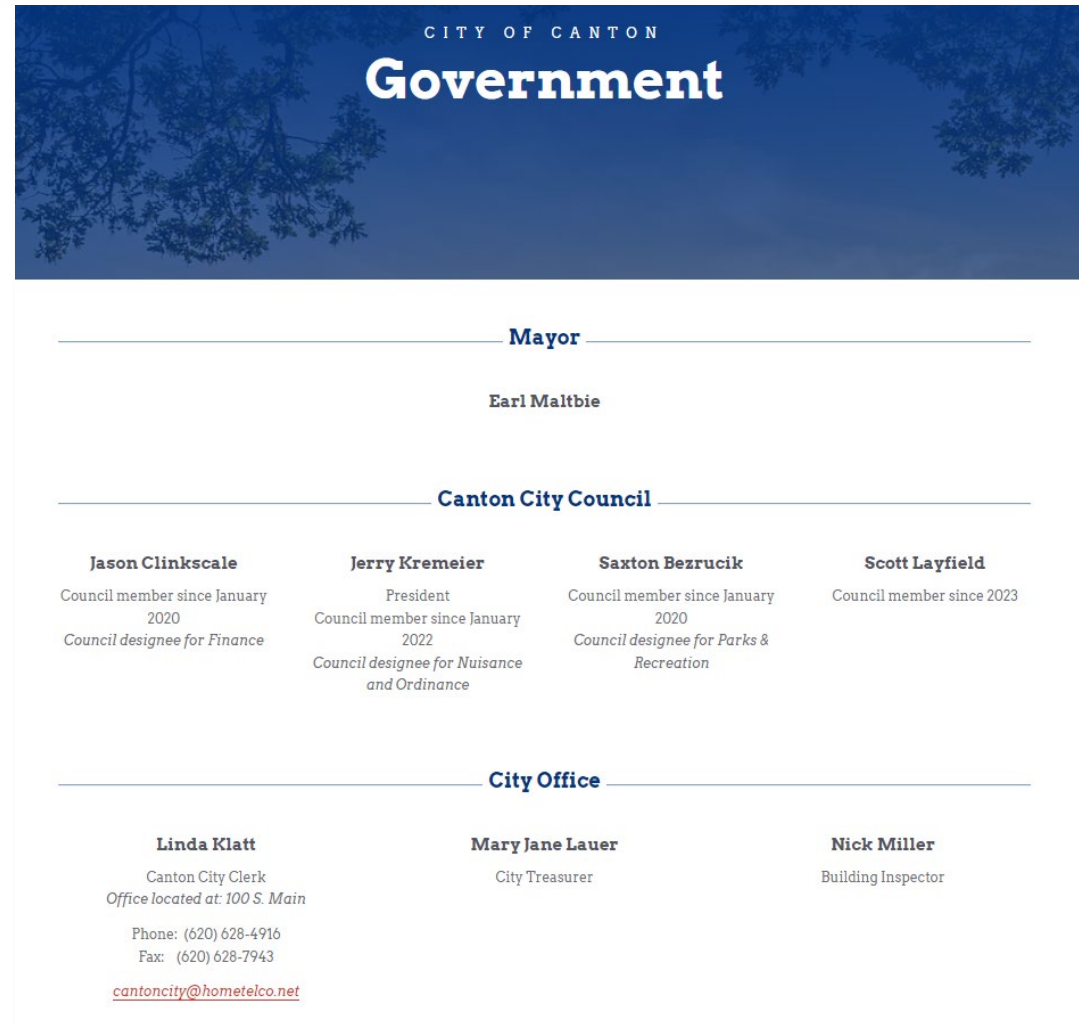
Hess Pool

Hess Pool Hours

Opening Day - Monday, May 29, 2023

Monday-Sunday (1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

- The city's website was easy to navigate. Maybe more focus could be placed on the citizens and the things that are offered in town.
- The Government page was a good representation of transparency and information. The Mayor and Council members were listed, but there was no contact information for them. Contact details for the City Clerk were listed.



