

First Impressions



Argonia, KS

K-State Research and Extension

- Protection asked for First Impressions, Argonia agreed to be its partner; 1 hour and 45 min drive.
- Volunteers in both communities were trained. Photos of Argonia were taken in July of 2024.
- 4 visitors visited Argonia on separate occasions. Two in March, one in May, and one in July.
- Results presented on 12/2/2024.
- Argonia uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

- **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.
- 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

- 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/>

- 2023 KS Certified Population: 451 ↓ 10% since 2010
- 2020 U.S. Census: 456
- 2010 U.S. Census: 501
- Median household income: \$74,688 **\$68,925**
- High school or GED 92.3% **91.6%**
- At least a B.S. Degree 19.6% **34.4%**
- Median Age: 45 years **37.6 years**
- Persons 65 and Over 19% **17.2%**

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

- Moved since Last Year (2022/23): 9.9% 14.6%
- Poverty rate (% of people below poverty line) 6.4% 12%

Race/Ethnicity

White: 91.2%	American Indian: 0%
Black: 1.2%	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 0%
Asian: 0%	Two or more races: 6.2%
Other: 0%	Hispanic or Latino: 1.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino: 98.6%	

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

Source: ACS 1-year estimates <https://data.census.gov>, MySidewalk)

- Argonia has a very nice website.
- It's very informative with details about the town, employment, places of interest, police, government, the cemetery, history, and much more.
- User friendly.
- Some of the menu choices do extend slightly off the screen to the left and right.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- It’s a mixture of really nice schools, nice houses, and great amenities along with areas of town that are in poor condition.
- Businesses on the main street are limited and there are several empty buildings.
- Some really nice homes with well maintained yards.



- Cemetery is lovely and well kept.
- Coming in from the east there are two beautiful, palatial properties that set the expectation of what the town will look like.
- Some great opportunities for murals and signage exist – maybe it could draw people into town.
- New homes north of town are something to brag about.



- Overall, good signage directing to historical buildings and amenities around town.
- A nice, large convenience store was observed during the drive through.



Downtown Business Area



- A mix of businesses and empty buildings. The empty buildings were not all well kept. Many were run down, but those occupied by businesses were in better condition.



- Several businesses observed include:
 - XO Boutique, Quilters Nook (though Google says it's permanently closed), Conway Bank, a carwash, Ox Bar & Grill, R. Greene Photography, and Sarah Jane's.
 - There was also a Cenex station which has Hunt Brothers Pizza and Krispy Krunchy Chicken.

