

First Impressions

St. George, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- St. George asked for First Impressions, I obtained Perry as its partner; 1 hour, 8 min drive.
- I trained the volunteers about the visit and survey on March 4. I took photos of St. George on September 11. Perry visitors added photos in August.
- Three visitors and their drivers came in August.
- Results presented October 27, 2020.
- St. George 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 and no one is noticing or talking about it.
- Only 36% lived there previously.
- 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
 - Low housing cost
 - ***“A job,” isn’t in the top 10 reasons.***
- “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*



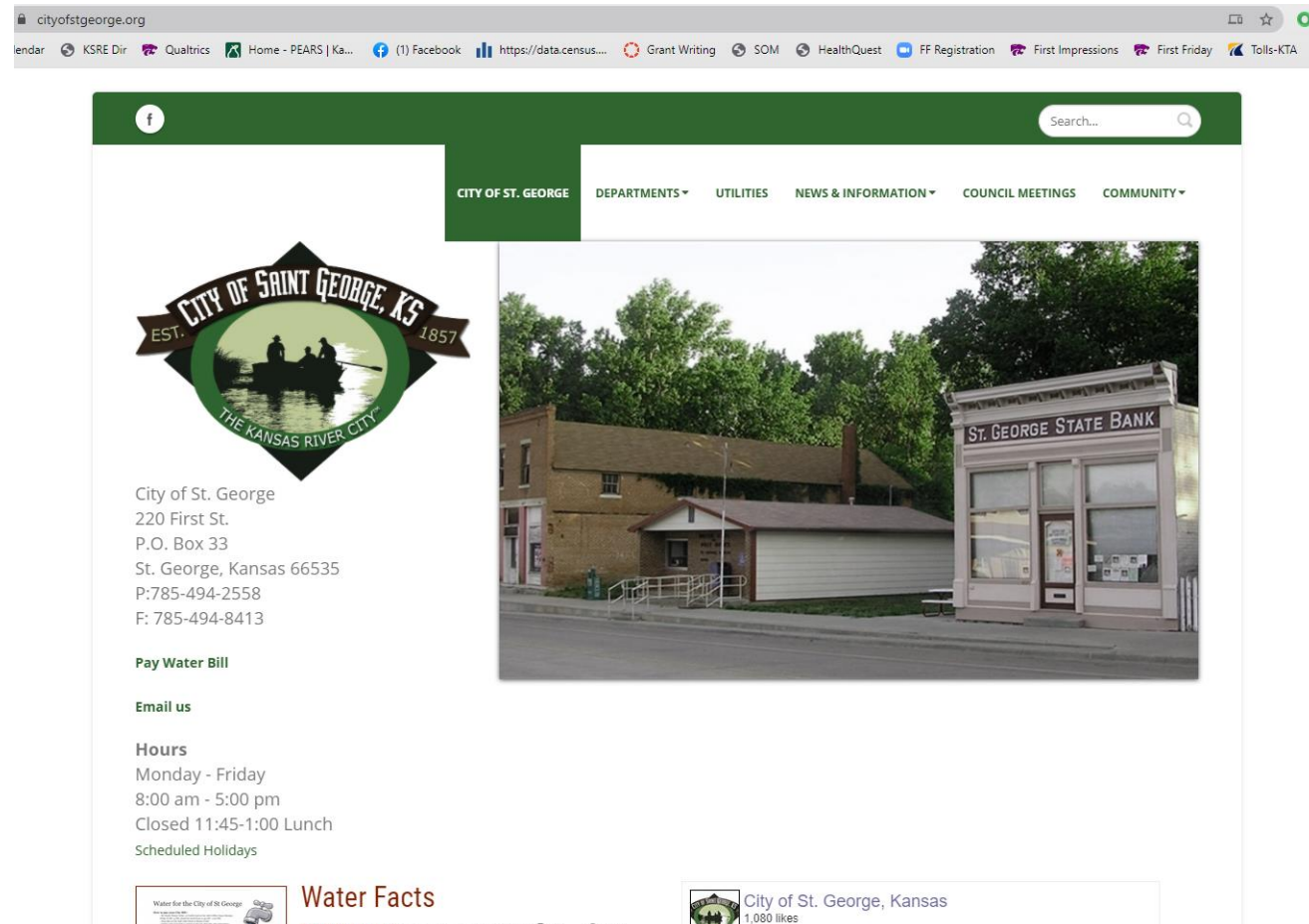
*Ben Winchester was our guest on the
March 1, 2019 First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

