

First Impressions

Sterling, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation

The logo for the Dane G. Hansen Foundation features a stylized tan arch above the text. The text "DANE G. HANSEN" is in a large, 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. A second, lower tan arch is positioned behind the word "FOUNDATION".

DANE G. HANSEN

F O U N D A T I O N

- Sterling applied to participate in the program and was matched with Cheney as a partner community.
- Volunteers were trained in each community.
- Visitors from Cheney came to Sterling on 9/20, 9/23, 10/1, and 10/19/2019
- Results are presented to the public tonight.
- Sterling 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 2,328
(down 11.88% since 2000*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2017 Estimate is 2,230
(down 15.59% since 2000 **KS= +8.0%**)
- 91.3% high school or GED, 32.4% college educated,
– **90.5% HS or equivalency, KS 32.4% college education,**
- Poverty rate 20.8% **(KS=12.8%)**
- Median Age 35.1 years **(36.3)**
- Median household income is \$45,469 **(\$55,477)**

* 2000 Census was 2,642

- **Website**

- <https://www.sterling-kansas.com/>

- Website easily accessed, very informative and thorough.
- Professional. Accurately reflected what was seen in the community.
- No info on things to do, businesses, restaurants – only a link to the golf course, swimming pool, and lodging. Nothing about happenings in town.



- **Facebook**

City of Sterling, KS

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

Sterling KS Community Bulletin Board

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/563587290513742/>

Main Street Sterling

<https://www.facebook.com/main.sterling/>



Sterling KS
Community Bulletin
Board

Public group

About

Discussion

Members



- **Facebook**
- Main Street Sterling Facebook page had shares from other businesses.
- Sterling KS Community Bulletin Board – couldn't read any information without joining the group.



Sterling KS
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“Five-Minute” Impression

- Obviously people are proud of the community.
- Downtown is impressive with the signage and curbside seating options.
- Great wayfinder signage.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Individual residences well maintained – old and new. Some immaculate homes on K-14.
- Newer streets on east side of town, still a lot of roads that aren’t paved. Noticed some very nice homes with dirt streets.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Well maintained buildings and infrastructure.
- Trees, street lights, and street signs – Broadway Street is beautiful.
- Storefronts appeared full to some visitors, others noted some empty buildings. A variety of businesses!



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Fall décor on street signs/lamp posts.
- Nice brick “Sterling” sign when entering from the south.
- New Casey’s and Sonic were attractive from the north.
- Loved the brick down the middle of the sidewalks.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Could see the water tower entering from the south from a mile out – it needs a better paint job.
- “Thought it was rusted, but when we got closer we found it was painted brown with cream-colored lettering...”
- Out of place.



Downtown Business Area

- Most structures well maintained. Business owners seem to have a good feeling of great care and concern for their businesses.
- Even vacant buildings were not eyesores.
- Most buildings occupied.



Downtown Business Area

- Walking down the street it was hard to see the names of the businesses. Maybe more businesses could put their names and hours on front doors/windows?



Downtown Business Area

Businesses observed in the downtown area:

- Dillons with a good selection.
- Restaurants – Café, pastry shop, clothing for sale.
- Wellness center.
- Boutique – tried to go in but the doors were locked even though Facebook said it would be open.



Downtown Business Area

Businesses observed in the downtown area (continued):

- Motel
- Funeral home
- Several churches
- Storage facility
- Bank
- Pharmacy – very small, could have more retail.
- Flower Shop
- Jacam Chemical
- Insurance company
- Gas station
- Post office; mail service business
- Bowling alley
- Impressive lumberyard



Customer Service:

- Reports of generally good customer care in most instances; one report of average customer service – helpful and polite, but lack of enthusiasm.
- Very kind and welcoming at the café.
- Flower shop was friendly; invited to look at other items in the back.
- TNT - very friendly young man took order and was inviting/helpful.



Public Amenities:

- Benches on the main street. Some noted there should be more.
- Some tables in front of businesses seen.
- Some noticed trash cans downtown, others didn't.
- Did not see any public restrooms or drinking fountains downtown. No mention of public wi-fi.



Lanscaping/Streetscaping

- Good parking – easy access.
- The street lighting and signs are great.
- Downtown business district is easy to walk.
- Enjoyed the small statues, banners on light posts, landscaping.
- Streets were clean.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Noted shopping and fast food available at the north end of town near the college. Relatively new areas and well kept.
- Only found a few blocks on Broadway with additional shopping.
- Crossing areas mid-intersection and crossing signs make it easy to get around.



- *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

- Areas were located west of Broadway as well as one large area right on Broadway.
- Hyatt Life Sciences and United Industries building areas.
- Not sure if there was room for expansion.
- Some did not notice any industrial/commercial areas.



