

# First Impressions

## Seneca, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership  
with

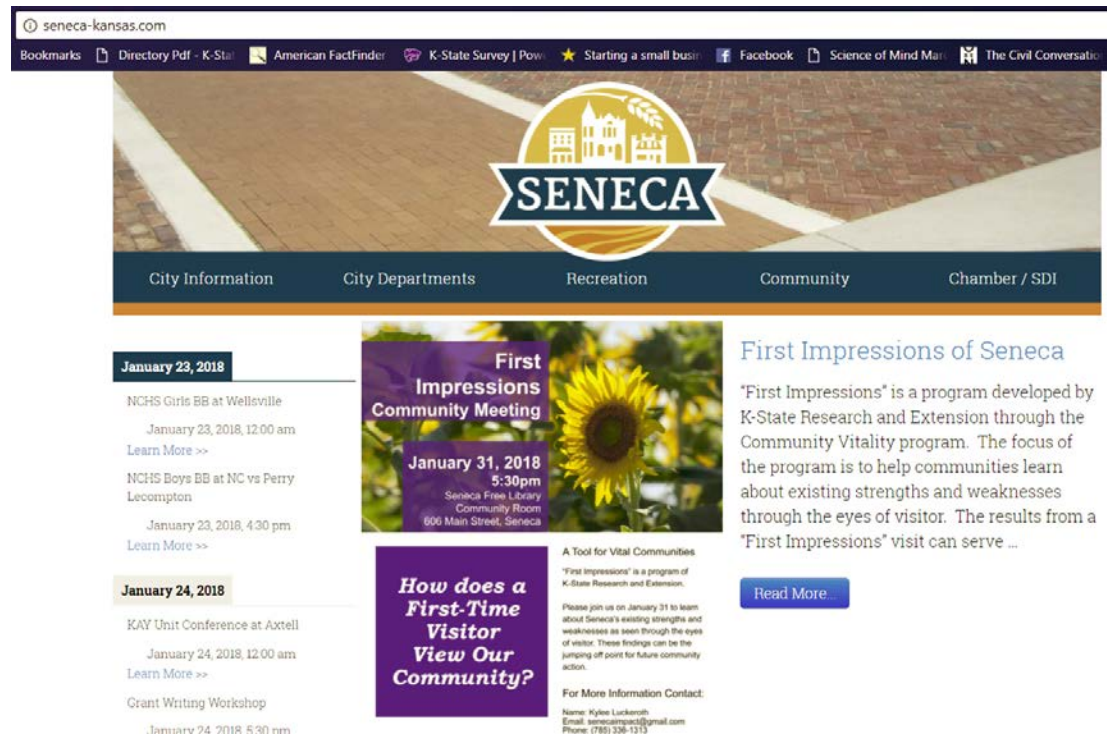
The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- 2010 Census Population 1,991  
(down 6.2% since 2000\*) **KS- 6.1%**
- 2016 Census Estimate is 2,019  
(down 4.9% since 2000 **KS +8.1%**)
- 15.6% college educated, 77.8% high school or GED  
– **KS 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency**
- 53.5% family households, 46.5% non-family
- Poverty rate is 9.3% **(KS=13.6%)**
- Median Age 50.1 years **(36)**
- Median household income is \$38,438 **(\$52,205)**

## Web Presence: <http://seneca-kansas.com/>

- A well thought-out and organized array of information.
- Easy to locate website with joint information with Chamber.



