

First Impressions

Lyons, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation

The logo for the Dane G. Hansen Foundation features the name "DANE G. HANSEN" in a bold, dark blue serif font. Below it, the word "FOUNDATION" is written in a smaller, dark blue serif font, with each letter separated by a wide space. Two light brown, curved lines arch over the text, framing it from above and below.

DANE G. HANSEN
F O U N D A T I O N

- Lyons requested First Impressions, Russell was obtained as its partner; 1 ¼ hours separate the communities.
- Volunteers in both communities were trained.
- Multiple visitors from Russell came on 11/4/2019.
- Photos of observations were taken on 12/6/2019 after all visitor reports were received and compiled.
- Results are presented to the public tonight.
- Lyons 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

- 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/>

- 2010 Census Population 3,739
(up 0.18% since 2000*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2018 Estimate is 3,511
(down 5.92% since 2000 **KS= +8.2%**)
- 85.4% high school or GED, 17.2% college educated
– **90.5% HS or equivalency, KS 32.3% college education, KS**
- Poverty rate 16.9% **(KS=12.8%)**
- Median Age 35.2 years **(36.3)**
- Median household income is \$48,900 **(\$55,477)**

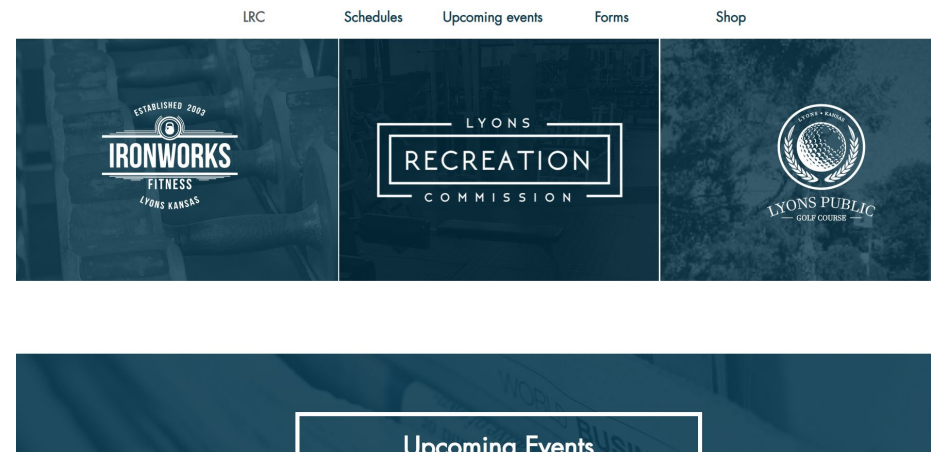
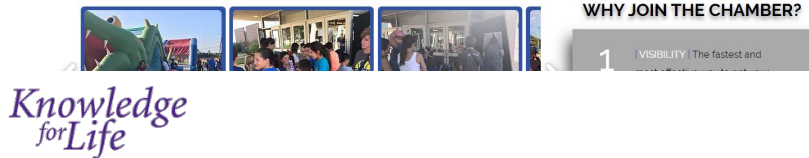
* 2000 Census was 3,732

- **Website**
 - <http://www.lyonsks.org>
- First site to show up in a Google search.
- Good website with a lot of information about the community.
- Easy to find the information and navigate.
- Extremely well done.



- **Website**

- <https://www.lyons-chamber.com/>
- <https://www.lyonsrec.org/>
- Chamber website also well done with lots of good information and easy to navigate.
- Lyons Recreation Commission site – lots of information and details about community events.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Average central Kansas town.
- Clean and neat community.
- Pleasantly surprised with amount of commerce.
- Courthouse square is absolutely beautiful.
Streetscape in that area is great.



- Easy to drive through with highways leading you through.
- Can be a benefit to stop along the way for specific travel needs.
- Can be a drawback because it’s so easy to keep on driving.
- Better highway signage might be helpful to direct people to businesses not on highways.
- No real sense of “We’re here!” until you see the courthouse.
- Bolder statement needed for downtown area.

“Five-Minute” Impression

- Land of Quivira welcome signs have been there a long time and seem dated, lacking luster. Maybe time to update?