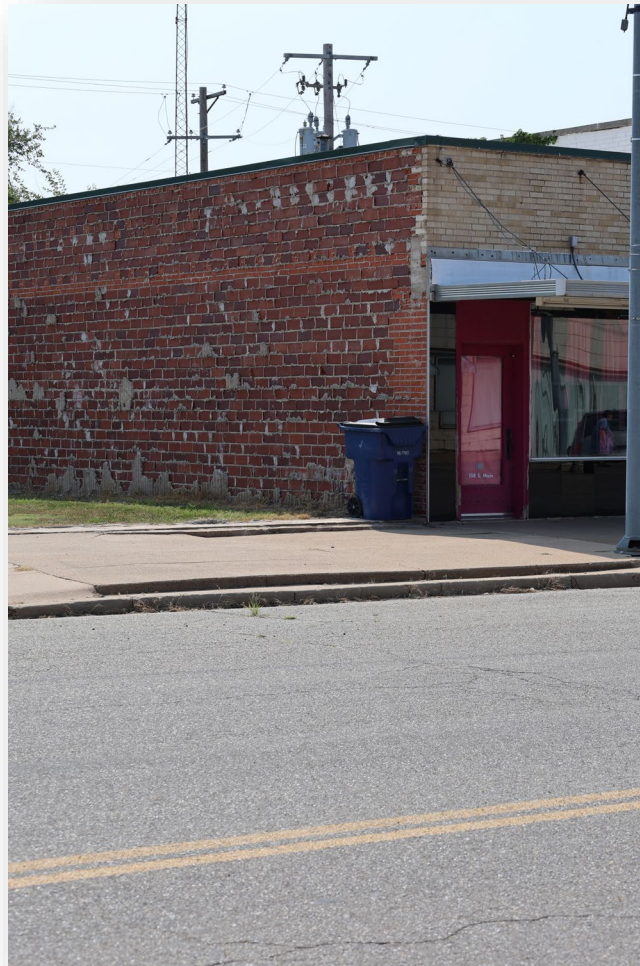


Some images obtained from Google Maps

- The library, elevator and feed store were observed in the area.
- No grocery store was seen.
- Really nowhere to get coffee or breakfast in town other than the gas station.
- The remodel of Sarah Jane's is pretty great!
- Visitors had great customer service where they were able to visit. Cenex workers were nice and friendly, and Ox Bar and Grill staff were friendly and willing to have a conversation.



- Some trash cans downtown.
- There were bathrooms at the RV park should anyone need them.
- No benches were seen.

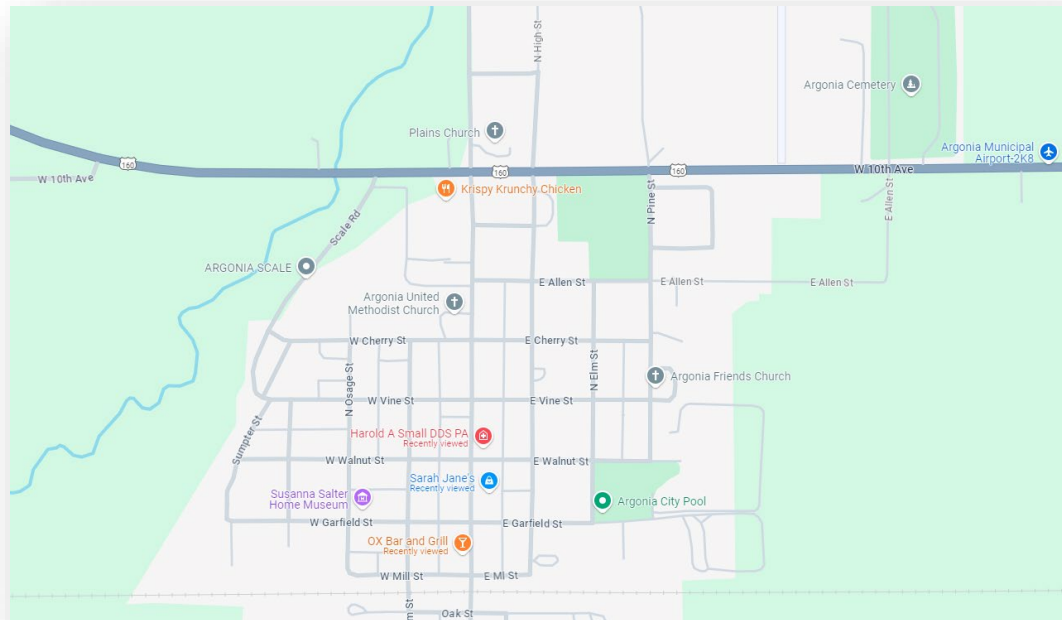


- Parking was good. Plenty of spaces to park and walk to any business in downtown.
- The street was very wide – kind of amazing!
- A little streetscaping was observed as well as the light posts.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Shopping was either located downtown or along the highway coming into town.



- *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.*

Industrial Parks/Commercial

- There's not an area specifically identified as an industrial park.
- There does seem to be room for expansion near the elevator.



- No hospital in town.
- There is the Argonia Clinic and dental office. The building is very nice looking and well maintained.
- Some visitors were told the dentist office is no longer in operation.
- No long-term care services, assisted living, or nursing facilities were seen. There was a community house observed, and visitors wondered if that was some sort of assisted living.