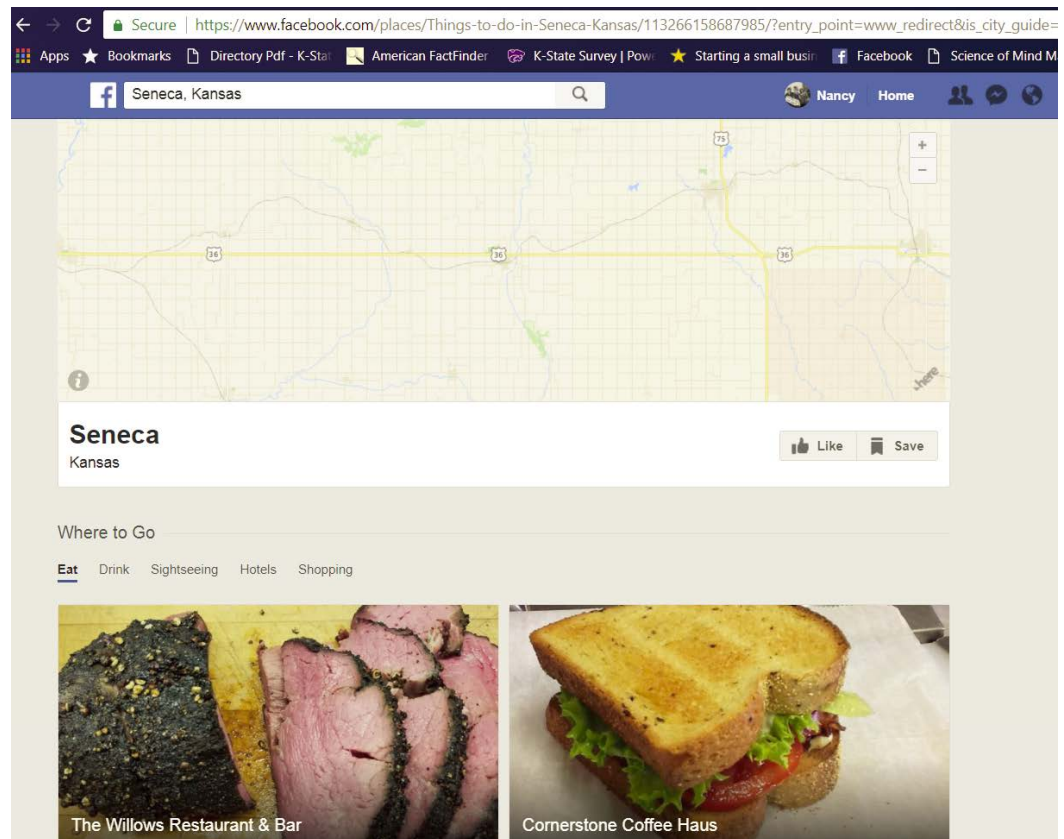
Retrieved from  
Internet 1-23-18

## FaceBook Presence:

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

- Like that, you have access to restaurant menus directly from the page.

*I counted 39 pages  
with links to Seneca:  
This is a wonderful  
opportunity for  
co-marketing.*





## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- All avenues of entry to the city seemed well-kept and the businesses looked like they were “of going concern.”
- On entering from the south on highway 63, there was a sign some distance before the intersection, a sign located once one arrives at the intersection could be most helpful.
- Signage and signs for historic downtown- great, but don’t draw enough attention for the casual drive-through. There is much to do “downtown!”

# The “Five-Minute” Impression



Photos were taken October 10 @  
noon (raining) and clear skies  
photos on November 29 in  
afternoon.



## Downtown Business Area

- Even though the majority of buildings were older, they are well-kept and attractive. There are lots of retail shops with a good variety of merchandise—really impressive for a town of this size.