Health Care Services

- Medical center was observed. Staffed by 3 physicians and one nurse practitioner (per website). Very valuable to the community.
- Dental office also observed by some, but not all. No optometrist found.
- Did not see any hospitals or emergency medical services, but hospitals are nearby in Hutchinson or Lyons.
- Noted again the pharmacy, and found a veterinarian.
- Rice County EMS building was noted to be run down and doesn't fit the rest of Broadway.



- Nice area with assisted living/nursing facilities observed by some, but not all.
- Some duplexes and triplexes suited for the elderly.
- Presbyterian Manor



- Appears to be a good mix of housing.
- Homes for sale in a variety of price ranges. Seem to be by the same realtor. Not much of a selection/very few for sale.
- Student housing and some apartments available. Would an apartment building (multi-level) be utilized by college students?
- In speaking with a resident, visitors found out that potential growth areas are in a flood plain.
- Some found no rentals, others noticed a small number.



- Most homes on the east side were well landscaped.
- Smaller type houses on west side could be used for rentals if not already.
- Many pre-1940s homes, most of which are well kept.
- Good job on signs pointing out lots to build on!
- Only saw one home being built. No housing developments. Some homes being remodeled or renovated.
- A few mobile homes. All in good shape.
- Dirt streets noted again.

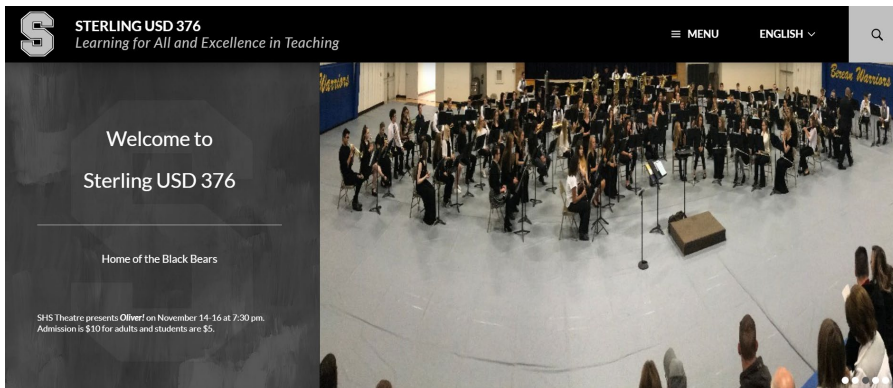


KANSAS

• Total Housing Units	933		
• Total Occupied Houses	786 (84.24%)	(89.1%)	
• Vacant Houses	147 (15.75%)	(10.7%)	
• Owner Occupied	572 (61.3%)	(66.4%)	
• Renter Occupied	214 (22.93%)	(33.6%)	

(Source: American FactFinder, 2010 U.S. Census Data)

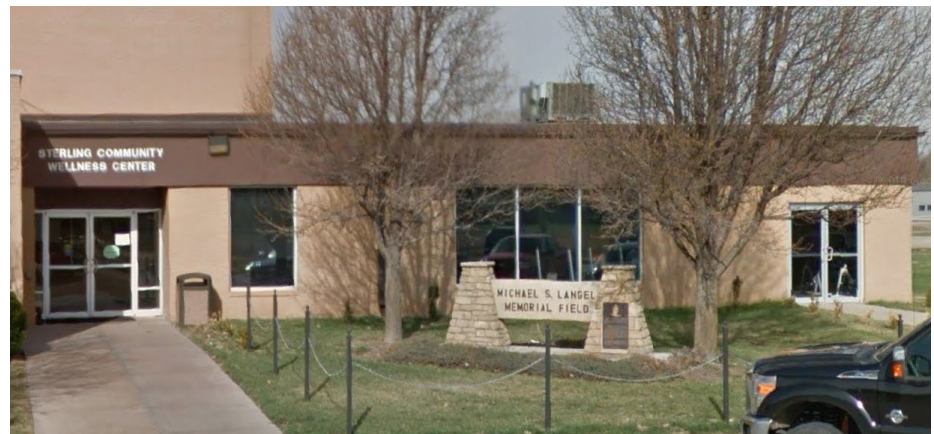
- Some visitors found the USD 376 website, others didn't, or didn't find specific sites for the individual schools.
- Found information about the schools indicating they were good, others couldn't find specific quality results.
- Other sites rate the school system highly, in the top 20 out of 280 in the state.
- College website was also found in searching online.



- Elementary school looked great!
- The playground was the best visitors have ever seen for a public school. Large playground.
- Wrought iron fence made the school look new.
- Liked the small turf soccer field.



