

First Impressions

Columbus, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- Columbus asked for First Impressions, I obtained Garnett as its partner; 1¾ hour drive.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey and took photos of Columbus on January 17.
- Four Garnett visitors came in one car on March 1.
- Results are presented tonight, April 11.
- Columbus uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

We need to change the narrative about rural.

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

- 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 and no one is noticing or talking about it.
- Only 36% of those who come, lived there previously.
- 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

- 46% of Kansans move every year.
- In a survey of newcomers to rural areas, the reasons they come are:
 - Simpler pace of life
 - Safety and Security
 - Low housing cost
 - ***“A job,” isn’t in the top 10 reasons.***
- “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
March 1, 2019 First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

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

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

- 2010 Census Population 3,312
(down 2.5% since 2000*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2017 Estimate is 3,158
(down 7.0% since 2000 **KS= +8.0%**)
- 87.2% high school or GED, 23.0% college educated,
– **90.3% HS or equivalency, KS 31.6% college education,**
- Poverty rate 11.9% **(KS=12.8%)**
- Median Age 43.1 years **(36.3)**
- Median household income is \$40,968 **(\$55,477)**

* 2000 Census was 3,396

- The City web-site was not representative of their community. I had some difficulties. I would change the home page to something much more WOW to entice visitors and possible new residents to Columbus.
- The website had limited information. It didn't really give any ideas as to what to see or where to visit.
- Constructive suggestions were given about how to improve the website.

- **Website** <https://www.columbuscityhall.com/>

The official site.



- **Facebook Columbus, KS**

<https://www.facebook.com/thecolumbusproject/>

The screenshot displays the Facebook profile of 'The Columbus Project'. The page header includes the Facebook logo, a search bar with the text 'The Columbus Project', and navigation links for 'Home', 'Create', and user avatars. The profile picture is a circular logo featuring a yellow flower and the text 'COLUMBUS KANSAS'. The cover photo is a large yellow flower with the text 'COLUMBUS KANSAS' overlaid. The left sidebar contains a menu with options: 'Home', 'Posts', 'Reviews', 'Videos', 'Photos', 'Groups', 'About', 'Community', 'Info and Ads', and 'Events'. A green button labeled 'Create a Page' is at the bottom of the sidebar. The main content area shows a 'Create Post' section with a profile picture, a 'Write a post...' text box, and buttons for 'Photo/Video', 'Tag Friends', 'Check in', and a three-dot menu. Below this is a 'Posts' section with a post from 'The Columbus Project' dated 'March 7 at 11:11 AM'. The post text reads: 'Here are complete results from the Pinewood Derby, sponsored by Pack 75 and held in Columbus last Saturday...'. The right sidebar features a 'Send Message' button, a 'No Rating Yet' section, a 'Community' section with 'See All' link, and an 'About' section with 'See All' link. The 'Community' section lists: 'Invite your friends to like this Page', '862 people like this', '885 people follow this', and 'Gregg Hadley and 3 other friends like this'.