- There was a page for water/trash/sewer service information which would be helpful to new or potential residents.
- Code information, city forms, and applications were found.
- Other online sources where information about Canton was found during searches: MapQuest, Kansas Tourism (Maxwell Wildlife Refuge and Bison Tour), and Wikipedia.
- Wikipedia stated that the elementary school is in Canton, but visitors noted it was an abandoned building when they toured the town.

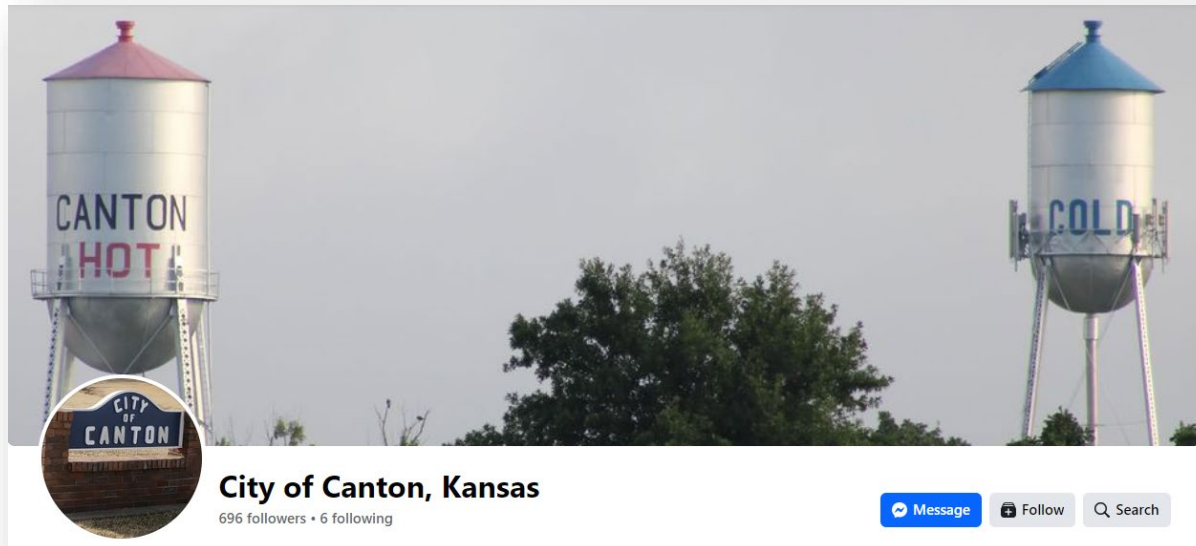
Education [\[edit\]](#)

The community is served by [Canton-Galva USD 419](#) public school district. This school district includes:

- Canton-Galva **Elementary** School, located in Canton
- Canton-Galva Middle School, located in [Galva](#)
- Canton-Galva High School, located in Canton

Canton and Galva schools unified in 1972 forming Canton-Galva High School with the Eagles mascot. Prior to unification, the Canton High School mascot was Canton Tigers.^{[\[33\]](#)}

- **Facebook**
- There was a link to the city's Facebook page from the city's website.
- The Facebook page was updated with events and official announcements about once per week.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Visitors liked the stone entrances to the city. They were beautiful and well maintained.
“Phenomenal” was one visitor’s description.
- Street signs were noticeable and for the most part were all straight.
- From what could be seen from the car, the buildings downtown appear to be well maintained. Visitors noted some excitement seeing the businesses downtown as that is something they need more of in their community.



“Five-Minute” Impression



- The buffalo on the street corners made the area attractive.
- Downtown gave visitors the impression that their own city was not in that great of shape in comparison. Then they turned the corner into the residential areas and felt they had nothing to worry about.
- A lot of unkept yards with high grass, no weed-eating, miscellaneous items in the yards throughout the city.

“Five-Minute” Impression

- Several noted the streets with potholes and the need for some major work. The dips at the intersections should be marked.
- It was unique seeing cement streets down the middle, then asphalt, then grass growing in the asphalt – that should probably be addressed.
- Some streets had no road signs at all.
- Random placement of “Kids at Play” signs in the city – that was a positive observation.
- Visitors saw a sign that advertised a festival that had just passed.



