

First Impressions

Elkhart, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- Elkhart asked for First Impressions, obtained Meade as its partner; 1.5-hour drive is “ideal” distance.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey and took photos on July 22.
- Three Meade visitors came in one car on August 5.
- Results are presented tonight, September 17.
- Elkhart 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 and no one is noticing or talking about it.
- Only 36% 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:

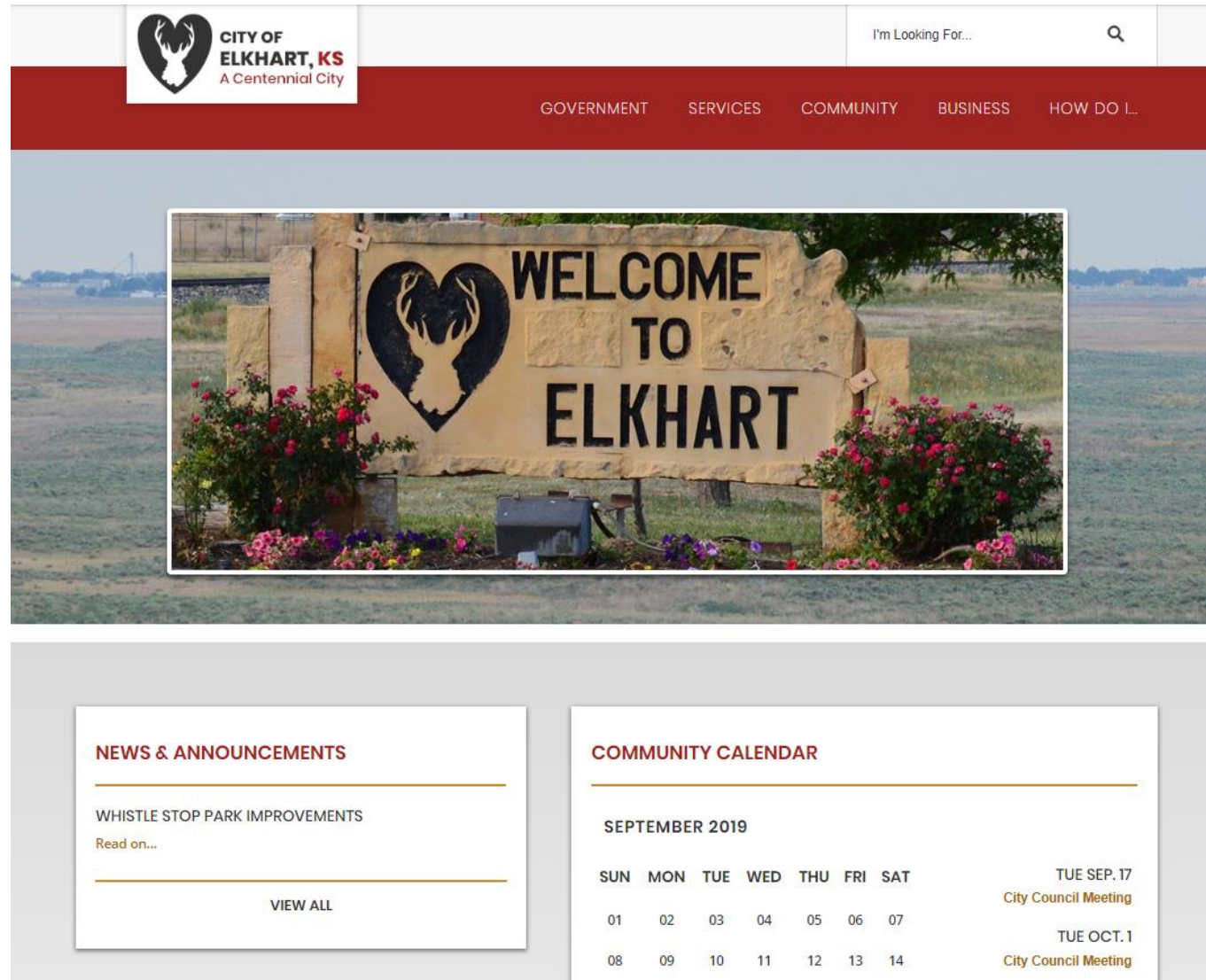
<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>