- There are some really nice, well kept houses in Argonia.
- There likely would be options for a new family wanting to move to Argonia.
- The Argonia Housing Authority handles low-income housing in town.
- Several houses were seen for sale while visiting.



- An online search at the time indicated about 6 homes for sale. A couple of those were in the country. Prices ranged from \$52,900 to \$79,900.
- Some felt there were no rental properties available. Others did note a few potential rentals.
- No motels or short-term rentals like AirBnB were observed during the visit.

	Kansas
• Occupied Housing Units: 224	1.15m
• Owner Occupied: 80%	65.3%
• Renter Occupied: 20%	34.7%
• Vacant Housing Units: 40	124k
- For rent: 5	
- For sale: 0	
- Sold, not occupied: 0	
- Seasonal/recreational: 0	
- All other vacants: 35	
• Average Household Size: 2.5	2.48

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

Data Source: Census.gov

& ACS 5-year Narrative Profile (Household Size), MySidewalk

Kansas

- | | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| • Average Travel Time to Work: | 27 mins | 19.6 mins |
| • Households without a computer*: | 18 (8%) | 45k (3.8%) |
| • Households without an internet subscription: | 25 (11%) | 108k (9.2%) |

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

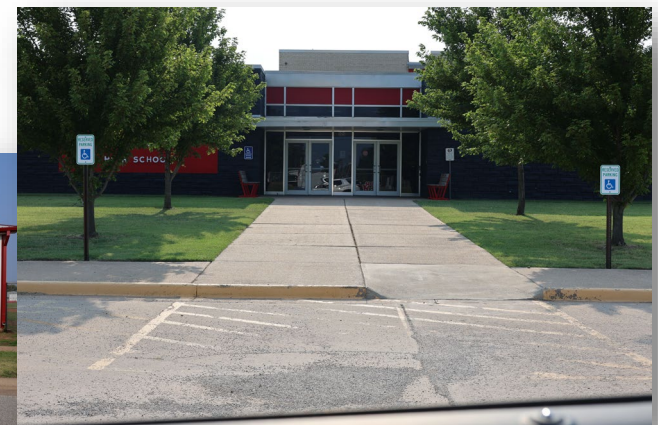
Data Source: Census.gov ACS 1-Year Estimates

- Kansas Housing Corporation is a resource to find out about housing grants and other tools for homeowners and renters.
- Also has some resources to address homelessness.

