

# First Impressions

## Bern, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- Bern asked for First Impressions, Beattie agreed to be its partner; 45 min drive.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey in January and took photos.
- Three Beattie visitors visited in February.
- Results presented by zoom and video recording.
- Bern 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**

- 46% of Kansas households moved between 1995-1999
- 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 2 people to a 200 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/>

- **2020 Census:** 161  
2010 Census: 167  
(down 3.6% since 2010) 145 **KS= +3.0%**
- Median household income is \$60,000 **(\$61,091)**
- Median Age 36.9 years **(37.2)**
- 65 years and older 32.4%



- **Website**

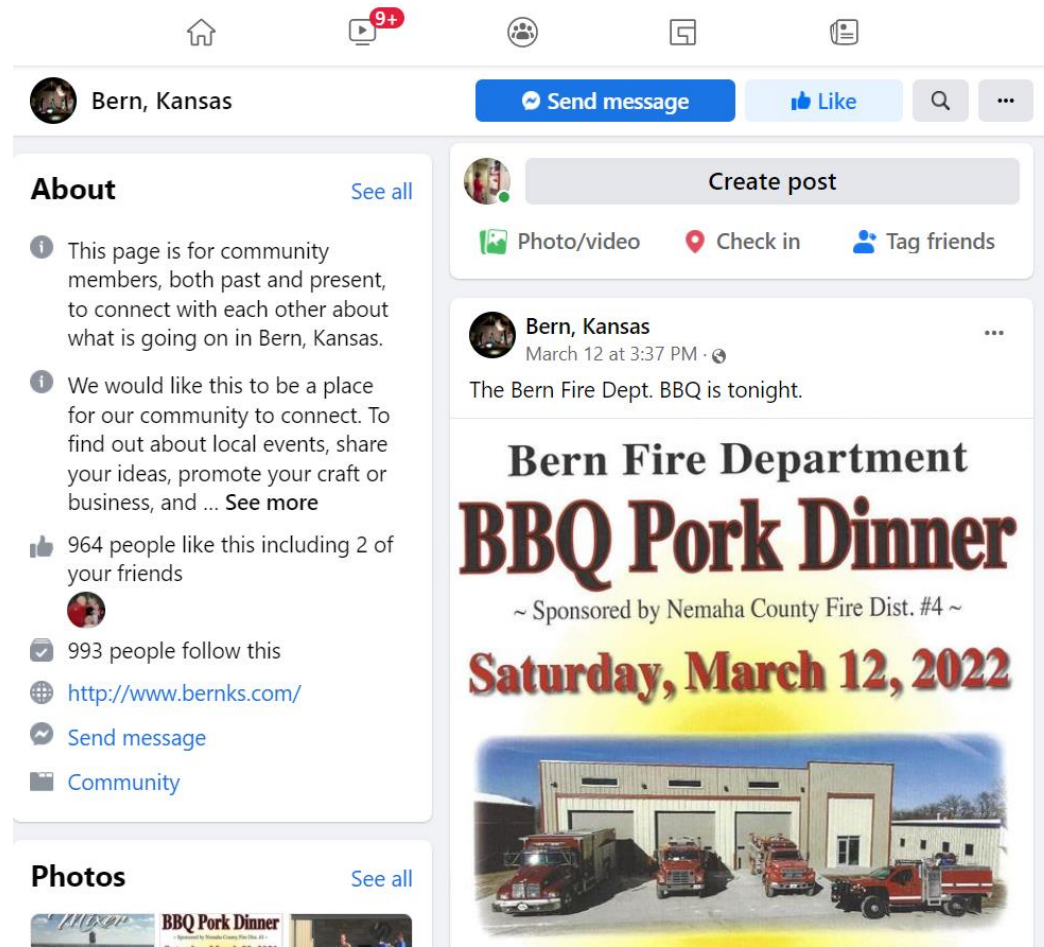
- No city website

- Named after Bern, Switzerland (Wikipedia)
- Online impression made me think of a small quiet town, but instead saw a town with several businesses and industry with diverse employment opportunities.

## FaceBook Bern, Kansas

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

- A very active community page with events and information.