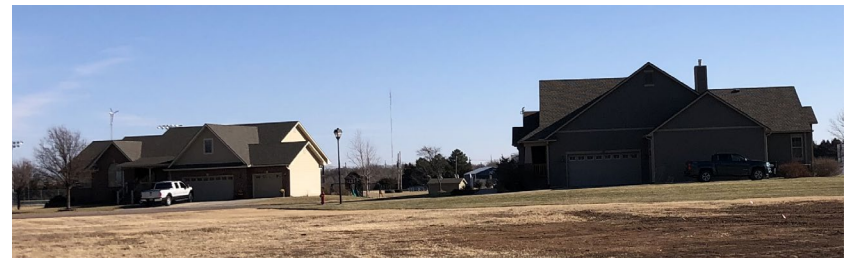
“Five-Minute” Impression

- From the north – vacant, abandoned, and/or blighted residential and commercial properties and some junk noticeable on the properties.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- From the south – Salt mine, golf course and nicer homes observed.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- From the west – a lot of retail and restaurants.
- From the east – older area of town, but neat and tidy. Saw Mahindra plant and Celebration Center and hotel.



Downtown Business Area

- Very nice downtown square. Many buildings in good condition however some owners/managers have not paid attention to outside building conditions.
- Inside totally different story – lots of good work renovating buildings inside to make them welcoming.
- Courthouse creates desire to park and walk around.



Downtown Business Area

- One block off of square in any direction there are more empty buildings.
- Some retail closed on Mondays.
- Signage on buildings was good.
- Customer service, merchandise and food were all very good. All questions answered and great assistance provided.



Downtown Business Area

- As with many small towns unfortunately service businesses and professional offices have taken up prime retail space.
- There is a decent mix, however, making it worth walking around.



Businesses observed downtown:

- Women's boutique
- Gift shops
- Coffee shop – great customer service (friendly and informative). Very impressed with multi-purpose use of the business.
- Flower shop – unique product lines, helpful owner. Would not have found the restaurant we ate at were it not for the flower shop recommendation. Restaurant appeared to be just a “beer joint” and could maybe use better signage.



Businesses observed downtown:

- Bar and grill
- Banks
- Insurance offices
- Financial services
- Title company
- Hardware
- Furniture
- Photography
- Phone company
- Landromat
- Thrift store
- Salons



Downtown Business Area

- Great customer service at every business visited!
- Bar and grill has great food and great interior, but needs an external facelift.



Downtown Business Area

- On the business side of the streets downtown, no public amenities observed.
- Landscaping at the courthouse was nice, not much else in the way of streetscaping.
- Plenty of parking, though spaces seemed narrow.
- Some benches around courthouse. No notice of trash receptacles downtown, though there are some near benches.



Downtown Business Area

- No public restrooms observed downtown, though coffee shop offered restrooms and complimentary water even if nothing was purchased.
- Public Wi-Fi available in some businesses.
- Some streets/highway crossings downtown had no assistance, which gave a feel that pedestrians had to cross at their own risk.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Number of retail businesses on West Highway 56 – average from the standpoint of attractiveness and ease of access.
- Ace Hardware was AMAZING – inventory was more than anticipated, friendly employees (visitors left their cards in hopes owners would open a store like it in Russell).
- Not sure why grocery store moved from downtown to highway – seems out of the way for residents.



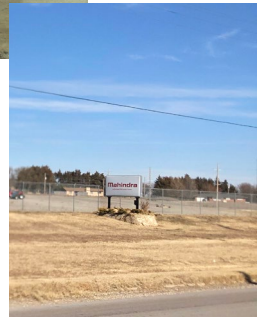
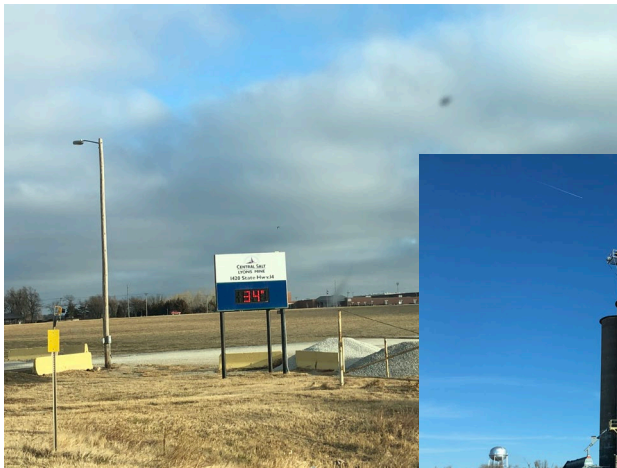
- *A drive-by is not how industry will find you, check with your local Eco Devo director to make sure your site is listed on LocationOne @ Kansas Department of Commerce.*

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

- Industrial park in northeast area of town, but industry seems to be spread out (Mahindra on east, salt mine on south).
- Industrial park seems to have area for expansion if the land is available.
- Noticed industrial park signage while leaving town.