- 2010 Census Population 2,205
(down 1.3% since 2000*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2017 Estimate is 1,872
(down 16.2% since 2000*) **KS= +8.0%**
- 84.2% high school or GED, 11.7% college educated,
– **90.5% HS or equivalency, KS 32.3% college education,**
- Poverty rate 6.6% **(KS=12.8%)**
- Median Age 35 years **(36.3)**
- Median household income is \$42,500 **(\$55,477)**

* 2000 Census was 2,233

- Great information. Saw the businesses posted.
- I visited the city website, Chamber of Commerce and school website. I felt they accurately reflected what I saw while visiting. I was impressed with both the city and chamber websites.
- Chamber had good testimonials that made you anticipate what was available. Good hook: Stop, Stretch, Stay.

- **Website** <https://www.ci.elkhart.ks.us/>



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

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Morton County Chamber of Commerce website. The background is a scenic landscape of a dry, hilly area with sparse vegetation. In the top right corner, the phone number 620-697-4600 and a Facebook icon are displayed. The main header features the text "MORTON COUNTY Chamber of Commerce" with a logo of two wheat stalks. Below this, a large banner reads "Welcome to Morton County!". To the left, a sidebar contains a list of links: Home, Restaurants, Resources, Health Care, Entertainment, Education, and Events, each with a corresponding icon. To the right, there is a subscription form titled "Subscribe to the Cornerstone Hub" with fields for Name and Email Address, and a "Subscribe Now!" button. At the bottom right, a weather widget shows "Morton County, Fri, Sep 13, 2019" with a sun and cloud icon, and a temperature of 84°F. The central text area below the banner reads: "Whether you're passing through or planning a short stay - MAKE IT MEMORABLE! STOP and enjoy our scenery along with our friendly people. STRETCH at any of our parks, landmarks, and rest areas."

620-697-4600
f

MORTON COUNTY
**Chamber
of Commerce**

*STOP...
STRETCH...
STAY...*

Welcome to Morton County!

Whether you're passing through or planning a short stay -
MAKE IT MEMORABLE!

STOP and enjoy our scenery along with our friendly people.

STRETCH at any of our parks, landmarks, and rest areas.

Subscribe to the
Cornerstone Hub
Upcoming events & news
for Morton County,
delivered to your email
weekly!

Name

Email Address

Subscribe Now!

