

# First Impressions



## Iola, KS

K-State Research and Extension  
in Partnership with  
The Dane G. Hansen Foundation

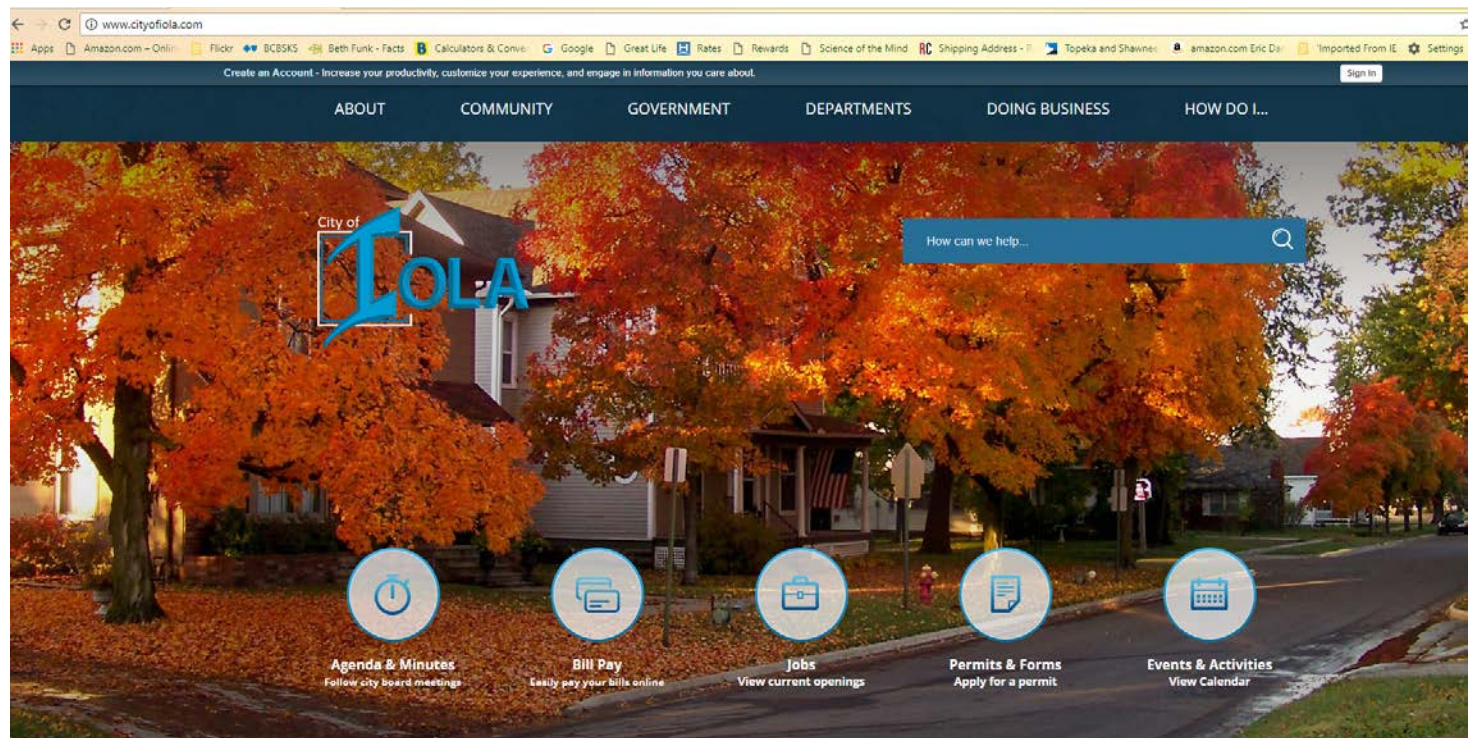


- 2010 Census Population 5,704  
(-9.5% since 2000\*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2016 Estimate is 5,454  
(-13.5% since 2000) **KS=+7.7%**
- 20.3% college educated, 89.8% high school or GED  
– **KS 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency**
- 55.4% family households, 44.6% non-family
- Poverty rate is 26.90% **(KS=13.6%)**
- Median Age 35.8 years **(36)**
- Median household income is \$29,935 **(\$52,205)**

- **Web Presence:**

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

I was impressed with their online presence. It was more informative than some city sites I have visited. It was easy to navigate and was a positive introduction to Iola.