- Hospital and emergency care facilities were easy to find and appear functional.
- Hospital well maintained.
- Seems to be an adequate supply of health care services – except behavioral healthcare providers were not observed.
- Observed 2 dentists, geriatric specialist, physician's assistant, family medicine, 3-4 chiropractors, 2 eye doctors.



- Long-term care/assisted living located close to hospital.
- Observed Waldron Place Senior Living, Country Living of Lyons, Good Samaritan Society.
- Very nice facilities!



- Impressed with the number of brick homes!
- Nice selection of mid- to high-end housing.
- Very impressed that there were only a few Morton-style/oversized shed buildings. Planning and zoning boards are doing a great job with that.



- Great older homes in the mid-town area that are in need of some TLC for those willing to take on a fixer-upper.
- Did not see a lot of homes for sale, but there were some at different price points.



- Southeast and southwest quadrants of town have the higher end values and newer construction.
- Area north of Highway 56 appears to be the original part of town and has some blighted properties, smaller housing, and older units – great potential for rehab and rental inventory.
- Some other properties that could use rehab observed.

- For rental properties, duplexes and Smart Suite Apartments were observed.
- Did see a few signs in front of homes with landlord's phone number and a new structure on the south end of town advertising for rentals.



Lyons

Kansas

• Total Housing Units	1,716	
• Total Occupied Houses	1,503 (87.5%)	(89.1%)
• Vacant Houses	213 (12.5%)	(10.9%)
• Owner Occupied	1,028 (68.4%)	(66.4%)
• Renter Occupied	475 (31.6%)	(33.6%)

May be a need for clean-up/demolition of older properties

Source: American FactFinder - U.S. Census 2010

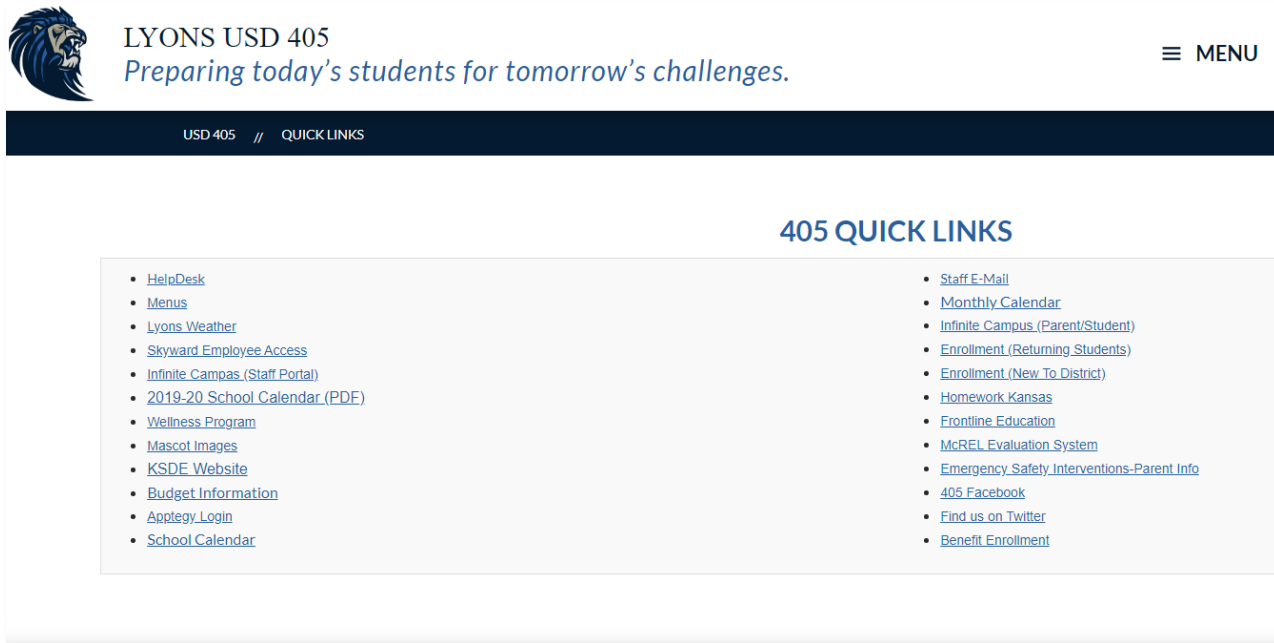
(2010 data used - Yearly estimates (e.g. 2017) have a +/- 100 margin of error. New official data will be available with the 2020 Census)

- Two elementary schools observed as well as a middle/senior high school. All well maintained.
- Signage on schools was hard to read, except for middle and high schools.
- Observed Frisbie Education Center/District Office.
- Middle School/High School facilities especially impressive.