Downtown Business Area

- Several noted it was hard to determine if a business was open or closed.
- The buildings downtown were in okay condition, but maybe could benefit from some paint to brighten things up.
- Street signs were prominent.
- Good variety of businesses throughout town.



Downtown Business Area

- The businesses observed that were open late-morning were Mama C's, the meat locker, and the little thrift store across the street.
- Mama C's staff was very helpful and visitors are excited to see what they will do for the community as the years progress.
- The staff at the heating and air company recommended Mama C's as a good place to eat. Visitors noted it was a take and dine establishment with fresh or frozen meals.



Downtown Business Area

- The meat locker is what you would expect and the lady working there was very friendly.
- The thrift store had a mix of items that were very reasonably priced.



Downtown Business Area

- Customer service downtown was great for the most part.
- Mama C's was the best service, hands down. Friendly and informative. Visitors learned about business and got answers to their questions.
- The city building staff greeted some visitors with a smile, answered questions, and asked about other information they could provide.



- The meat locker workers were all busy, but the lady at the counter still made time to tell visitors about the meat prices and how they wanted to make them affordable for the community.
- There was a little girl and a little boy at the thrift store, greeting visitors, then the lady behind the counter greeted them and described the store. A store similar to Goodwill but with way better pricing. The community is lucky to have this outlet.

Public Amenities Downtown

- Benches and trash bins were found downtown.
- One of the benches was in front of the Senior Center.
- No water fountains, wi-fi, or public restrooms were noted.



- Parking was easily accessible.
- Some felt the landscaping/plants were beautiful.
- Others felt the landscaping was just ok downtown, maybe a little drab.
- The buffalo were amazing!
- There were empty buildings noted, but because they were in good repair, they never detracted from how pleasing the downtown was.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Visitors did not mention any retail areas outside of downtown.



- *A drive-by is not how industry will find you, check with your local Eco Devo director to make sure your site is listed on LocationOne @ Kansas Department of Commerce.*

Observation:

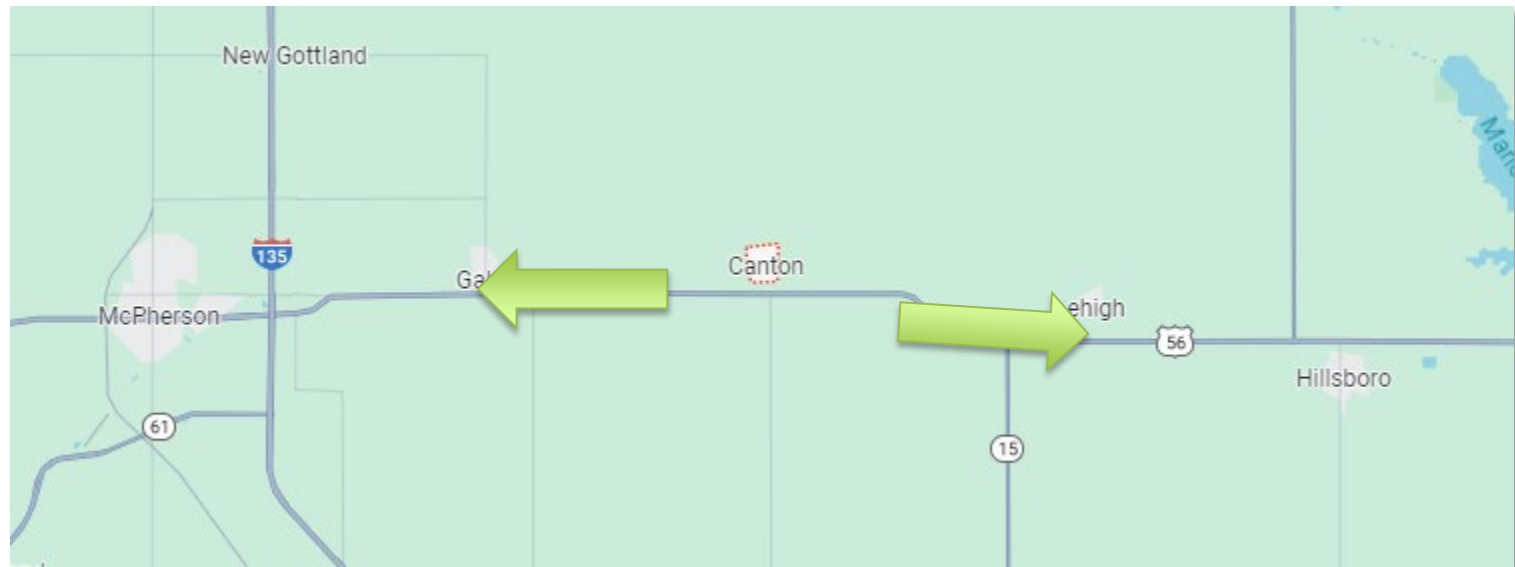
- “Entrepreneurs who choose to start their small businesses are responsible for 63 percent of net new jobs created in the United States every year.”
- *Global marketing makes your town accessible to purchases all over the world.*