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

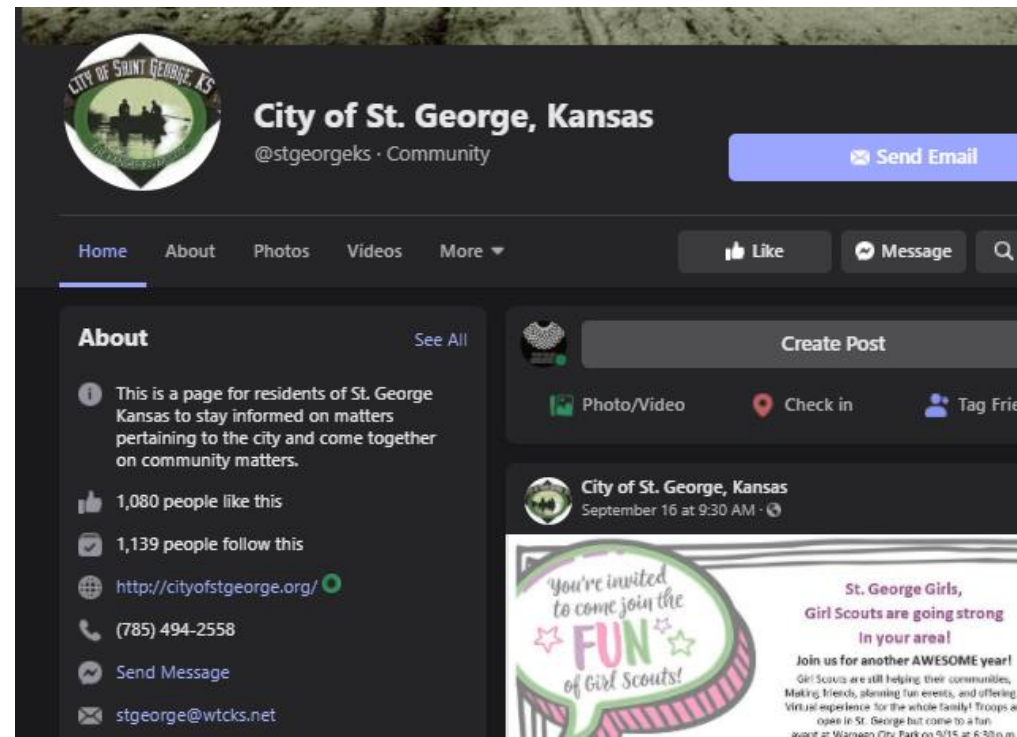
- 2018 Estimate is 951 2010 Census: 639
(up 48.8% since 2010 **KS= +2.1%**)
- 96.2% high school or GED, 45.2% college educated,
 — **91.8% HS or equivalency, KS 34.0% college education**
- Poverty rate 11.4% **(KS=11.4%)**
- Median Age 29.8 years **(KS= 37.2)**
- Median household income is \$76,920 **(\$62,087)**

- **Website**
 - <https://cityofstgeorge.org/>



FaceBook: City of St. George, Kansas

- No problem finding an abundance of information.
- **Favorite things:** 1) ability to pay water bill online, 2) easy access to city officials' emails and Council meeting minutes, 3) Contacts for all businesses.



