

First Impressions

Nickerson, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- Caldwell asked for First Impressions, Nickerson agreed to be its partner; 1:45 min drive.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey on July 30 and took photos.
- 3 visitors visited on Friday, August 23
- Results presented on November 18, 2024
- Nickerson 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 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
First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

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

- 2023 KS Certified Population: 1,053 **Stable population**
- 2013 KS Certified Population: 1,049
- Median household income: \$50,350 **\$68,925**
- High school or GED 95% **91.6%**
- At least a B.S. Degree 16% **34.4%**
- Median Age: 46.4 years **37.6 years**
- Persons 65 and Over 16% **17.2%**

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

• Moved since Last Year (2018-2022)*:	12%	14.6%
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• Poverty rate (% of people below poverty line)	8%	12%
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Race/Ethnicity

White: 88%

Black: 5%

Asian: %

Other: %

Hispanic or Latino: 5%

American Indian: %

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific
Islander: %

Two or more races: 6%

Not Hispanic or Latino: 94%

- Each of us found a different website.
- City website was easy to navigate, but not the most informative.
 - *Possible additions: businesses, civic groups, health care, schools.*
- We didn't find Nickerson Chamber Fb page until we left town.

- **Website** <https://www.nickersonks.org/>



Nickerson Kansas

HOME

City Government

Community Information

PayOnline

Contact

ALERTS

Like our Facebook page at
facebook.com/cityofnickersonks

Sign up for FrontDesk

[Consumer Confidence Report](#)

**AFTER HOURS
EMERGENCIES CALL
(620) 422-5279**

**2024
TRASH
SCHEDULE**

[Click Here](#)

Welcome!

The city was incorporated here in Reno County on June 7, 1879, with a current population that is around 1040. Nickerson has a Chamber of Commerce, EMS, Library, Recreation Commission, Post Office, Senior Center and a County Fire Department.

There are several events that the citizens can get involved with throughout the year. We have a nice city park that offers a quiet area for family reunions, picnicking, or a place to take you children to play. The park has barbeques, water, restrooms, electricity access, sheltered picnic area, playground, basketball court, volleyball courts, a splash pad and is across the street from the baseball diamonds.

For your convenience there is a local grocery store, dining establishments and area churches.





*Please feel free to contact the city
office about any questions you may
have.*


*Sincerely,
The Mayor and City Council*


- **Facebook** *I counted 40 FB pages from Nickerson, a great opportunity for cross-promotion.*





**Nickerson, Kansas**
City · 651 likes
Nickerson is a city in Reno County, Kansas, United States. It was named in honor of Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway president Thomas...[Like](#)


**Nickerson Kansas Community Center**
Community Service · 35 likes
[Like](#)


**Nickerson Kansas Chamber of Commerce**
Public Figure · Not yet rated (0 Reviews) · 1K followers · 8 posts in the last 2 weeks
We are a small group of local residents reinvesting our time and talent towards creating a better Nickerson for ALL. Join us with...[Follow](#)


**Nickerson Panthers Wrestling**
Amateur Sports Team · 618 followers
Nickerson High School Panthers Wrestling 4A High School Kansas
[Follow](#)


**Nickerson Elementary**
Elementary School · 130 likes
Lowest grade taught: Prekindergarten · Highest grade taught: 6th Grade
[Like](#)

**Nickerson High School (Kansas) Class of 1972**
School · 53 followers
Finding the members of the Class of 1972
[Follow](#)

**Nickerson Elementary School**
Public School · 130 likes
[Like](#)

**Nickerson Panthers Wrestling Fundraising**
School Sports Team · 27 followers
This page is for the Nickerson Panther High School wrestling and Jr. Panthers wrestling Fundraisers.
[Follow](#)