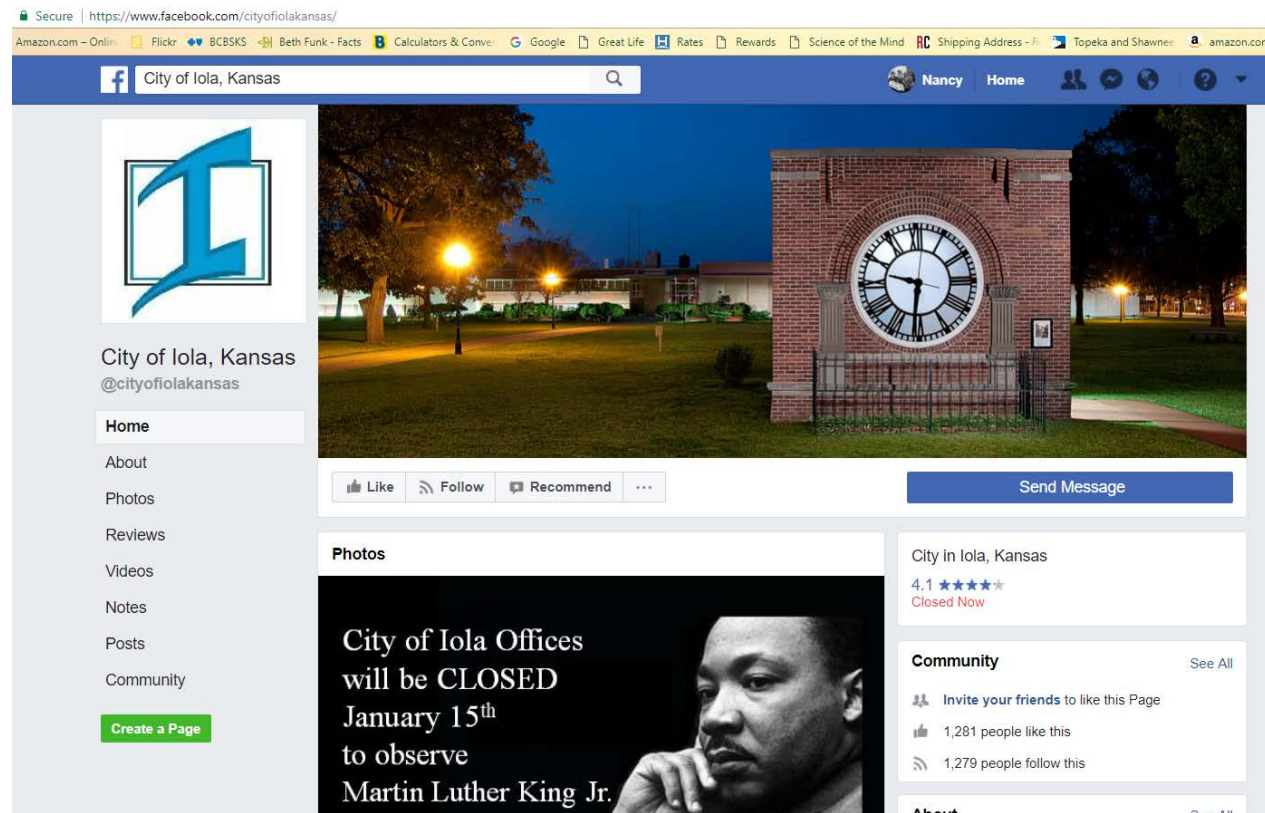


- **FaceBook**

- City of Iola, Kansas

- <https://www.facebook.com/cityofiolakansas/>

- Posts events, City Hall Announcements, City Council Meeting Minutes.