Morton County,
Fri, Sep 13, 2019

84°F

Home
Restaurants
Resources
Health Care
Entertainment
Education
Events

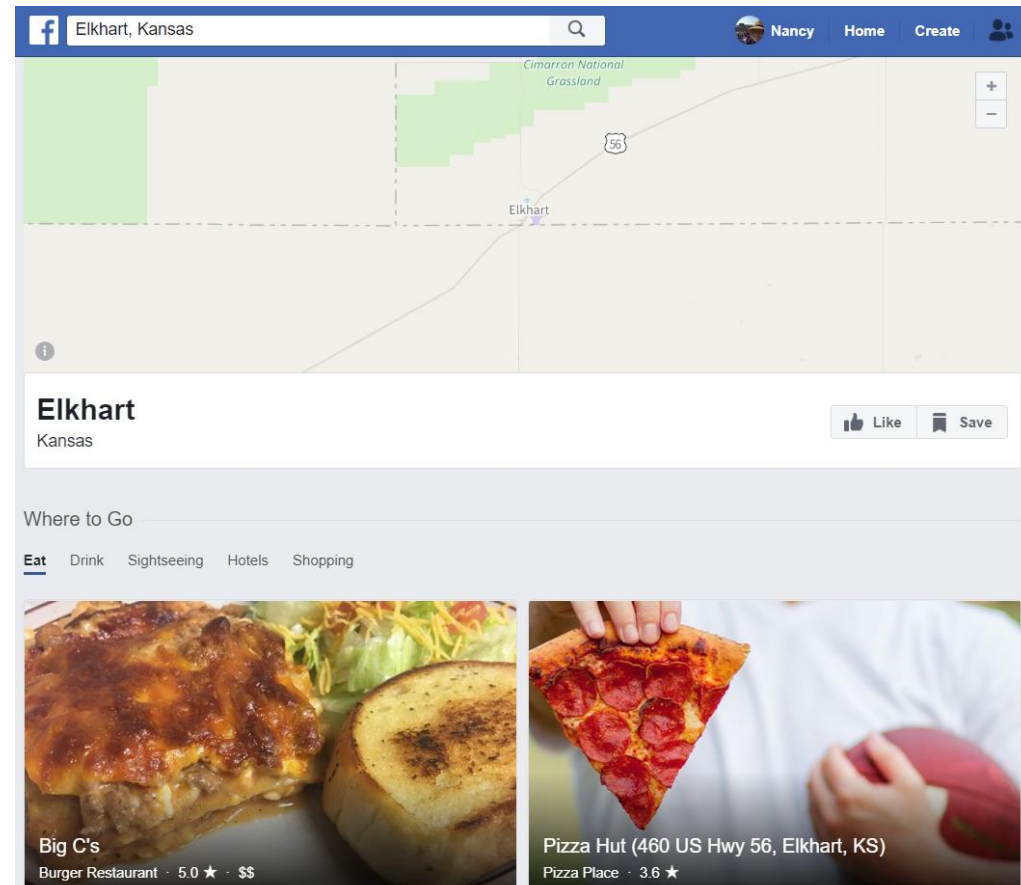
- **Chamber Facebook**

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

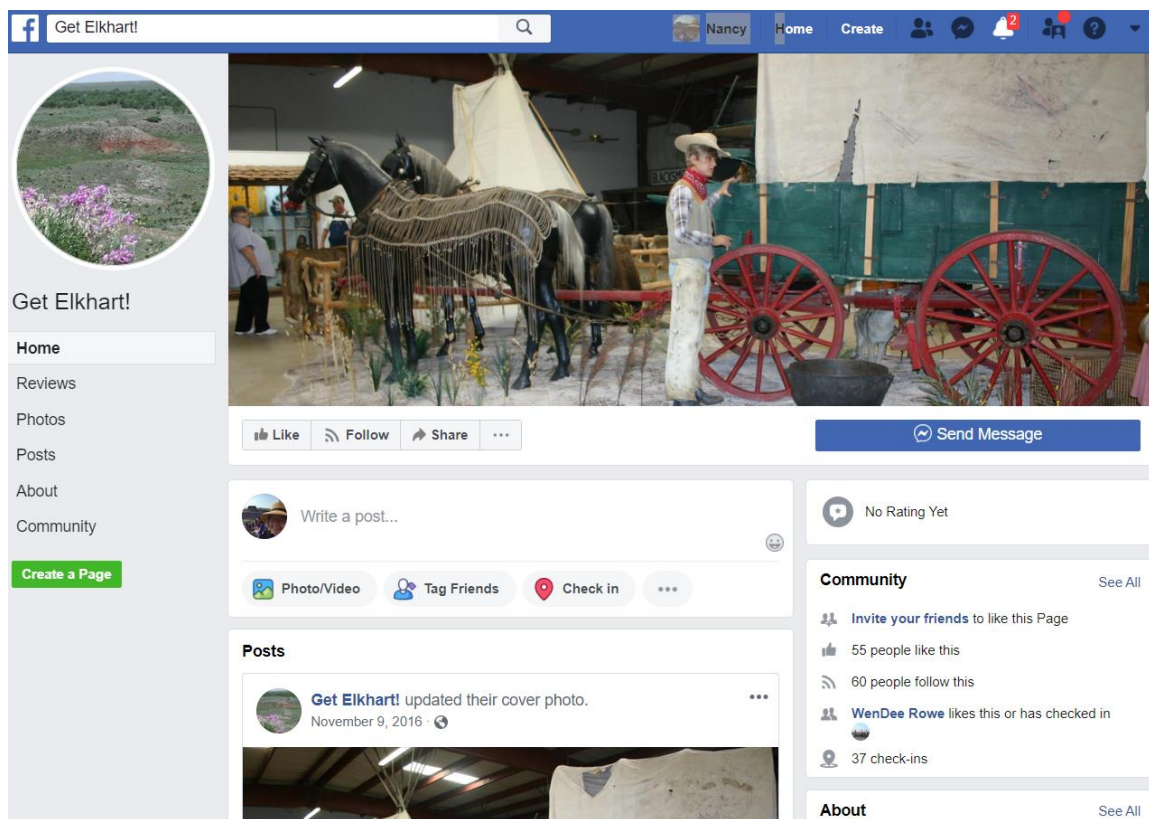
- *This FB site links from the City business page*