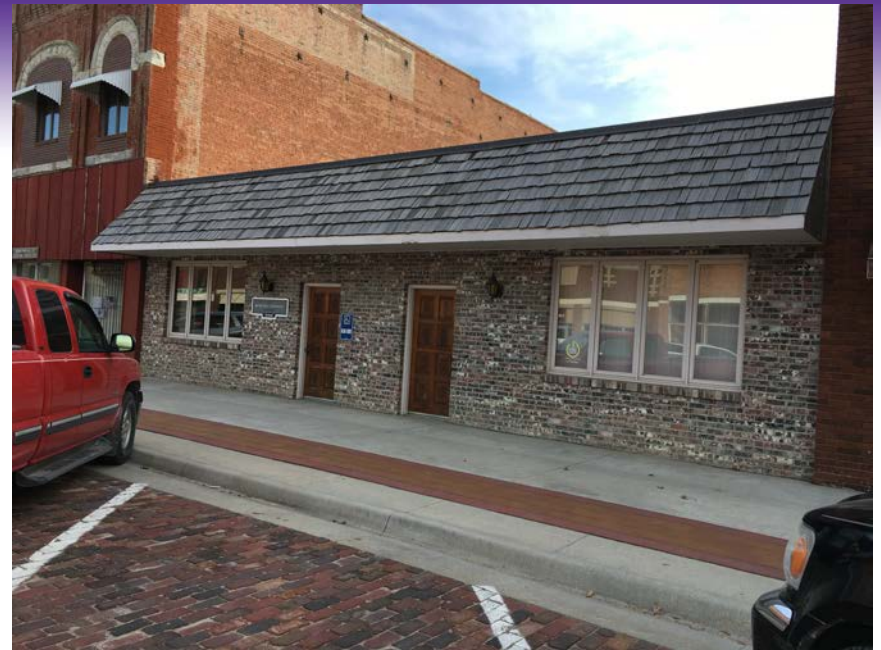


## Downtown Business Area

- Stores are clean and pleasant to enter and look around.
- The personnel were friendly and for the most part attention to someone coming into the store. The usual comment was “May I help you?”



















## Downtown Business Area

- Sweet Pea's Bakery was a delight. The only thing warmer than the tea and cinnamon rolls was the friendly small town customer service.











## Downtown Business Area

- Wide sidewalks, easy for handicapped, etc. to shop.
- Nice banners and flags. Hard to find any negatives.



## Downtown Business Area

- Great parking and lines with room for bigger vehicles and twin cab trucks, so common to rural Kansas.







## Downtown Business Area

- Drinking fountain and restroom downtown is pretty much unique.
- Parking is more than adequate.
- *Is there Wi-Fi?*







## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- The new sidewalk initiative was extremely nice— both in beauty and also in functionality.
- Most other retail was on Highway 36. Easy to get to, but spread out across town.







## Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Appeared to be industrial clusters, but most of the land was occupied.





## Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- We had heard of the SKF closing and were saddened of how this might impact the community. That said, we saw an opportunity for other businesses to absorb a much needed labor force and a resiliency in the community that was a real strength.



## ***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 competes with your downtown can help your entrepreneur serve the world.*





## Health Care Services

- We visited Nemaha Valley Community Hospital and Seneca Family Practice. A newly expanded clinic with caring staff which rivals what we would expect to see in suburban Kansas City.



## Health Care Services

- Additionally we noticed two Chiropractors and two pharmacies.





## Long-Term Care

- Country Place/Assisted Living, Crestview Manor and Life Care Center Nursing Homes.



## Long-Term Care

- Long term care facilities were located by the hospital medical complex.





# Housing

- Only a few “for sale” signs and one was already marked “Sold.”
- It would be a challenge for families moving that needed immediate occupancy.



















## Housing – Rental

- Most rentals appear to be section 8 housing.
- Could not find home rentals for a family.







## Housing data

## KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 1,055
- Total Occupied Houses 1,009 (95.6%) (89.5%)
- Vacant Houses 46 ( 4.4%) (10.5%)
  
- Owner Occupied 779 (77%) (66.7%)
- Renter Occupied 230 (23%) (33.3%)



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

- *Seneca appears to do a good job of code enforcement or the owners have a sense of pride; I did not find any homes for this category.*

# Schools

- USD 115: an elementary school, 6-8 junior high and 9-12 High school.
- Schools appear to be in excellent condition.