Industrial Parks/Commercial

- The old elementary school was mentioned by some as a potential area for expansion of this type of business activity. It would be perfect for shopping as well.
- Many noted there were several areas where industries could be placed or expanded. There seems to be a few plots of land in the area that could house some industry if they were available for purchase.



- No hospital or emergency medical services were observed by visitors.
- This includes a lack of long-term care/assisted living facilities.



- A mix of housing types was observed, from low- to mid- to higher-income range.
- Many homes were nice and maintained, some weren't.
- The locals encountered felt there is a need for housing and there seems to be a new committee that has formed to address it.
- The SW area (if the visitor got their directions correct) has some development and there appears to be room for one more house.
- Some lawns were not mowed, weeds were not dealt with, and some homes were in need of repair or paint.
- Three homes were noted to be for sale, one under contract during visits.



- For rental properties, the city office said they had a list of landlords but couldn't give the list out. They did offer to take the visitors' numbers and call the landlords to check availability and get back with the information.
- There were apartments the city office was aware of, but staff didn't know who was in charge of them. The city owns them, however. Visitors felt getting their housing questions answered was not the most helpful part of their visit.
- Some visitors did not indicate they saw any rental properties.



- Occupied Housing Units: 242 **Kansas**
1.15m
- Owner Occupied: 80.6% **65.3%**
- Renter Occupied: 19.4% **34.7%**
- Vacant Housing Units 31 **124k**
 - For rent: 5
 - For sale: 7
 - Sold, not occupied: 0
 - Seasonal/recreational: 5
 - All other vacants: 14
- Average Household Size: 2.5 **2.48**

Kansas

- Average Travel Time to Work: 27.1 mins **19.6 mins**
- Households without a computer*: 15 (6.2%) **45k (3.8%)**
- Households without an internet subscription: 49 (20.2%) **108k (9.2%)**

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

- Kansas Housing Corporation is a resource to find out about housing grants and other tools for homeowners and renters.
- Also has some resources to address homelessness.