- **FaceBook** Elkhart, Kansas
 - <https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Elkhart-Kansas/108092565884722/>
 - *A Facebook generated page.*



- **FaceBook** <https://www.facebook.com/Get-Elkhart-164982757921/>
 - I counted 49 Elkhart Pages, including this one with one entry from Nov 2016.
 - *An opportunity for co-marketing.*



- <http://www.elkhart.com/>



ELKHART
Southwest Kansas Community

WELCOME!

This site brings Elkhart Community web resources in one location to assist you in finding information fast about the **Cornerstone of Kansas**. The official website for the [City of Elkhart](#) is a good resource for additional information.

This area is a great place to live, work, play and learn . From gas and oil, to agriculture, to health care, hunting and hiking and education Elkhart

“Five-Minute” Impression

- Three different entrances. Only one area had nice landscaping. Sign from east was covered with overgrown trees. The third sign was faded and needed to be updated.



“Five-Minute” Impression



“Five-Minute” Impression



“Five-Minute” Impression

- The digital sign with community events was nice.
- The walking path and benches were impressive.
- Main street was well maintained. The buildings appeared to be in good condition and full. Most homes seemed well cared for and occupied.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- A quiet community.
- Loved the streetlamps; flag posts were empty.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- The convenience store could use sprucing up.
- Museum, Civic Center, fairgrounds and golf course looked inviting.



Downtown Business Area

- Great buildings with appealing store fronts. Every business was welcoming, friendly and helpful.
- There were a few businesses I wasn't sure what their business was, they needed signs.
- Business owners appeared to take pride in their businesses and community.



Downtown Business Area

- Nice entrance to the downtown area. Laid out in a user-friendly manner with several recent upgrades in infrastructure easily identified, e.g. sidewalks and building remodeling.





Downtown Business Area





Downtown Amenities

- Benches on the walking trail, very accommodating parking with businesses within walking distance.
- The lights downtown were nice.
- I would love to see the flags on the light poles.
- I did not notice trash cans or bathrooms.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- We didn't even realize there were other areas with businesses. Once we found them, they were easy to access, but we only knew to look because the lady at the salon told us where other businesses were located.
- Aside from downtown, the Dollar Store seemed to be the only other retail.



Industrial Parks/Commercial

- The industrial areas were scattered on the outer edges of town, not just one area.



- *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.*

- The clinic and hospital need some updating.
- All the health care services appeared to be in one area. We saw the hospital, medical clinic, and three senior living facilities.
- Didn't notice the Morton County Health Department in that area.



Physicians, dentists and other health care providers:

- Saw only the medical office.
- Large health complex for a city this size with alternative medicine as an option.
- There was also Angela's Wellness Clinic nearby.