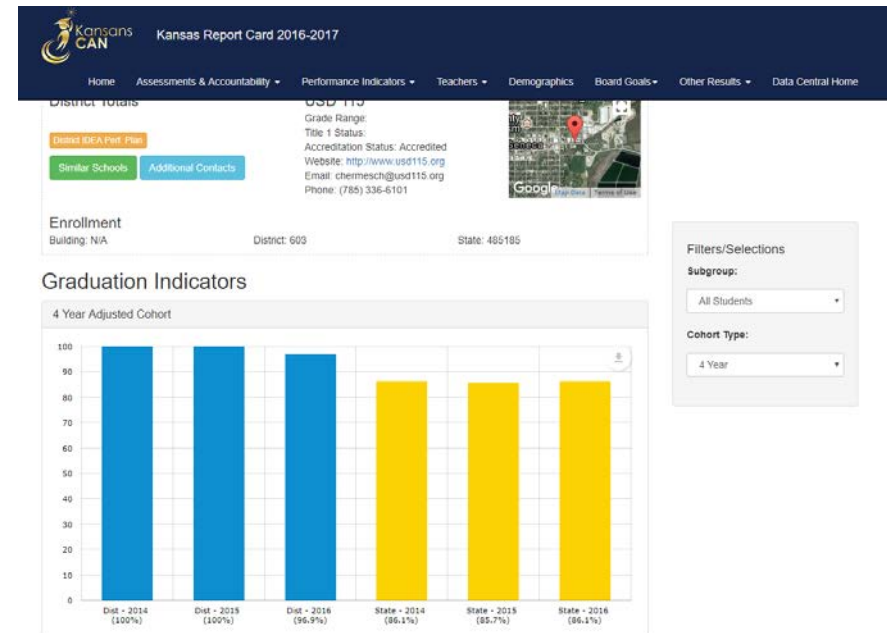
# Schools

- St. Peter and Paul Grade School: Well-maintained. Impressed with the planning that allowed schools to share recreation areas and parking.



# Schools

- USD 115 website: clear and concise and provides more than adequate information.
- A few websites I found concerning the city and schools all gave Seneca very good marks for schools.
- *KSDE Reports are embedded in the site and easy to find.*





# Childcare

- Drove by one child care.



## Faith/Religion

- Catholic Church is the predominant church in Seneca. The entire complex is in excellent condition.





# Faith/Religion

- Baptist and Methodist Churches.



## Civic

- Knights of Columbus Council.
- American Legion





## Civic

- *4-H evident in October*
- *Nemaha County Food Pantry*



**Civic:** *Nemaha County Training Center, provides vocational supports and meaningful day activities, residential services, and case coordination services to individuals affected by intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD).*





## Public Infrastructure

- Public infrastructure appears to be more than adequate. City services appear well-maintained.
- Businesses develop where they can, without much consideration to zoning or planning for the collective benefit.



## City Hall

- Well received, and easily accessible.
- Seemed typical for Kansas small town.
- Visitors would probably stop at Chamber Office.





# Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Police and fire protection appear to be more than adequate.
- Did not ask for the current fire protection rating.



# Library

- Library is fairly new.
- Several people in the community commented on what a great library it is.





## City Parks

- Very impressive walking trail and park area- lots of space.
- Very spacious, variety of sports and playground equipment.









## Recreation/Tourism

- Fairly new 18-hole golf course that is “home” for many golf tournaments.
  - It was difficult to find how to get there.



## Events, Natural & Manmade Features

- There were some postings of upcoming events. Did not appear to be a draw for visitors.
- Veteran's memorial on east side was impressive.
- For some strange reason, we found ourselves drawn to take a picture on the dinosaur!
- *The significance of this structure (hand dug well) isn't apparent from nearby.*





*No one mentioned the museums.*



# What would bring you back?

- Golf Course
- Cornerstone Coffee House
- Sweet Pea's Bakery





## Most Positive Observations

- Clean, caring and friendly.
- Seneca would be a great place to live!
- Pleasant people, well-kept buildings, downtown has a lot to offer.



## **Biggest Obstacles/Challenges**

- The loss of jobs at SKF Industries.
- The “distance from other cities” challenge becomes an asset as they’ve attracted services and amenities not found in many small towns.
- Housing. Rental and homes to buy.
- Signage to attract visitors into the historical downtown— brown signs aren’t enough. (see “Downtown” Comments)



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

- Sense of a settled, close-knit community, where neighbors care for and look after one another.
- Downtown, brick streets, quaint shops, great food and fine people.



## Next Steps:

### *Thank our leadership team:*

- *Kylee Luckeroth*
- *Matt Rehder*
- *Kate Haynie*
- *Nancy Gafford*
- *David Key*

- **Set next steps!**

- Which group will lead the discussion?