- Middle school and high school well maintained. Some didn't see a sign for the middle school.
- High school is dated and architecture seems out of place for the town.
- Community Wellness Center is a plus.



- College had nice curb-appeal when traveling through town.
- Buildings and grounds of Sterling College seem very nice.



Comments: Many couldn't find childcare information online or in the community during the visit. Two visitors saw the church childcare center on Broadway. Indicated it would be nice to have options available online to get more details.



Rice County Data:

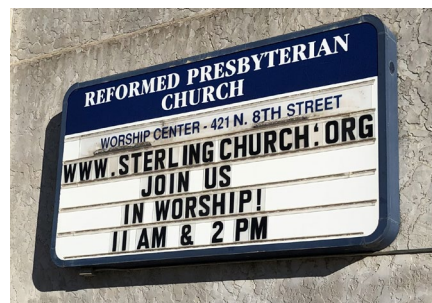
- **Number of Children Under Age 6 Potentially Needing Childcare:** **411**
- **Licensed Family & Group Day Care Homes:** **7**
- **Childcare Centers:** **3**
- **Programs That Provide Care During Nontraditional Hours:** **0**
- **Desired Capacity of Child Care Centers** **224**
- **Extent that desired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

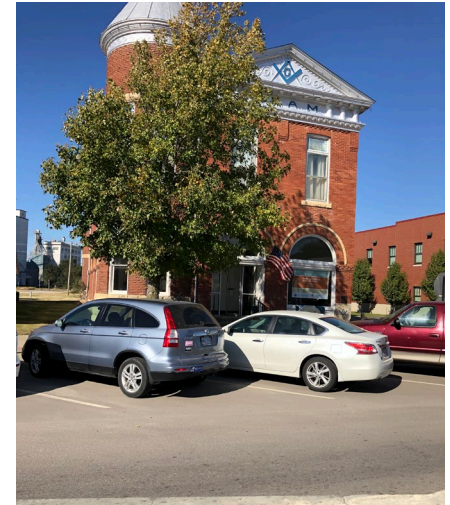
Contact ks.childcareaware.org to get access to local child care specialists.

785-823-3343

- 10 churches listed online. Visitors found up to 6 of them while driving through town.
- Presbyterian connection with college and assisted living center.
- Noticed Presbyterian-associated sign on the side of a building on Broadway.
- Churches observed on Broadway were Methodist, Church of Christ and Presbyterian.
- All well maintained.
- No faith-based community services noted other than childcare.



- One visitor indicated that they didn't see any evidence of civic organizations in town. Maybe the Wellness Center was a non-profit?
- American Legion was found.
- Masonic Lodge found – stately old building on Broadway.
- Did not see any evidence of civic group activity for the groups observed.
- Online there are lists of several boards such as housing authority, park advisory, planning commission if people wish to get involved.
- No civic organization welcome signs or thanks for visiting signs seen.



- Knowledge
for Life*



- Some did not visit city hall or it was closed when they tried.
- Others were well received, felt staff was friendly, and found general information easily.
- City hall is very clean.
- No fliers or info to grab about the town.



Fire, EMS and Police Services



- Found that there were 5 full-time police officers and a volunteer fire department.
- Liked how fire and police were across from each other.
- One visitor did not observe the police or fire presence, another didn't see any police vehicles patrolling during their visit.




Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department

Home Contact Us search


Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt



Kansas Insurance Department
420 SW 9th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1000
Consumer Hotline: 800-432-2484 (KS only)
[Email Us](#) | Phone: 785-296-3000

- > The Department
- > Auto/Home
- > Health/Life
- > Insurance Fraud & Education
- > Producer/Agency Services
- > Company Services
- > Other Services



HOME : ISO

ISO Public Protection Classification

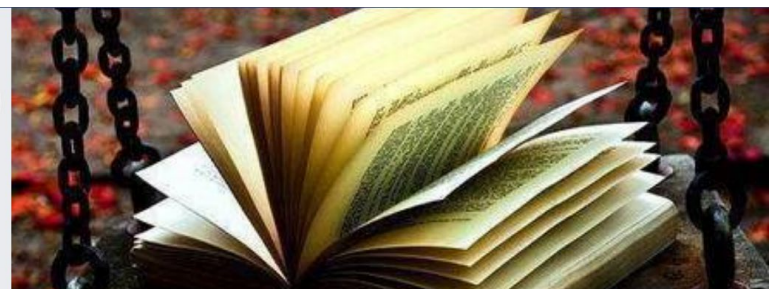
Most U.S. insurers of home and business properties use Insurance Services Office's (ISO) Property Protection Classification (PPC) in calculating premiums. In general, the price of insurance in a community with a good PPC is lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal.

