

# First Impressions

## Valley Falls, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership  
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



*Knowledge  
forLife*



- 2010 Census Population 1,192  
(down 4.9% since 2000\*) **KS= +6.1%**
- 2017 Estimate is 1,138  
(down 9.3% since 2000 **KS= +8.4%**)
- 89.2% high school or GED, 14.6% college educated,  
— **90.3% HS or equivalency, KS 31.6% college education,**
- Poverty rate is 14.6% **(KS=13.3%)**
- Median Age 49.4 years **(36.2)**
- Median household income is \$39,500 **(\$53,571)**

\* 2000 Census was 1,254

- **Website**
  - <http://valleyfalls.org/>

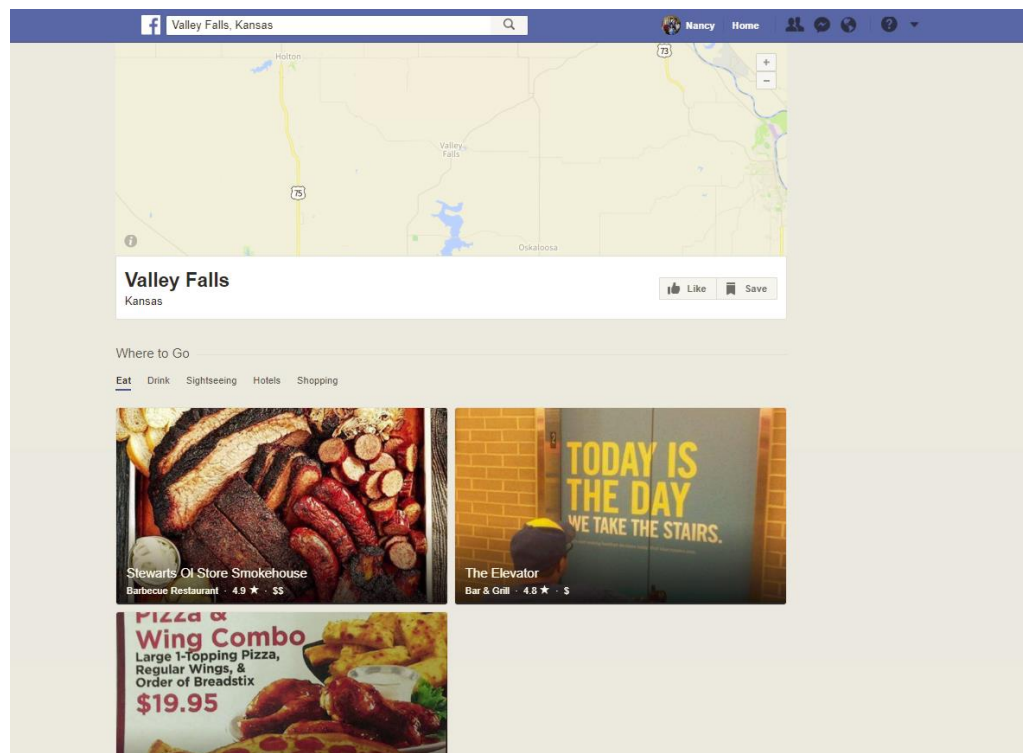


- **FaceBook**

- Valley Falls, Kansas

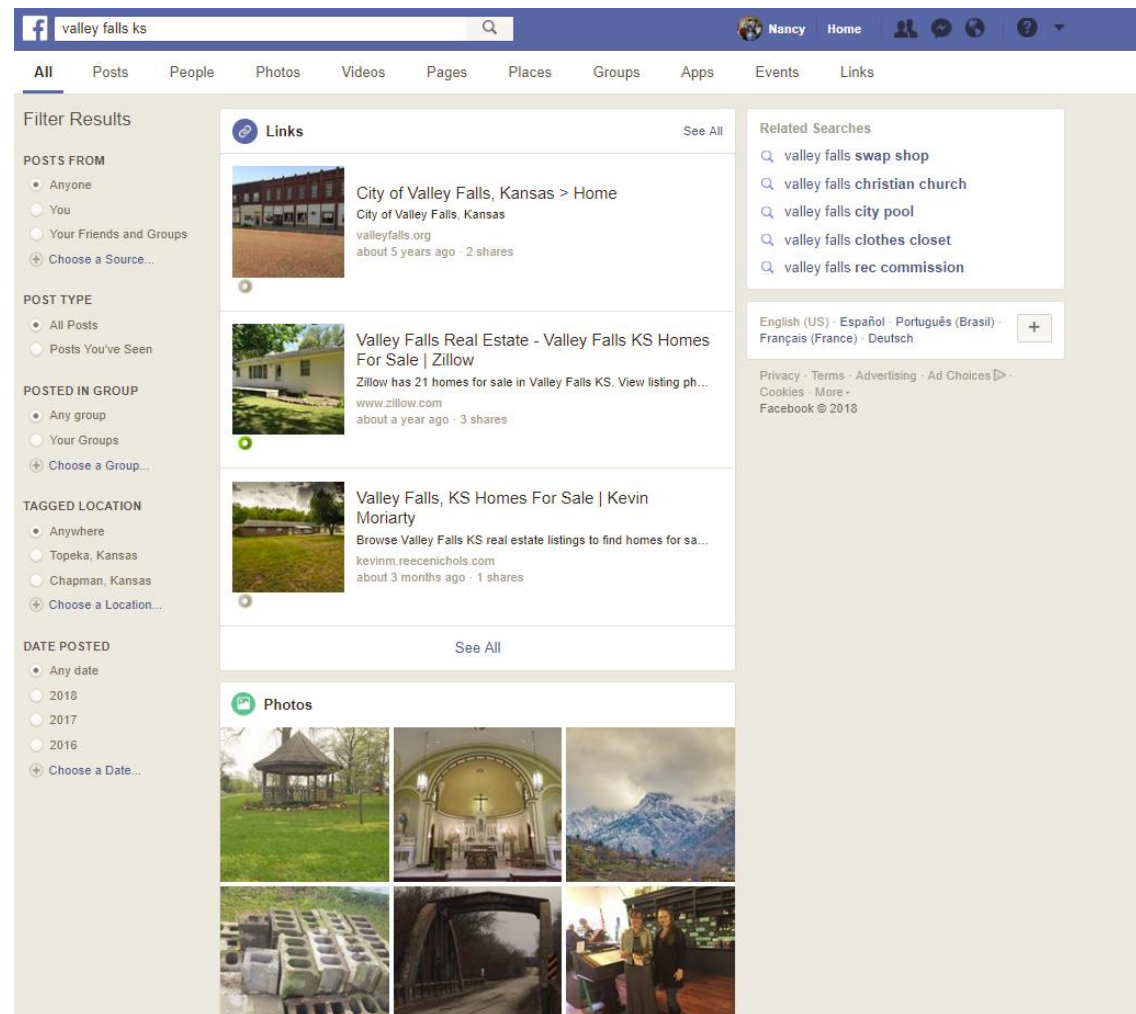
- <https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Valley-Falls-Kansas/105631452804965/>

- A Facebook-generated page with maps, events and places to eat.





- **FaceBook**
    - Valley Falls, **KS**
- Periodically monitor these sites to make sure the content shows your town well.



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- The west side has no welcome sign.



Visitors' surveys 4-27-18  
Photos taken 4-18-18 and 7-30-18



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- There is a greenhouse- is it in business or out of business?



Photos on 7/30/18



## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Most yards maintained. Clever signage on businesses and churches.
- Very sports oriented town with impressive ball fields and pool.
- Downtown and new housing development are extremely attractive.