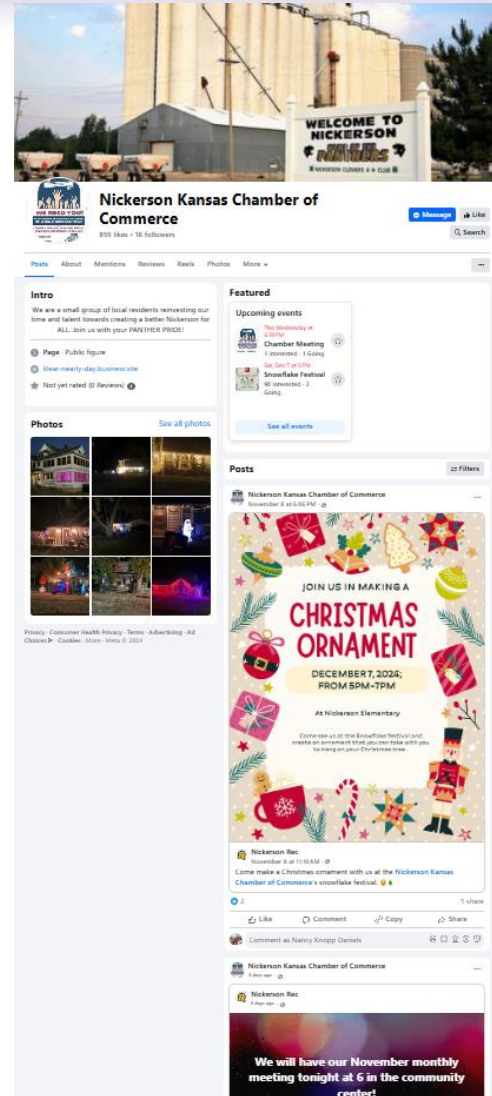
**Nickerson High School**
Elementary School · [Open now](#) · 2.1K likes
[Like](#)

**Nickerson United Methodist Church**
Methodist Church · 100% recommend (5 Reviews) · [Closed now](#) · 177 followers
A family-centered, rural Methodist Church serving Nickerson, Ks and the surrounding area.
[Follow](#)