Long term care

- Assisted Living and Nursing Home.
- Long term and rehab center, a memory center, and an independent and assisted living center.



- A great variety of housing. The homes for sale were nice.
- Appeared to be mostly upper- or lower-income range.



- Initial drive-through showed above average housing for this size of community. Later we saw a lower-income side of town.



- Didn't notice any homes for rent. Chamber had a list of contacts for rental properties on their counter.



Is this housing?

KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 942
- Total Occupied Houses 712 (75.6%) (89.1%)
- Vacant Houses 230 (24.4%) (10.7%)

- Owner Occupied 476 (66.9%) (66.4%)
- Renter Occupied 236 (33.1%) (33.6%)
- Family Households 65.4% (65.4%)
- Non-family Household 34.6% (34.6%)

- **Need for clean-up/demolition of older properties**



- Grade school, middle school and high school. Great size and lots of shade and grass at the elementary school for playing.
- Chamber told us about the possible new preschool option.

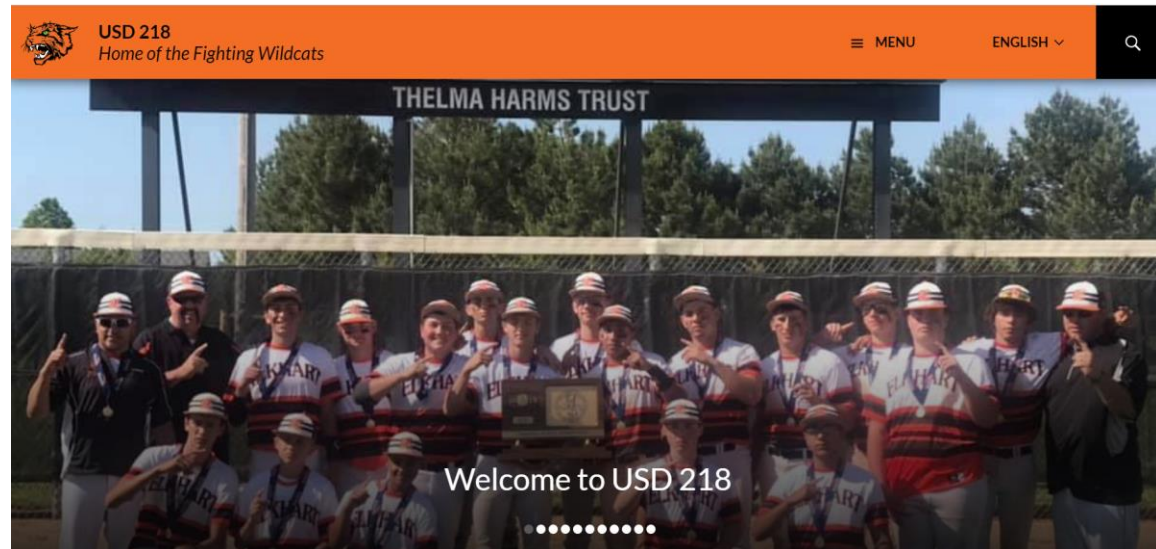







- The website was informative.
- The District office right downtown is helpful and an impressive lead-in to the schools.


*Nice photos, primarily of athletics. **Tell us why you love your schools.** Help a potential parent picture their children loving it there.*



- *Some pages still need to be filled.*

**USD 218**
Home of the Fighting Wildcats

USD218 // NEWS // OUR STUDENTS COME FIRST!



OUR STUDENTS COME FIRST!
ADMIN
TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2019

Students come first at USD 218!

Comments:

- We only knew of two childcares.
- Childcare is a challenge for the people we talked to.

Morton County Data:

- **Number of Children Under Age 6:** **269**
- **Children with all parents in the workforce:** **61%**
- **Desired Capacity of Child Care Centers** **48**
- **Extent that desired capacity meets potential need** **29%**
- **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 childcare specialists.
785-823-3343*

- We saw 8-9 places of worship. They were smaller and not well-marked or easy to find.





