

First Impressions



Oswego, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- Arma asked for First Impressions, Oswego agreed to be its partner; 54 min drive.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey in February and took photos March 15.
- Three Oswego visitors visited in March and April.
- Results presented by zoom and video recording.
- Oswego 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:**

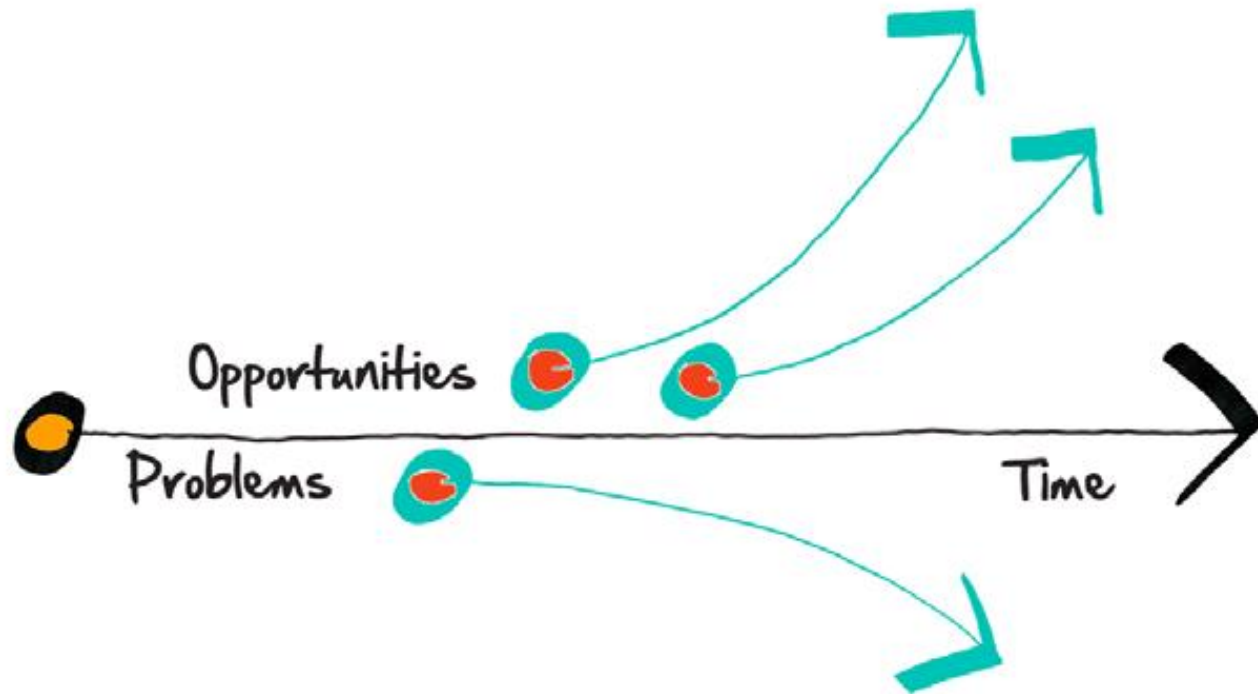
- ***Be curious,*** Why does the visitor see it this way?
- Is the observation worth considering?
- What can we do to change it– or the perception?

Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary

Asset Based Community Development

People move in the direction of their conversations



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/>

- 2020 Census: 1,683 ↓ **21.1%** 2010 Census: 2,133
 - Median household income: \$42,237 **\$47,992**
 - High school or GED 91.7% **89.6%**
 - At least a BS 16.4% **21.6%**
 - Median Age: 42.9 years **41.2 years**
- 20.5% are 65 and above*

Blue: Parsons Micro Area comparison

- Moved since Last Year: 23.6% 13.4%
- Poverty rate 9.8% 16.3%

Race/Ethnicity

White 92.5% American Indian: 1.3%

Black: 1.4% Two or more races: 4.9%

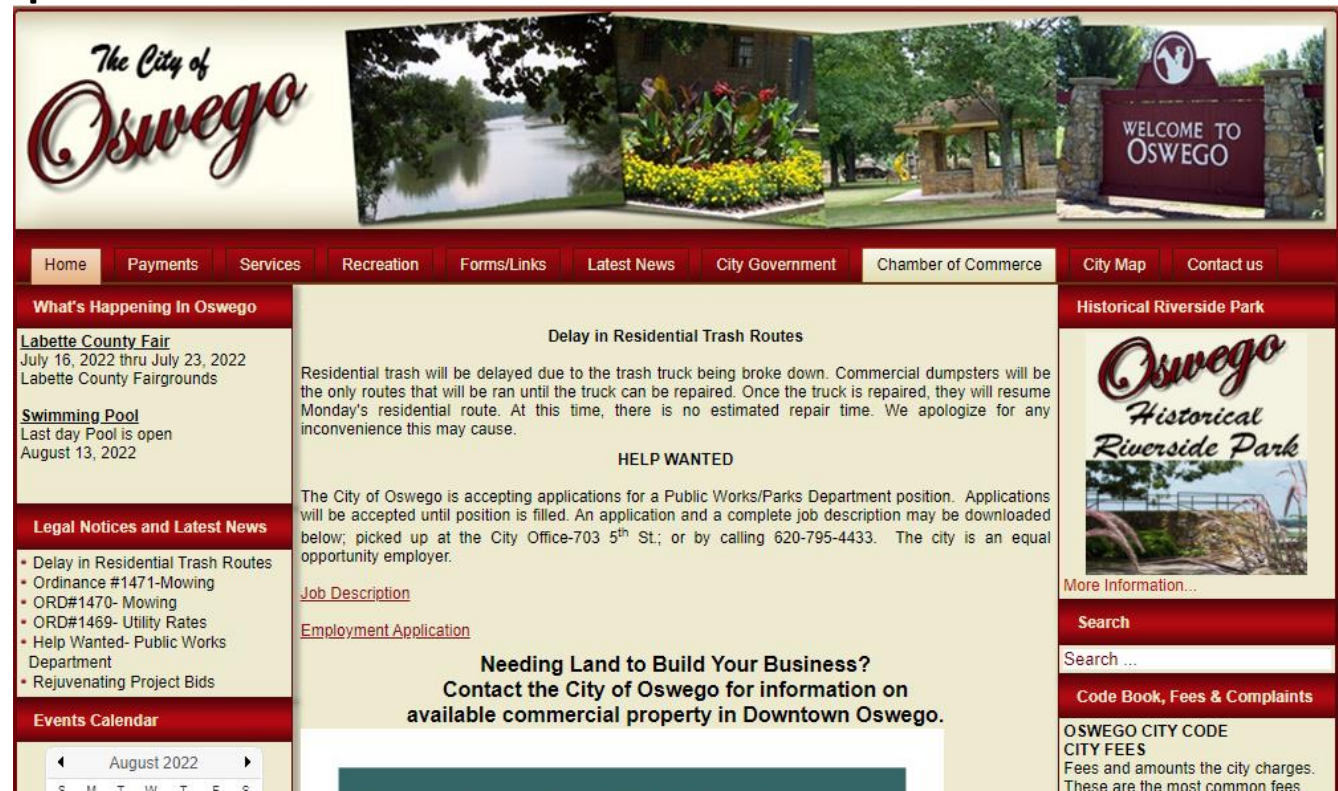
Hispanic: 1.3% (of any race)