- **Facebook**

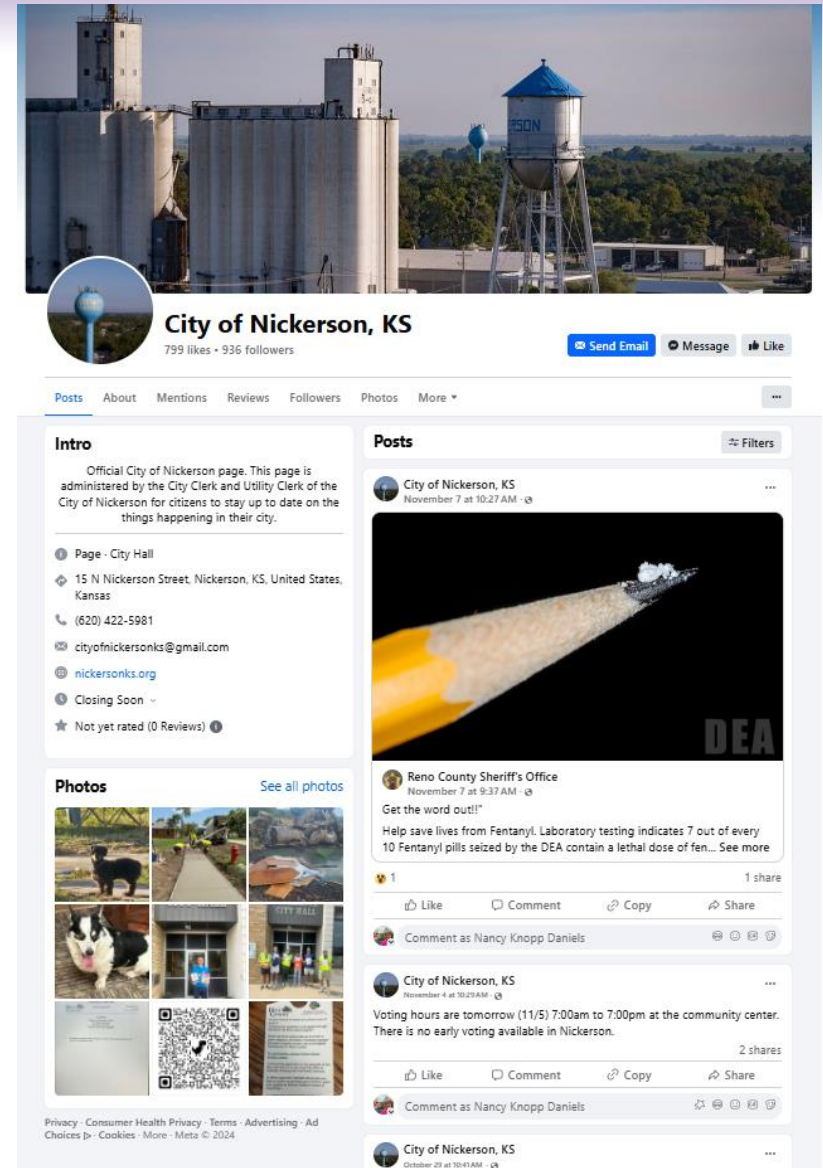
<https://www.facebook.com/nickersonCC>

There have been 9 posts in the past 2 weeks; 3 were posts about the chamber meeting.



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

City Fb Page is updated with official announcements several times per month



- There isn't much commerce on the main street.
- We were confused by the diagonal streets and the lack of informational signage.
- It is neat and well-cared for.
- We did not see any welcome signs from HWY 14.

“Five-Minute” Impression



“Five-Minute” Impression



Downtown looks uniformly tan.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- The exotic animal signage was eye-catching and nice signage on the grocery store.



Downtown Business Area

- We saw the bank, post office, library, and city hall, which were all nice. Very few open businesses.



Downtown Business Area

- The Coop has a large footprint in the center of town, but because of the railroad layout, it was logical.
- The grocery store was nice.
- The owner of the Red Chair was very welcoming.



Downtown Business Area







Public Amenities Downtown

- There are some benches downtown.
- The public library had public WiFi and directed us how to use it.
- Potted urns with some real and some fake flowers.
- Downtown was pretty empty, so parking was no problem.
- The street leading into downtown was brand new and nice. We anticipate crosswalks and lines to be painted soon.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- There were no other retail shops except the grocery store and Kwik Trip. The bar had some T-Shirts.



- *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

- It appeared there might be space near the gravel & chemical companies.



- Fire and EMS were the health care services.
- *Consider putting: “Health Care” on your city site with “number of miles/minutes” to travel.*



- Visitors called housing “a shining star.”
- Mostly well-kept homes with larger, stately homes in decent condition.
- We did not see any for sale or rent signs.
 - Visitors arrived after City Hall closed and couldn’t ask for official information.









- Occupied Housing Units: 397 (78%)
- Owner Occupied: 74%
- Renter Occupied: 26%
- Vacant Housing Units 110 (22%)
 - For rent: 7
 - For sale: 0
 - Sold, not occupied:
 - Seasonal/recreational:
 - All other vacants: 103
- Average Household Size: 2.27

Kansas

1.15m

65.3%

34.7%

124k

2.48

Kansas

- Average Travel Time to Work: 29.6 mins 19.6 mins
- Households without a computer*: 15 (4%) 45k (3.8%)
- Households without an internet subscription: 95 (24%) 108k (9.2%)

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

- Kansas Housing Corporation is a resource to find out about housing grants and other tools for homeowners and renters.
- Also has some resources to address homelessness.

<https://kshousingcorp.org/>



- K-8 and High School, no visible Pre-K or Head Start.
- The schools are impressive with nice playgrounds and adequate in size.





- The city did not have a link to the school website.
- The website doesn't show anything unique to Nickerson without in-depth searching.
- *Tell us your story.*



“Potential Students”
are an audience for
your website.