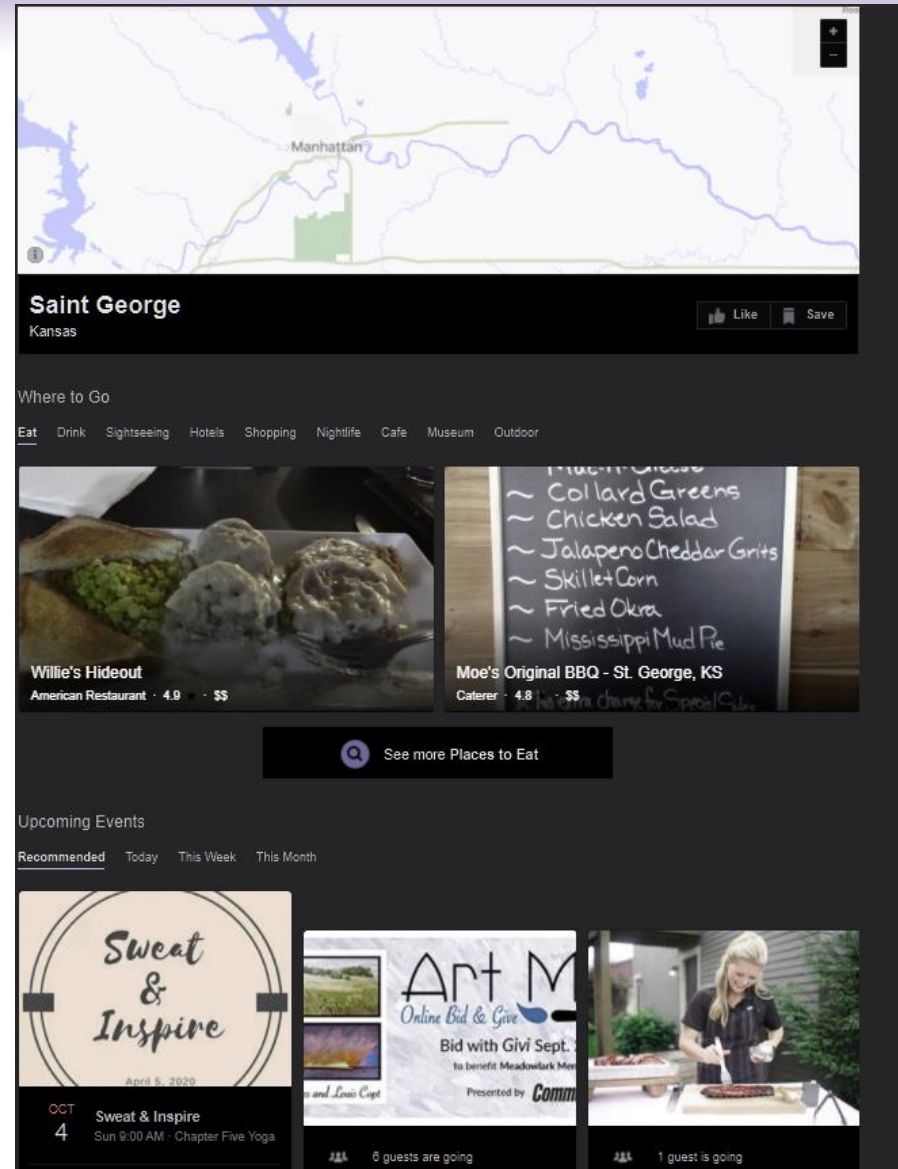
FaceBook: City of St. George, Kansas

- Park and Riverfront have photos; but no information. Saw little info on schools or Beacon Center on City sites.
- Information for a potential resident or non-local viewer is almost non-existent:
 - Doctors, dentists, prompt care services, rental agencies, even if located outside city limits but helpful to new residents.

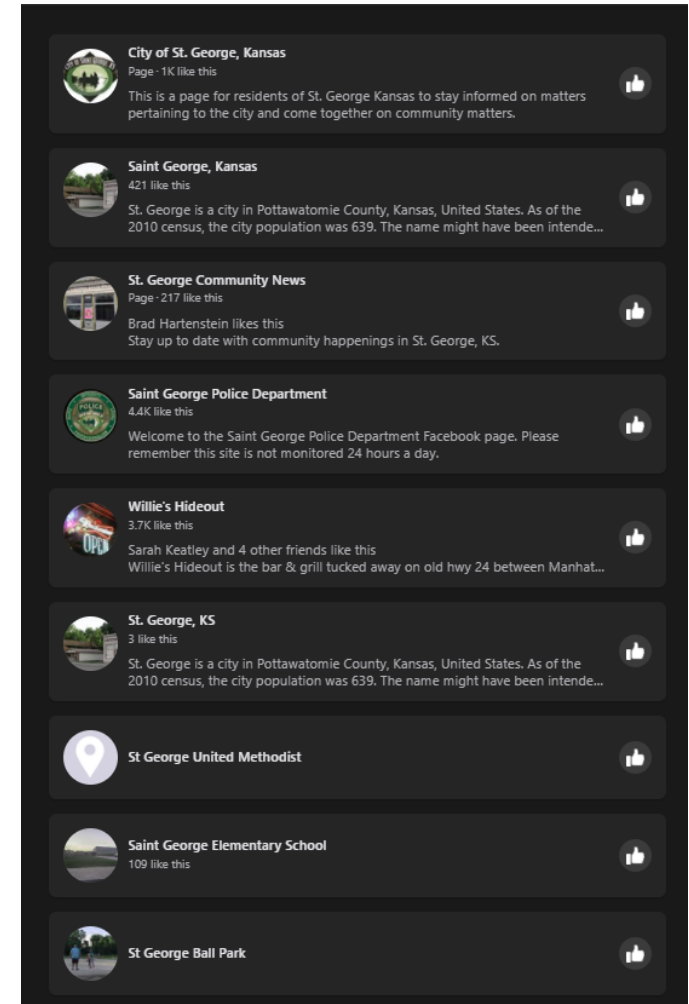
- **FaceBook**

Things to do in Saint George Kansas

A FB-generated page that can be taken over and personalized.