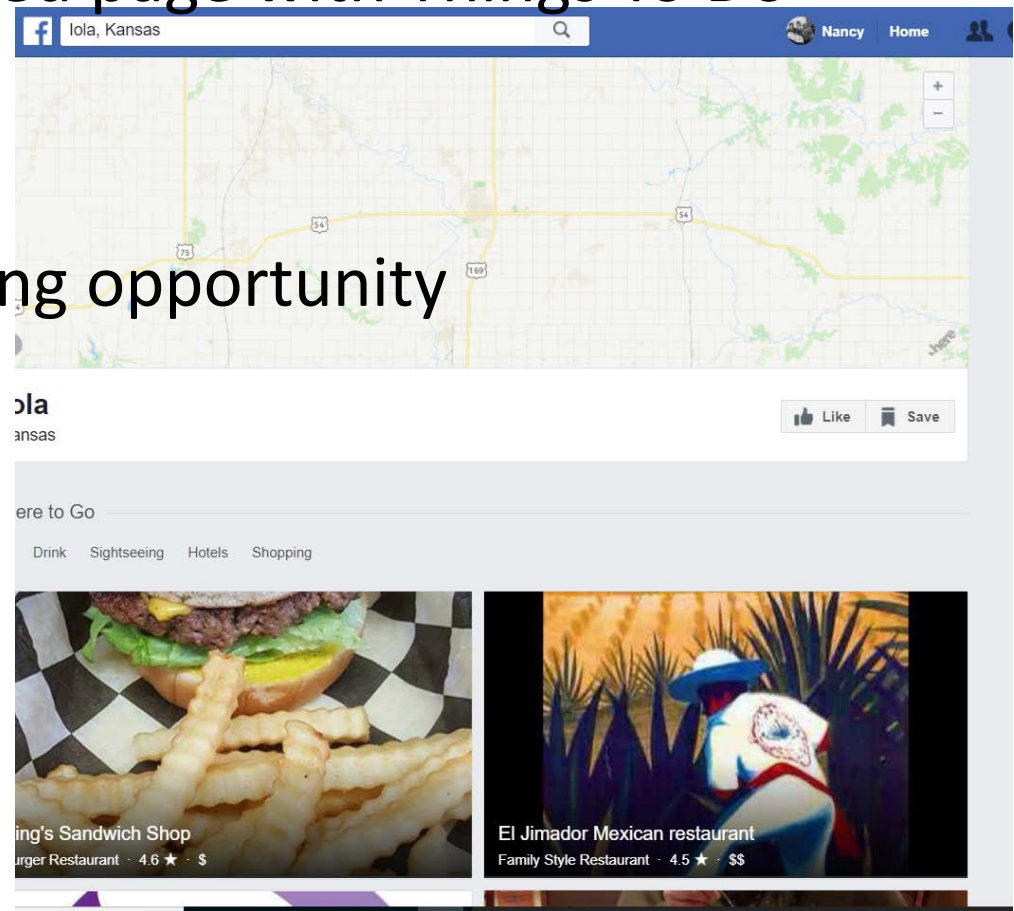


Website and FaceBook  
Retrieved from Internet,  
January 26, 2018



- **FaceBook**

- Iola Kansas (Places)
- FaceBook-Generated page with Things To Do
- I counted 96 pages with links to Iola.
- A great Co-Marketing opportunity



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Nice downtown square area. Lots of parking and clean.



Retrieved from Google Earth January 26, 2018  
Photo taken May, 2014

# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Small town charm with many amenities including a local paper(!)



All photos were taken  
October 5, 2017





# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- A LOT more diverse resources [than Baldwin City].
- Well-kept streets.



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Wonderful and impressive biking and walking trails.



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Entrance from south has no city sign, north has sign.
- Overall signage was prominent and informative.





## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Signage from 59 Highway was not very clear. We entered from the NE by hospital and golf course. Saw a sign that said something about the downtown square but nothing about where to turn.



## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Good welcome signs on 54 east and west of town.
- Farm City Days banner for festival.
- Directional signs on 54 were too detailed and small to read while driving.



## Downtown Business Area

- Buildings were freshly painted. Plenty of businesses with good diversity and unique shops.
- Visitors had varying experiences with customer service, some very good and others not. (See report)





## Downtown Business Area

- Antiques, boutiques, Art, Culture and Historical.
- Corner Coffee Shop was a lovely, inviting space and very friendly and informative.