This is Mound City, MO:

- “Why choose us” info on home page.



ABOUT US

Why Us

Graduation Rate

100%

Technology Ratio

Computer to Student Ratio: 1:1

Teacher Ratio

1:9 Teacher to Student Ratio

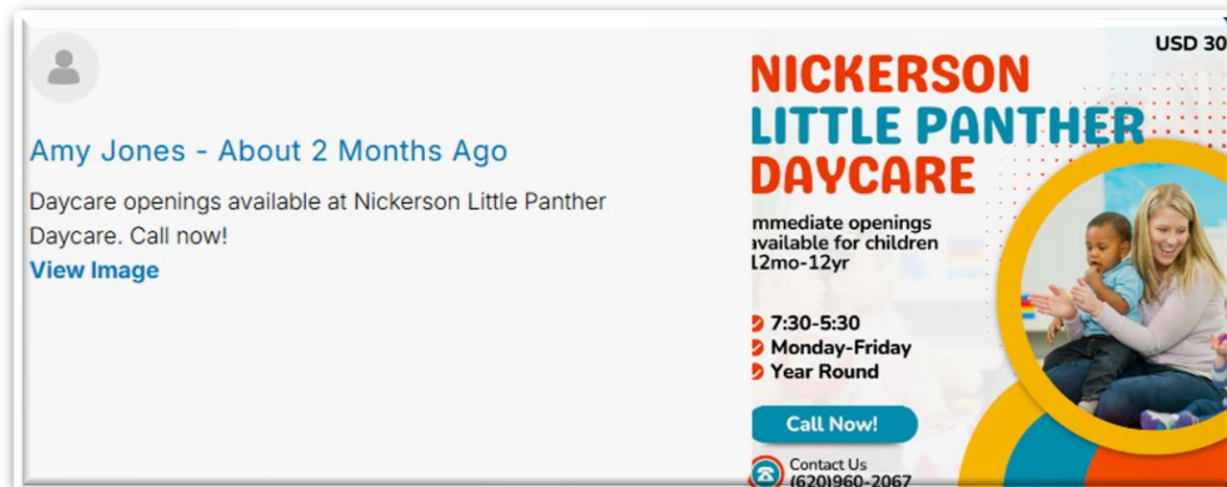
Career Ed. Programs

Agriculture Education, Business Education, Family Consumer Sciences and Human Services



Comments:

We didn't see any. City Hall was closed, so we couldn't ask.



A screenshot of a Facebook post. On the left, a grey profile picture icon is above the text "Amy Jones - About 2 Months Ago". Below this, the post text reads: "Daycare openings available at Nickerson Little Panther Daycare. Call now!" followed by a blue "View Image" link. On the right is a colorful advertisement for "NICKERSON LITTLE PANTHER DAYCARE". The ad features a woman smiling and clapping her hands next to a young child. Text in the ad includes "USD 309", "Immediate openings available for children 12mo-12yr", "7:30-5:30", "Monday-Friday", "Year Round", a blue "Call Now!" button, and a "Contact Us (620)960-2067" button with a phone icon.

Reno County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **37%**
- **Child Care Cost Burden: 24% of Median Household Income.**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

Sources: <https://allthingskansas.k-state.edu/>
<https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/>

Retrieved from internet 11-11-2024

- We remember two churches, but we did get turned around a lot. The church signage on the highway showed a community gathering.



- The Masonic Lodge had a Main Street presence.
- There was a sign at the entrance for Lions Club and Masonic Lodge.
- At Weber Park there was disc golf donated by the Masonic Lodge.



- There were nice large street signs in some areas.
- Varying types of streets, many were sand.
- The streetlights, restrooms, and pavilion at the main park were well done and a highlight. The park was nicely mowed and had very green grass.
- We didn't notice sidewalks in residential areas but noticed some nice walking paths.
- The park restrooms were well taken care of.
- The street lighting was fine.
- There weren't many (if any) cars parked on the public streets in residential areas.