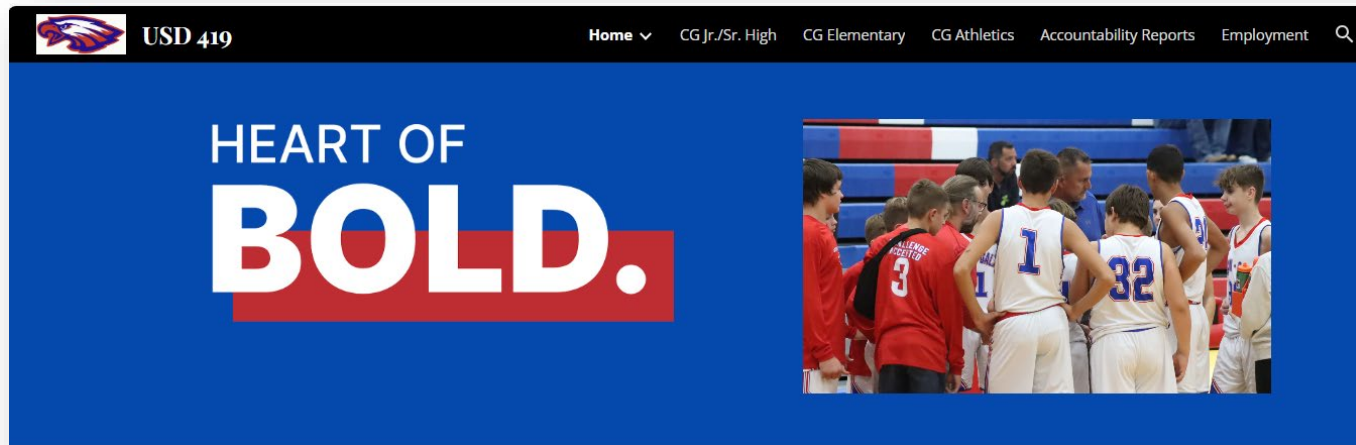
<https://kshousingcorp.org/>



- Visitors were told Canton had a high school, and noted that the buildings and grounds were well maintained once they found the school. The building was not marked well, but there was a marquee. Coming in from Main, it might be hard to identify – maybe more markings would help?
- The elementary school is in Galva.

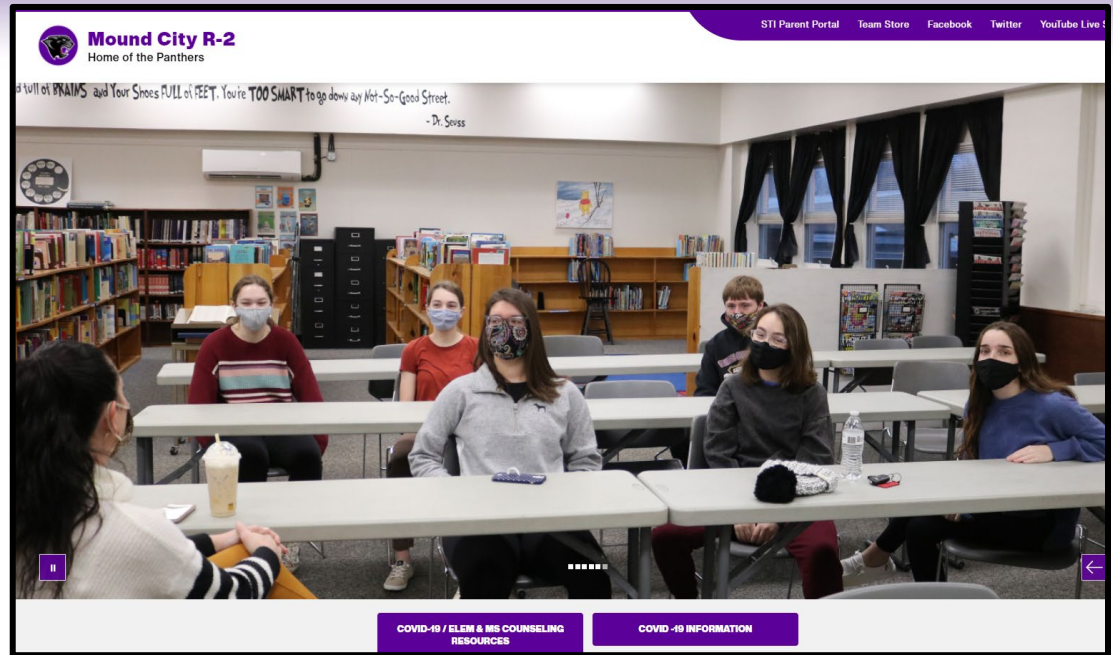


- The school district website made visitors feel as if they were invited to the district and made it appear students and parents were both excited about the school system.
- The website had a lot of information and portrays students as happy and active.



“Potential Students” are an audience for your website.

- This is Mound City, MO:
- “Why choose us” info on home page.