## Downtown Business Area

- Preserved old architecture, apartments on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor being remodeled.
- Planter boxes, benches.





## Downtown Business Area

- Well-marked and resurfaced pavement.
- Central Park is a great feature.
- Old clock in park is good.







## Downtown Business Area

- Clothing stores, financial services, personal services (nails & tanning), Farmer's Market.
- Learned about upcoming Corn Days and Buster Keaton Days from shops.



# Downtown Business Area





## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Variety of shops and stores including many national chains- Dollar General, Walmart, Hibbert Sports. Impressive for the size of community.
- Several car and implement dealerships.



## Other Retail Shopping Areas



# Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

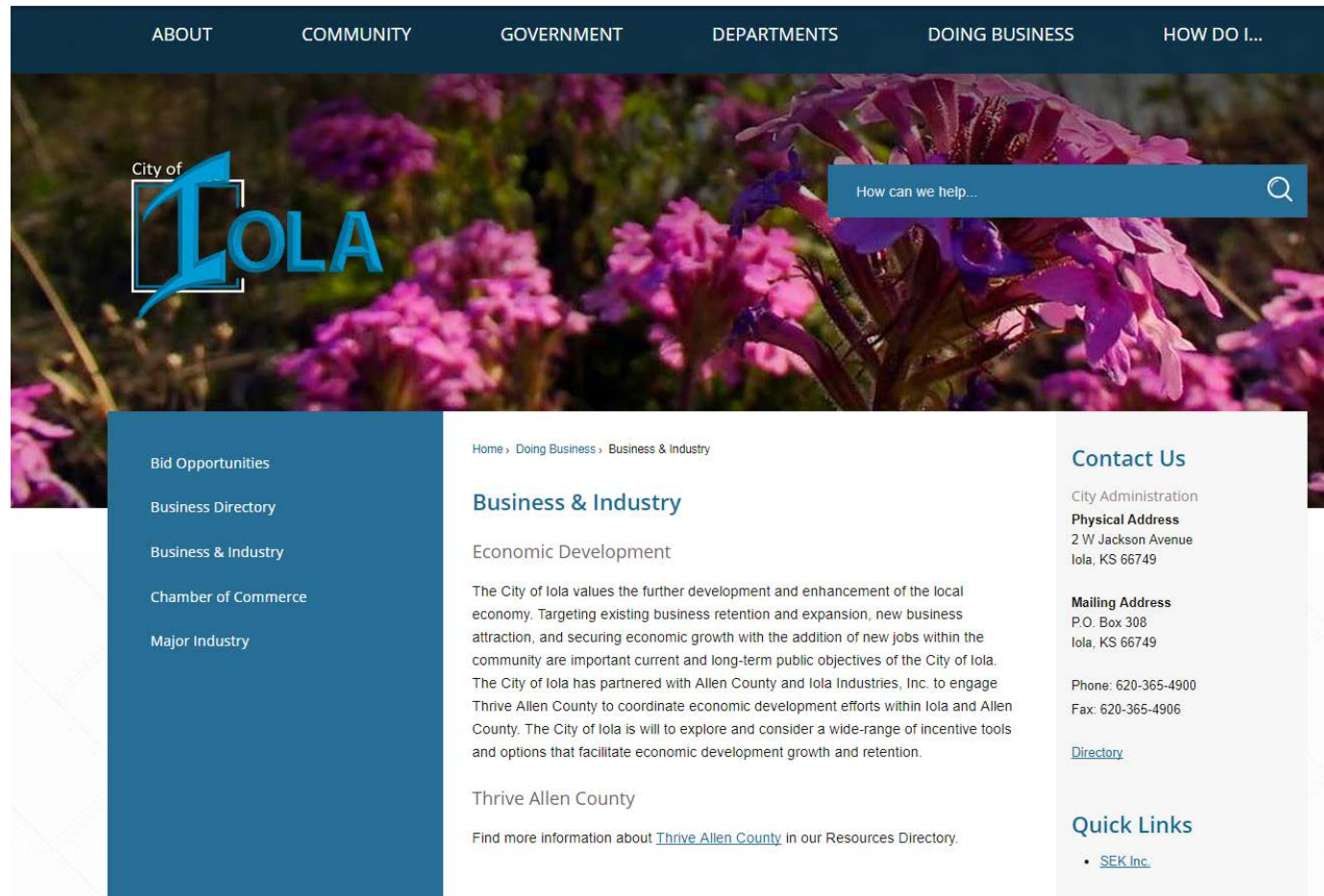
- North and South Commercial areas.
- Visitors had varying experiences of finding them.





# Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- More importantly, information is accessible on City Website.



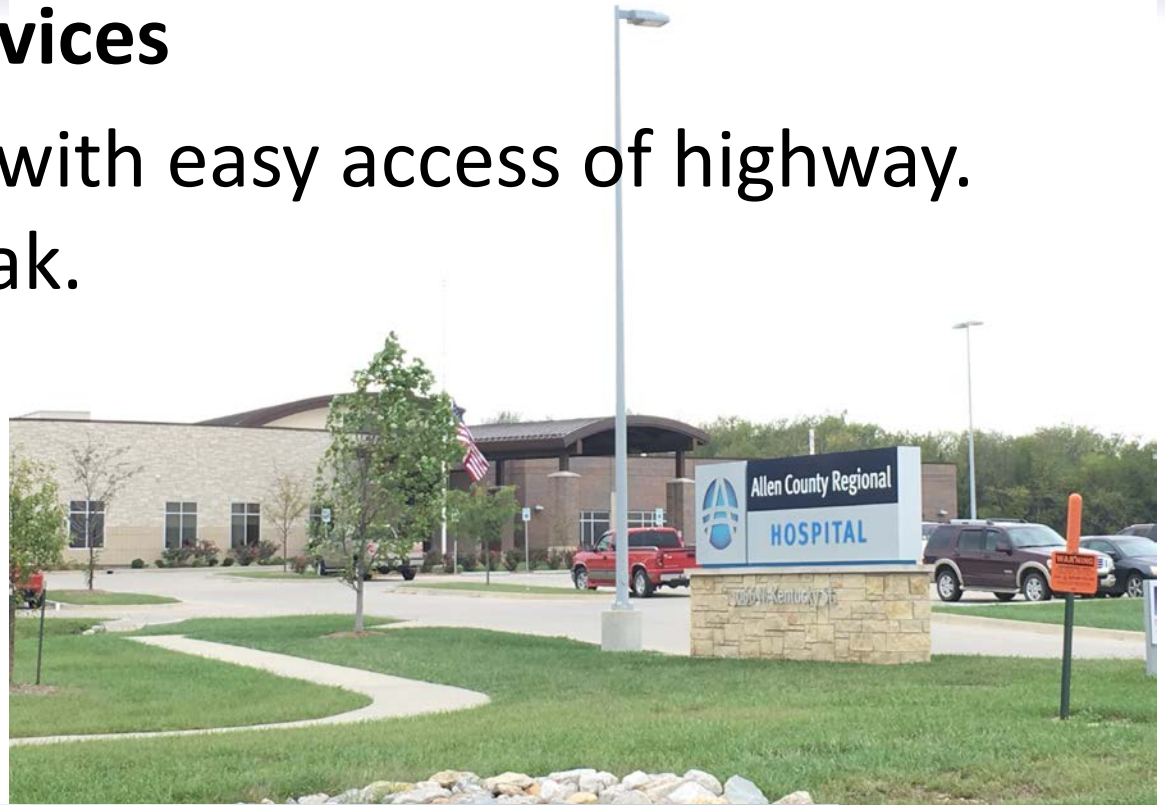
# Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

## ***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.”
- *The same UPS truck who competed with your downtown can help your entrepreneur serve the world.*

## Health Care Services

- New hospital with easy access of highway.  
Signage is weak.





## Health Care Services

- Very good availability of all health services.
- Physician's offices, Pregnancy Resource Center and a couple of pharmacies.
- Doctors' building on 54 looked nice.