- City Hall closed at 11 am on Friday. Visitors arrived later.



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- There was no evidence of police, but Reno county has a fire department on the outskirts of town.
- County Sheriff provides law enforcement.



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



- The library had a great selection of books, and the librarian was very helpful.
- There were restrooms and water fountains
- A wonderful children's area.



- We thought the water tower park was it.



- Visitors highly suggest way-finder signage to the wonderful Weber Park.
- Walking paths connect to the ball fields.
- Horseshoe Pits and disc golf provide fun for all ages.







- Splash pad is smaller, but gets the job done with some nice features. The shaded benches were lovely.
- Pickleball courts are cutting-edge!



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- Birthplace of the Gleaner! This is your unique history. Visitors felt it faced the wrong direction and was hidden behind a tree. Nicely kept, nice bench and welcome sign.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- After finding the chamber's Facebook page we found the “Klear Nearly” Days is the main festival in town. We couldn’t figure out the significance of the name, but it sounds fun.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Lakeside camping was a surprise. Cool small campy feel with a bright sign and logo would be punchy and fun. Weekend getaway in Nickerson. Maximize this unusually close-to-town attraction and pair it with the great food & friendliness at the Last Call Bar & Grill.



Visitor's Center

- City hall would serve this purpose.
- Hours are published on city page.



What would bring you back?

- Most restaurants were closed. The Last Call Bar and Grill was open and in a welcoming environment, our waitress was friendly and helpful, and the food was good!



Most Positive Observations

- Weber Park was my favorite thing about Nickerson. I have park envy. The few people that we ran into were friendly and complimentary of their community. I also geeked out over the Gleaner history and hope that's celebrated more!
- The amount of playground equipment in the city limits is still sticking with me (it is SO pricey and we are always trying to figure out how to buy more). The Park was incredible.

Most Positive Observations

- The downtown needs punchier fun colors to share the fun City Park vibe and fun-sounding Klear Nearly Festival that we can't figure out what it means or what it celebrates. Something to pull it together, draw you in, celebrate the community connectedness with impressive athletic facilities, sidewalk walking path connecting it, picnic shelter, activity centers – very cool. SO attractive for families and visitors. Feels hidden without signage, makes the main street feel disconnected somehow from the main central feature expressing this friendly community.
- Friendly people- the woman at the Red Chair opened her home and business and made us feel at home-- what a hoot!

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- The lack of business in their downtown area seems like a drive-through community. I assumed most citizens work elsewhere during the day or at school.
- The community doesn't sell itself:
 - We only found the city park by accident—no signage.
 - The Birthplace of the Gleaner should be marketed.
 - Wild Animal Park should bring people to town

What will you remember?

- Weber Park.
- The layout of their streets is still puzzling to me.
- The Wild Animal Park- Why is this not advertised on the highway to bring people to town?



- When you Google “Images” for Nickerson, KS
Kansas Tourism Site



What will you remember?

- Two water towers. The City's Facebook page also promotes this, but we're not sure why. If it's a cool feature and cool story, tell it! Quirkiness and uniqueness draw people in, even if it's on the way to somewhere else.
- Hedrick Exotic Animal Farm. I visited here 29 years ago, and memories came flooding back! I was at a conference in Hutchinson, and we took a wagon ride out.
- The Gavilon fertilizer plant. This is what Nickerson is known for in our neck of the woods since that's where the regional farmers go to buy fertilizer (my husband and sons). All things Ag in Nickerson – love it, promote it. Ag feeds the world.

- Create Links on the city page to important assets in the community.
- Wayfinder signs to parks.
- Look for ways to **tell your story** about your events, your places, your history, and your businesses.

