

First Impressions

St. Mary's, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- 2010 Census Population 2,627
(+19.5% since 2000*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2016 Estimate is 2,664
(+21.2% since 2000) **KS= +7.7%**
- 20.9% college educated, 95.9% high school or GED
– **KS 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency**
- 69% family households, 31% non-family
- Poverty rate is 10.2% **(KS=13.6%)**
- Median Age 24.9 years **(36)**
- Median household income is \$47,672 **(\$52,205)**

Web Presence:

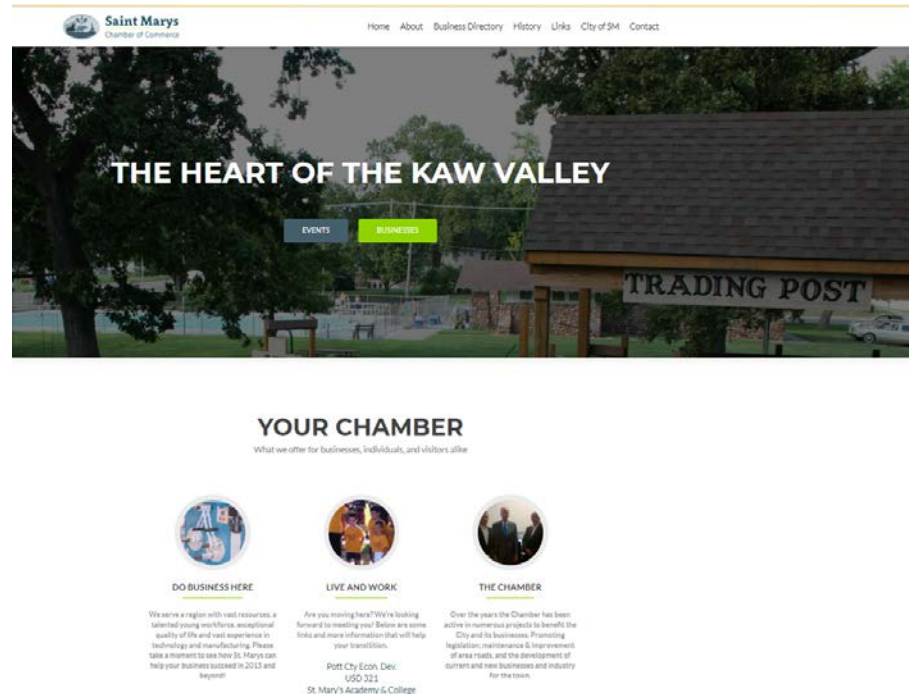
City Page

<http://www.smks.info/>



Chamber Page

<http://www.saintmarys.com/>



- Searching “St Marys Kansas” on Google turned up both the City and Chamber websites in the top 5 responses.
- Easy to navigate on mobile and desktop.
- Lots of calendars that seem like they could be combined.
- Both sites linked to the Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation which is informational. The community and region appear to be open for business.
- Pages appear to be current and professionally designed.