Blue: Parsons Micro Area comparison

Website <https://www.oswegokansas.com/>

- Very easy to find information with accurate depictions of what I saw.
- The city page has lots of helpful information with tabs and pull-down information.

*Retrieved from
internet 8/4/22*



FaceBook <https://www.facebook.com/CityofOswegoKS>

Visitors found the Facebook page current with 1,759 followers. *(1,815 as of 8/4/2022)*

- *Pay special attention to the comments from Visitor C who found non-working links and suggestions.*



City of Oswego Kansas

@CityofOswegoKS · City

Send message

Hi! Please let us know how we can help.

Home About Photos Events More ▾

Like 🔍 ⋮

About

See all

The city government of Oswego, KS.

City of Oswego Kansas
20h · 🌐

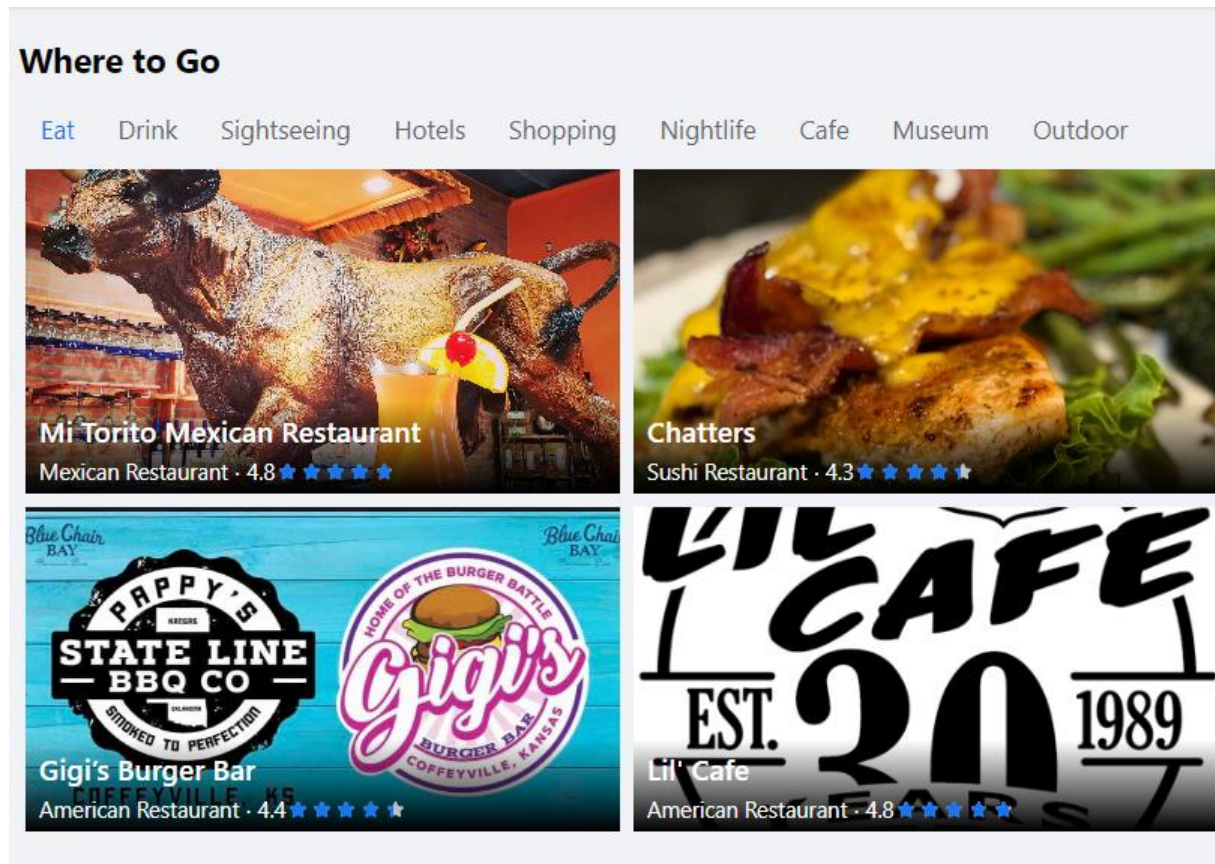
NEW UPDATE:

The trash routes will begin tomorrow between 6:00 and 6:30 am. Monday's

- **FaceBook Oswego, Kansas**

<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Oswego-Kansas/112486878763747/>

A Facebook generated page.