## Downtown Business Area

- The light poles downtown are painted and look well-kept.
- Empty buildings downtown have window decorations or art work.





## Downtown Business Area

- Downtown is clean. All of the businesses were welcoming and kind. Customer service was very personalized.



## Downtown Business Area

- Restrooms available at City Hall, drinking fountain at the library.
- Plenty of parking, everything accessible.



*Knowledge  
forLife* Photos @ 8:30 am (Mon) and  
10:15 am (Wed)



























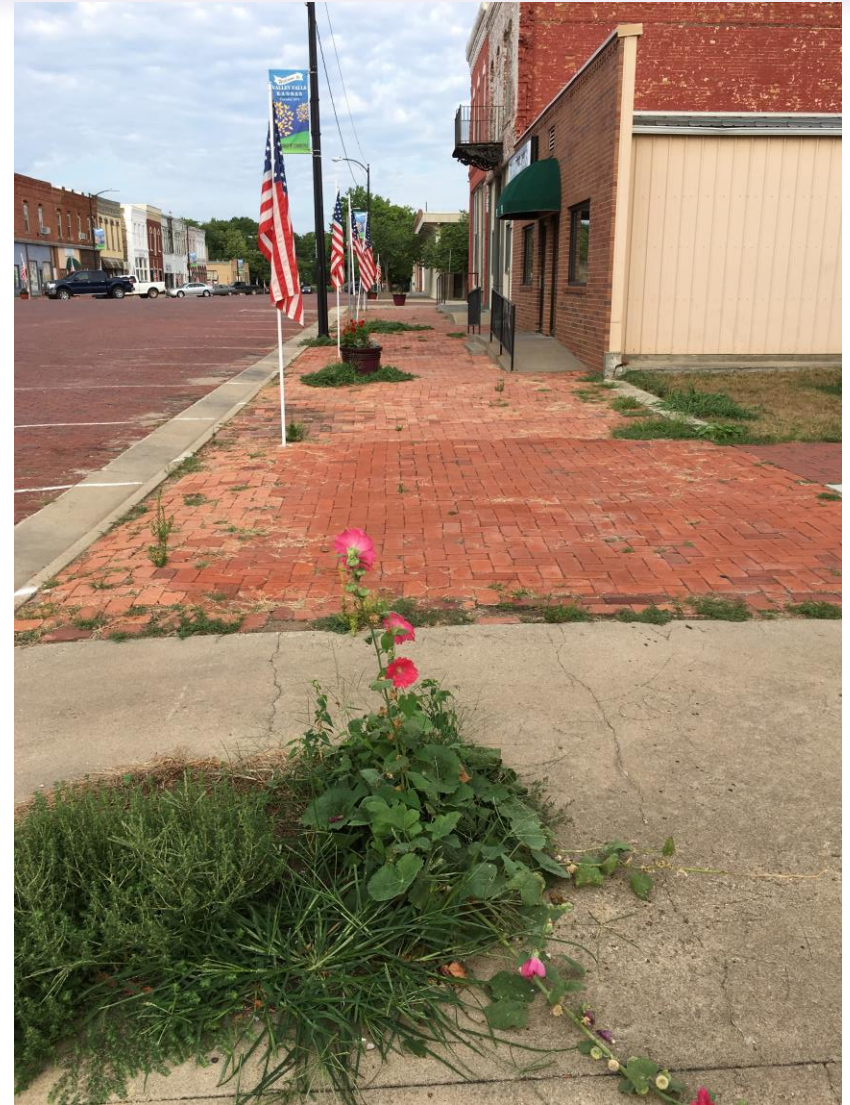






## Downtown amenities:

- Restrooms available at city hall as well as drinking fountains.
- Didn't notice any trash cans or benches.





## Downtown amenities:

- Did not notice streetscaping (April). *Pretty planters in July.*
- *Sidewalks downtown had varying conditions of evenness. Planters, when present, warn of holes in sidewalks.*



## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- West entrance where Dollar General and the gas station were located were easy to find, but not as appealing.



## Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Visitors weren't sure. Speculated it might be by the fertilizer plant.



*“No Industrial Park”*

### ***Observation:***

- “Doers/dreamers/makers who choose to start their small businesses are responsible for 63 percent of net new jobs created in the United States every year.”





## Health Care Services

- Valley Falls has a medical clinic, chiropractor, dentist and a pharmacy. There is a hospital in Topeka, not far away.
- We noticed a helicopter pad.







## Long Term Care

- Assisted living is available.
- Valley Health Care mental health housing in another part of town.





# Housing

- This was an amazing find: low income, equal opportunity housing facility, a new housing development is being built for senior living. Seven duplexes with 14 apartments.









# Housing

- This was the thing that impressed me the most, the range in size and variety of housing available. Everything from new construction to trailer courts, low-income housing, etc.













## Housing data

## KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 499
- Total Occupied Houses 458 (91.8%) (89.3%)
- Vacant Houses 41 ( 8.2%) (10.7%)
  
- Owner Occupied 296 (64.6%) (66.3%)
- Renter Occupied 162 (35.4%) (33.7%)
- Family Households 57.6% (65.4%)
- Non-family Household 42.4% (34.6%)

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





# Schools

- Preschool to grade 12 classes and an after-school program.
- Well-maintained and adequate size.
- Noted that the school has dropped from 2A to 1A.



## Information about school quality

- We couldn't find much about the school system.
- In talking to residents we heard that the schools are very focused on athletics.
- *Typical school website: very functional, but doesn't say, "This is why 338 is great."*
- *The photos show many kinds of activities, but you may see only sports if you don't wait for a while.*

Front Page District Elementary School Middle School High School Enrichment Classes Athletics Gym Usage Save It

Staff Forms Online Payments Community Enrollment Site Council PTO Rec Commission Career Cruising Technology Reso

Archives Calendar

# VALLEY FALLS

USD #338

Dragons

Pursuing Excellence Through Education

75° F Valley Falls Search

### Enrollment

Enrollment Packets will be mailed out in July Open Enrollment Dates are:  
July 25th 12:00-8:00 PM July 26th 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM RevTrak Online  
Payments Tentative PK-8 Supply List 2018-19 Athletic Passes

read more

### Quick Links

- Calendar
- Menu



# Information about school quality

- City website does it better:
  - National Blue Ribbon Award!
- Lots of good info
- Highlights:
  - National Blue Ribbon award- only 5 in state!
  - Small classroom ratio.
  - 96% proficiency in English & Math.
  - Teachers come and stay.



# Childcare

- There is at least one day care home in town, clearly labeled as such.
- City offices will assist callers in finding the names of child care providers in town.





# Faith/Religion

- Saw various churches.



## Faith Community Activities

- Especially impressed with Methodist Church's Clothes Closet.





## Civic

- There is a Rotary Club, Lions Club, and VFW.
- Impressed to learn of Lion's Club participation in Christmas Lights.



## Civic

- Didn't see any signage, but learned at city hall about the activities that the clubs do: highway clean up, help with ball games, read in the classroom in schools.





# Public Infrastructure

- Street signs were hard to read.



# Public Infrastructure

- We did not notice many sidewalks around town except for library, parks, ball field and pool area.





## City Hall

- Lots of information when asked!
- Loved the blue pool prints.
- A warm welcome and overwhelmed with the amount of information and time employees gave us.
- Liked to see a city building refurbished and used.