- **Health Care Services**



# Long Term care, Assisted Living & Nursing Care

- Not sure. Hard to find.
- Graystone Residential Care Heartland Meadows for long-term care.





# Long Term care, Assisted Living & Nursing Care

- Senior housing, with rent controlled in ample supply.





# Housing

- Very good mix. Not much on the market.





# Housing

- Mixed diversity of housing; the new apartments east of downtown are inviting.





# Housing

- Older neighborhoods south of downtown lack sidewalks.



# Housing

- Nice mix of new and older housing. Appears to be green space that could be developed.





## Rental Housing

- Could use a little up-keep. Did not seem much for rent.
- College duplexes, new apartments downtown, senior housing for rent.





# Housing





# Housing



## Housing data

## KANSAS

- Total Housing Units      2,686
- Total Occupied Houses 2,256 (84.0%)      (89.5%)
- Vacant Houses      430 (16.0%)      (10.5%)
  
- Owner Occupied      1,334 (59%)      (66.7%)
- Renter Occupied      922 (41%)      (33.3%)



# Need for clean-up/demolition of older properties



# Schools

- Hard to find.





# Schools

- Quaint high school and middle schools located adjacent to the town square and residential.





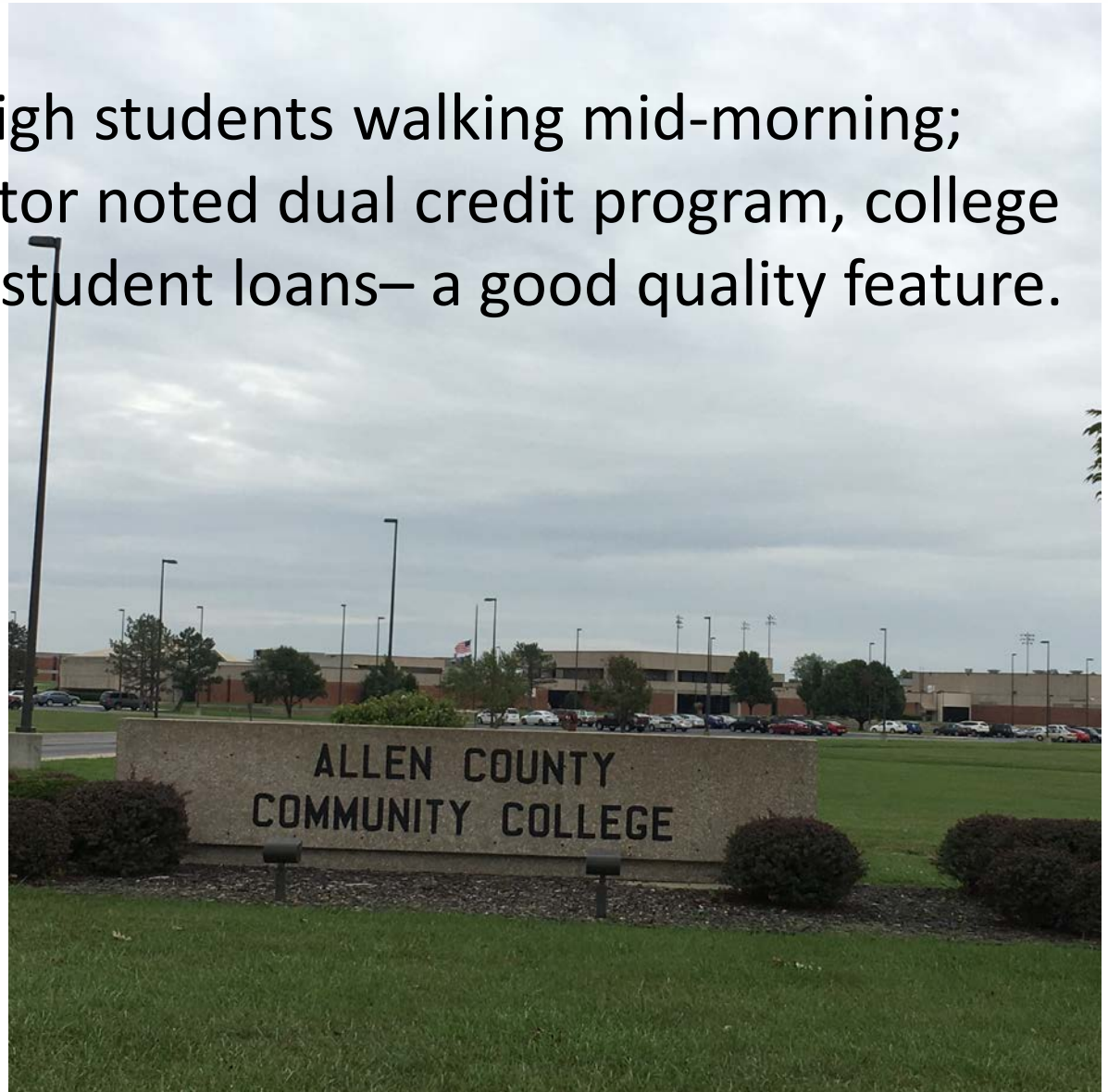
# Schools

- The grounds were all well maintained.
- Street through high school campus did not seem safe for students walking.



## Schools

- Noted junior high students walking mid-morning; Chamber director noted dual credit program, college credit reduces student loans— a good quality feature.



# Schools

- Online information helped assess the quality of the education.
- KSDE reports were linked by school and district.



## Geolocation Search

Building within Selected Radius

Organization	Building Number	Building Name	Address	
D0257	1558	Lincoln Elem	700 N Jefferson	<a href="#">Go</a>
D0257	1564	Iola Sr High	300 E Jackson	<a href="#">Go</a>
D0257	1562	Iola Middle School	600 East Street	<a href="#">Go</a>
D0257	1556	Jefferson Elem	300 S Jefferson	<a href="#">Go</a>
D0257	1560	McKinley Elem	209 S Kentucky	<a href="#">Go</a>



# Childcare

- Chamber said childcare is adequate, but night shifts at plants have few options.



## Faith/Religion

- Lots of diversity of denominations.
- Appeared in good shape.
- Church activities? Saw a soup supper.















## Civic

- Masonic Lodge, Library, Art Center.