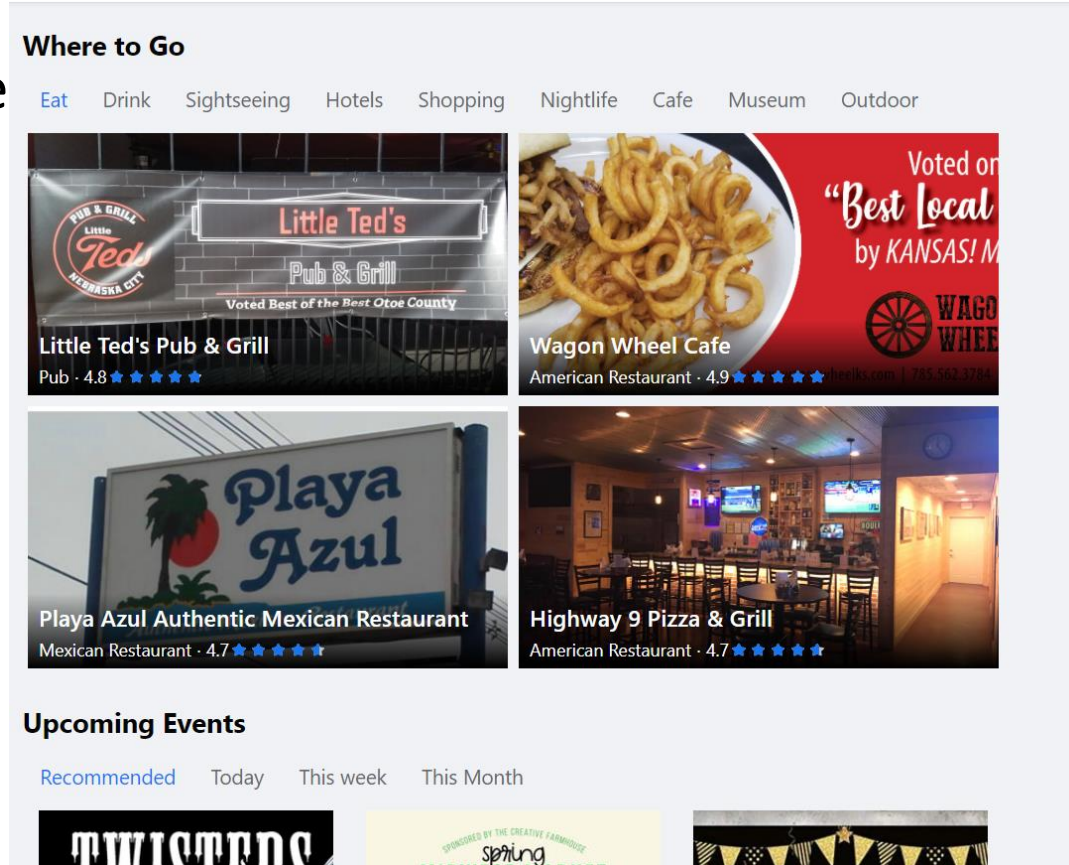
Retrieved from internet 4/5/2022

- **FaceBook**

## Bern, Kansas

<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Bern-Kansas/105641846135015/>

A facebook generated page



Retrieved from internet 4/5/2022

- **Facebook**

*Consider gathering your people for “coffee and calendars” and develop opportunities to co-market.*



Pages



**Bern, Kansas**

City · 287 like this

Bern is a city in Nemaha County, Kansas, United States. As of the 2010 census, the city population was 166. HistoryBern had...



**Bern, Kansas**

Page · Community · 964 like this

This page is for community members, both past and present, to connect with each other about what is going on in Bern,...

👤 Brenda Bauman Swank and 2 other friends like this



**Kansas State University** ✓

College & university · 0.4 mi · 163K like this

Welcome to the official Facebook page of Kansas State University! Founded on Feb. 16, 1863, K-State is home to mor...

👤 Madeline Bolding and 153 other friends like this



**Kansas Sampler Foundation**

\$ · Nonprofit Organization · 4.6 out of 5 · Open now · 3.6K like this

Our mission is to preserve and sustain rural culture. We're an Inman-based 501c(3) public non-profit organization. Founded...