- **Facebook Columbus, KS**

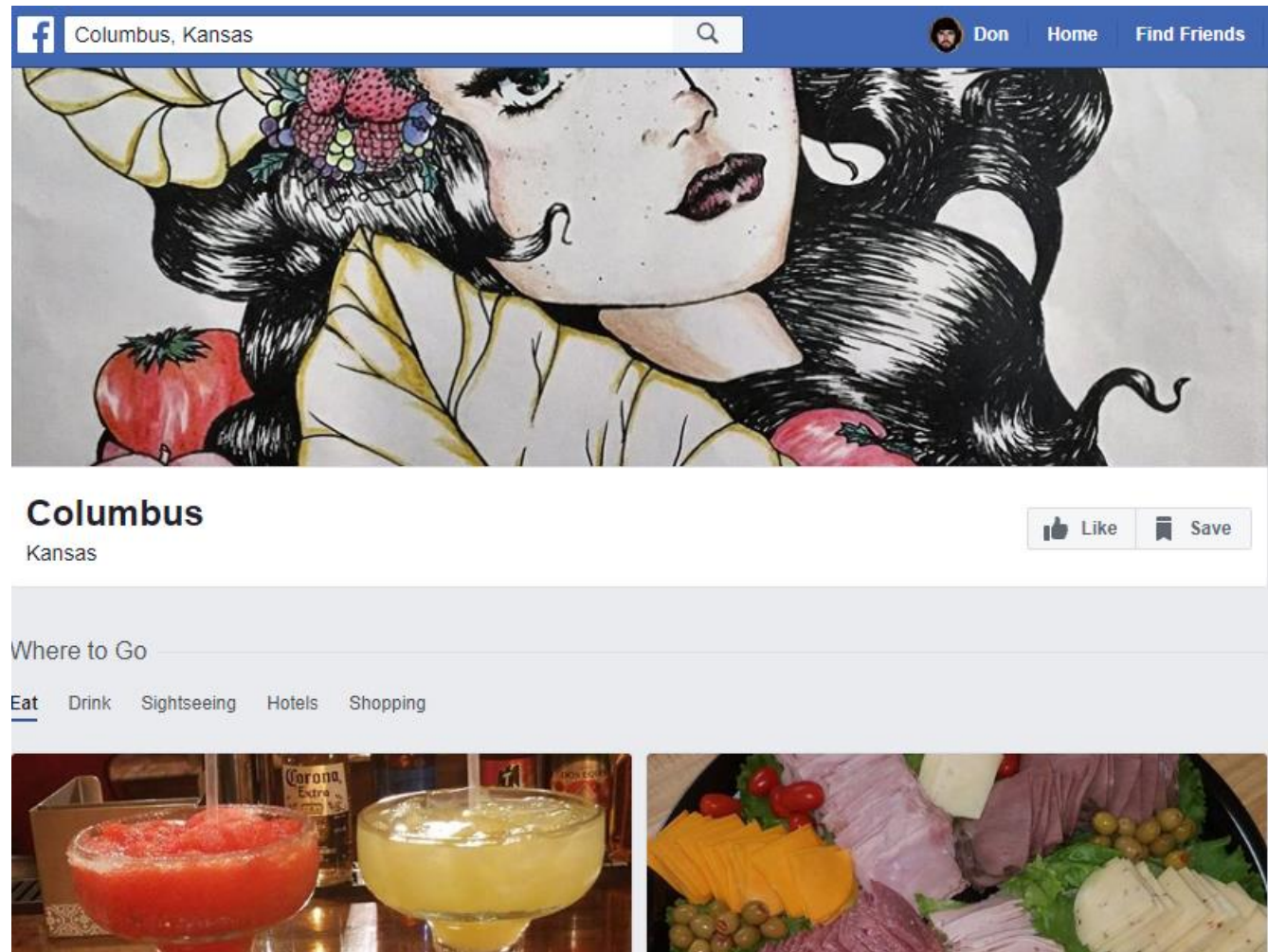
<https://www.facebook.com/ColumbusKansasChamberOfCommerce/>

Chamber FB page showcases the times and ways that the community comes together. Helps us “picture ourselves here.”



- **Facebook Columbus, KS**

A Facebook generated page. <https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Columbus-Kansas/103108306396037/>



“Five-Minute” Impression

- A “clean entrance” with nice entrance signs. The 5-minute impression I felt was somewhat cluttered. There are some buildings in disrepair, but what community doesn’t have those? Overall, I found Columbus to be a nice community with several positive amenities.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Columbus signs let you know you have arrived. The North (?) sign is large and in a strange place. The smaller one on the south needs some attention.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Crossland Construction definitely has a huge presence and almost makes you miss the small entrance sign.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Observations: No wayfinding signs that I saw to give directions. The flower bed planters could use some decoration during the winter. Your courthouse square with Veterans’ Memorial and bell tower is very cool!



“Five-Minute” Impression



Downtown Business Area

- Columbus needs either banners or historic light poles to make downtown a destination.
- I really liked the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria on the light poles. That theme would be excellent to carry through as branding for the community.



Downtown Business Area

- The planters seem dated to me and should be refurbished or removed.



Downtown Business Area

- Typical of other towns, some buildings are in great shape and others are in desperate need of repair.





Downtown Business Area



- *Visitors were intentional in visiting businesses and had specific feedback and mostly-positive reviews about the customer relations and quality of the merchandise, including one store (Westco) that referred the visitor to a new boutique.*
- Furniture store was definitely a place I would revisit.
- On one block in the town square was an awning that was rather low for most people to walk under. Might be a safety issue.

Downtown Business Area

- A warm, welcoming, wonderful small town experience at Norma's for lunch. The food and service was amazing. It was especially fun to observe locals visiting with each other.