- **Contact me if you need resources or help:**

- Nancy Daniels

Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

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<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

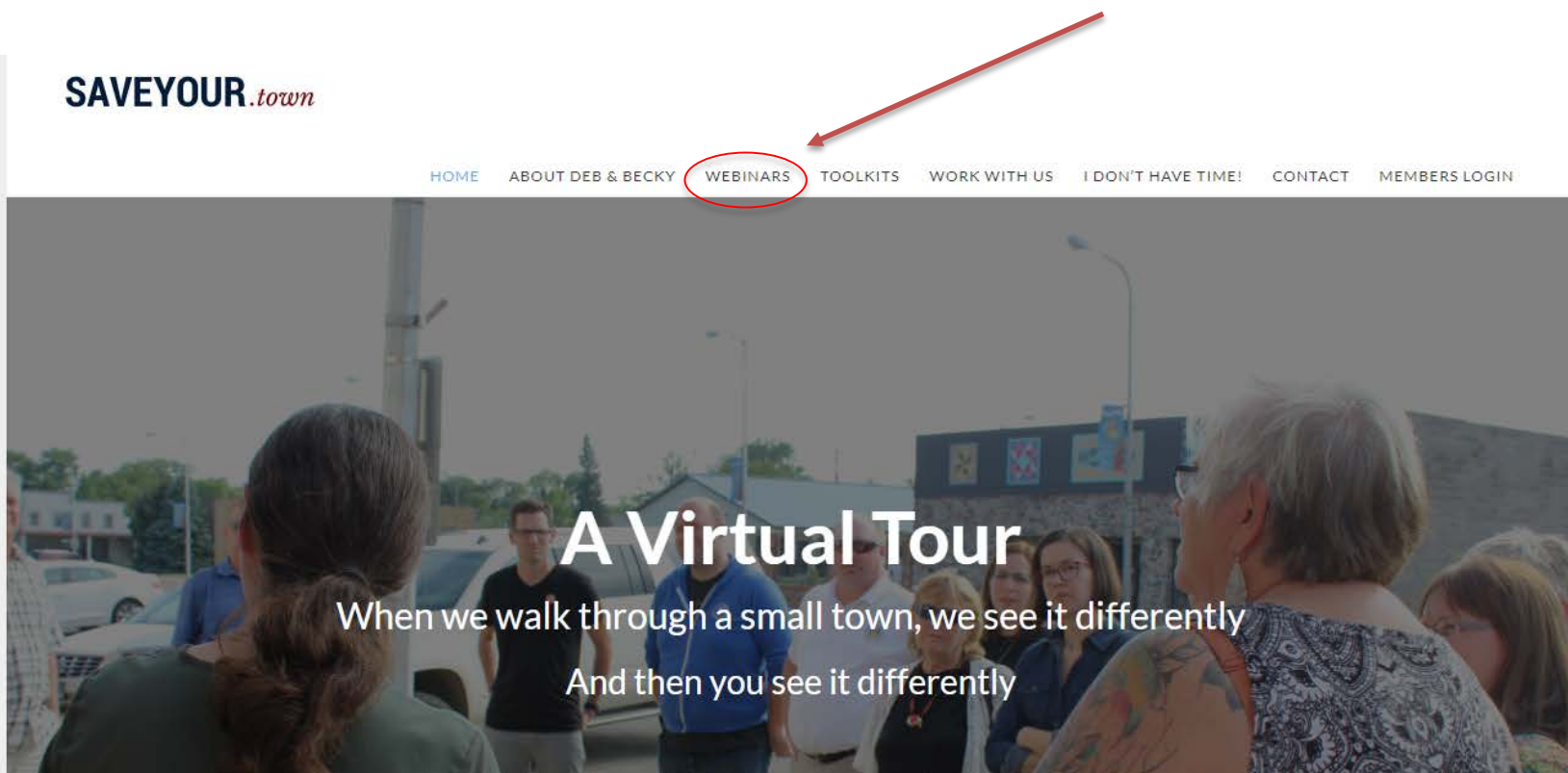
- ☒ Small Biz Survival
- ☒ Positive View of Rural
- ☒ Building Possibility

[JOIN](#)

I will never sell or rent your email.