- **FaceBook**
 - Numerous pages with St. George connections.
 - *An opportunity for co-marketing.*



“Five-Minute” Impression

- The town feels like a mountain town with a linear layout, as if following a valley, instead of the usual Kansas “square” layout.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- A cute wooden sign on 1st Street welcomes folks.
- Typical county road, streetscape... little to no shoulder, heavily wooded to near road edge.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- What a beautiful, HUGE elementary school.



Visitor photo taken August 2020

“Five-Minute” Impression

- There was a big contrast between the new developments and the original town. The rapid population growth presents challenges.
- I love the trees, I bet the hills offer wonderful views of the valley.



Downtown Business Area

- 2013 Google Maps shows not a single business downtown, but several are now occupied and others appear to be getting spruced up.



Downtown Business Area

- The Purple Door seemed to be owned by the Kawfee Pot. There may have been a store called Who Wood, but we were next door and didn't notice it.



August 15 Visitor photo



September 11 photo

Downtown Business Area

- Impressed with Willie's Hideout Bar and Grill, tried to buy a tee-shirt, but they weren't really for sale. Loved the food and frosty glasses; even used iPad technology in ordering



Downtown Business Area

- Age and quality of buildings varied from newer metal building structures to refurbished historical buildings. Overall, they present a pride and interest in maintaining the First Street business district as viable.



Downtown Business Area

- Downtown had a mix of private housing, businesses and public buildings and some vagary about which was which.*



Amenities, e.g. drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi.

- Didn't notice any of these.
- Landscaping is pretty much non-existent.
- Didn't notice trash disposal sites.
- Visitors did not experience difficulty with cell phone reception, but wondered about Wi-Fi because of the new development with a sign for WTC fiber.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Shopping at Highway 24 includes newly opened Moe's BBQ and Cenex. Visitors were under the impression these are outside of St. George and don't pay city taxes.
- Surprised at the lack of staples at Dara's; visitors thought "lack of grocery access" would be a problem.



- No industry was observed and no space was seen for industry to locate.

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.*

- We found no evidence of local health care services on our visit or online.
- *Some small towns make this clear online by having a tab for health care and giving the “number of minutes” to get these services in the nearest towns.*

Long Term Care

- New facility on the other side of U.S. 24 is outside city limits.
- Visitors were confused about whether it is down-sized apartment living or had medical services.

- It felt as if there was housing at the high end and lower price, with little in the middle.
- I'm jealous of the mix of housing.



- The downtown area has older homes needing fix-up maintenance and improved lawn care. The older homes around downtown are much better. Lawn care and miscellaneous items in lawn diminish the appearance.



- There are five areas of development just outside the older part of town, but within city limits. They include modest sized duplexes, medium to large single family homes and two trailer parks with some homes well-maintained and others needing work.





Rental Property

- Rental property was not observed nor apparent.
- Some assumptions were made about which units may have been rentals, but the city clerk was not aware that rentals existed.



KANSAS

• Total Housing Units	315	
• Total Occupied Houses	299 (94.9%)	(88.8%)
• Vacant Houses	16 (5.1%)	(11.2%)
• Owner Occupied	234 (78.3%)	(66.3%)
• Renter Occupied	65 (21.7%)	(33.7%)
• Family Households	84.3%	(65.1%)
• Non-family Households	15.7%	(34.9%)

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

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/> Family data is found at DP04

- Visitors noted the school is impressive in their very first impressions and in their comments here.
- One visitor knew that the format had changed from K-6 in St. George to K-4.
- Visitors heard very positive comments about the schools from residents.





- Rock Creek Middle School will be 5th – 6th grades starting this school year.
- St George, Rock Creek Middle-Senior Campus District 323 office also at this address and St George, School District Office: School is for grades 7th through Senior and is located in open rural farm land approximately 7 miles from St. George. The roadway is asphalt county maintained with little to no shoulder. This facility was built in the late 1990's and is a massive facility.
- Like the Elementary facility, people in the community we encountered spoke very highly about the quality of teachers and facility.