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

- Most visitors noticed the library but did not stop in.
- Felt the building was old, but nice. Historic. Near downtown park.
- Was clear when it was open because of electronic sign in window.
- Felt Facebook page had a good listing of events to offer.



- One visitor only found the park at the lake and school playground. Nothing on the west side of town seen.
- Two city parks observed within walking distance of downtown. One was a bench on a corner with some green space, another was an open grass area near the water tower.
- Baseball fields and tennis courts by school could use some maintenance. Does the high school share football facilities with the college?



- Great city lake park with RV campground!
- Great walking path.
- Most of the playground equipment impressive at lake. East side could use some updating.



- Liked the basketball courts, bike station, water fountain at playground, covered pavilions at the lake park.
- Splash pad was nice – maybe add some benches there.
- Neat bridge to the island.
- Trash cans were overflowing on the island area at lake.



- Some homes around the lake need to be cleaned up.



Well-known for an attraction or event?

- Community celebration in July.
- Fine arts activities are prevalent. The high school and college promote this.
- Known for Sterling College.
- A nice pool house and concession stand area.
- Some did not notice a slogan, others did. Felt “Where the quality of life shines” is ok, but doesn’t say much about the town and can be easily forgotten.
- No community events listed on website. Some didn’t see any events advertised around town.



Any activities taking place that would be of interest to visitors and residents?

- At the time of some visits, college and public school activities were taking place.
- The Old Fashioned 4th from the website.
- Didn't see any community events advertised in town. Visitor recommended a digital sign.
- Warrior Fest



Schedule of Events

9:30 a.m. to Noon - Vendors
downtown

9:30 a.m. to Noon - SC teams
downtown with fun activities

9:30 Sterling Chamber Express
Train rides

10:30 a.m. SC Football Team
signs Autographs

1:00 p.m. SC Women's Soccer vs.
Central Christian College

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Did not see the golf course or had difficulty finding it.
- City lake and RV campground.
- Studio 96 on Broadway. Looked cool but had to Google what it was because there were no signs outside indicating what it was. Tinted windows on Broadway so couldn't see what was actually inside (not just Studio 96).



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Small “Sterling” mural on a gray building across from City Hall. Might be opportunity to add to it?
- Bed and Breakfast found at Sterling Lake.
- Public swimming pool. Visitors wondered why there was still water in the pool so late in the year?



Visitor's Center

- City offices were visited. No obvious visitor's center,
- One visitor searching for city hall online found an address that didn't match the actual location.
- Main Street Association was found online, however not all of the links on the website appeared to work at the time of browsing.



3. City of Sterling

Government Offices, City, Village & Township Government,...

[Website](#)

(620) 278-2100

117 N Broadway Ave
Sterling, KS 67579

What would bring you back?

- Not really any restaurants, specialty shops, or attractions that would bring one of the visitors back, though they indicated there was a nice variety here.
- Sterling Lake and Sterling College.
- Would like to have checked out the Boutique. TNT Dairyland was great (adding outside umbrellas would be nice in the heat). Ice cream was very good. Looked like a place you'd find on old Route 66.
- Mexican restaurant was very good.



Most Positive Observations

- Nice community with a great number of businesses. 10 fairly large businesses and job opportunities.
- College town. Very attractive downtown.
- Broadway was very clean.
- Several projects going on around town showing that there are community improvements happening.
- Sterling College – great opportunity for locals to take classes or employers to offer continuing education training to employees.
- Homes were well maintained.
- It's obvious a majority of residents and businesses take pride in their properties.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Similar to other small Kansas communities. A need for growth and there's competition from larger cities.
- Somewhat landlocked due to flood plain, so limited opportunity for housing/business development sites outside of what is there already.
- Some very nice homes built on dirt roads. May be a city maintenance nightmare as homeowners may complain about potholes. Dirt roads were rough during visit and not well maintained.
- A city employee instructed one visitor to go to Lyons to shop instead of promoting Sterling's local businesses.
- Good distance from the nearest large city. Are there many job opportunities outside of the school district/college?

What will you remember?

- How well things were taken care of in the city!
- Well kept downtown and school campuses.
- Impressive website/website didn't provide much info.
- Splash pad and lake area.
- Street lights and streetscaping were great.
- Older homes.
- They have a stop light. Don't know why.
- Nice hometown feel.
- TNT Dairyland.
- Amazing elementary school playground.
- History and stately college buildings.
- "The ugly water tower. The outdated high school."

Thank our leadership team and volunteer visitors!

Set Next Steps:

- Which group will lead the discussion?

Contact me if you need resources or have questions:

Jan Steen

Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

620.200.0665

jmsteen@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.



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/>



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