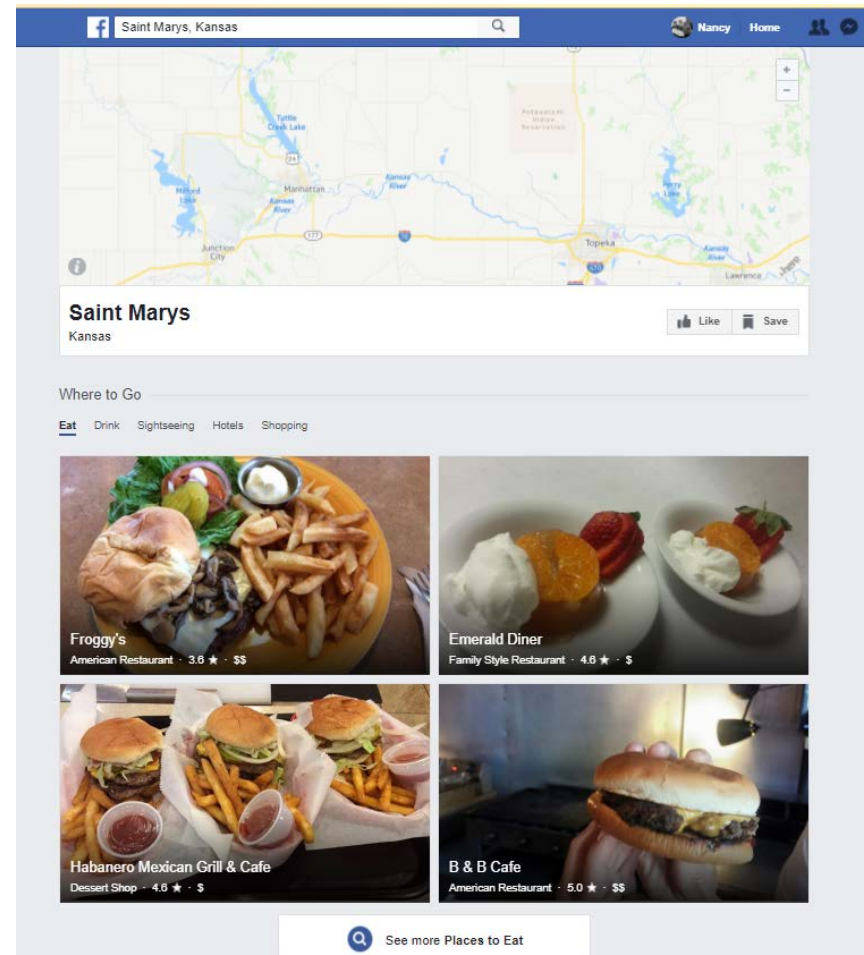
Facebook

A Facebook-generated “City” page

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

Facebook shows only a handful of pages linked to St. Mary's Kansas

Visitors' Survey: October 24
Photos taken Nov. 17, 2017



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- A pleasant, quiet community. Good signage from all 4 directions, although some of them were obscured by trees.
- A water tower with “St. Mary’s” on it was easily identifiable, followed by a city limit sign.



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Lots of “way-finding” signs along highways 24 & 63.
- Generally homes and buildings were in good shape.
- 4-H welcome from the east and west.



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- There were signs directing to the hospital from the north, west and east.
- Water tower in newer housing development.
- Salvage yard is screened.



Downtown Business Area

- Main Street is Highway 24 which feels like a narrow corridor.
- Not much handicapped parking for those who need to shop at pharmacy.



Downtown Business Area

- Visitors were complimentary of the Coffee Shop, Pharmacy, Florence Adams clothing, Sugar Creek General store.



Downtown Business Area

- We were greeted in stores and shops and did not have to ask for assistance.
- The coffee shop's coffee machine was broken during the visit, but the gal was very friendly. Decorated well, clean, and the aroma was heavenly – very welcoming.



Downtown Business Area

- Sidewalk easels in front of downtown businesses made the stores inviting.





- There were cracks in the sidewalks with flower growing through in front of the doctor's/CPA office.
- Very dark windows were off-putting.
- All other areas were quiet and well-kept.



- We asked several times about a Chamber office and no one seemed to know if there was one or where.





- All in all, the buildings in good/decent shape– only one in poor shape.









- Main Street had a couple of concrete benches that did not look inviting.



Downtown Amenities:

- Not many benches, trash cans were few and far between in the main shopping district, free Wi-Fi seemed available in coffee shop, no sign of public restrooms.
- There was a drinking fountain in the roadside park on highway 24, but its water quality was questionable as the source was a garden hose



- An art gallery located in the realty office on Main Street is one of the best kept secrets of the town. Gives area artists an opportunity to display their talents and changes exhibits every quarter so it can be visited fairly often without seeing the same things. Items are for sale as well as for viewing.



“Art on 24” retrieved from Facebook 2-4-2018.
Caption says “New sign is up” Dec. 4, 2017.

Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Nice mix of retail, services and production although it seems to have just grown a little like “Topsy” without much planning like a lot of other small communities.



Highway 24 transition



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Santa Cruz plaza has retail space that was attractive and easy to get to.
- There was a mixture of restaurants, retail, chiropractor, lumber yards and manufacturing there.



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- There did not appear to be a defined manufacturing area since some were scattered across various locations.



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- A review of social media confirms there is no “defined area.”



- *“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

- There are clear signs pointing in the direction of the hospital, but not as clear after you leave Highway 24.



Health Care Services

- Nursing facility, hospital and clinic are all in the same block.
- Signage on the buildings themselves was not clear.



Health Care Services

- Noticed chiropractors, dentist, eye doctor and medical doctor on Highway 24. Clinic at hospital site.
- Doctor and dentist are in good locations downtown.



Long Term Care

- St. Mary's Manor, a nursing facility near the hospital.