- *St. George Elementary seems to understand that the prospective student is one of its audiences.*
- *National Blue Ribbon School with teachers who grew up in the area and are proud to be part of “Rock Creek for Life!”*
- *City website should tout the story or at least link to school.*

St. George Elementary	
Parent Information	Home / St. George Elementary
Foals	St. George Elementary School
Colts	
Broncs	200 Blackjack Road
"Slangs	St. George, KS 66535
Counselor	In Session: 8:00am to 3:25pm
Media Center/Library	
Music	(785) 494-2482
PE	(785) 494-2492
Title 1 Reading K-2	FAX (785) 494-2481
Santa Fe Trail Program	

Quicklinks	
	
EZ School Pay	
Power School	



St. George Elementary is an award-winning school, having won the National Blue Ribbon School award in 2010, and has a long track record of success and excellence. We have about 360 students in grades Pre-K through 4th call SGES home. Many of our staff grew up in the area and are proud to say they are “Rock Creek for Life!”. New additions to the school were added in 2014 to meet the demands of our growing population. This year the 5th and 6th graders moved up to the new Rock Creek Middle School building on the existing Rock Creek campus.

Comments:

- We saw no child care, but wondered about sites.
- St. George Elementary has Pre-K- 2 Preschool System. Identified 7 day cares, mostly at private residences within city limits.

Pottawatomie County Data:

- **Desired Capacity of existing Child Care** **1,014**
- **Number of Children Under Age 6 potentially needing care:** **1,184**
- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential need** **86%**
- Creating a Child Care Action Plan
<https://ks.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Draft-Child-Care-Supply-Demand-Action-Plan.pdf>
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local child care specialists.
785-823-3343

- We saw two churches, Baptist and United Methodist.
- Lighthouse Baptist is attached to The Beacon Center in a former school.



- St. Joseph Catholic is just outside the edge of town.
- TRU Church, a small independent house of worship.
- The Beacon is used as a community meeting center with the City Council and Court there.



- Visitors did not observe any Civic activity from a visit with the city clerk.
- It seems the social interaction is through church or schools.

- The community in general and parks/public spaces were very clean.
- Generally, city streets were a significant negative, having some decent streets with curbing, but in many places transitioning to, or being connected by gravel.
- *Street signs were consistent and mostly in good repair.*



- *Sidewalks are few and far between. Consider whether children have safe paths to school.*
- *Our visitors will not see lighting, because they are home before dark. What do your residents say?*





- There was one street that seemed super odd – really steep road and sidewalk-like building material (Wildcat Way). But from looking at the city map, it appears this is not within the limits even though it is flanked by areas that are.

This photo is not the area visitor spoke about, but St. George does have some unusual streets.



- City hall Interior is mostly office space with a reasonable amount of appropriate furniture and computer stations.
- The City Clerk was pleasant and helpful; she expressed pride in the community and the fact they are striving to improve.



- Police station is small building just west of City Hall, city website shows a chief of police and 3 officers.
- *Perhaps a sheriff's deputy lives in St. George.*



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Fire Department is hard to spot and not listed on City website.
- *Support your local fire department to have the best possible ISO Classification.*



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

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



- There is no library.
- There is some discussion of a book kiosk at the Police Station.

- Most noticeable park is on the west end of First Street. When entering the city from the west it is easily seen. New playground equipment and pavilion
- In a very shady and quiet location.
- *I felt confused about where to park as if I was on private property.*



- A small park area around the ball diamonds on Lincoln St – associated with the Lighthouse Baptist Church. The Methodist Church has a nice ball diamond and playground area.
- Riverside Park, mostly a boat launch site, is used for events at times.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- KAWnsas Fest – a large music event held downtown in August. As a child who grew up alongside it (Bonner Springs, KS), I LOVE all the play on the word “Kaw.”
- The St. George City Path is a .93 mile paved trail from downtown to the Elementary School at corner of West First Street and Blackjack Rd.