## Civic

- Community garden was especially nice in the core of downtown.





## Civic

- Thrive Allen County seems like a great county health initiative.



# Civic

- Lions, Masons, Humanity House.





## Public Infrastructure

- Street signs need update, curb needs some up-keep, storm water looked ok. The sidewalk was fair. Landscape looked fair.
- Good parking and walkability downtown, poor other areas.



# Public Infrastructure

- Quality public works structure.



# City Hall

- Great reception in City Hall. Very little information on Iola in City Hall. Chamber was better.





## Police and Fire Protection

- Saw downtown near County services on the square, but did not see local fire/police.



## Fire, EMS and Police Services

- *When I visited, they were giving a tour to a school group and still stopped to help with maps*





# Library

- Library is a little hidden; poor signage.



## City Parks

- Well maintained.
- *Golf Course was mentioned in 5-minute impression.*
- *I did not notice any modern playgrounds with climbing equipment.*





# City Parks

- Dog Park, JuCo Sports complex, central parks, National Guard Armory.









# Features that would draw people to community

- Awesome Riverside Park! Iola should be proud of their trails and lake.



## Recreation/Tourism: Significant Events.

- Farm City Days
- Rail Trails for biking/walking is a big promotion.
- Lake facility rented to Elks Club.
- RV park west of town, properly located.





## Visitor's Center?

- Visibility was good, facilities were good, signage was good.
- Hard to find the Chamber Office. The office and director should be more visible and promoted—Carol Ann Sager is a wealth of information.
- Chamber was informative, but no local brochure was seen. Would like to see town map, featured events, and history of Iola.



## Most Positive Observations

- Local charm of town square, schools were charming and parks and trails were amazing.





## Most Positive Observations

- Chamber Director, Iola Industries, Thrive Allen County and bringing high school graduates back to town.



## Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Better signage entering town.
- Your town is SO COOL but lacks “shout it out” to visitors in form of informational brochure.





# What will you remember the most in six months from now?

- B&B Café
- Iola Industries, Thrive Allen County and upbeat, active business community.
- Much more cohesive and unified than Baldwin.