**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

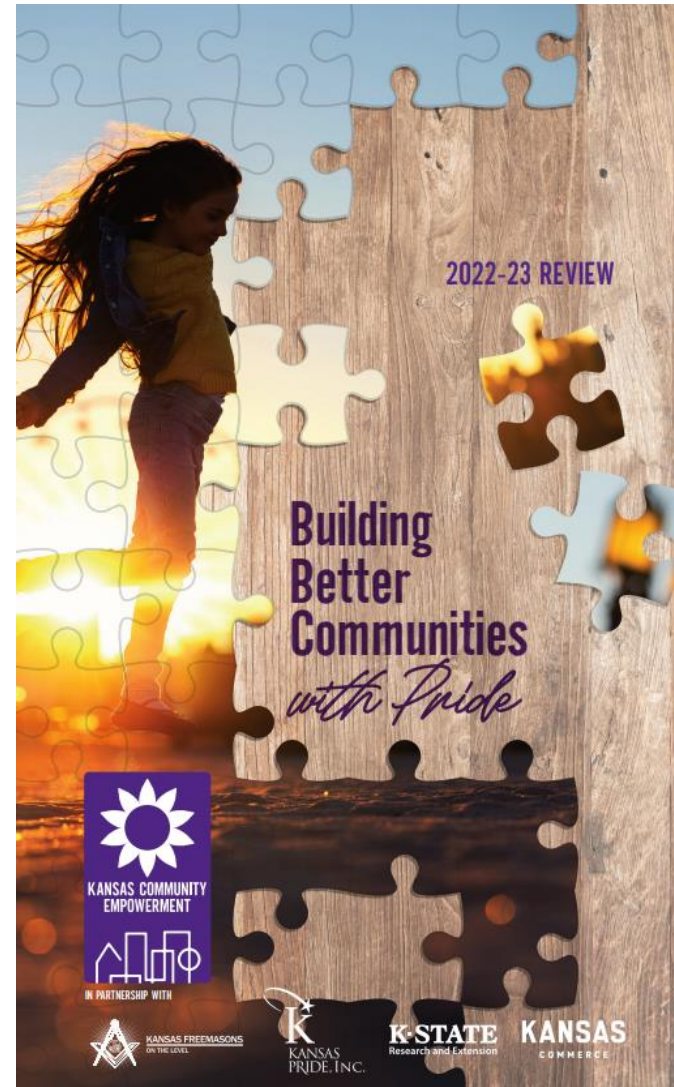
Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

KSRECV@ksu.edu or nkdaniels@ksu.edu

Kansas Community Empowerment

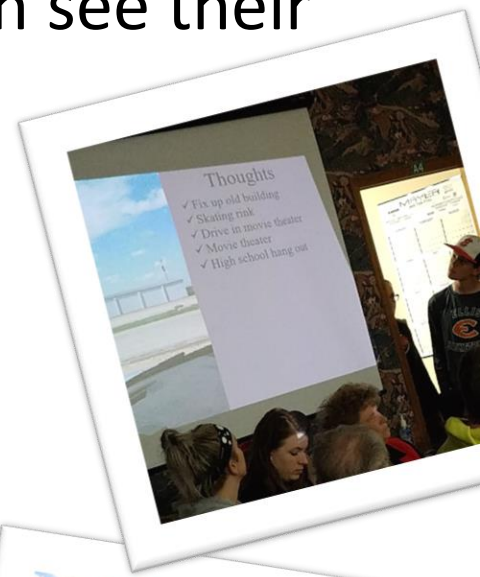
<http://kce.k-state.edu>

- 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 <https://bit.ly/ks-ycp>

- 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



Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



- 1 ONLINE GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving more than \$52 million in successful grants. 
- 2 A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT COURSE**
An 8-week course dedicated to helping you complete a fundable proposal. 
- 3 A LIST OF CONTRACT GRANT WRITERS**
Professionals willing and ready to write grants on a contract basis.
- 4 SUPPORT FOR KANSAS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT COMMUNITIES**
Excellent resources for those wanting to bring more to their communities.
- 5 ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS**
Our professionals are prepared to help you find grants and review your grant proposals.

For more information email KSRECV@k-state.edu.