# Fire, EMS and Police Services

- 3 Full time police and several part time, friendly officer.
- A new fire station.



www.kinsurance.org/otherservices/iso.php

Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department

**Kansas Insurance Commissioner**

**Kansas Insurance Department**  
420 SW 9th Street  
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1678  
Consumer Hotline: 800-432-2484 (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.isomitigation.com/program-works/how-the-ppc-program-works.html>

A community's PPC depends on:

- > The Department
- > Auto/Home
- > Health/Life
- > Insurance Fraud & Education
- > Agent/Agency Services
- > Company Services



# Library

- The library needs landscaping or streetscaping to give it curb appeal. The inside is beautiful with a nice space for all ages.
- Amazing how many computers it had.



*A Photo on Google Earth captured July 2013, shows improvements over 5 years.*

## City Parks

- The new city pool looks like it will be a great addition.
- *City website shows beautiful photos of parks but no addresses for visitors.*







Well-kept. Nice batting cage! Nice track field!







## City Parks

- Seems odd that the RV Park is placed by the sewer pond.



- *I saw the sign for the walking trail and heard about it from your team– but I couldn't find how to get on it.*

## Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The Barn, but we didn't see it.
- Community Slogan wasn't evident except on The Barn (*and city*) website: "Historic Town with vision for the Future."
- Flyers and posters on the city building show upcoming events.





## Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Close to Perry Lake and the Barn.
  - *Consider how to make that link closer. Signage? Website references?*
- There is a neat rock by the water tower that says 1888. That should be added on— we love history.
- *What's the story? And why are there (lots of) golf balls?*



## Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- I loved the museum downtown.





## Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- Campground with access to the river is an attraction to people passing through.
- The pond in town is attractive.



Someone was fishing at 8:30 am,  
but I couldn't tell how to get  
there.



## Visitor's Center

- The City Building; they were very helpful.
- A bit confusing to see the other old building that said, "City Hall."





## What would bring you back?

- I would like to spend more time in the shops, couldn't do it all in the time we had with travel time.
- Not for me.
- The Smokehouse BBQ restaurant seemed to be an attraction, but not open when I was there. Would like to see the Barn in full swing.
- *Awesome Blossom has lunch, but you can't tell that from outside.*



## Most Positive Observations!!

- The housing! (x3)
- The ball diamonds were nice.
- Evidence of completing large projects and the community's commitment to stability and growth.





## Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Midwest fertilizer/seed plant at the entrance.
- The school losing population.
- The proximity to Topeka (30 min.) Not sure why kids are attending school in Topeka when there is a school in town.

*\*Team named  
“proximity to larger  
cities” as an asset:  
Lawrence and  
Leavenworth 45 min.*



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

- Housing. Lots of choice housing
- Helpful city employees
- New pool and ball fields.





## Next Steps:

*Thank our leadership team:*

- *Donny Smith*
- *Salih Doughramaji*
- *Betsy Doughramaji*
- *Jeri Clark*
- **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  
785.410.6352  
[nkdaniels@ksu.edu](mailto: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

### Nearby Grant Workshops:

- August 28: Topeka
- September 21: Holton

Also posted on:

### Community Vitality Calendar:

<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/community/>

## 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](mailto:nkdaniels@ksu.edu) to participate.
  - Previous calls are recorded at <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>




- <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](#)


## SMALL BIZ SURVIVAL

THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL BUSINESS RESOURCE




[FRONT PAGE](#) [LATEST STORIES](#) [ABOUT](#) [GUIDED TOUR](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [PODCAST](#) [CONTACT](#) [RSS](#)

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 time to hire that first employee. ... [Get growing.](#)

**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 address to anyone else because I wouldn't like that either.

## 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

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT DEB & BECKY](#)

[WEBINARS](#)

[TOOLKITS](#)

[WORK WITH US](#)

[I DON'T HAVE TIME!](#)

[CONTACT](#)