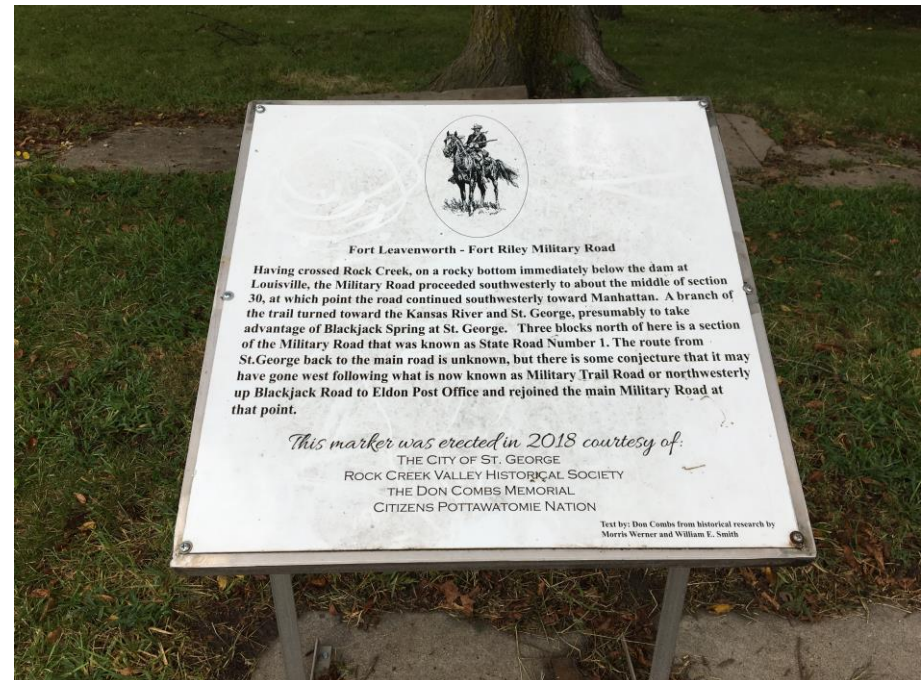
Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The Black Jack Spring site was interesting.
- Intrigued by octagonal old storage bins; there was no interpretive information.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Interested in the connection between “Old Highway 24” and “Military Road.” City website refers to it as Highway 40.
- Mural is very visible and pleasant. Would love to know the story behind it.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The Riverside Park and boat ramp and the Konza Kayaks paddle rentals! I would play this up more online. Big draw.



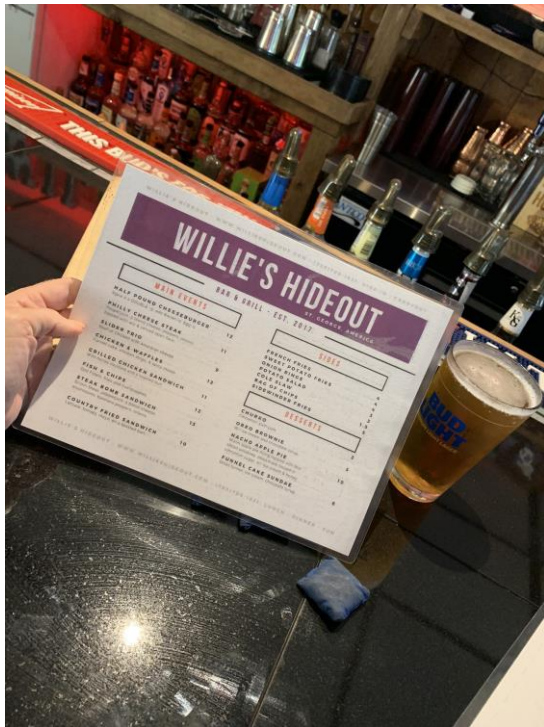
Visitor's Center

- City Hall plays this role.



What would bring you back?

- Willie's Hideout
- Moe's BBQ
- Kawffee Pot



Most Positive Observations

- Community pride- clean and well-maintained.
- Growth because of its proximity to Manhattan.
- Pride oozes from this community. So many well-kept yards and houses. The Kawffee Pot, Willie's Hideout Bar & Grill and Willie Good Pizza are bringing an old downtown area back to life. Amazing potential for growth with the amount of housing developments.
- Strong growth in new housing in multiple areas on the outskirts, within city limits. Mural on building at Lincoln and First St and the active work on restoring the few remaining downtown buildings.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Managing growth successfully. Aligning the needs and desires of long-time community members and those of the “recent” arrivals.
- Maintaining community identity and feel.
- Web Presence- tell your story.
- Working with citizens to help them improve maintenance of older homes; structure and landscaping.
- Attracting viable business model/style to setup in their restored store fronts that would be attractive to upper income consumers.

What will you remember?

- The similarities in our two communities and challenges of proximity to larger towns.
- Friendly, adorable downtown experience at Willie's Hideout.



What will you remember?