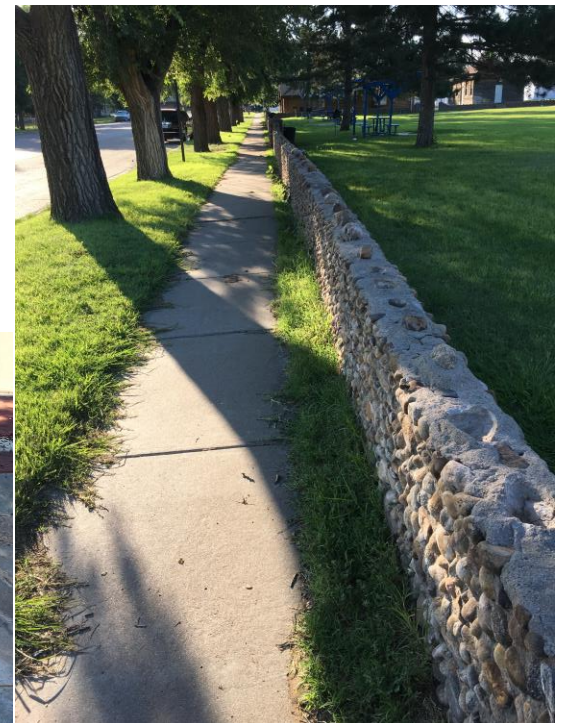


- Hands of Hope provided a food bank and free/reduced clothing store.
- 4-H kids decorated the store fronts with fair information.
- Very nice civic center.





- Streets seemed to be clean and well-maintained.
- Some sidewalks look old and in need of repair, others were fine.
- Some curbs were breaking down.



- Very nice city hall. Welcoming with lots of good information.





Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Didn't see police department or evidence of law enforcement on our visit.
- Didn't see the fire department.




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

- > 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



- Great impression from the outside.
- Older building with outdoor seating available for reading and relaxing.
- I don't remember seeing a directional sign for it.



- Several city parks in good condition.



- There is a city pool with adjacent playground.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- I didn't see anything they are famous for.
- The Doric Theater is a big asset.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Cimarron Grasslands with a headquarters building on the highway.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The museum was closed when we were there. Didn't see it on our first pass through, but I had seen it on the website.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The fair.



Visitor's Center

- Chamber was a bit hidden inside the Epic Touch Business. The ladies at City Hall told us about it.



What would bring you back?

- Higher Grounds was an exceptional place to eat.
- The Doric Theater.



- What would bring you back?



Most Positive Observations

- 70% of the houses were well-kept.
- Every single person we met had a smile on their faces and were asking how they could help.
- Elkhart takes a lot of pride in their community and their schools.



Most Positive Observations

- Clean streets with a variety of stores.
- Cornerstone pieces: Doric Theater, Grasslands, Museum, Civic Center and golf course.



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- The landscaping coming into town and along the railroad tracks had lots of weeds. The sign on the east side was overgrown with weeds and trees.
- Location. Quite a distance from larger cities. A struggle for retail businesses to provide necessities at a competitive price.
- There is a lot of highway frontage to keep looking nice.
- The primary gas station visible to the public needs a serious facelift. It takes away from the nice features around it.

What will you remember?

- Quiet, well-kept downtown. Higher Grounds had amazing food. Every single person greeted us with a smile and made me feel welcome and part of the community.
- Theater, the friendly cleaning lady who went out of her way to open it and show us around.
- The visible evidence of improvements throughout town, including new bathrooms at the fairgrounds, new sidewalks in the park. This is a community striving to improve.