ABOUT US

Why Us

Graduation Rate

100%

Technology Ratio

Computer to Student Ratio: 1:1

Teacher Ratio

1:9 Teacher to Student Ratio

Career Ed. Programs

Agriculture Education, Business Education, Family Consumer Sciences and Human Services



Comments:

- All visitors noted that city staff mentioned there were a couple or a few providers in town, but like the rental housing, would have to call the providers first.
- Staff took names and phone numbers of visitors to call back with the information. One visitor hadn't heard back at the time of writing their report and others didn't indicate whether they had heard back.

McPherson County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **63%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

Source <https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/> Retrieved from internet 1/5/24

- Many noted the churches felt like the central part of the community, being well kept and welcoming.
- Methodist and Baptist churches were observed.
- There was no indication of faith-based community services offered in town.



- Several comments that the city appeared to be in the early stages of forming a Kansas Community Empowerment group.
- 4-H presence is obvious in town to most, another mentioned the fairgrounds and assumed there was a 4-H presence, but didn't really see evidence of such.
- There was an American Legion noted.



- Visitors noted that while in town they learned there are about 5 different things local committees are trying to address for improvement and wondered instead of 5 committees, would one be able to do it one at a time?
- Other than the American Legion community chili feed advertisement, no other evidence of civic organization activity was noted.



- Many noted the same sentiment, rating the streets and potholes as poor to horrendous.
- The city clerk explained they repair the streets with cement when they fix a water leak, which is why the center of the streets have cement and asphalt on the sides.
- Street signage was observed to be good.



- Some were greeted with a smile upon entering city hall and questions were answered with additional offers to provide information about other needs.
- Others felt they didn't get good customer service. While it was noted that the staff member was on the phone with software support during one of the visits, she didn't raise a finger to say hold on a minute or acknowledge they were in the building. In addition, not being able to provide a list of landlords or daycare providers wasn't helpful.
- When asking about the old elementary school, visitors were told that someone bought it to make offices out of. They own hotels in McPherson and "just dump their junk in there now."



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- The buildings for fire and police were in good condition.
- Both buildings looked newer and appealing.




Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department

Home Contact Us

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt

Kansas Insurance Department
420 SW 9th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1678
Consumer Hotline: 800-432-2484 (KS only)
[Email Us](#) | Phone: 785-296-3071



ISO Public Protection Classification


HOME : ISO

Most U.S. insurers of home and business properties use Insurance Services Office's (ISO) Property Protection Classification (PPC) in calculating premiums. In general, the price of insurance in a community with a good PPC is lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal.

PPC Program: <https://www.isomitigation.com/program-works/how-the-ppc-program-works.html>

A community's PPC depends on:

1. Emergency communications systems, including facilities for the public to report fires, staffing, training, certification of telecommunicators, and facilities for dispatching fire departments
2. The fire department, including equipment, staffing, training, and geographic deployment of fire companies
3. The water supply system, including the inspection and flow testing of hydrants and a careful evaluation of



- Very welcoming building, but it was closed during both visit dates.
- One of the best sites observed in town – very beautiful.
- You can tell it has a focus on the kids.



- City parks were noted to be well kept.
- The walking trail has signage, and visitors would have walked it had it not been so hot out.
- There was a sign for the ballpark noted, and playground equipment for the kids to play on.
- The fairgrounds were in good condition and the parking area was immaculate.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The buffalo on the street corners were enjoyed by the visitors.
- There was a sign about Heritage Days but no other mention of it.
- There was a parade advertised, but it had passed. It was on July 15th.
- The American Legion chili feed.

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- If marketed well, the buffalo.
- The swimming pool, which was nice.
- The Lake. There were signs of lakes but they were in a different area nearby.



Visitor's Center

- Several noted that the Senior Center and Community Center were both closed when they visited.
- The city office could serve this purpose.



What would bring you back?

- Mama C's to see what they have progressed on. Mama C's food was nice, but visitors wouldn't drive from Leon for just that, but they would stop if in the area.
- Otherwise, nothing noted that would entice people to come back at this time.