Downtown Business Area

- Signage on some buildings is hard to read and some buildings have no signage, or it was hard to determine what was in them.



Amenities

- Not difficult finding parking.
- The parking in the middle of the streets isn't needed and would add visual appeal to stores and downtown square.
- Decorative brick in front of City Hall with Columbus on them is a neat idea.



Downtown Business Area





Other Retail Shopping Areas

- There was easy access to other retail shopping areas, however they were not very attractive.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- The grocery stores and convenience stores located on the main highway were nice and did not appear hard to access.



Industrial Parks/Commercial

- Didn't see a defined area, but did see industrial and commercial business, including Tamko.



- *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.*

Health Care Services

- The hospital's exterior was somewhat dated. There appeared to be an ambulance service. The hospital appeared to be very busy so it looked as though the community was utilizing it.



- Did not see eye doctor, but large dental facility as well as the physicians' annex.
- The public health dept has a nice facility.



- The long-term care facility on the highway looks very nice from the outside and gave a good impression.
- Autumn Place Memory Care facility looked like a nice facility.



- There was a very nice mix of all income housing.





- Seemed to be a large amount of low-income housing.



- A couple of “Country Club” areas, and several dilapidated homes. I think finding something within a reasonable price range and in good condition would be a challenge.





- Not many “for sale” signs.



- **Properties in need of clean up**



KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 1,612
- Total Occupied Houses 1,294 (80.3%) (89.1%)
- Vacant Houses 318 (19.7%) (10.7%)

**In 2010, there were 1,239 occupied housing units*

- Owner Occupied 861 (66.5%) (66.4%)
- Renter Occupied 433 (33.5%) (33.6%)
- Family Households 69.0% (65.4%)
- Non-family Househld. 31.0% (34.6%)

- Metal buildings being used for additional classrooms are not appealing.



- The elementary school could use additional playground equipment.





The campus nature of this school makes it difficult for a well-intentioned visitor to find the right door but easy for a person of bad intent to enter.



- Schools were very nice. Elementary, Middle, High and Coffeyville Community College extension.



- School website is excellent. I could find information on almost everything.
- There was no school information at the Chamber office.
- Online report card link was available.
- The school website's audience is more than for just the people who already live there. The website helps determine whether a family moves to that community.

- We couldn't sense what the experience is like for students to attend. Tell us, "Why do you love your schools?"*

HOME OF THE TITANS

TITANS

COLUMBUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Columbus Unified High School
District Office
Central Middle School
Highland Elementary
Park Elementary

USD 493
Email

PowerSchool

PowerTeacher

Staff Resources

Columbus Unified High School

Administration

Alumni Information

Athletics

Calendar

Counselors' Site

High School Announcements

Lunch Menu

Media Center

Student Life

Student/Parent Resources

Teachers

Columbus Unified High School

124 South High School Avenue
Columbus, KS 66725
Phone - 620-429-3821
Fax - 620-429-3657
Principal - Tim Davied
Assistant Principal - Dan Grundy

[PowerSchool Single Sign-on Video](#)

[Reading Counts - Student Login](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CUHS

[State Tournament Info](#) You can watch the Lady Titans tonight on City Link! However, this is the only game we have the rights to and it will not be available on City Link ...
Posted Mar 6, 2019, 7:45 AM by Laura Boeckman

[School Dismissed at 1:00 on Wednesday, 3/6/19](#) Because we have many staff members and families who would like to attend the State Basketball Tournament, we will be dismissing school at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Parents ...
Posted Mar 4, 2019, 11:29 AM by Laura Boeckman

[Little Mermaid JR - 3/23 & 3/24](#)
Posted Mar 4, 2019, 6:18 AM by Laura Boeckman

Today: ◀ ▶

Tuesday, March 19

3:00pm CUHS Tennis @ Parsons

4:30pm CUHS Baseball v LCHS 2V (H)

4:30pm CUHS Softball vs LCHS (H) 2V

Wednesday, March 20

CNC Music Festival

Thursday, March 21

4:30pm CUHS Baseball v LCHS 2JV(A)

Saturday, March 23

CUHS Baseball v Wyandotte 2V (A)

Monday, March 25

9:00am CUHS Golf Miami Invitational

3:00pm CUHS Tennis @ Independence

4:30pm CUHS Baseball v Parsons 1V&1JV (A)

4:30pm CUHS Softball vs Parsons (A) 2V

Tuesday, March 26

3:30pm CUHS Track @ Southeast

Thursday, March 28

2:30pm CUHS Track @ LCHS(varsity and j.v.)