Were there sources online or in the community that helped to assess the quality of the education system?

- Two-thirds of the visitors indicated they didn't find any information.
- Another was aware of several online sources that provide this information.



The screenshot shows the Lyons USD 405 website. At the top left is the Lyons USD 405 logo, a blue lion head. To its right is the text "LYONS USD 405" and the tagline "Preparing today's students for tomorrow's challenges." At the top right is a "MENU" button. Below the header is a dark blue navigation bar with "USD 405 // QUICK LINKS". The main content area is titled "405 QUICK LINKS" and contains two columns of links. The left column includes links to HelpDesk, Menus, Lyons Weather, Skyward Employee Access, Infinite Campus (Staff Portal), 2019-20 School Calendar (PDF), Wellness Program, Mascot Images, KSDE Website, Budget Information, Applegy Login, and School Calendar. The right column includes links to Staff E-Mail, Monthly Calendar, Infinite Campus (Parent/Student), Enrollment (Returning Students), Enrollment (New To District), Homework Kansas, Frontline Education, McREL Evaluation System, Emergency Safety Interventions-Parent Info, 405 Facebook, Find us on Twitter, and Benefit Enrollment.

LYONS USD 405
Preparing today's students for tomorrow's challenges.

USD 405 // QUICK LINKS

405 QUICK LINKS

- [HelpDesk](#)
- [Menus](#)
- [Lyons Weather](#)
- [Skyward Employee Access](#)
- [Infinite Campus \(Staff Portal\)](#)
- [2019-20 School Calendar \(PDF\)](#)
- [Wellness Program](#)
- [Mascot Images](#)
- [KSDE Website](#)
- [Budget Information](#)
- [Applegy Login](#)
- [School Calendar](#)
- [Staff E-Mail](#)
- [Monthly Calendar](#)
- [Infinite Campus \(Parent/Student\)](#)
- [Enrollment \(Returning Students\)](#)
- [Enrollment \(New To District\)](#)
- [Homework Kansas](#)
- [Frontline Education](#)
- [McREL Evaluation System](#)
- [Emergency Safety Interventions-Parent Info](#)
- [405 Facebook](#)
- [Find us on Twitter](#)
- [Benefit Enrollment](#)

Comments: Visitors noted that online information indicates there are approximately 3 in-home licensed daycare providers. There is also a Cornerstone pre-school facility and Head Start program.

Rice County Data:

- **Number of Children Under Age 6 Potentially Needing Childcare:** 411
- **Licensed Family & Group Day Care Homes:** 7
- **Childcare Centers:** 3
- **Programs That Provide Care During Nontraditional Hours:** 0
- **Desired Capacity of Child Care Centers** 224
- **Extent that desired capacity meets potential need** 55%
- **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

- Observed many denominations: Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, Nazarene, Catholic, Community.
- Physical appearance of buildings was good.
- Some options open to non-denominational worshipers.
- Other than a potential pre-school at the Baptist church, no faith-based community services observed.



- Observed signs for Rotary and the Rotary Community Service Building.
- Saw some information about the Lions Club, but not sure if it's still active.
- Saw several nonprofit organizations, including Rice County Community Foundation.
- Also noted Boy Scout building.



- Overall community has taken care of streets, parking, lighting.
- Landscaping along with streetscapes could be developed – especially with two highways coming through town.
- Some street signs are very faded, even in nicer neighborhoods.



- Might be some opportunities for aesthetic improvement coming through the west commercial district. No cohesiveness or landscaping, just a bunch of businesses along the highway.
- Coming into town from the south, visitors see the wonderful schools, and beautiful golf course.
- Would be nice to see the appeal of the square extend even a block off the square (landscaping/building appeal/charm).



- Nice new city hall and library complex.
- Former city hall/library appears abandoned.
- City building was easy to find.



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- New fire station.
- Police station appears to be in an older building, a little outdated – an old gas station?
- Could police department move to former city building?