- **Facebook**

***DOZENS of FB Pages:
An Opportunity for
Co-Marketing***



Oswego, Kansas

City · 651 like this

Oswego is a city in and the county seat of Labette County, Kansas, United States, and situated along the Neosho River. As...

Like



Oswego Kansas Park

Local Business · 2 like this

Like



City of Oswego Kansas

City · 1.8K like this · 3 posts in the last 2 weeks

The city government of Oswego, KS.

Like



Frances Gorman Graves and 2 other friends like this



Oswego Kansas Park

Park · 1 likes this

Like



Oswego, Kansas Chamber of Commerce

Public & Government Service · 623 like this

Informational Page for our Oswego, Kansas Business Community. Be sure to follow this page for updates on our...

Like



Julie Dieterle Smith likes this



Oswego, KS Public Pool

\$ · Public Swimming Pool · 477 like this · 7 posts in the last 2 weeks

Welcome to the Oswego, KS Public Pool page. We will keep you updated on events and closings here.

Like



Julie Dieterle Smith likes this

“Five-Minute” Impression

- Very welcoming! --Very large wood and stone signs at the three entrances into Oswego set the tone for what was immediately to come—an overall sense of pride and community—several homeowners were working in their yards or in/out of their homes, garages and outbuildings, well maintained homes, yards, and landscaping



“Five-Minute” Impression

- The downtown area is older buildings fairly maintained.
- South entrance has a nice sign but no lettering; had civic signs with groups. The best was on the east entrance coming up the hill, civic signs not great but good directional signs to downtown, swimming pool, parks.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Some houses are nice, some need to be kept up better. Looks like affordable housing, but they need to be kept up to look nice.
- The downtown area needs work, but I could see some people are working on it.
- School buildings are very nice.
- Pool could be worked on.
- There needs to be better signage on some businesses. It is hard to tell what they are.

- Downtown people were talking to each other on the sidewalks, smiling, laughing; a strong sense of community, belonging/inclusive, and friendly.
- Sidewalks looked in good condition around businesses. Could use some welcome flags.
- The buildings are old and need to be kept up. I could see that people are working on it. I could see there are a variety of businesses. The middle of the street parking is unique and helpful. The area could use some banners, plants, benches, and trees.





Downtown Business Area



Downtown Business Area



Downtown Business Area







Public Amenities Downtown

- I didn't observe any [benches, trash cans, public restrooms or wi-fi] in the downtown area. There seemed to be enough parking in front of each store. Could use some sprucing up with lights, flowers, murals, or welcome flags.
- Did not notice any of these-especially public restrooms downtown. Did not notice any trash receptacles and I think wi-fi was available. Could use some landscaping and streetscaping. Liked the parking in the middle of the street. No difficulty finding parking and could access multiple services.

Public Amenities Downtown



- To the south of downtown approximately 2 blocks there is a large well maintained and busy grocery store (G&W) and next to it Bill's, then Dollar General and then a Home Health. All had several customers' vehicles parked out front.







Industrial Parks/Commercial

- The industrial park was hard to find. No visible signage I found. It was hidden away. Found Tank Connections at the edge of town, Industrial Diamond Coach, and a county prison also. Bartlett Coop wasn't in good shape.
- Little to no signage for it. There was the Co-op, the detention centers, and the Diamond manufacturing 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.*

- I located Labette Health in the town which was fairly new. Looked nice. I presume it is like a Quick Care but no hospital. They had a fitness facility which is great.
- Noticed the Harry Hynes Hospice. There was a 3D sonogram center downtown that a lot of people seem to use.
- There is a Labette Health Oswego Clinic and Express Care, Home Health Care, St. John's Medical Center, and Oswego Health and Rehab-but they are hard to find. There is an optometrist in town.





- There is quite a variety of homes in Oswego: small and quaint; larger Victorian style 2-story homes, and many ranch style 70s to newer homes built since then.
- Most “For Sale” signs in the yards were realtor signs and “pending sale” or “sold” attached to them. The homes are maintained moderately well to very well, have medium to large yards.
- I only saw three very poorly maintained homes and yards in deplorable condition.
- There were a lot of older homes, so upkeep is the factor in whether a house seemed nice.







- I could not distinguish any rental properties.
- Saw what seemed to be some income-based housing. There did not seem to be much land in town that could be used for building new structures. There seemed to be rentals. Housing would appeal to young families (affordability, good schools, parks) and seniors (available health care and pharmacy).
- I observed several very nice cabins in town and talked to owner in length about her properties. She rents thru Airbnb and has several nice extended stay homes for people when moving into area before buying or building to rent.

Rental Housing

Many of these are more accurately described as guest housing or overnight stays.





KANSAS

- Occupied Housing Units 868**
- Owner Occupied 69.1% (66.3%)
- Vacant Houses 13.9%
- Average Household size 2.1
 - Households without a computer*: 13.0%
 - Households without Internet Subscription: 20.7%
- Travel Time to jobs: 19.1 min 15.4m
Blue: Parsons Micro Area comparison

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2053450-oswego-ks/>

*Includes Smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/> table 2504

- Moderate Income Housing Grants
 - Grants of up to \$650,000 for any city or county applicant with less than 60,000 residents.
 - New funding cycles every 3 months.
 - [15:22 video overview](#)
 - See “Documents/Forms/Resources” at bottom

<https://kshousingcorp.org/moderate-income-housing/>

Retrieved from Internet 7-27-22



Need for clean-up

- The issue is the yards: filled with derelict cars, large piles of sorted and unsorted scrap metal, large piles of discarded household items and appliances, etc.