3:00pm CUHS Tennis @ Pittsburg

4:30pm CUHS Baseball v Parsons 1V&1JV (H)

4:30pm CUHS Softball vs Parsons (H) 2JV

Monday, April 1

4:30pm CUHS Baseball v Rayzor 2V (H)

Events shown in time zone: Central Time - Chicago

Knowledge
forLife

Comments:

- Noticed a few childcares, especially across from Park School.
 - Did not find childcare information at Chamber office.
-

Cherokee County Data:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • Number of Children Under Age 6: | 1,671 |
| • Children with all parents in the workforce: | 61% |
| • Desired Capacity of Child Care Centers | 566 |
| • Extent that desired capacity meets potential need | 56% |

Creating a Child Care Action Plan

<https://ks.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Draft-Child-Care-Supply-Demand-Action-Plan.pdf>

*Contact ks.childcareaware.org to get access to local child care specialists.
785-823-3343*



- Saw several beautiful churches and the Visitor's Guide at the Chamber office noted a few church-sponsored activities in the community for example the Easter Egg Hunt, Easter Sunrise Service and Pancake breakfast.

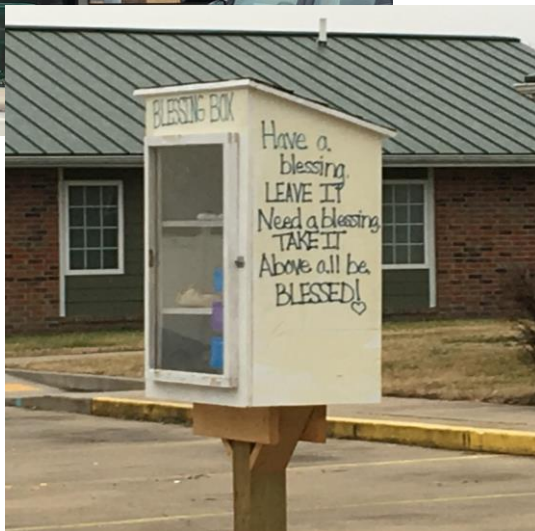








- City Hall, “This community is very active in helping each other.”
- We noticed the Blessing Boxes.



- American Legion, Lions, 4-H Clubs, Girl Scouts, VFW and Rotary.



- Civic investment is shown in the buildings they sponsor at the fairgrounds. A Lion's Club Bean Feed poster was on display on the bulletin board at City Hall.



- The streets, signage, sidewalks were all adequate. Parking outside the downtown was good as well as landscaping and streetscapes. The cobra lights were evident throughout the community which are very adequate for lighting. Public restrooms at the park were visible.



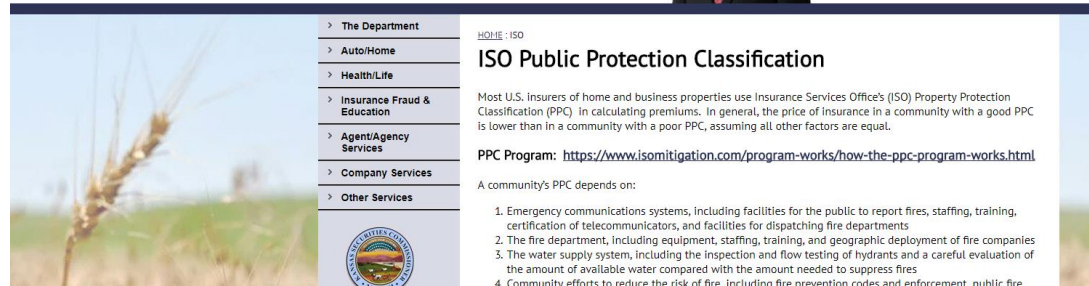
- Some signage, lighting, etc. good; others in need of repair. Restrooms dirty. A couple of well-maintained parks. Streets suffered a bit due to weather.



- We were received very well at city hall. The person was very helpful and friendly. She took ample time with us answering our questions even though she was working by herself.



- At the City Hall facilities. We saw a marked patrol car while we were driving.