Housing

- A good mix of old and new homes throughout.



Housing

- Seems to be a mix that would appeal to all incomes, though very few “for sale” and one of those in bad shape.



- I noticed one trailer park with trailers that were fairly well kept and the area was clean and neat.



Housing

- Housing was generally well maintained. New housing developments on the north and east.
- No apparent lots available in the older sections.



- A lot of the housing seemed to be single family and older style homes (built in the 1970s or before.)



Housing

- According to the real estate agent most rentals are rented before the last occupant leaves.



Housing

- There did not seem to be any apartment type housing with the exception of some of the upstairs of buildings in the “downtown area” which, according to the real estate agent, were all rented out.



Housing data

KANSAS

• Total Housing Units	890	
• Occupied Houses	830 (93.3%)	(89.5%)
• Vacant Houses	60 (6.7%)	(10.5%)
• Owner Occupied	562 (68%)	(66.7%)
• Renter Occupied	268 (32%)	(33.3%)

Schools

- USD 321 has K-12 in one location and two buildings. All appear adequate in size and well-maintained.

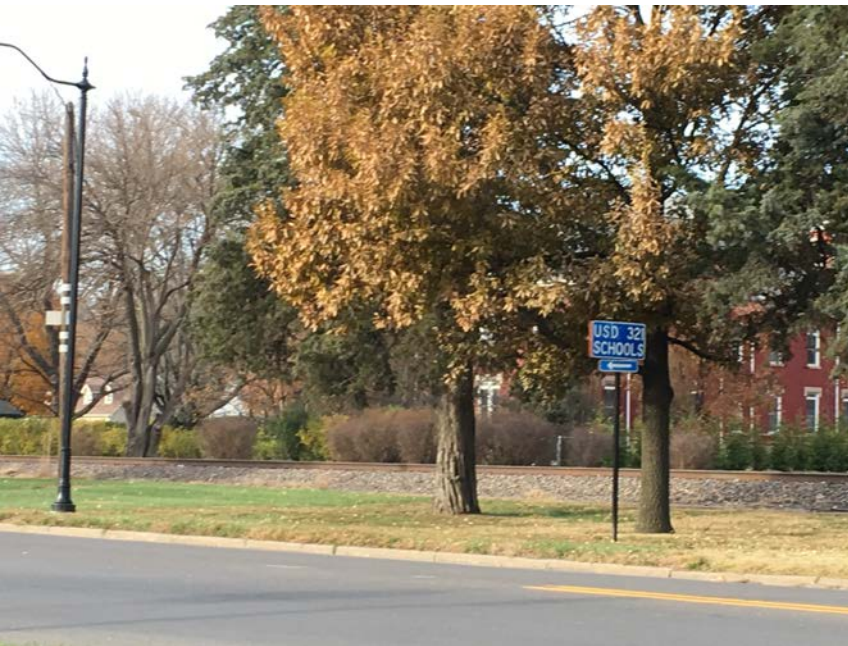


A nature trail by the Elementary School.



Schools

- There is a nice new brick sign with a digital sign board on it for the school but it is not located in front the school, it is closer to the hospital.