👤 Chandra Ruthstrom and 40 other friends like this



**Columbus, Kansas Chamber of Commerce**

Community Organization · 3.2 out of 5 · Closed now · 2.3K like this

<http://www.chamberofcommerce.com/>

<http://www.columbusdayballoons.com/>

👤 Christina Holmes and 2 other friends like this



**Kansas Democratic Party** ✓

Page · Political Party · 50 mi · Open now · 41,286 followers



# “Five-Minute” Impression

- Nice and clean, quiet except around the industrial park west end of town. Welcome signs, streets and buildings kept up well, signage good, street signs up.
- This town has a lot going on. It is very diverse with houses, businesses, industrial plant that was noisy, and recreational areas.
- Quite a few businesses, large and small, cute park, nice ballfield. More housing than expected.



# “Five-Minute” Impression



# “Five-Minute” Impression





# Downtown Business Area

- Locker, Polaris, AHRS Construction and Veterinary clinic were courteous and friendly. Good customer service, busy but still ask if they could help in any way.





# Downtown Business Area

- Mostly historic brick building “feel” with some modern metal business buildings. The city park had a prominent “Bern High School” upcoming event/activity sign that was a great idea and eye catching. Most of the buildings had identifiable signage, and the streets appeared to be maintained.









# Industrial Parks/Commercial

*“More jobs than residents, expansion within existing businesses.” Bern First Impressions Team*

- The industrial areas were on the edges of town, so expanding would not be a problem, for the right price to the farmers who own the land around of course.



- *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.*

- First Responders for Medical Emergencies
- *If you get a web presence, consider showing health care services in terms of minutes.*
  - *Sabetha Community Hospital- 18 Minutes*
  - *Nemaha Valley Community Hospital- 17 minutes*

## KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 88
- Occupied Housing Units 66 (75%) 90%
- Owner Occupied 62.5% 66.3%
- Households w/a computer: 94.6% 91.7%
- Households w/Internet Subscript.: 91.1% 84.5%
- Living in the same house 1 year ago: 73.6% 84.1%
- 9.8% moved to Bern from a different state,*
- 3.0% from a different county*

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/> table 1101, S2801

- Only saw 1 house for sale, and it had a pending contract.
- The housing ranged from affordable (manufactured homes & RV/Camper lot), remodeled well-built older homes, and high end custom newer built.
- There was also a small apartment complex (Lik Home Apartments) that we did not expect. It was small but I'm sure a nice option to have in town.











## Rental Housing

- Wilson Rentals and RV Park
- One complex (5 units?) on the east of downtown.
- We assumed there were rentals.

*Does City Hall have a list of landlords?*



- No schools in town.
- ..it appears that the former Bern High School building is being used by Lortscher Ag Service (semi-trailers parked in the school lot) or the pet food plant. There was no signage to distinguish who owned/used it.



***If you get a web presence:***

- *Schools are important to people considering moving to Bern.*
- *Where do students attend school?*
- *Tell them “Why we love our schools.”*

## Comments:

- No visitors saw evidence of child care.
- *Does City Hall have a list of childcare providers?*

## Nemaha County Data:

- **Desired Capacity of existing Child Care** **432**
- **Number of Children Under Age 6 potentially needing care:** **579**
- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential need** **75%**
- 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](https://ks.childcareaware.org) to access local child care specialists.  
785-823-3343

Source <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/292534183/10/>



- One church, United Methodist Church. Very nice appearing church building with a front circle drive with lots of parking. I didn't notice any faith-based community services.
- There was a Methodist Church in town. It was fairly good sized, good parking, nice looking building.



- American Legion and Auxiliary, Bern Caring Group, and Bern Community Support Group. Did not observe civic activity.
- I didn't notice any organizational signs. I noticed an activity flyer for a Superbowl watch party or a Valentines party in a downtown building window.





- Good streets and upkeep of city buildings; most of this town is kept up very well.
- We were very impressed with the streets in town. Most all were concrete and in great shape. Very few were even gravel.
- I don't recall there being many sidewalks around town, other than in downtown.
- Not sure on lighting, as we went during the day and failed to take note.
- There were restrooms in the city park, but they were not open due to time of year.