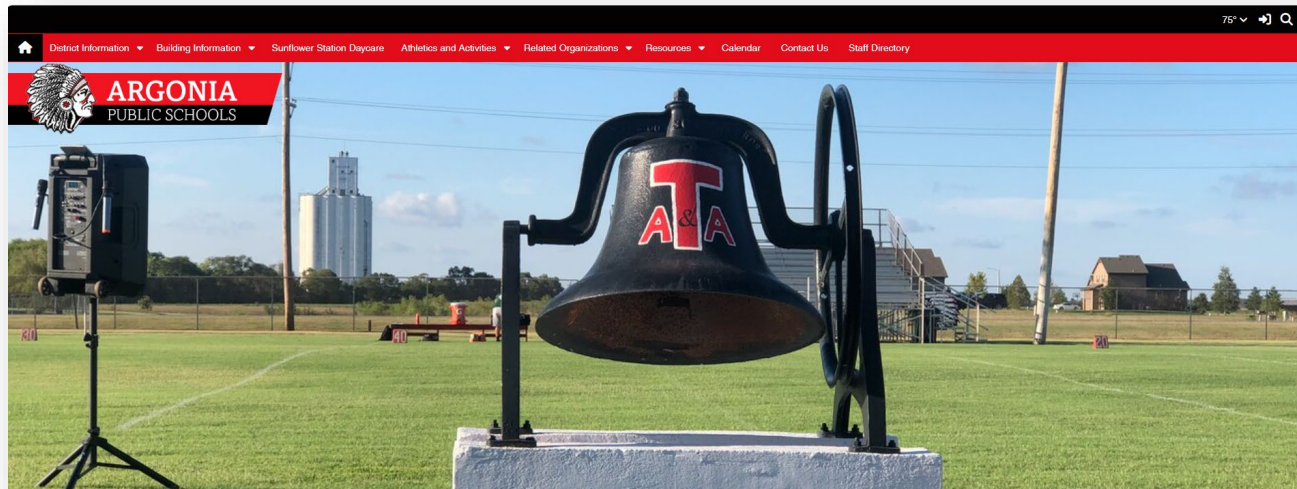
<https://kshousingcorp.org/>



- Argonia has a nice high school/middle school and grade school.
- The football field has a dirt track and there's a fairly new concession stand there.
- The weightlifting building was a positive observation.
- Kids were playing on the playground during the summer.
- K-8 have small classes. Will consolidation be in the future?
- The high school is also small. A local person mentioned in conversation that Argonia has had to consolidate for sports.
- The school buildings are lovely and well maintained.

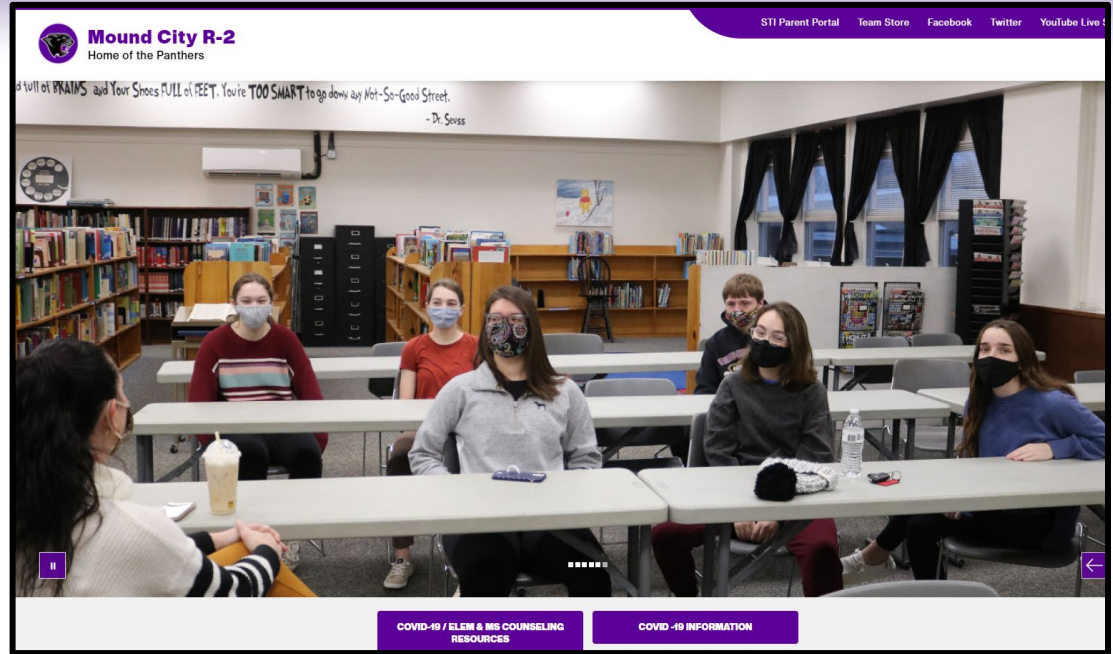


- The school has a digital sign out front.
- The district's website has a lot of information, including a tab for Summer Rec programs.
- There is a wellness committee working to improve student and staff health and wellness.
- Nothing suggesting the quality of education was found online.



“Potential Students” are an audience for your website.

- This is Mound City, MO:
- “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:

- The school website mentions they have the Sunflower Station childcare center and that the expected opening date was June 1, 2024.
- Cost information for Sunflower Station was found online.
- Another observation noted one daycare with no information locally on affordability.