EMS and Public Transportation



- The Carnegie Library was a great building and in a good location for walking. Parking was available as well.



- I was impressed with the overall appearance of the sports complex. For the most part the complex was well kept and had several electronic score boards.
- Is parking adequate for ball fields?
- An aging sign was noted (Hatfield?)



- I liked the Fairground area especially the fact that it was on a grass area instead of located on gravel.



- Visitors only commented on street signs downtown, noting, “Street signs were hard to find and see at first.”*



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The Hot Air Balloon Festival.
- Christopher Columbus logos are visible throughout. Chamber says, “Help America Discover.” Create a list of what you want people to discover and market your niche with pride.
- *I saw a Double Decker Trolley on the City Map, but no visitors saw evidence of it in this season.*
- *Congrats on having a city map; cities larger than you do not have one.*

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Museum, Veteran's Memorial.
- RV Park.



Visitor's Center

- The Chamber Building is very nice and well-kept.
- Chamber of Commerce does a great job of promoting Columbus, its events and the many amenities that make this community great.
- Very impressed with her friendliness and knowledge.



Visitor's Center

- What's Important to the community:
 - Hot Air Balloon Regatta, hunting/fishing, Claythorne Lodge, Rowdy's Rustic Moose Lodge, Pitcher Pump B&B, and Crossland Construction Company.



What would bring you back?

- Norma's was great– I'd like to see what else is here.
- Not really, unless for the hot air balloons.
- The Claythorne Lodge has events that keep the town busy with visitors. The downtown lodging place with the art gallery was intriguing. We tried to visit it but it was locked at the time of our visit.



Most Positive Observations

- Friendly, welcoming people- the best asset!
- That small town feel is alive in your community where everyone works together for the common good and providing quality of life.
- Would definitely eat at Norma's again and visit the sports apparel shop.
- You are the county seat and strategically located close to Missouri and Oklahoma to draw visitors, businesses and potential new residents.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Dilapidated homes and downtown buildings that need rehab.
- The biggest challenges your community might face would be the expense of infrastructure, downtown revitalization, bringing new businesses to your square, housing (funds to refurbish dilapidated buildings and housing), working to clean up specific areas of town, updating your hospital (partnering with Saint Luke's), looking at what will bring your children back as young adults to their hometown, providing opportunities for quality of life, and your vision going forward.
- Road conditions and junk.
- Financing improvements, whether it is infrastructure (roads, curbs/gutters and sidewalks), housing, medical services, schools, business expansion- is difficult.

What will you remember?

- The incredibly friendly people who were so warm and inviting.
- I have visited many downtowns and those ships are a feature that will stay with me, they are impressive and outstanding.
- You are people-oriented, warm and welcoming, proud of your community, and you have a lot to offer for a small town.
- The food, the people and the Veteran's Memorial.

Thank our leadership team:

- *Liz Simpson, Chair*
- *Lauren Dainty*
- *Dale Helwig*
- *Christina Holmes*
- *Tom Pryor*
- *Daniela Rivas*
- *Grant Spieth*

Set Next Steps:

- Which group will lead the discussion?

Contact me if you need resources or have questions:

Nancy Daniels

Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

785.410.6352

nkdaniels@ksu.edu

K-State Research and Extension

PRIDE: <http://kansasprideprogram.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.



K-State Research and Extension

Contact

Nancy Daniels

nkdaniels@ksu.edu

to participate.

Grant Writing Workshops

Grants are a vital piece in your community's funding puzzle...and *you* can do it.

K-State Research and Extension's Community Vitality Team offers grant writing workshops for local communities.

Objectives

- Conquer your grant writing fears and start writing.
- Learn new sources of data to document community needs.
- Learn new sources of grant funding.
- Practice developing the Grant Elements: Problem, Outcomes, Activities, Evaluation, and Budget.

Short Term Outcomes

- 93% have increased confidence to write a successful grant.
- 94% learned new sources of data to document community needs.
- 80% learned new sources for finding grants.
- 91% have increased confidence to develop the elements of a successful grant.