- There is Head Start, K-8 and a High School. All appear to very appropriately meet Oswego's needs, and all are well maintained.
- We observed the fairly new high school and middle schools. The outdoor facilities were really nice also like the football field and ball fields. They have a Head Start program. The grade school was there also. For the size of town, the schools looked very well maintained.
- Could see Elementary, Middle School, and High School. Nice for a town the size of Oswego. They are well-maintained-except the football field.

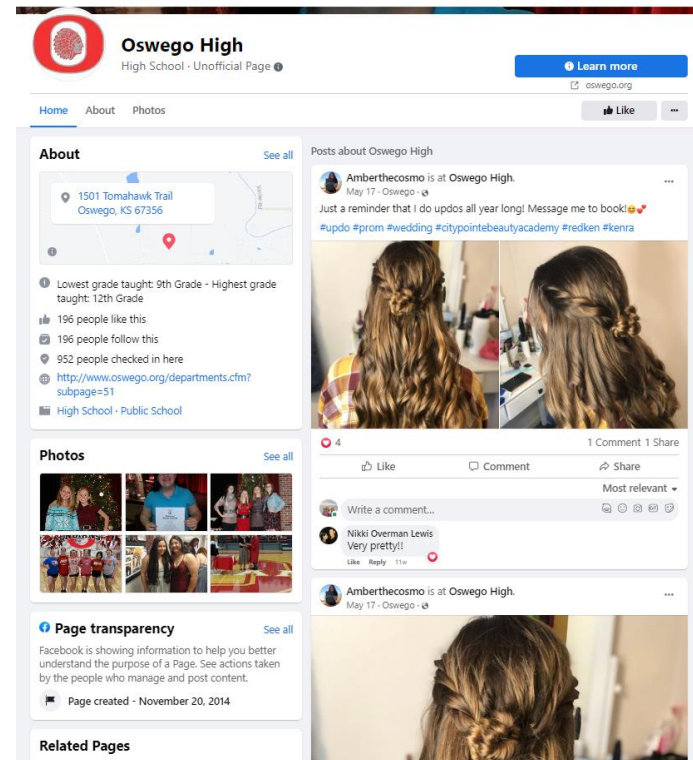
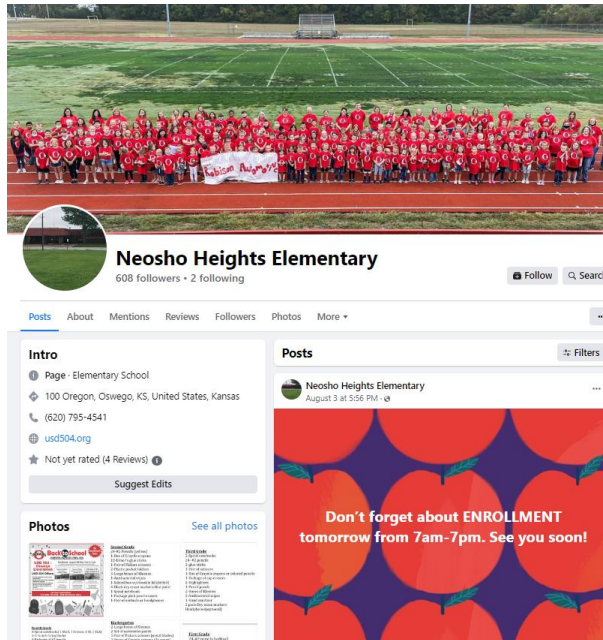