- *No visitors saw or visited city hall*

# Fire, EMS and Police Services

- The fire station north of the city park looked to be relatively new and was a very nice building. There wasn't signage for it, although we did see an old one leaning against the building to the west.



Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department Home Contact Us search GO

**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

[f](#) [t](#)

**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

[The Department](#)  
[Auto/Home](#)  
[Health/Life](#)  
[Insurance Fraud & Education](#)  
[Producer/Agency Services](#)  
[Company Services](#)  
[Other Services](#)



- There was a Library in the downtown area, with hours posted. It looks to be open a lot, only closed Sunday and Tuesday, and there was 1 night that it was open late.



- City Park is centralized with modern a playground-restrooms-large shelter house picnic area. The ballpark has restrooms, covered seating, and a large rocked parking lot with what appeared to be a self-serve recycling trailer.
- The city park is nice, but only about a quarter to half a block big, so not really a walking track.
- The baseball field is on the south end of town. The bleachers and ball shack look to be older but I'm sure they do the job.









## **Well-Known for an attraction or event?**

- I have heard of the town's large fireworks show every July that attracts large crowds to celebrate Independence Day (4<sup>th</sup> of July).
- The sign in the town square had a lot of things listed, but for the time we were there, it was just upcoming holidays. We assume that when events are upcoming in the community, they are posted there.



## **Natural or manmade features that can draw people?**

- Swiss Summit in City Park
- “Big or Small, they feed them all!”
  - Ag Businesses supply farmers with seed/fertilizer.
  - Pet Food supplies pets/animals,
  - Meat Locker provides food for human consumption.

## Visitor's Center

- Community Building, not staffed. Library and City Hall buildings are easily accessed on Main Street.
- City Hall or Library would be a natural visitor center as long as someone can be available to greet people. Otherwise, the open businesses will become the city ambassadors (good or bad).

## What would bring you back?

- The meat shop (I like to grill). Maybe Polaris shop.
- Restaurant when it is open?
- RV park is a nice addition to the community.

# Most Positive Observations

- There seems to be a lot going on for a small town. Friendly, well-kept streets and buildings.
- There appears to be a strong, viable employment base to sustain or grow the city population. The overall condition of properties is well-kept. They have a beautiful city park & ballpark. I see the connection of the past with the present through the Bern High School (closed) community activities/events sign in the city park and the school banner/jerseys hanging in the City Hall.

# Most Positive Observations

- We were very impressed with what we found in Bern. It looks like a very nice little community with more going on than one would think. Lots of businesses, small and large, that could bring people to the community to live and work. The city park, basketball court and ball field are nice assets.
- The concrete streets were a surprise. They were awesome!



# Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Housing for Alphia Dog Food Plant, employees are bused in from Topeka morning and night.
- The 14-21-mile proximity to the area county seats (Seneca, Sabetha, Pawnee City NE) could be a positive or negative. With all the town employees for the businesses and manufacturing plant, it seems a local café could be sustained. Cafes are great community hubs for information sharing and deepening fellowship.

# Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- I think Bern faces the same challenges as any other small community. Having to drive 15-20 minutes to get groceries, go to the school, restaurants, etc. can make it hard to draw in more community members.
- Having the industries there in town brings in employment, but also a lot of noise. It was unfortunate that downtown area and super cute city park were right next to it all.

## What will you remember?

- Friendly people.
- The industry and businesses dominate the center of town, and the housing circles around them.
- We were impressed by our tour of Bern.
- More signage, especially in the downtown area, would be nice. I'm sure locals know what every building is, but coming from out of town, there were a handful of buildings that we were unclear what they were.

- ✓ Get to know each other.
- ❑ Do all you can to increase or improve available housing.
  - Housing Resources: [First Friday calls](#)
    - Rural Housing Incentive Districts
    - Kansas Housing Resources
    - Using Land Banks to improve housing
    - Improving Housing: An idea friendly approach.

**NO ONE CAN DO EVERYTHING,  
BUT EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING.**



- ☐ Improve web presence to make your assets known to others
- ☐ Having public wi-fi is like a virtual welcome mat.
- ☐ Is there a need for co-working or remote worker support?
- ☐ Spiff up the ball park bleachers?