K-State Research and Extension


- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am (CT)**
 - Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.
 - Contact Nancy Daniels nkdaniels@ksu.edu to participate.
 - Previous calls are recorded at <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>
 - Community Vitality Calendar of events: <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/>

- <http://smallbizsurvival.com/>
– THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL BUSINESS RESOURCE

NEW! SURVEY	BOOK BECKY TO SPEAK	THE BOOK: SMALL TOWN RULES	SHOP LOCAL EBOOK	SAVEYOUR.TOWN	
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SMALL BIZ SURVIVAL

THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL BUSINESS RESOURCE




FRONT PAGE	LATEST STORIES	ABOUT	GUIDED TOUR	SUBSCRIBE	PODCAST	CONTACT	RSS	
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WHAT BUSINESS STAGE ARE YOU IN?



Dreaming

For those who are dreaming or planning to start a business of their own. ... [Get started.](#)



Doing & Growing

For those who have a business and have grown to the point that it's

Get our articles plus special bonus emails, a positive view of rural once a week:
Join me and 3546 rural friends.

Newsletters
☒ Small Biz Survival
☒ Positive View of Rural
☒ Building Possibility

JOIN

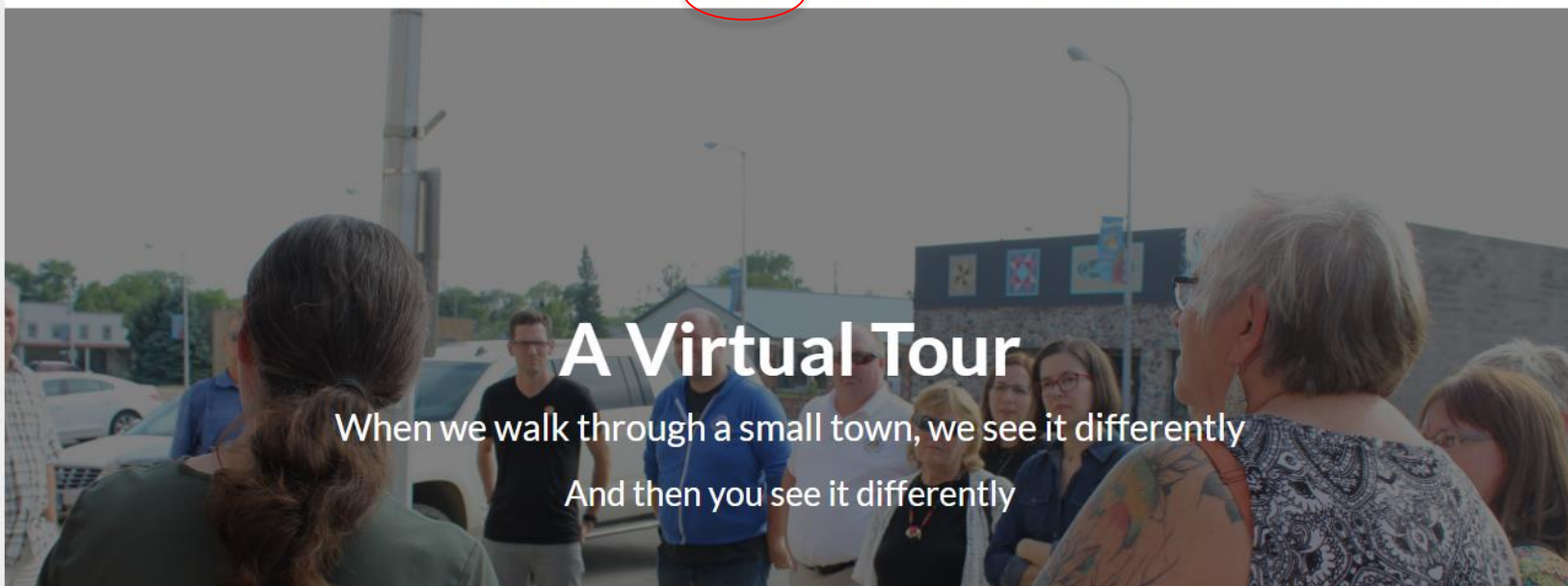
I will never sell or rent your email.

Resources I like:

- <http://saveyour.town/>
 - Monthly live webinars; available on recording.
 - Pay once and show as many times as you want.
 - Watch parties encouraged.