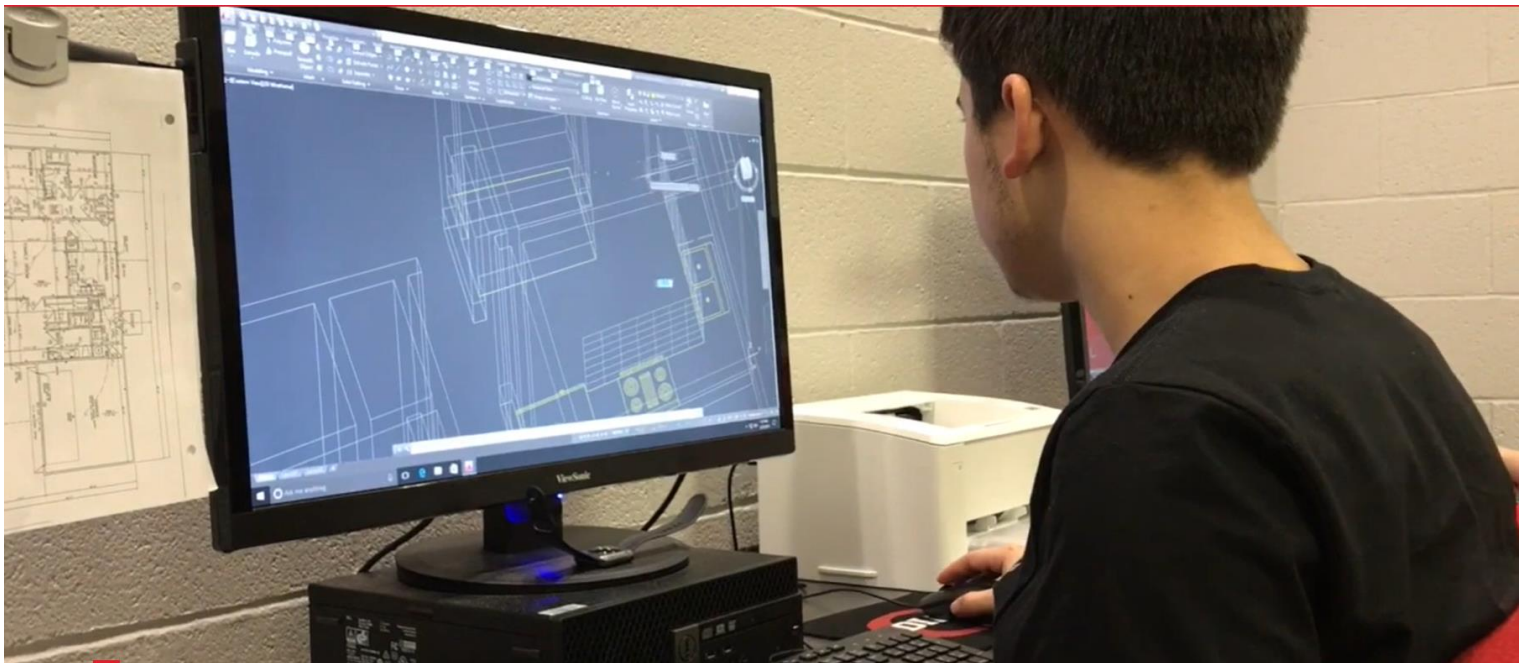
Outdoor Learning Site

- There is also a great Facebook presence.
- *FB pages came up for Oswego High, Neosho Heights Elementary, Neosho Heights PTO when I searched, "Oswego KS schools."*



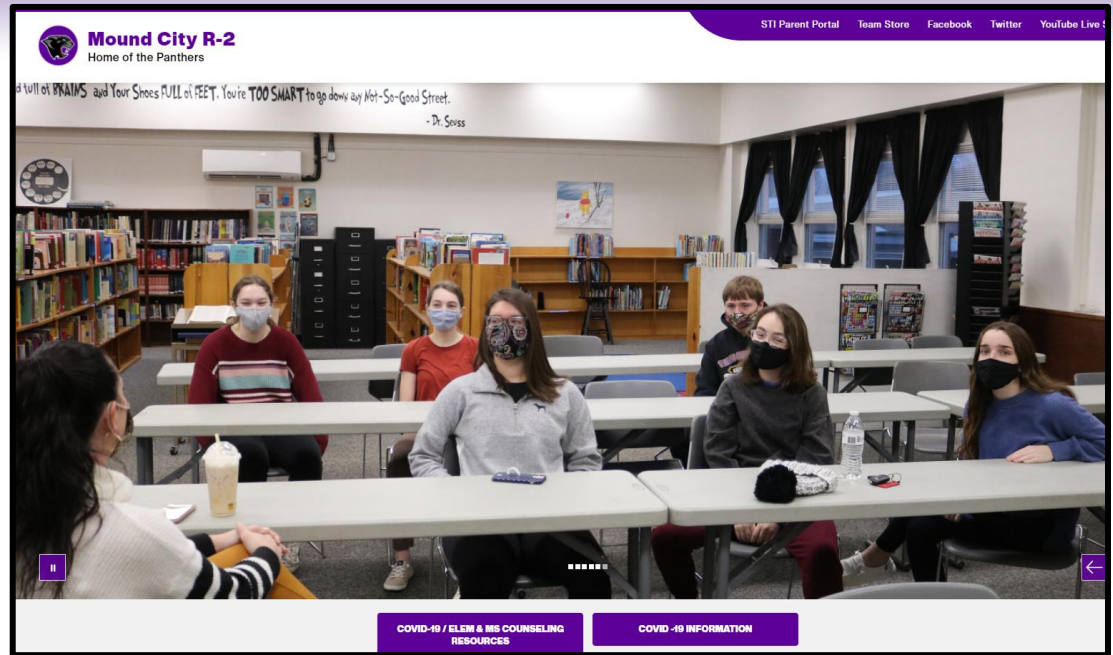
- Excellent online resources. Especially liked the online introductory video.
- *If you watch the short video, you'll get the important points about achievement.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA8wMAa9nbo>



Be mindful that “Potential Students” are an audience for your website.

- This is Mound City, **MO**:
- Pandemic period photos show emphasis on science-based. (masks & COVID info)
- “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:

- a. There are at least three childcares, I did not inquire about the cost.
- b. I did not get any information on this.
- c. I saw one day care. Not sure of the price.

Labette County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **64%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

Source <https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/> Retrieved from internet 7/27/22

- I made a comment to a lunch customer about the churches I saw. The customer added that the churches are all involved with community improvements as well and work together.
- Lots of churches with several denominations. They all seemed well maintained in appearance.
- There were many churches. It seemed “The Church” and the “Lost Soul” churches are non-denominational. There seemed to be eight churches in town. All the churches could work on appearance. I did not see much evidence of community services. I saw signs for a free Wednesday night meal at the Baptist Church.





- Museum and Historical Society
- Oswego Senior Center has a huge sign not far north on 59 as you just entered Oswego from the south. Below it on a separate sign is the announcement of their Bingo days and times. There is no missing it, a great promotion of both the Senior Center and the Bingo.
- Had an Oswego Senior Center in kind of poor condition.
- It is evident 4-H is very active, because the fairgrounds are excellent. There is a nice community center. Chamber of Commerce.
- I saw signs coming into town saying Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs are here.



- *Is this an abandoned building or a temporary condition?*
- *Consider removing the Lions' Club sign to make it clear it is available.*



- Well-marked street signs and traffic control signs. Average wear and tear of streets as compared to other rural small towns in SE Kansas. Not all residential streets have sidewalks but not high traffic either so unnecessary. A lot of mature trees throughout residential and along the highways in town.



- On the south side of town, there need to be street signs. The streets are narrow, and the paving is OK, not great.
- There needs to be a big, lighted sign at the Tomahawk Lane corner to the High School. People would have a hard time finding where to turn for the Junior and High School at night if they had not been there during the day. GPS might not help.



- Did not go into City Hall as it was Saturday. I saw it, the courthouse and the law enforcement building to all be very nicely maintained and appropriately adequate.
- Everyone was friendly. No information about the town available except the City News flyer I happened to pick up at a business. There was not any information available at the Post Office. I did not go to the city/town hall. I only knew about the online sources of information because of the flyer.