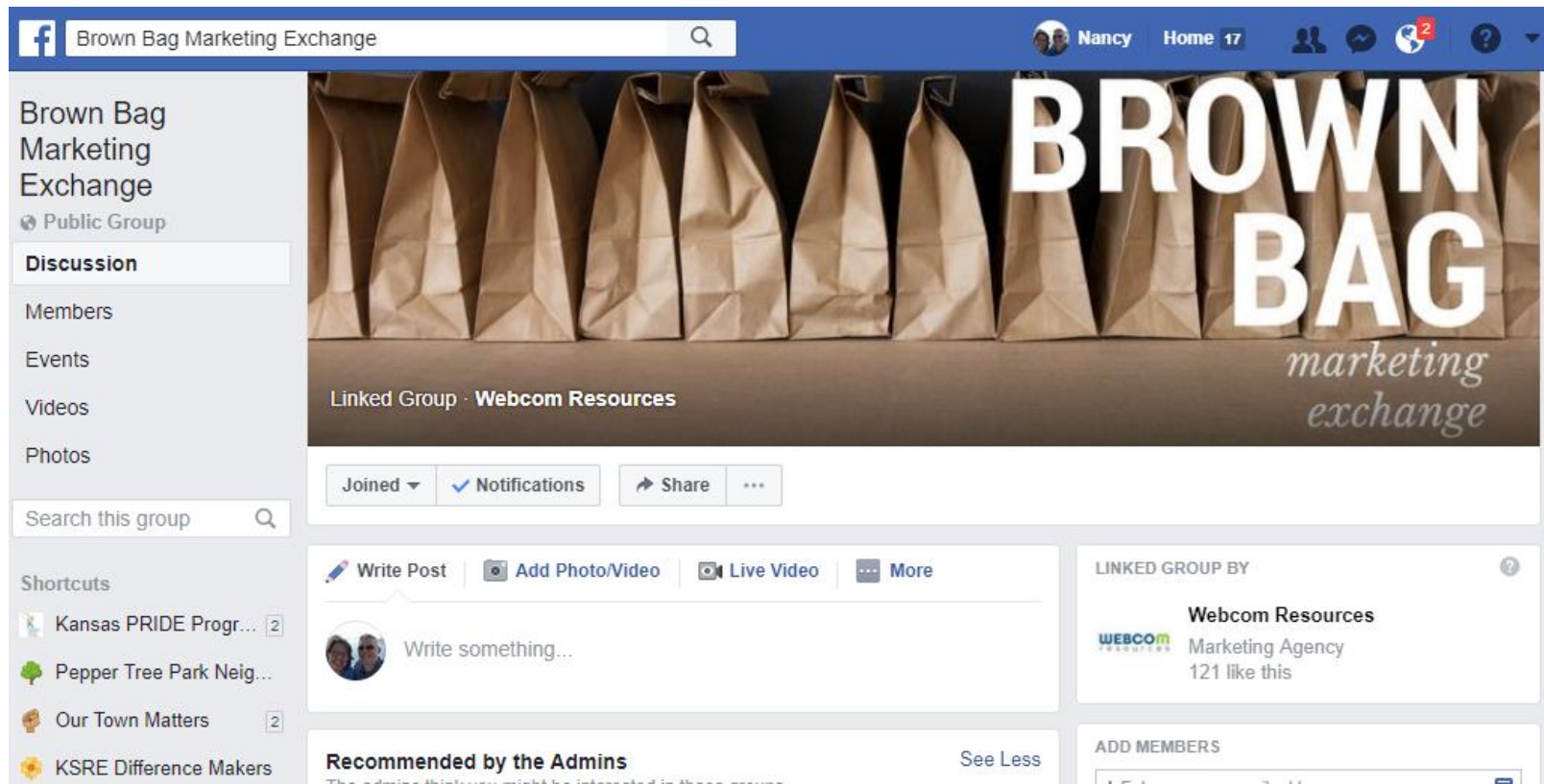
[MEMBERS LOGIN](#)

## A Virtual Tour

When we walk through a small town, we see it differently  
And then you see it differently



- <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*





- An initiative in Germany puts window stickers on windows that say “Clean Bathrooms.” (Nice Toilet)