**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:**

**Nancy Daniels**

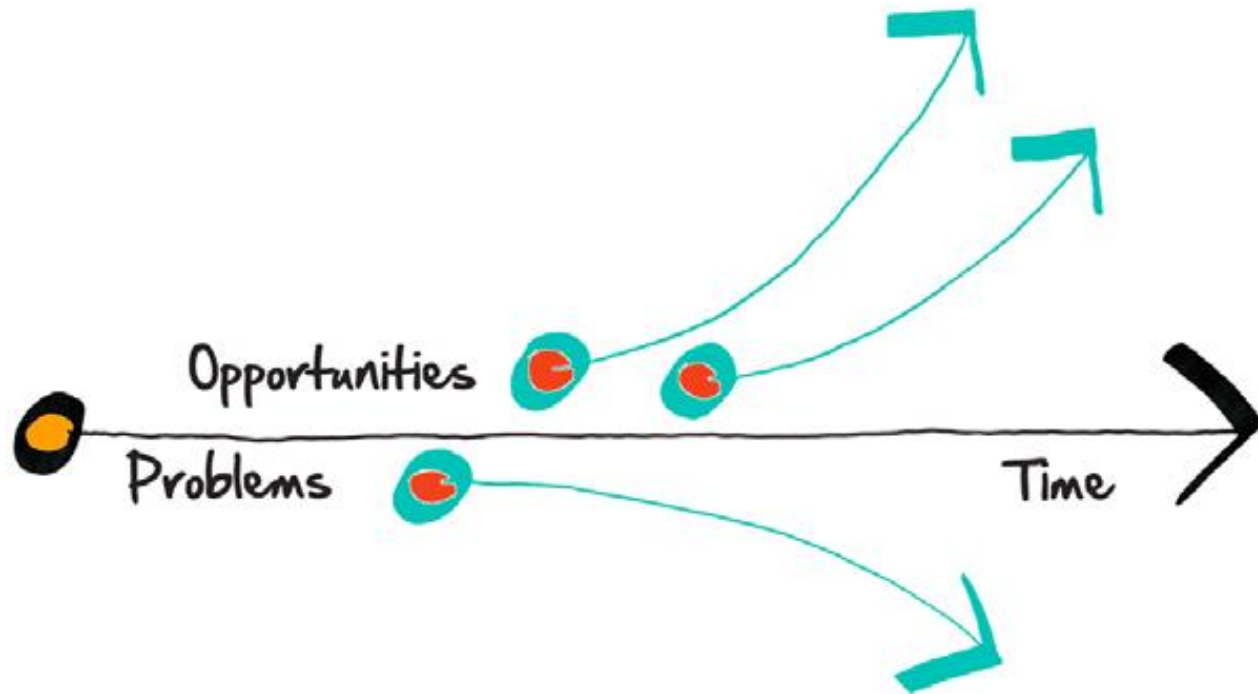
**Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension**

**785.410.6352**

**[nkdaniels@ksu.edu](mailto:nkdaniels@ksu.edu)**

# Asset Based Community Development

People move in the direction of their conversations



## 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.





## Youth Community Perceptions

- 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



**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Community  
Vitality

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension



## K-State Research and Extension

### Contact

**Nancy Daniels**

[nkdaniels@ksu.edu](mailto: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](mailto:nkdaniels@ksu.edu) or [Register here](#)
  - Community Vitality Calendar of events:  
<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/>
  - Previous calls are recorded at  
<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/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



- Kansas Remote Online Initiative
  - Certified Remote Work Professional
  - Certified Remote Work Leader
- *Certification in 4-weeks*
- *A new program every month.*




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

SURVEY	BOOK BECKY TO SPEAK	THE BOOK: SMALL TOWN RULES	SHOP LOCAL VIDEO	SAVEYOUR.TOWN
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## SMALL BIZ SURVIVAL

THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL BUSINESS RESOURCE



FRONT PAGE	LATEST STORIES	ABOUT	GUIDED TOUR	<b>SUBSCRIBE</b>	PRIVACY POLICY	CONTACT
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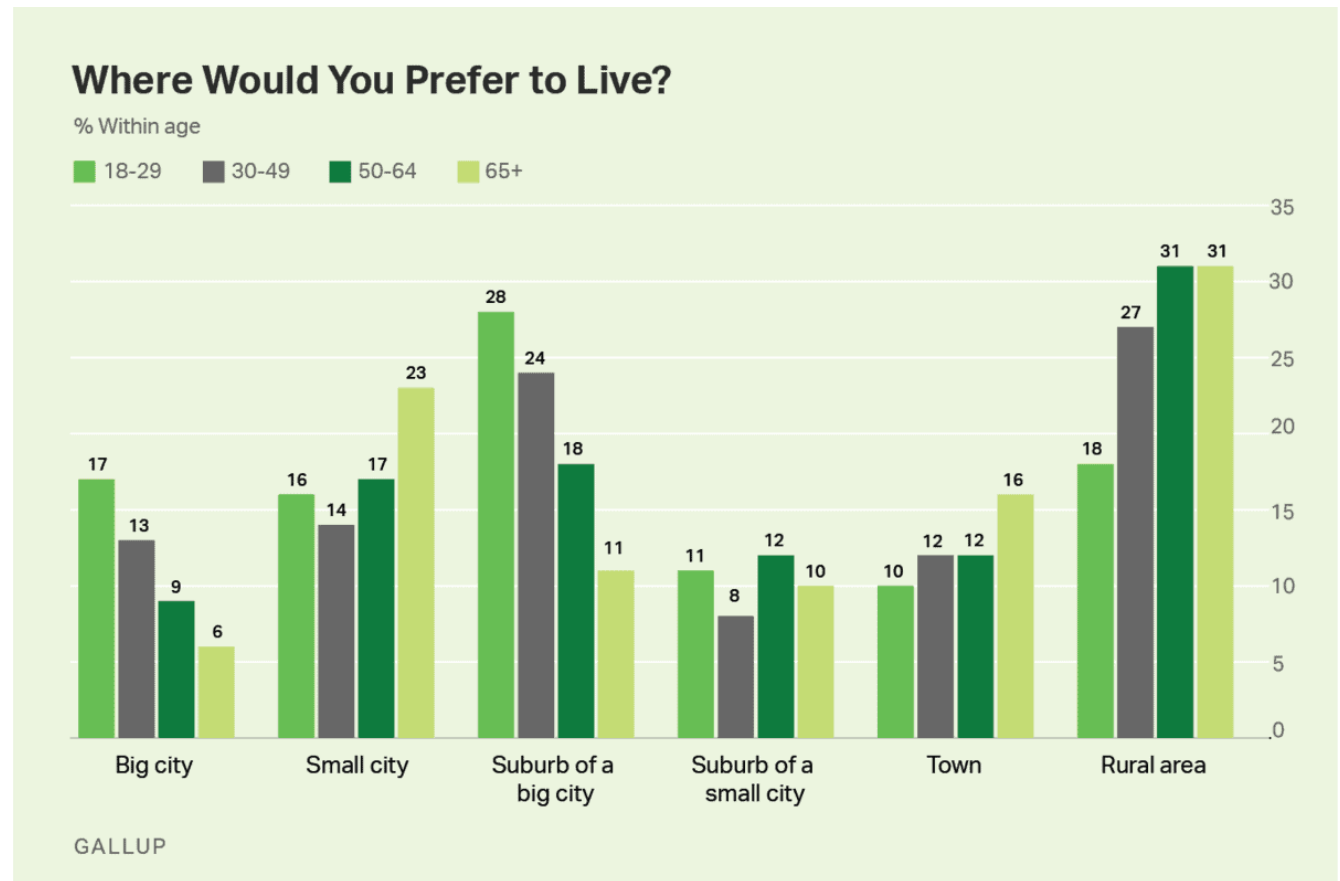
RSS

### Zoom Towns: attracting and supporting remote workers in rural small towns

BY BECKY MCCRAY — 1 COMMENT

People have been saying for years that they would prefer to live in rural areas.

- Americans under age 30 are the only group whose top desired place to live is *not* rural; rural was #2, even for them.