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- They are both nice buildings, well maintained.
- Did not notice a fire station. Good police-when I drove around a neighborhood twice, a police officer seemed to follow me to check out what I was doing.

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

Navigation:

- > 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:

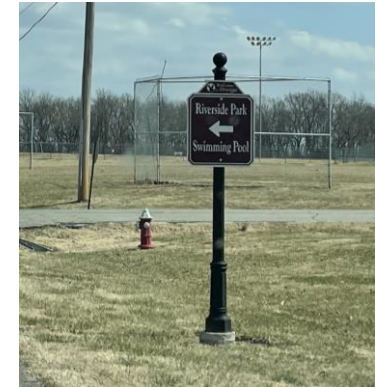
1. Emergency communications systems, including facilities for the public to report fires, staffing, training, certification of telecommunicators, and facilities for dispatching fire departments
2. The fire department, including equipment, staffing, training, and geographic deployment of fire companies
3. The water supply system, including the inspection and flow testing of hydrants and a careful evaluation of

- I observed an older structure for a library which I believe is a Carnegie Library.
- Needs to be kept up better on the outside. I did not feel comfortable to go in. It did not seem to be open. No signage visible from the street as far as hours. No information in City News flyer about it.



- Next to the fairgrounds there is a large area of assorted playground equipment for varying ages and interests for children. Very well- maintained grounds and equipment. Walking trail through this area, very nice views, trees, and shrubs.
- I visited the picturesque Riverside Park on my way out of town and it is just breathtakingly beautiful even without the flowers that have not yet been planted or bloomed!
- There are several city parks and playgrounds well maintained with covered picnic areas. They also had a walking trail inside of Riverside Park. The sports complex at the high school was fairly new.







Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- “Home of Renowned Sports Artist Ted Watts.”
- The Riverside Park (established 1902) is a draw and gem for the community for its beauty and enjoyment and being historical.
- The Labette County Fairgrounds is the Fairgrounds in Oswego. The permanent structures for the exhibits, barns and activities are very well maintained. The Fair itself is also very well known for being the best and draws huge numbers of people to it each year.
- I don’t know about a slogan, but I’ve always known it for the river that they have. Beautiful view around the park area of it.

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The museum, the cabin, the original town well, Riverside Park and its grounds, location, and view of the Neosho River below it to the north; there are RV campgrounds access to it, the historic bath house at the Riverside Park (sunbathing was done more discretely on the roof), the Fair grounds were established around 1917 or thereabouts.
- Camping, fishing area. Had nice camping area and a large, air-conditioned building for use.
- Riverside Park, Community Center, Fairgrounds, Baseball and Softball fields. Campground by the river.

Visitor's Center

- There is no visitor's center

What would bring you back?

- I will definitely return to Black Crow Trading Company, Stonehouse Grill for good and friendly conversations and food and shopping! I plan to return later this Spring and again in the Summer to see Riverside Park in its full bloom. I hope to take in more of the other stores I did not see or shop in this trip.
- Being there on a Monday there was a flea market I wanted to go in, but it wasn't open. I have a friend that says it is a good one, so I definitely want to return to visit there. I was also told there is a specialty business for 3-D sonograms for babies.
- I would maybe come back for the Chicken Coop and the Black Crow Trading Company flea markets. I would enjoy spending time at Riverside Park, the fair, sports events tied in with the schools, and events at churches.

Most Positive Observations

- I really enjoyed all my experiences at Oswego and most of all the friendliness! I look forward to returning and seeing what else they all have done in preserving the good and positives, the new things and projects I know with their very obvious commitment and love of Oswego they will be continuing to develop and do to honor, maintain and not lose its past but also while growing, evolving and progressing it into the future.
- The schools, parks, tennis courts and a grocery store are all an A+ for community!
- Friendliness, schools, Riverside Park, Fairgrounds. Great to have a G and W store, Casey's, and Dollar General in the Community.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Nothing specific to Oswego and its citizens that's any different than any other older or smaller rural community in SE Kansas...if they continue to work together, build on what they have, stay flexible and creative, work toward what they need or do not have, they will attract future generations to stay or also return home so there is always a thriving Oswego.
- The downtown facades on the businesses could use updated. The courthouse could use a makeover. It needs some restaurants also. Could use an updated swimming pool. Really could use some senior housing and community center.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- The houses could be kept up better. Also, for people to improve the downtown area and have more civic groups. The downtown area could be really great if people would improve the building facades and add benches, trees, banners, and plants.

What will you remember?

- One of the friendliest places I have ever visited, anywhere. A very comfortable and at home feeling—the experiences, the surroundings, and the people. A lunch customer talked with pride and hope for Oswego in that several of the younger generation that grew up and moved away from Oswego are returning back to Oswego to live and raise their families (30–40-year-olds), are opening businesses and that these are also the ones that are the newer and growing members that have joined in the efforts of the Chamber.
 - (Read the rest of this comment for another sweet anecdote from a restaurant customer)

What will you remember?

- I would say Riverside Park, it was very peaceful and pleasant also.
- The excellent school facilities the wonderful Riverside Park, and that people need to work on their properties. There are some beautiful houses-they just need to be kept up. It is also hard to find the Courthouse. I am used to courthouses being a focal point in the county seat. Your two flea markets are also draws to the community. The Fairgrounds, school facilities, and Community Center are great.

- Remember that potential new residents are researching before they come. Use your City and School websites to highlight your many assets.
- What are you proud of? Show us online.
- Tell your positive stories. Make your residents want to contribute to a positive story.