- Everyone we met and chatted with were very friendly and helpful...noticeably proud of their community.
- The mural on the building at Lincoln and First. Very impressive school campuses: Elementary and the collective Middle, Senior and District Office, and sports facilities.
- Overall growth of housing not only in St. George but in the suburban and urban areas between St. George to Manhattan and Wamego.

- More information on city website about the fire department , park, historical and school information.
- Improve historical interpretation of sites: Signs to Black Jack Springs.
- Improve visibility of City assets and events on websites and signage.
- Consider walkability to school along Old Military Road.

Thanks to our leadership team:

- ***Debby Werth***
- ***Ryan Rafferty***
- ***Liz Wagoner***

Set Next Steps:

- Which group will lead the discussion?

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

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

Contact

Nancy Daniels

nkdaniels@ksu.edu

to participate.

New In 2021:

Online Classes

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.



K-State Research and Extension


- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am (CT)**
 - Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.
 - Contact Nancy Daniels nkdaniels@ksu.edu to participate.
 - Previous calls are recorded at <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>
 - Community Vitality Calendar of events: <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/>

- <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

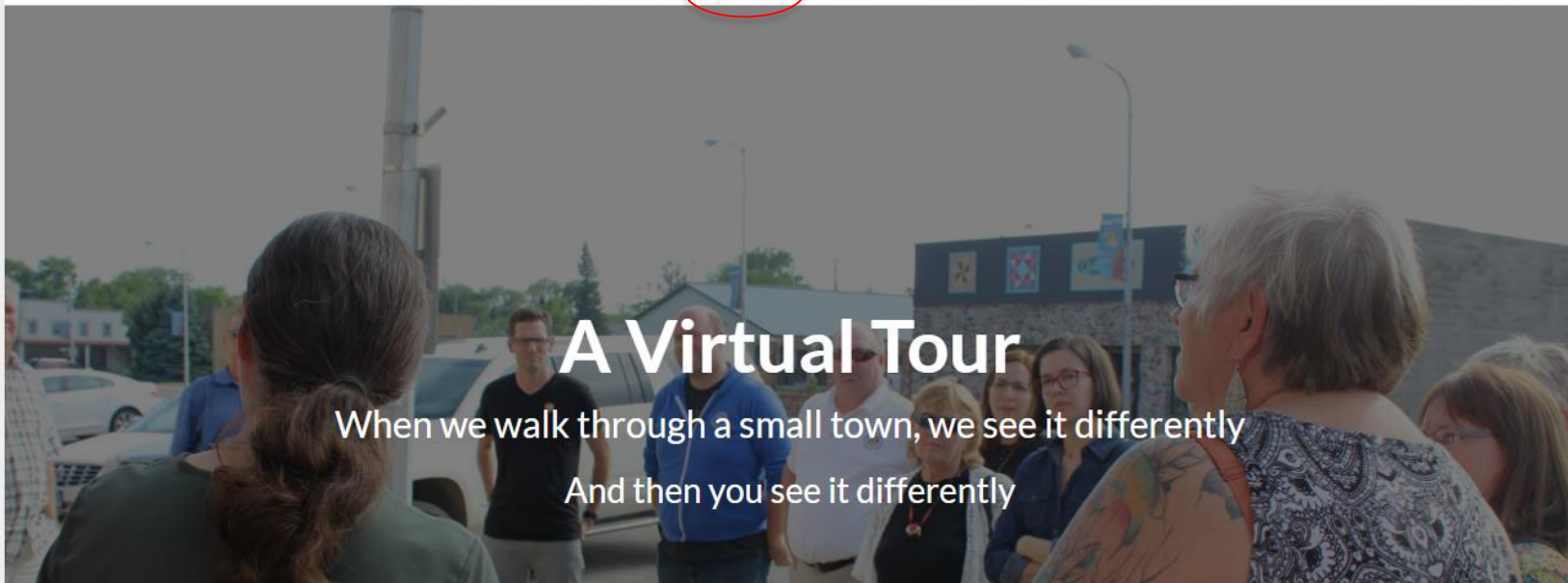
I will never sell or rent your email.