## Next Steps:

*Thank our leadership team:*

- *Sid Fleming*
- *Carla Nemecek*
- *Lonnie Larson*
- *Ryan Sparks*
- *Lori Stone*

**Set next steps!**

**Contact me if you need help:**

**Nancy Daniels**

Community Vitality Specialist,  
K-State Research and Extension

785.410.6352

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




- <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:**  
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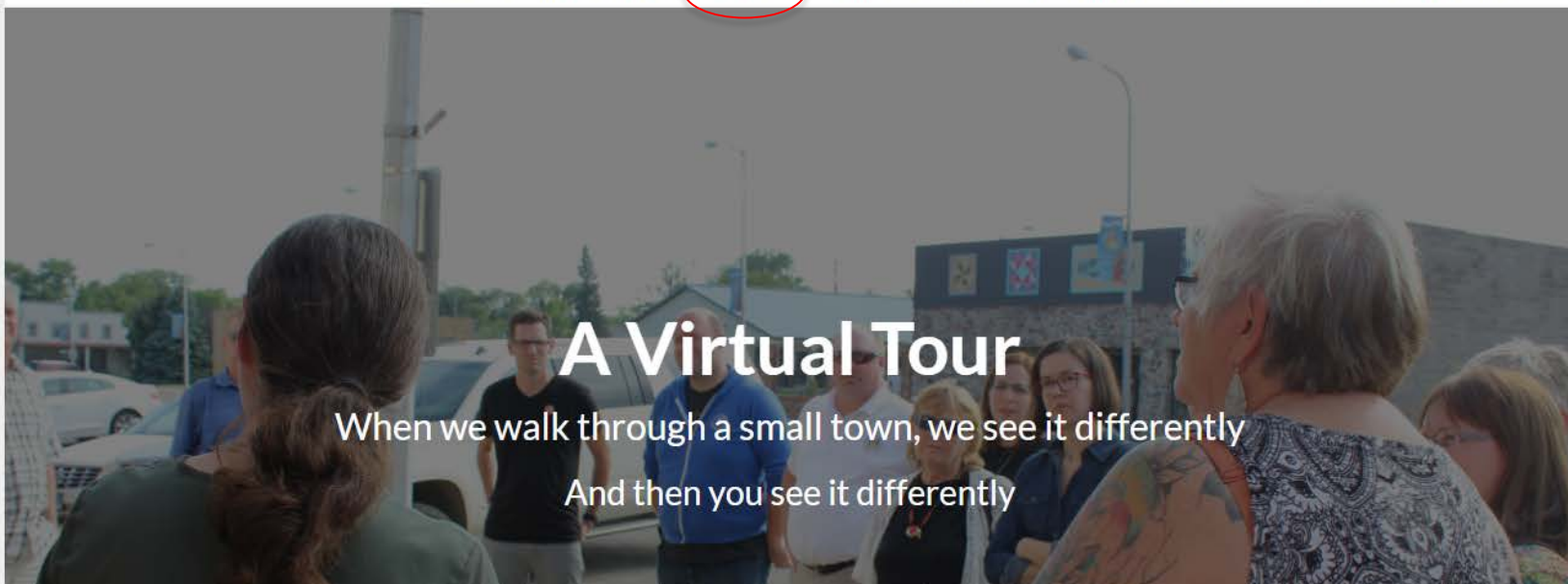
I will never sell or rent your email.

## 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](#)





## Resources I like:

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



**Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOIMRJ-jc14>

- 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.
- 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.
- People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.
- Only 1/3 of the people who move rural have a previous connection with that area.



- 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! It matters!
- The number of people who live in rural areas is increasing—from 54M to 60M from 1970-2010. The relative % of people who live rural is smaller (19% instead of 26%) but the real number has increased.
- Don't buy in to someone else's narrative.
- We lose our hardware store, our school, consolidate our churches, etc... but we are still here! In MN, they have only lost 3 towns in 50 years.

- 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.
- 1/5 of dollars come from transfer payments—not employers.

*- Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow,  
University of Minnesota*