**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

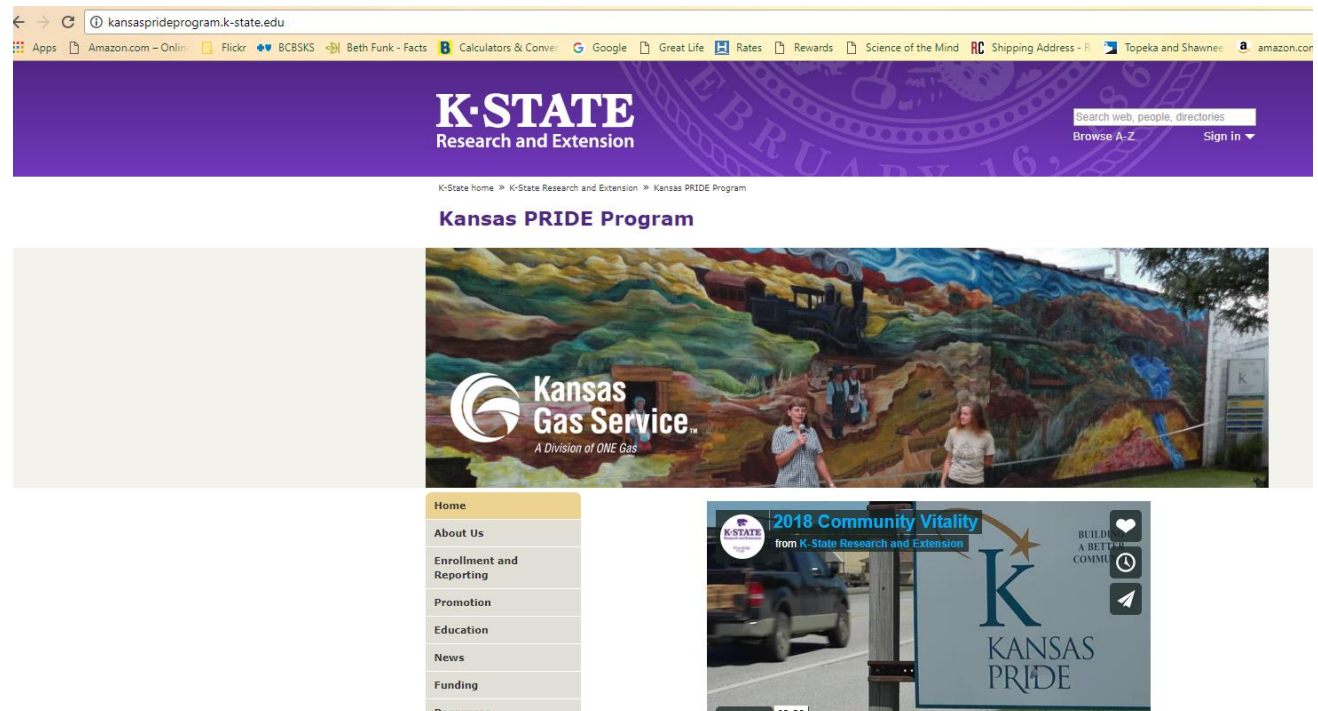
Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

785.410.6352

nkdaniels@ksu.edu

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.



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



Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



5 GRANT WRITING RESOURCES

K-State Research and Extension provides resources to help you write and submit successful grant proposals to improve lives, livelihoods and communities across Kansas.

- 1 ONLINE GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving \$28 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 PRIDE 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.

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](#)

- 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.*



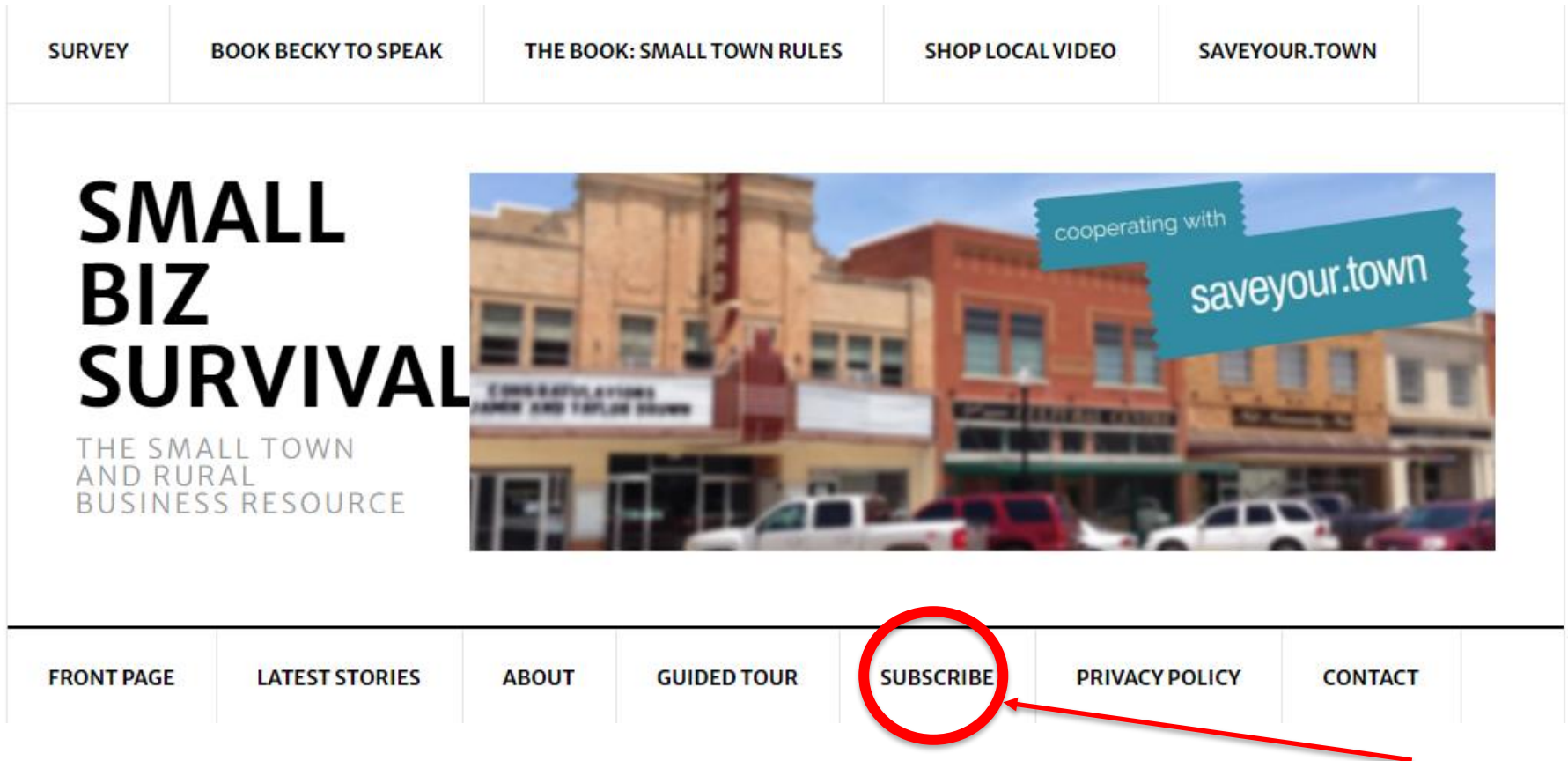
Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