SAVEYOUR.town

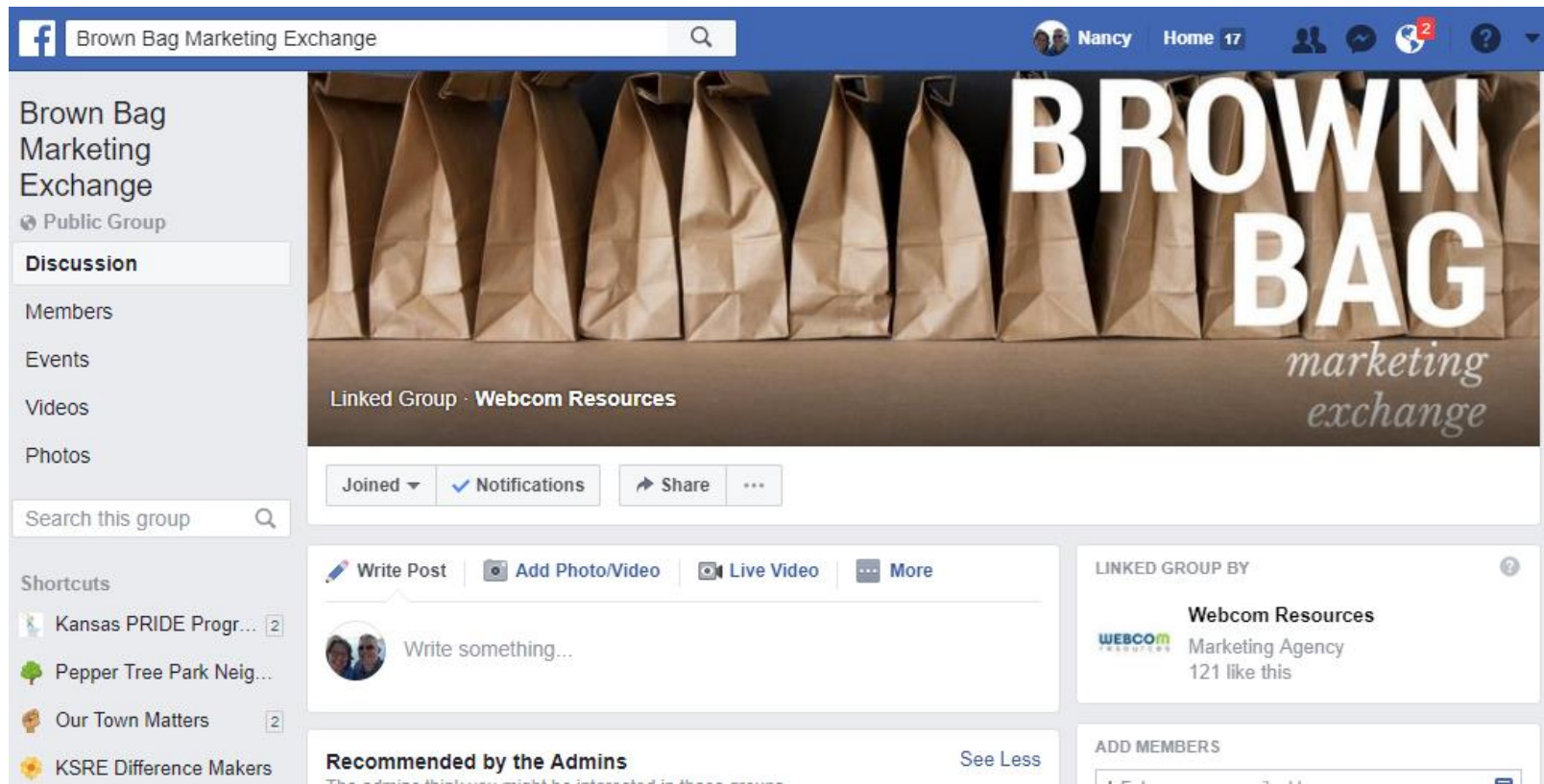
[HOME](#) [ABOUT DEB & BECKY](#) [WEBINARS](#) [TOOLKITS](#) [WORK WITH US](#) [I DON'T HAVE TIME!](#) [CONTACT](#) [MEMBERS LOGIN](#)



A Virtual Tour

When we walk through a small town, we see it differently
And then you see it differently

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/brownbagmx/>
Brown Bag Marketing Exchange
(Atchison, KS Co-Marketing group)



Kansas Healthy Food Initiative

- **Goal:** Increase access to affordable fresh 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/>

Isabelle Busenitz, ibusenitz@ksu.edu,

KHFI Technical Assistance Coordinator, 785-532-6868



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