Schools

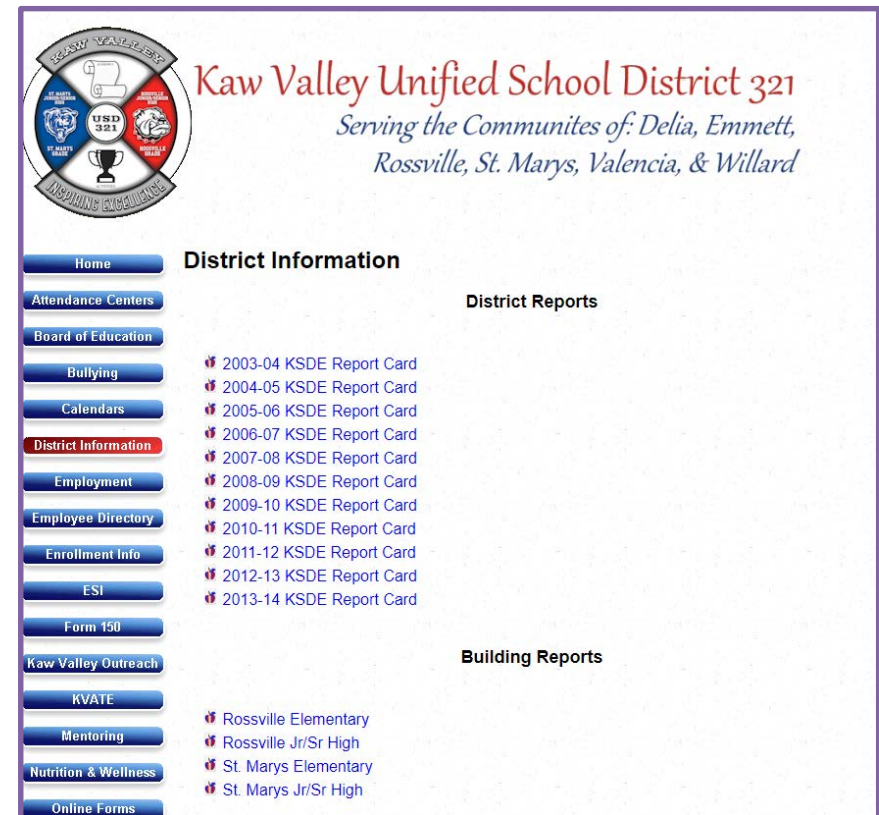
- St. Mary's Academy has a nice campus. The full parking lot indicates a large faculty or commuting students.
- There is an obstacle course located to the north of the academy with a nice walking trail to it.



Schools- *online information to assess quality?*

- Visitors did not see information online.
- Noted a lack of “school spirit” demonstrated in town.

Links from the front page of the District site to KSDE (Department of Ed) reports are easy to locate, but not up to date and the links are broken.



Kaw Valley Unified School District 321
Serving the Communities of: Delia, Emmett, Rossville, St. Marys, Valencia, & Willard

District Information

District Reports

- 2003-04 KSDE Report Card
- 2004-05 KSDE Report Card
- 2005-06 KSDE Report Card
- 2006-07 KSDE Report Card
- 2007-08 KSDE Report Card
- 2008-09 KSDE Report Card
- 2009-10 KSDE Report Card
- 2010-11 KSDE Report Card
- 2011-12 KSDE Report Card
- 2012-13 KSDE Report Card
- 2013-14 KSDE Report Card

Building Reports

- Rossville Elementary
- Rossville Jr/Sr High
- St. Marys Elementary
- St. Marys Jr/Sr High

Childcare

- There was no evidence of childcare anywhere. We found one playground; it didn't seem to be connected to childcare.
- There was no evidence of Head Start either.
- No reference to children in the community other than the schools or recreational facilities available in the park.

Leadership team confirmed that finding childcare is a challenge.

Faith/Religion

- Saw a Methodist, Bible Baptist, Immaculate Conception, and St. Mary's.



Faith/Religion

- We did not see evidence of church-sponsored activities but heard from others that the food pantry is run by the churches.



Civic

- 4-H Club on the welcome signs from east & west.
- Saw an event going on in October to benefit the food pantry.

*Senior Center
next to park*



Public Infrastructure

- Noticed the pool was not drained and that the storm drains along that street seem old and in need of work. Is there water in the pool because of drainage issues?



Public Infrastructure

- We visited in the day, but lighting appears adequate.
- There are some “Dip” signs, but others are needed.
- Street intersection signage could be easier to read and lack consistency.
- Good way-finding signs; not as good on buildings.



Public Infrastructure

- The sidewalks we saw in the residential areas were in good condition but there were some areas that did not have sidewalks and there was a lack of curbing in some areas.



Public Infrastructure



City Hall

- City Hall had a small sign on Highway 24 showing it was 2 blocks south. The building was a newer structure, clean, and seemed well kept. They share space with their city police department.



Police Services and EMS

- Police station connected to City Hall.
- An officer on duty seemed happy to answer questions and gave good directions.



Fire

- Fire protection near park with 4 bays.
- Small fire station with signs along 24 indicating its location.



*Do you know your city's
ISO rating?*

Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department
Ken Selzer, CPA

Kansas Insurance Department
420 SW 9th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1678
Consumer Hotline: 800-452-2484 (KS only)
Email Us | Phone: 785-296-3071

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.iso.mitigation.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 telecommunications, and facilities for dispatching fire departments.

Library

- Clear signs along highway 24 and a beautiful sign in front of library.
- Pottawatomie County Library, ample parking.