Thank our leadership team:

- *Becki Richardson*
- *Traci Overpeck*
- *Becky Scott*
- *Rhianna Shaw*

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!](#)

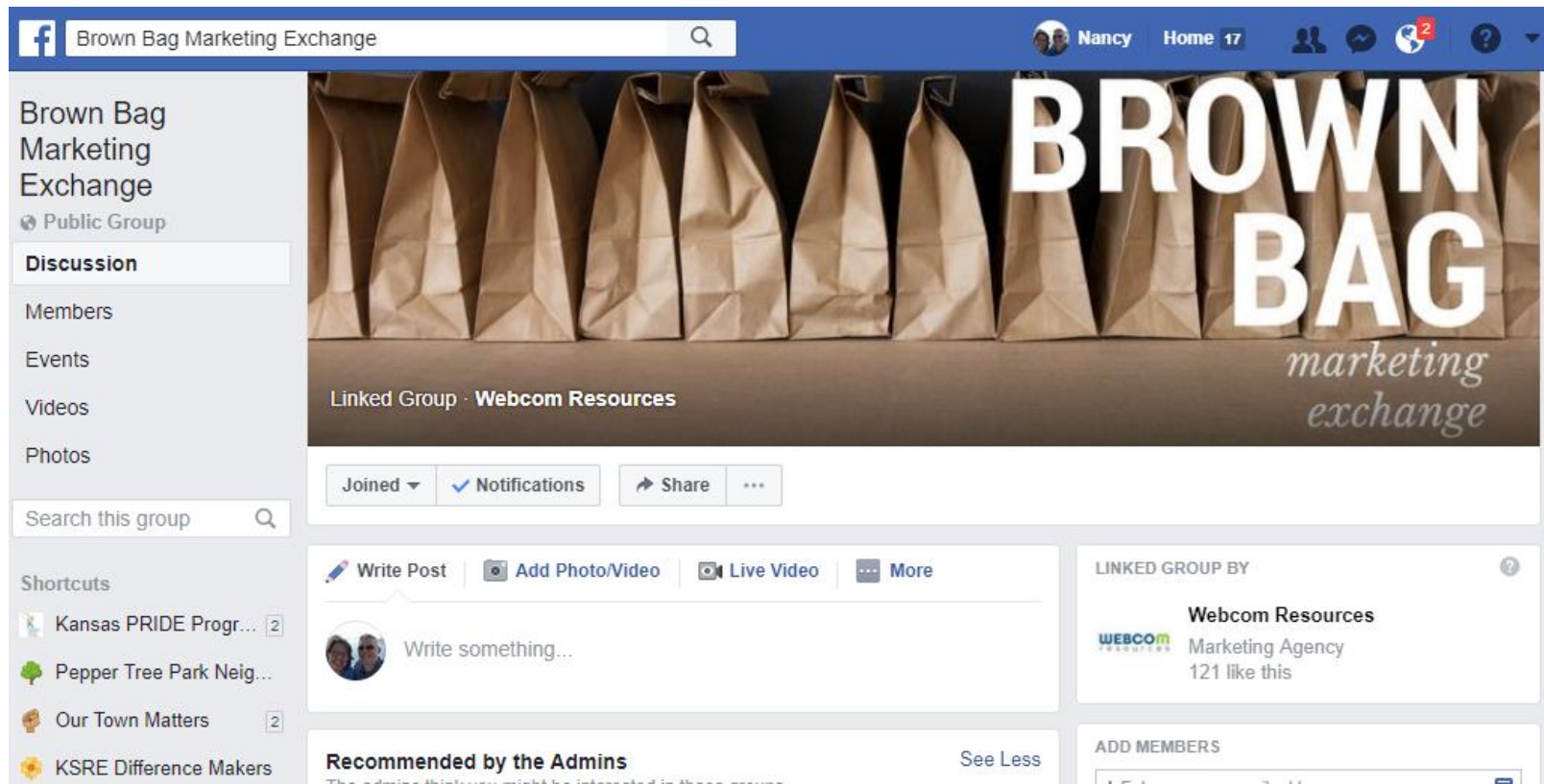
[CONTACT](#)

[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 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

Grow Smarter. Grow Stronger. Grow Kansas.

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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