Resources I like:

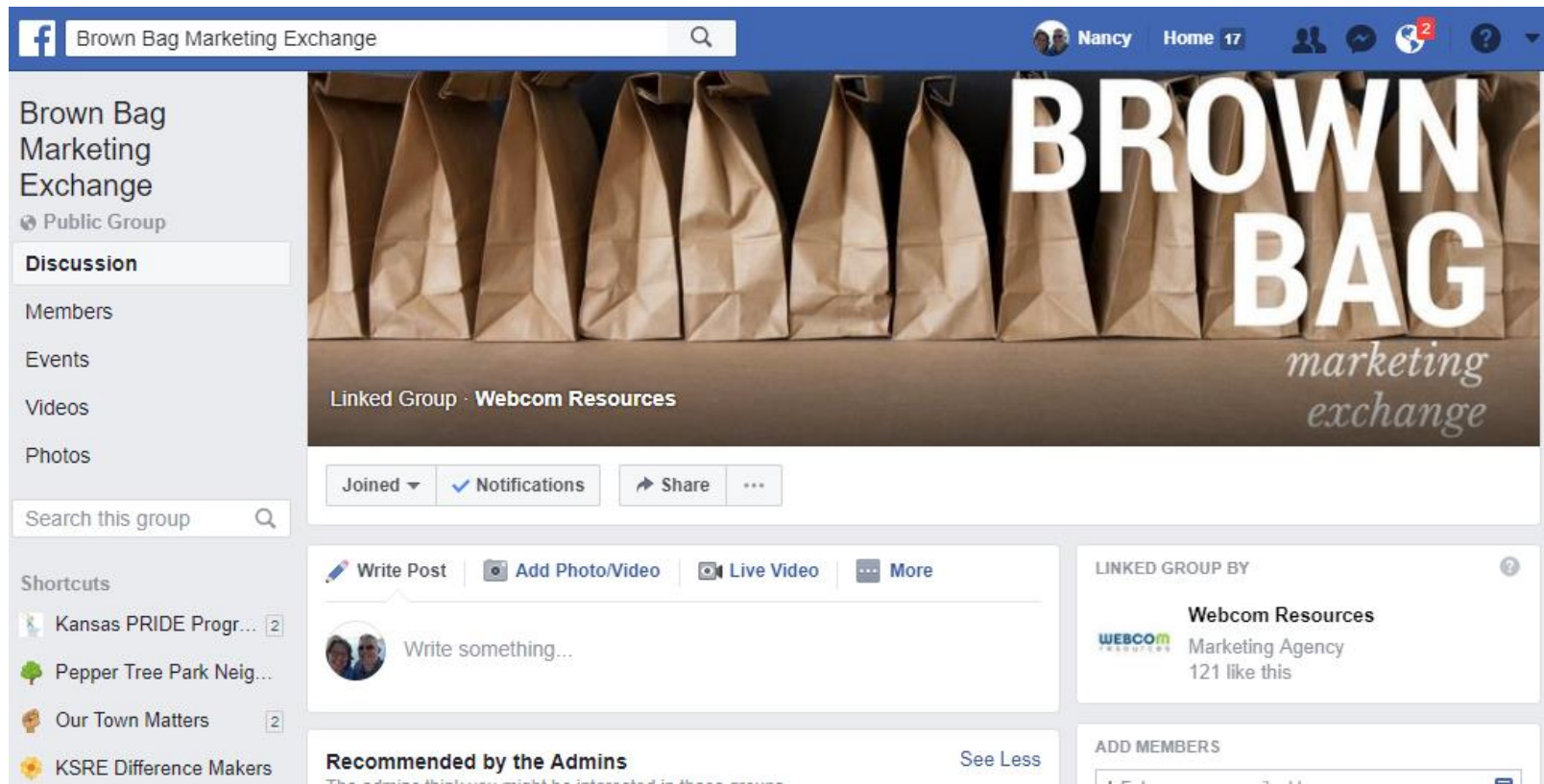
- <http://saveyour.town/>
 - Monthly live webinars; available on recording.
 - Pay once and show as many times as you want.
 - Watch parties encouraged.

SAVEYOUR.town

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



Kansas Department of Agriculture in partnership with other state organizations, will work with your community to find the best opportunities for growth using the assets of your region.



GROW IN KANSAS

STRATEGIC GROWTH INITIATIVE

A pilot program for the proactive recruitment of food, agriculture and UAS/small aircraft business to Kansas.

The collage features various agricultural and technological elements: a white sheep, golden wheat, a black cow, a pig, a chicken, a drone flying over a field, a green tractor, a circuit board, a horse, a person in a lab coat, and various fruits and vegetables.

For more information on the Strategic Growth Initiative, please contact
Russell Plaschka, Ag Business Development Program Manager
785-564-7466 • Russell.Plaschka@ks.gov
agriculture.ks.gov/GrowAg

Kansas 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/>

khfi@ksu.edu

KHFI Technical Assistance Coordinator





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