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

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

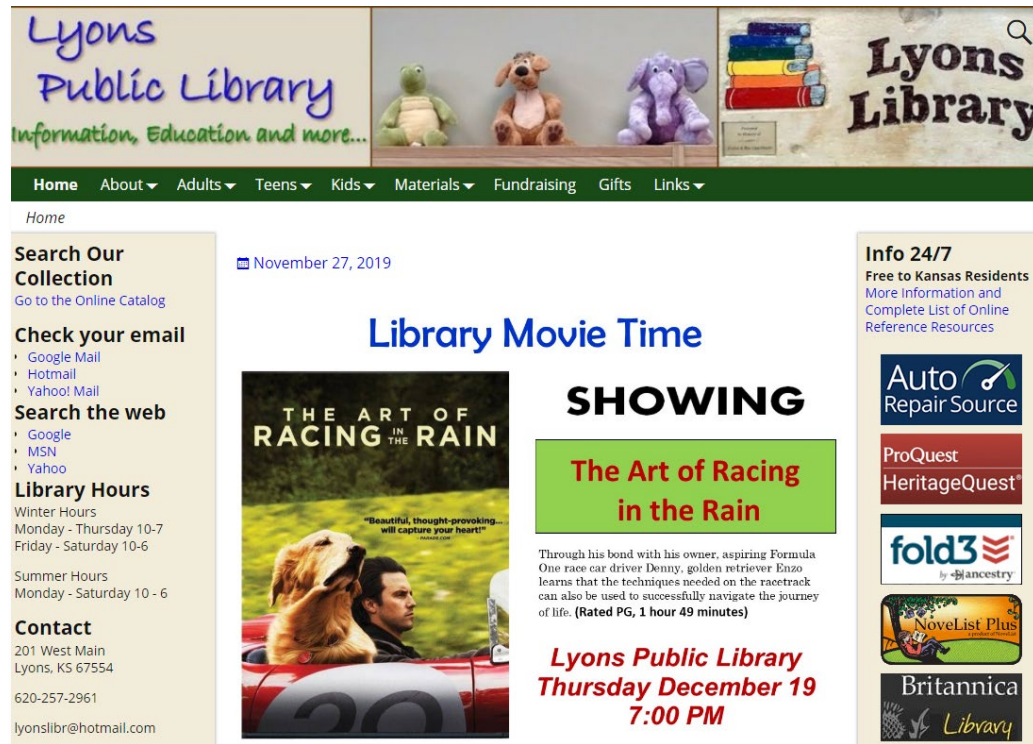


Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Emergency services complex is very impressive!
- EMS is located with county health department.
- Makes sense to have in one place.
- Makes statement that community is committed to state of the art facilities for emergency services.



- As mentioned earlier it is sharing a building with city hall.
- Website has current information about library events. A good resource to get more details about the library.



- Large number of sports facilities, parks, and green spaces observed.
- Swimming park, ball parks – all well maintained.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- “Land of Quivira”
- The Quivira image ties into a historic marker about 3 miles from town, but didn’t understand the tie in between the welcome signs and marker.
- Wonderful golf course!
- Lyons Rec Commission seems very active in planning community events – great website and promotion.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- Brochure found at retail stores highlighting Christmas activities. Brochure was very well done and a great invitation to come back, not just to Lyons, but surrounding communities.
- Hometown Heroes event in partnership with the Lyons Chamber of Commerce and the City of Lyons. Honor a veteran with the purchase of a banner to fly downtown in May and November.

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- None noted.
- Visitors did not see any public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds or regional heritage sites.
- They felt if there were any locations or facilities that fall into this category, it's a secret to outsiders and not being promoted well.
- Visitors did see something online about a hiking trail, but never could find any specific information about it.

Visitor's Center

- Could not find a visitor's center, but did visit the Community Foundation building to get more information.
- Found that the Chamber of Commerce does not have a physical office location, and no Main Street program.
- Economic Development office is in the courthouse.

What would bring you back?

- Brew 56, County Seat and Ace Hardware would bring the visitors back to town.
- They would like to stop by the Rustic Arrow on a day that it is open.
- Great food and merchandise at restaurants and specialty shops.
- Yours Truly.