Most Positive Observations

- Visitors observed some people out working in their yards.
- Mama C's, their willingness to visit – inviting and friendly.
- The main street and pavement on the main roads.
- The physical appeal of the library.
- Downtown was clean and well taken care of.
- Friendly people encountered.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- The streets – the street conditions off the main street is likely the most obvious challenge facing Canton.
- The number of empty buildings is a definite obstacle but could be a positive if there were businesses wanting to open.
- Their big dreams – is trying to tackle them all at once appropriate or should work be done on one issue at a time?
- In the 3 hours there, no maintenance or city workers were seen.
- Lack of places to eat and shop means people will spend their money in the bigger cities around.

What will you remember?

- All visitors said the #1 thing they would remember most were the people who were all welcoming, except for the staff at the city office for some, and the general feel of camaraderie.
- The downtown area was amazing.
- The streets left a negative impression that will stay with some.
- The library was an impressive facility.
- Canton's yard issues made visitors feel their own city was on the right track.
- Mama C's.

Dollars Spent During Visits

- Visitors spent the following amounts individually while in town: \$28.32, \$12.49, \$38.26 for a total of = \$79.07.
- One visitor noted if there were more places to spend their money they would've been happy to do so.

No one can do everything,
but everyone can do something.

Thank you to our volunteer visitors.

Set Next Steps:

- Start talking! Find ways to discuss what you heard in small groups of every kind.

Contact me if you need resources or have questions:

Jan Steen

Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

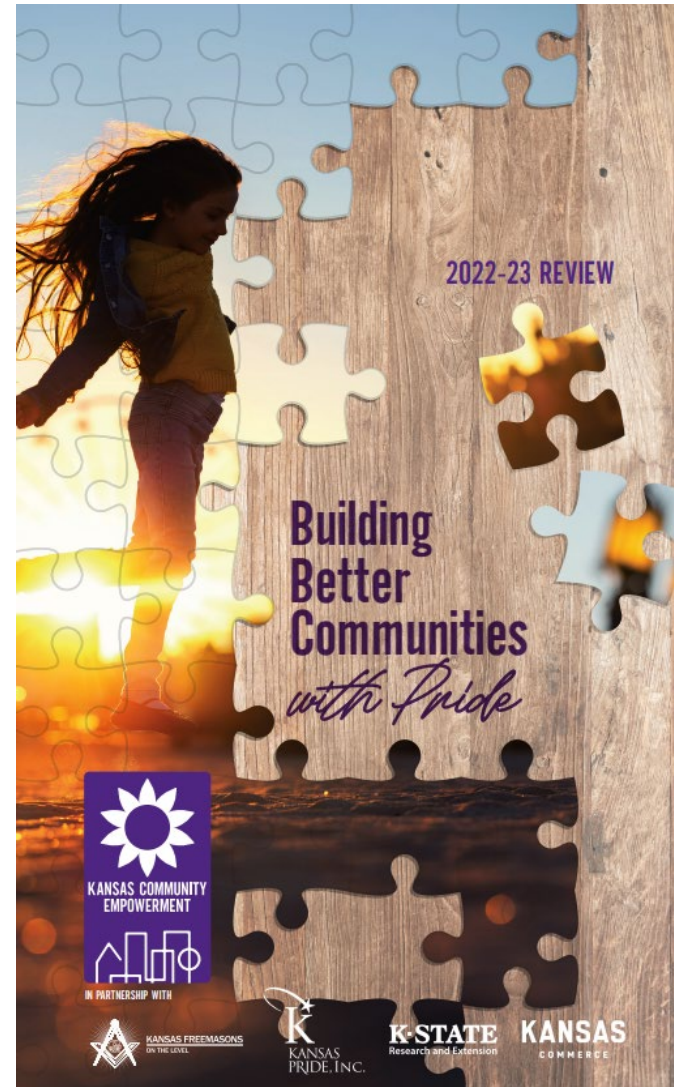
785.532.5840

jmsteen@ksu.edu

Kansas Community Empowerment

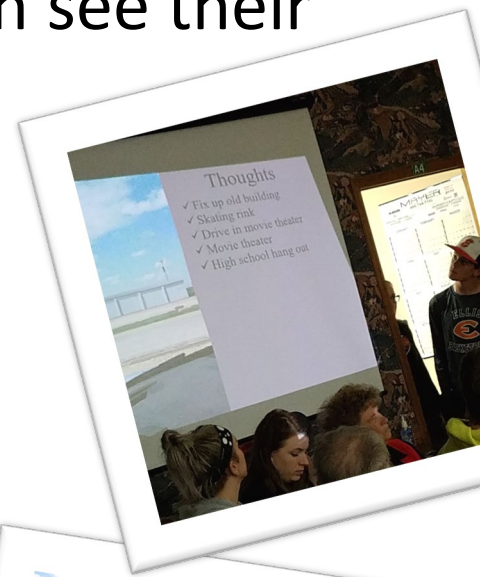
<http://kce.k-state.edu>

- Local communities identify what they would like to preserve, create, or improve for their future and volunteers pull together to create their ideal community future.



Youth Community Perceptions <https://bit.ly/ks-ycp>

- Youth-Based Community Assessment.
- Gives communities insights on how youth see their community.
- Creates opportunities for youth voices in the community.
- Allows youth to become involved in local government and community process



Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



5 GRANT WRITING RESOURCES

K-State Research and Extension provides resources to help you write and submit successful grant proposals to improve lives, livelihoods and communities across Kansas.

- 1 ONLINE GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving \$28 million in successful grants. 
- 2 A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT COURSE**
An 8-week course dedicated to helping you complete a fundable proposal. 
- 3 A LIST OF CONTRACT GRANT WRITERS**
Professionals willing and ready to write grants on a contract basis.
- 4 SUPPORT FOR KANSAS PRIDE COMMUNITIES**
Excellent resources for those wanting to bring more to their communities.
- 5 ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS**
Our professionals are prepared to help you find grants and review your grant proposals.

Small Business and Community Development

- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am**

Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.

– Register here: <https://ksre-learn.com/ecall>

– Previous calls are recorded at
<https://ksre-learn.com/entrepreneurship>

- Now people have a choice, and millions of them are planning to move.
- **“The pivot to remote work is the biggest, fastest transformation of the labor market since the World War II mobilization.”**
- **Major cities will see the biggest out-migration:** 20.6% of those planning to move are currently based in a major city.
- **People are seeking less expensive housing:** Altogether, **more than half** (52.5%) are planning to move to a house that is significantly more affordable than their current home.
- **People are moving beyond regular commute distances:** 54.7% of people are moving over two hours away or more from their current location, which is beyond daily or even weekly commuting distances for most.

UpWork October, 2020 <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/economist-report-remote-workers-on-the-move>, retrieved from Internet 12-12-20, UpWork October, 2020

Remote Work Certification

- Kansas Remote Online Initiative
 - Certified Remote Work Professional
 - Certified Remote Work Leader
- *Certification in 4-weeks*
- Monthly Classes: <https://kansasremotework.com/>



Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

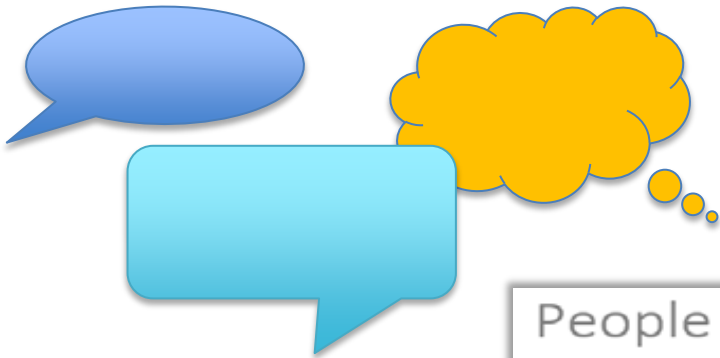
- **Goal:** Increase access to affordable, healthy food and to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.
- Technical assistance and financing to develop new or renovate fresh food retail in underserved communities throughout Kansas.

<http://kansashealthyfood.org/>



What will we do?

What did you hear?



What will we do?



People move in the direction of their conversations