<http://saveyour.town/>

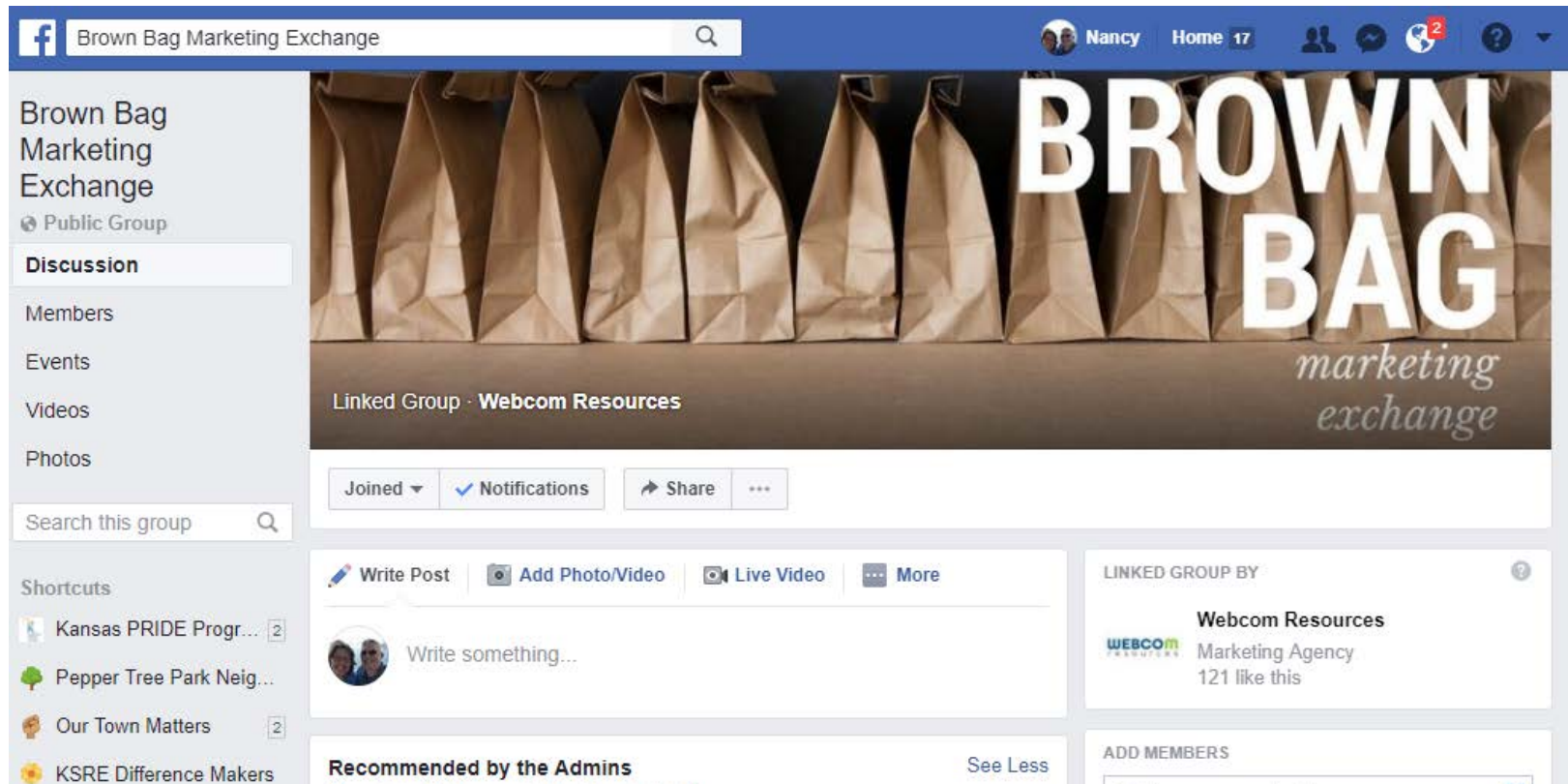
- Monthly live webinars; available on recording.
- Pay once and show as many times as you want.
- Watch parties encouraged.





<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*