Most Positive Observations

- Friendly people and a nice downtown area.
- Food and retail stores are a great asset to draw people back into the community.
- Great selection of goods and services.
- Quality housing and rental options.
- Hospital and healthcare are updated and meeting community needs.
- Neighborhoods are well kept.
- Veterans banners were simply amazing.
- A lot of pride in properties or well-policed ordinances.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- A dependence directly and indirectly on commodity markets (ag, oil/gas, salt).
- Housing conditions on north end of town needs to be cleaned up.
- Signage and entrances to community.
- Some large commercial buildings appear to be vacant or used as storage and could be used for artwork to make community more welcoming.
- Focus on area immediately outside of the block of the square – up to 4 blocks to make buildings more inviting.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

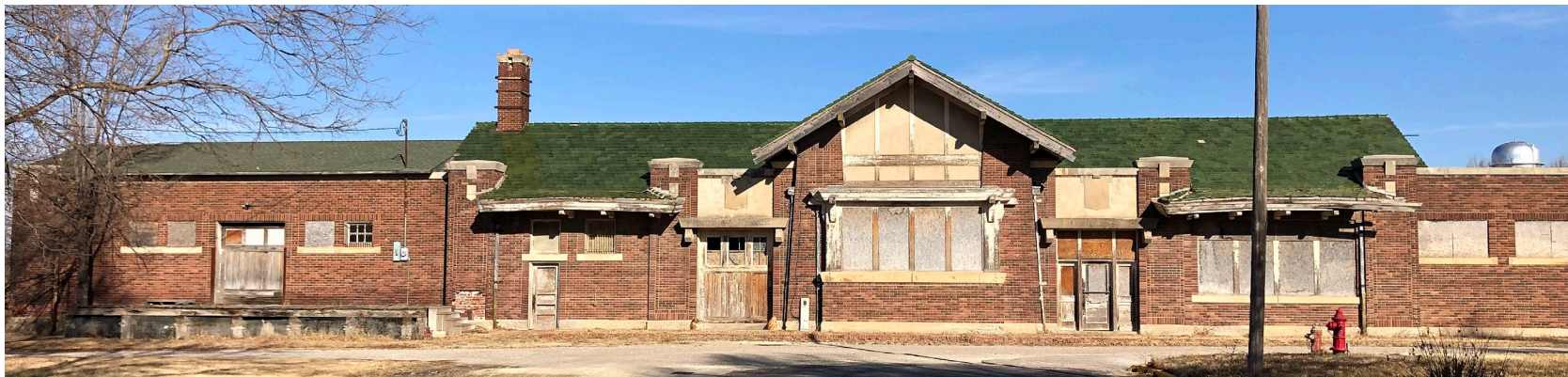
- Downtown is somewhat detached from the major commercial districts – which may not be an obstacle, but would require additional marketing and signage to drive visitors downtown, and that's not there in abundance currently.

What will you remember?

- Lyons' wide variety of retail and service businesses.
- Some very nice homes and nice people.
- Food establishments.
- Housing inventory – especially the number of brick homes.
- The number of senior housing and skilled care facilities promotes the message that seniors can stay in their hometown as they age.

What will you remember?

- You have a fabulous old train depot! Do something with it!
- Why is nothing being done with the amazing train depot? It's a goldmine opportunity!
- Would make a great civic center, restaurant/bar, brewery.
- Capitalize on this!!!



Thanks to our leadership team and volunteer visitors!

Set Next Steps:

- Which group will lead the discussion?

Contact us if you need resources or have questions:

Jan Steen
Community Vitality Specialist,
K-State Research and Extension
620.200.0665
jmsteen@ksu.edu

Wendy Hughes
County Extension Director
K-State Research and Extension Rice Co.
620.257.5131
ws Hughes@ksu.edu

K-State Research and Extension

Kansas 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. (*Lyons participated in the 1970s-80s – 3 years*)



K-State Research and Extension

Youth Community Perceptions: <https://bit.ly/33GGwGS>

Helps youth learn to identify needs and opportunities in their community while working with local leaders to make a difference!

Assists Youth and Communities in:

- Creating opportunities for youth to have a voice in the community.
- Involving and familiarizing youth with local government and community processes.
- Bridging the gap between youth, local government, and the community.

YOUTH
COMMUNITY
PERCEPTIONS



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/>

Kansas Department of Agriculture in partnership with other state organizations, will work with your community to find the best opportunities for growth using the assets of your region.

GROW IN KANSAS



STRATEGIC GROWTH INITIATIVE

A pilot program for the proactive recruitment of food, agriculture and UAS/small aircraft business to Kansas.

For more information on the Strategic Growth Initiative, please contact
Russell Plaschka, Ag Business Development Program Manager
785-564-7466 • Russell.Plaschka@ks.gov
agriculture.ks.gov/GrowAg