Small Business and Community Development

- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am**

Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.

— Register here: <https://ksre-learn.com/ecall>

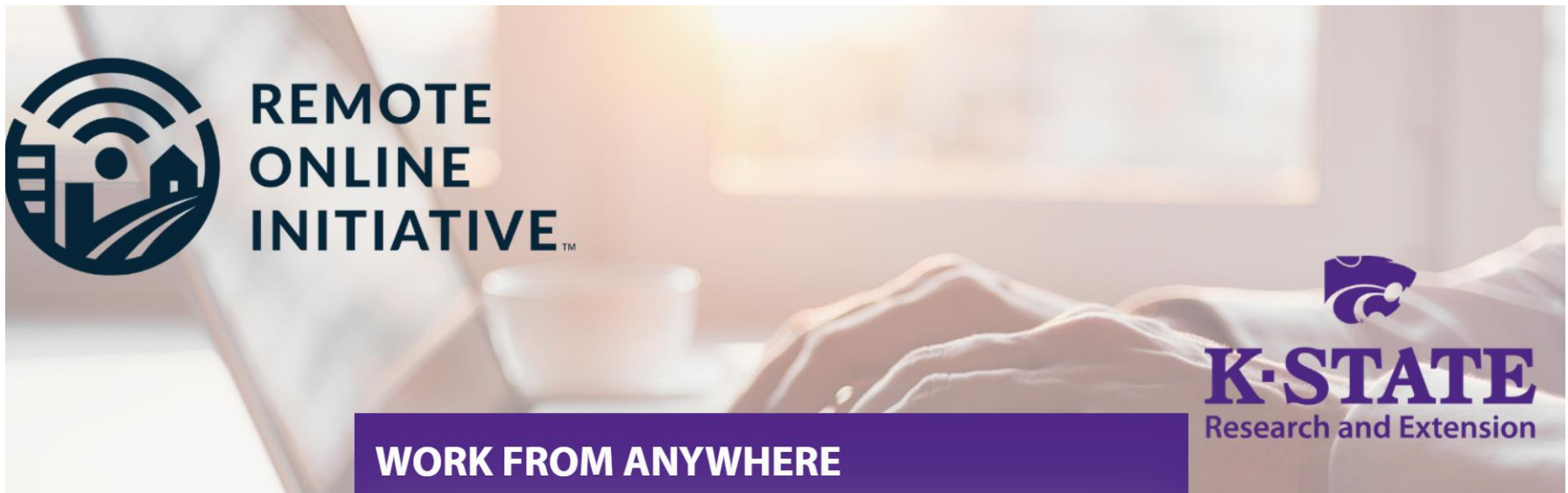
— Previous calls are recorded at

<https://ksre-learn.com/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*
- Monthly Classes: <https://kansasremotework.com/>



Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

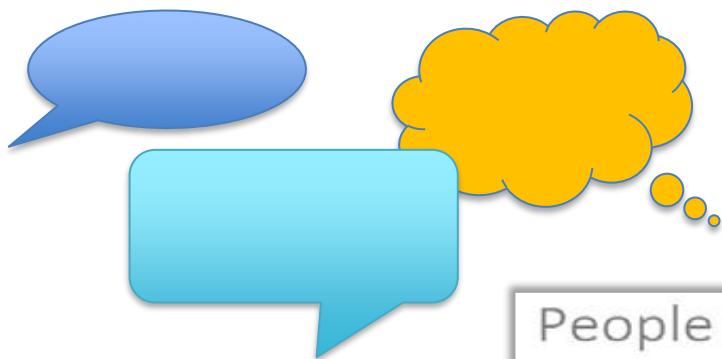
- **Goal:** Increase access to affordable, healthy food and to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.
- Technical assistance and financing to develop new or renovate fresh food retail in underserved communities throughout Kansas.

<http://kansashealthyfood.org/>



What will we do?

What did you hear?



What will we do?



People move in the direction of their conversations