City Parks

- Downtown



Riverside

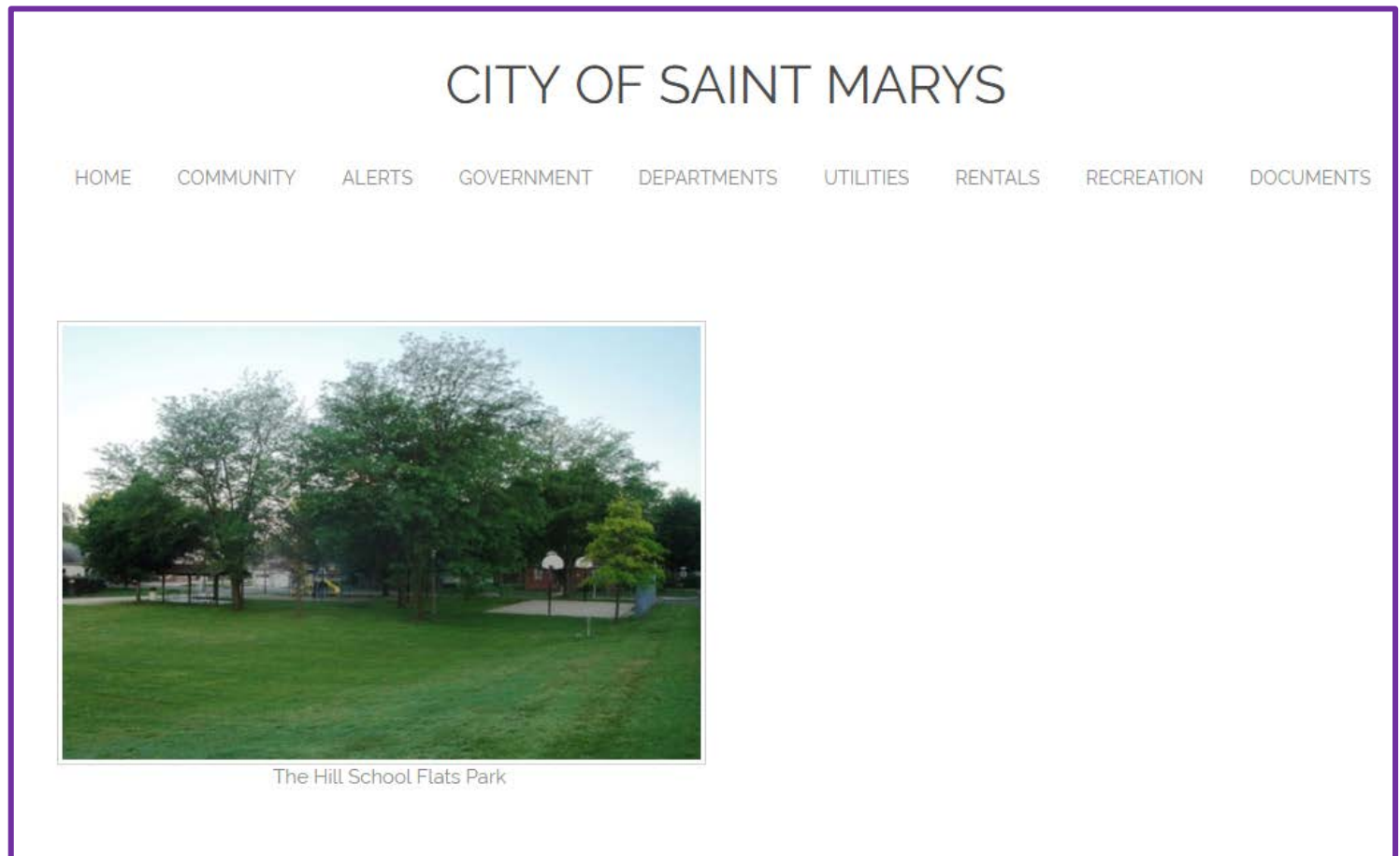
- The main city park appeared to be quite nice.
- The walking trail had a couple of nice signs in the park but other than that no signs for it appeared. You could see throughout town where the walking trail probably was but no signs to confirm.



- There were nice baseball, softball and soccer fields in the park with some older and some newer bleachers.
- There are so many very nice trees in the park!



- *Missed taking photos of the Hill School Flats park.*
- *Parks are listed on the Recreation page without addresses*



Attractions

- Pay Station Museum has nice signage along the highway, but not after. Not open many hours.
- Seems there could be more done with the Oregon and California trails than just trail markers.