Sumner County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **24%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

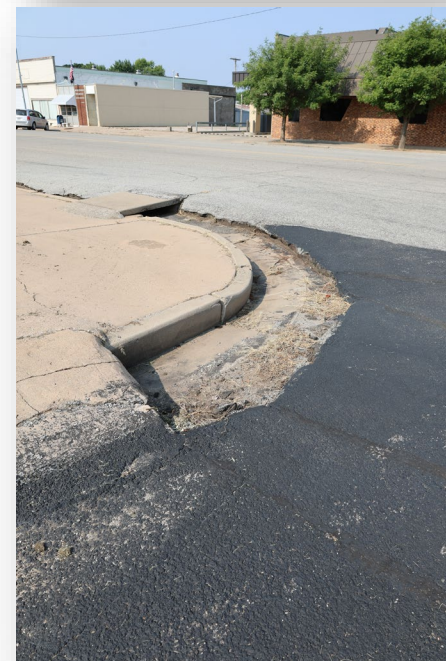
Source <https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/> Retrieved from internet 9/27/2024

- There are several churches in Argonia: Argonia Bible Church, Friends Church, Cornerstone Church (looks fairly new), Plains Church, United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, and Zion Lutheran.
- Service times and other information were noted on signs for the First Baptist Church and Friends Church.
- Buildings all look to be well maintained.
- No faith-based community services or activities were observed.



- There was an economic development committee and active city council.
- No other civic groups, nonprofit organizations or clubs were noted.
- No evidence of civic organization activities were observed however a city-wide cleanup was happening at the time of one of the visits, and Argonia Days was coming up.

- No welcome signage was observed coming into town.
- Street signs were observed.
- Paved roads were in good shape. Some of the dirt side streets were described as bad and a little rough.
- There were some curb/guttering issues noted.





- City Hall was observed. Some visitors noted it was closed during their visit.
- There were community activities posted in the window.
- City Hall staff told a visitor to drive outside of town to see the River Park and Memorial Walk. Had they not mentioned it, the visitor wouldn't have known it was there. This is a good opportunity for better advertising/signage (it's a great park and the walk is also really nice).



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- The Argonia-Dixon Township Fire Department was observed.
- Visitors saw no physical evidence of a police department while in town.
- One local person mentioned to visitors in conversation that there was, in fact, a police department.



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

[The Department](#)
[Auto/Home](#)
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[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





- The Dixon Township Library is in town and there is a website for it. The site lists hours and contact information.
- The library has summer programming and links to the City of Argonia and school district pages on their website.
- The library was small but looks like a nice facility.



- There is a playground with some older equipment, but it all looks well maintained.
- There is a swimming pool, picnic area, and an armored tank on display.
- The baseball field with batting cage is a nice facility.
- The sports complex was noted as was the camping area by the river.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- Argonia Days is hosted every year.
- The Salter Museum – Susanna Madora Salter was the 1st woman mayor in 1887.
- The RV campsite outside of town.
- Rocket launching event held yearly.
- A lot of basketball goals in the streets and bikes everywhere, leading visitors to believe there are a lot of kids in town and they are a major focus. This bodes well for growth potentially.

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The Salter Museum and the town's interesting history.
- The campgrounds were mentioned again.



Visitor's Center

- There is a community center, but not a visitor's center.
- City Hall might fit this role and it's easy to get to on the main street.



What would bring you back?

- Ox Bar and Grill was the only restaurant. It was nice and clean.
- Sarah Jane's
- XO Boutique

Most Positive Observations

- The community feels safe.
- Some really nice features like the park, housing, and school.
- The history is great.
- A very laid back and friendly town.
- Everyone encountered smiled and waved, giving the city a friendly feel.

- Shrinking population.
- Possibility of losing the schools because of enrollment numbers.
- Lack of industrial jobs.
- Lacking some businesses and services:
 - No grocery store
 - No nursing facilities
 - Though Argonia's clinic was listed earlier by some, it's mentioned that there's a lack of doctors here.