- **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/>



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



People Prefer to Live Rural

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

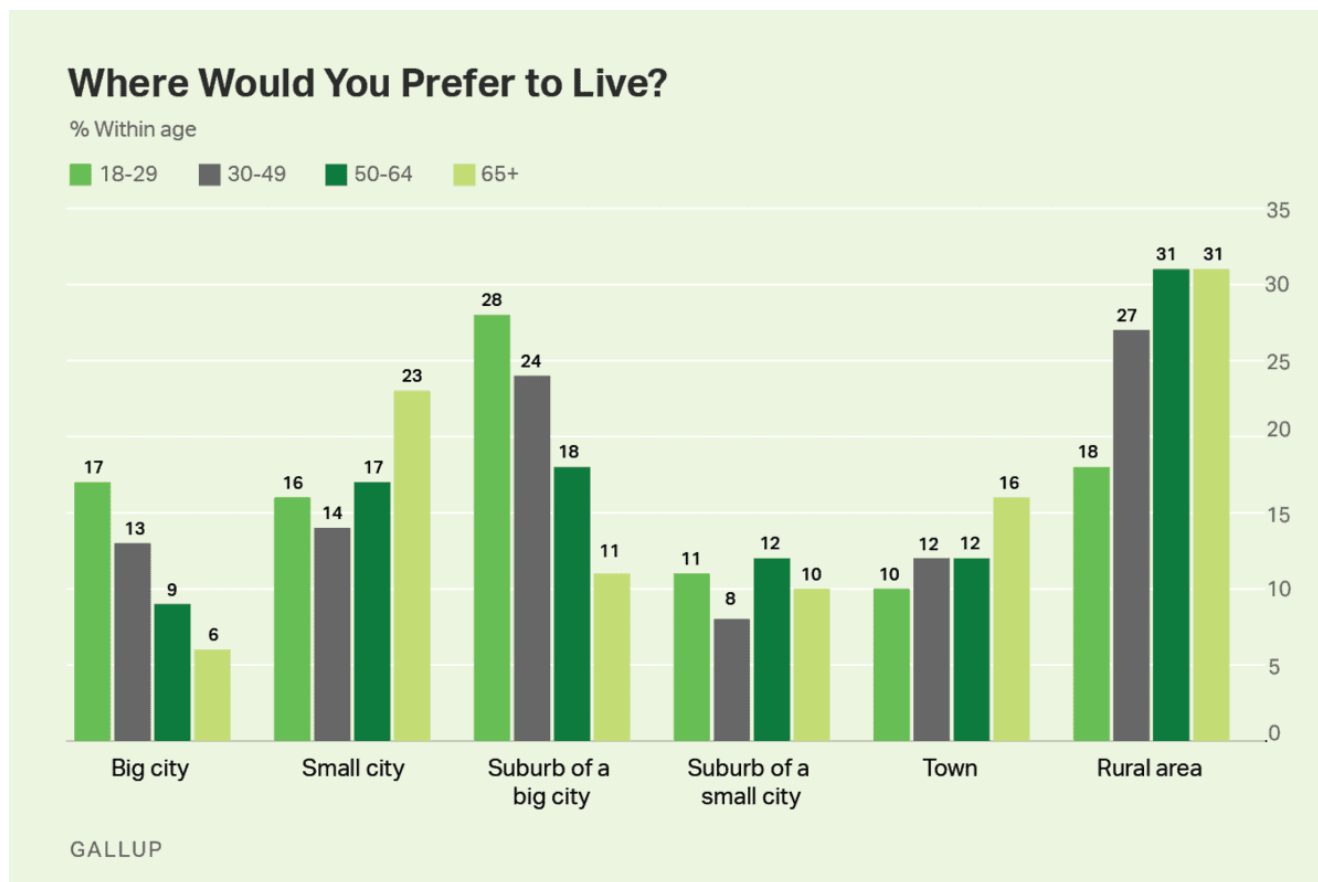
SOURCE:

Gallup,

Dec 7, 2018:

Americans Big
on Idea of
Living in the
Country.

<https://bit.ly/3AycMNp>



Climate Change Refugees



There isn't a community in America, particularly in coastal America, where we are not seeing a transition from the coast to higher ground.

- Jesse Keenan, PhD, Tulane University

CBS Sunday Morning, January 24, 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SByFy9R6320>

Retrieved from the Internet, 2-8-2021



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.”



Nancy Daniels

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