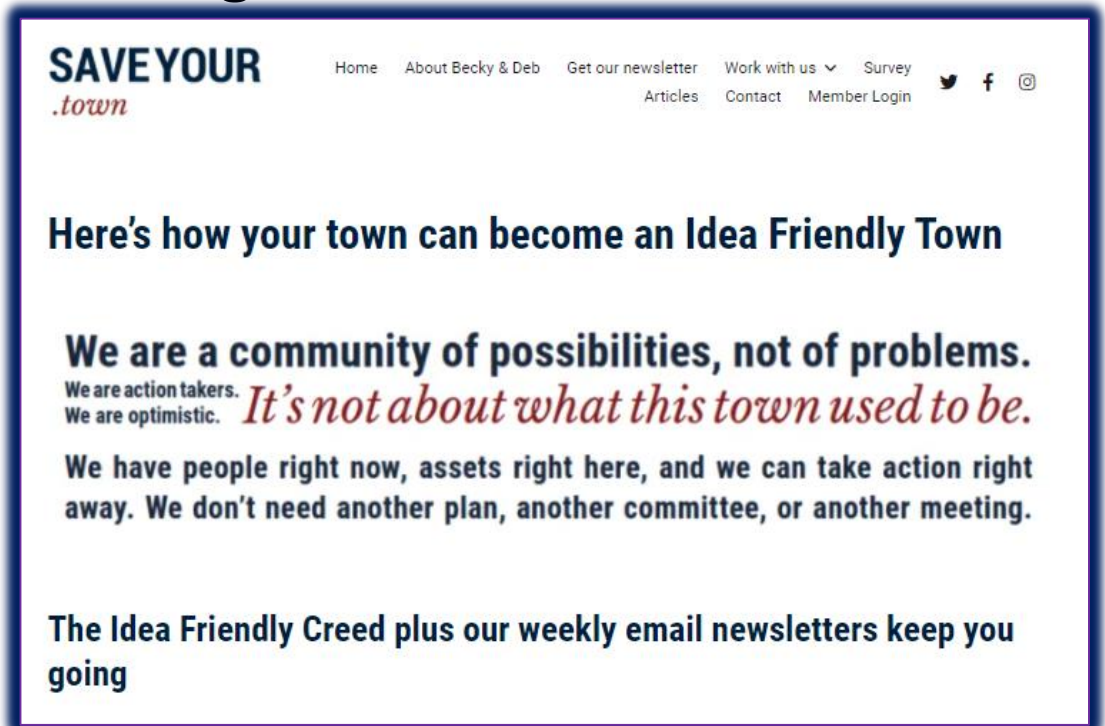


## Resources I like:

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

## 10 Tools:

<https://saveyour.town/workwithus/>

A screenshot of the 'SAVE YOUR .town' website. The header includes the logo 'SAVE YOUR .town' and navigation links: Home, About Becky & Deb, Get our newsletter, Work with us (with a dropdown arrow), Survey, Articles, Contact, and Member Login. Social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are also present. The main content area features the heading 'Here's how your town can become an Idea Friendly Town' followed by the text: 'We are a community of possibilities, not of problems. We are action takers. We are optimistic. *It's not about what this town used to be.* We have people right now, assets right here, and we can take action right away. We don't need another plan, another committee, or another meeting.' At the bottom, it says 'The Idea Friendly Creed plus our weekly email newsletters keep you going'.



## Collaboration between Businesses:



On Wednesday morning, Sam Capoun, owner of Mesa Collection, 216 Main St. in Maple Hill, shows off one of her bags she sells. Capoun has coordinated with other local businesses to adjust hours to align and help drive more customers into the small Kansas town. *Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal*



Mike Babb clears the final bits of snow in front of his restaurant, Flint Hills Smokehouse, on Wednesday morning. coordinated his hours to align with those of Mesa Collection's so that visitors to Maple Hill can eat at the restaurant go shop, or vice versa. *Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal*

Maple Hill, population 600. Two businesses struggling during the pandemic coordinated their social media and their hours for the benefit of both.

“It’s so much better to love thy neighbor, this is a unique and limited market.”

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.

The graphic features a collage of images related to agriculture and technology, including a white sheep, a corn cob, a green tractor, a drone, a pig, a chicken, a horse, a person in a lab coat, and various fruits and vegetables.

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

## Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

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

[khfi@ksu.edu](mailto:khfi@ksu.edu)

Keeping Groceries Alive: [Webinar series for Grocery Transition](#)





## Nancy Daniels

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