- There is a golf course with directional signs, but once you leave 24 there are no directions to the course. Better signs are needed.



Visitor's Center?

- No one knew where the Chamber Office was.
- Visitors didn't go into the City office so they couldn't comment on information that might have been there.



What would bring you back?

- Florence Adams and a stop at Sugar Creek for shopping and lunch.
- Gallery in the Realtor's office changes exhibits every quarter to give a showcase for local art. Items are for sale as well as viewing.
- The pay station if I could be sure it would be open.

Most Positive Observations!

- It is a clean city with retail and services to meet basic needs of its citizens.
- Very friendly people.



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Good way-finding signs at Highway 24 could be improved with follow-up signage.
- Housing availability for newcomers.
- Highway 24 as downtown main street.



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Proximity to Topeka and Manhattan may pose competition for businesses.
- There was little evidence of cultural and entertainment opportunities.
- Business people and employees need to be better informed about what is going on and where things are located.

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

- Sugar Creek and Florence Adams
- Park area, condition of streets, housing development northeast of town.
- Art Gallery.
- I suggest that St. Mary's look at their history and culture to develop those aspects that prove they are "The Heart of the Kaw."

Next Steps:

Thank our leadership team:

- *Helen Pauly*
- *Michael Bomberger*
- *John Simecka*
- *Dan Hohman*

Set next steps!

Contact me if you need help:

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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*



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

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.




- <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

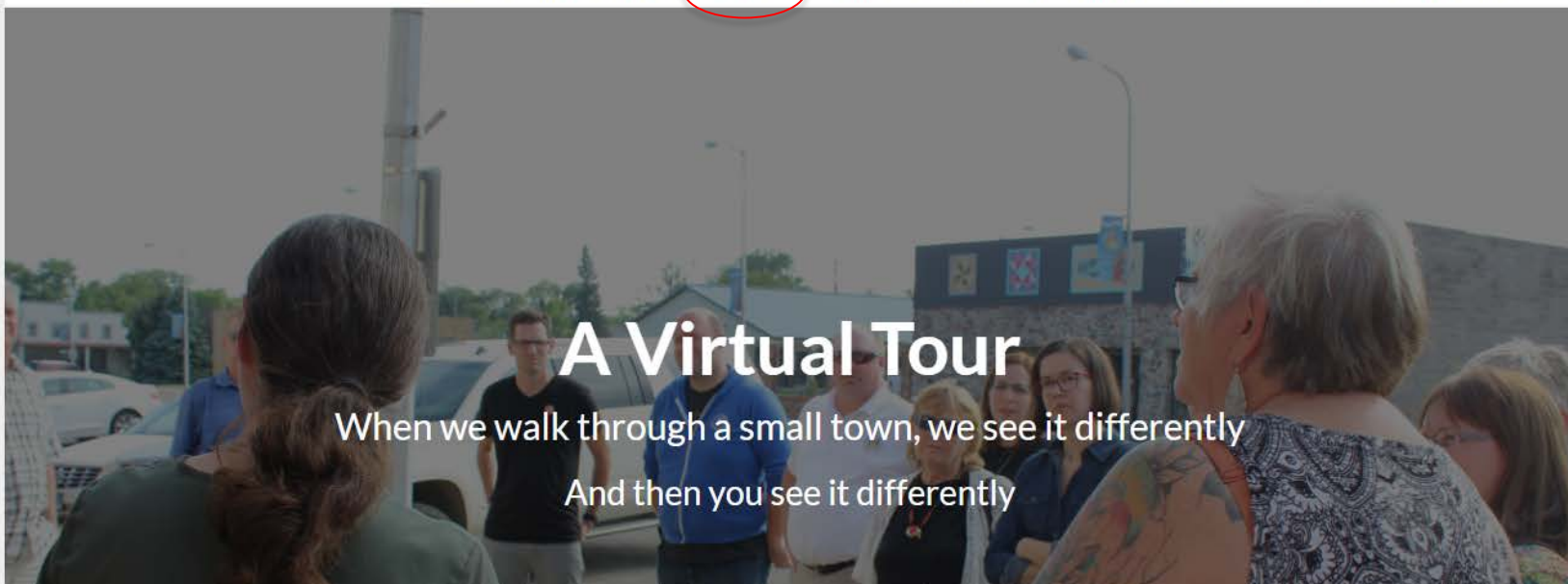
I will never sell or rent your email.

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

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Resources I like:

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