What will you remember?

- The Salter Museum and the history of the 1st woman mayor in the country.
- Several really nice houses and yards.
- Many people out taking care of their properties.
- Everyone was very friendly!
- The Ox was amazing.

- Visitors spent a total of \$125 while in town.

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 us if you need resources or have questions:

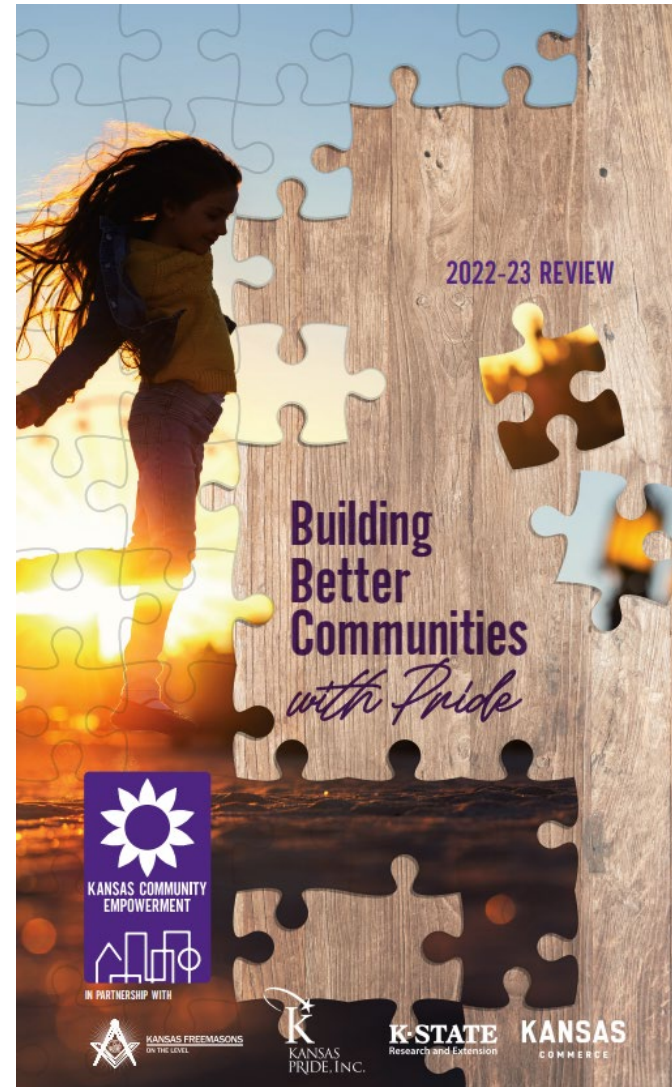
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Kansas Community Empowerment

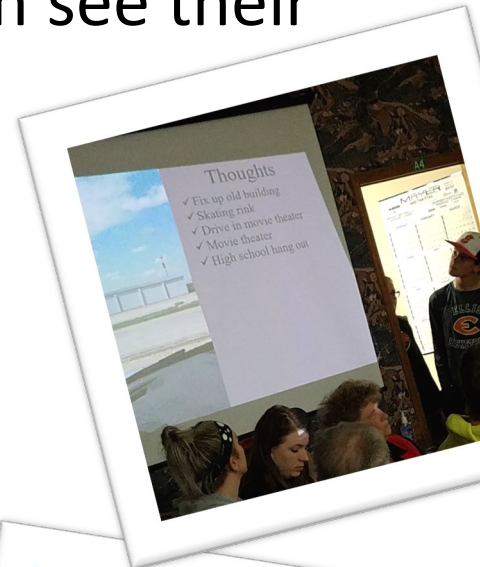
<http://kce.k-state.edu>

- 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 <https://bit.ly/ks-ycp>

- 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



Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



K-STATE
Research and Extension

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 more than \$52 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 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT 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: <https://ksre-learn.com/ecall>

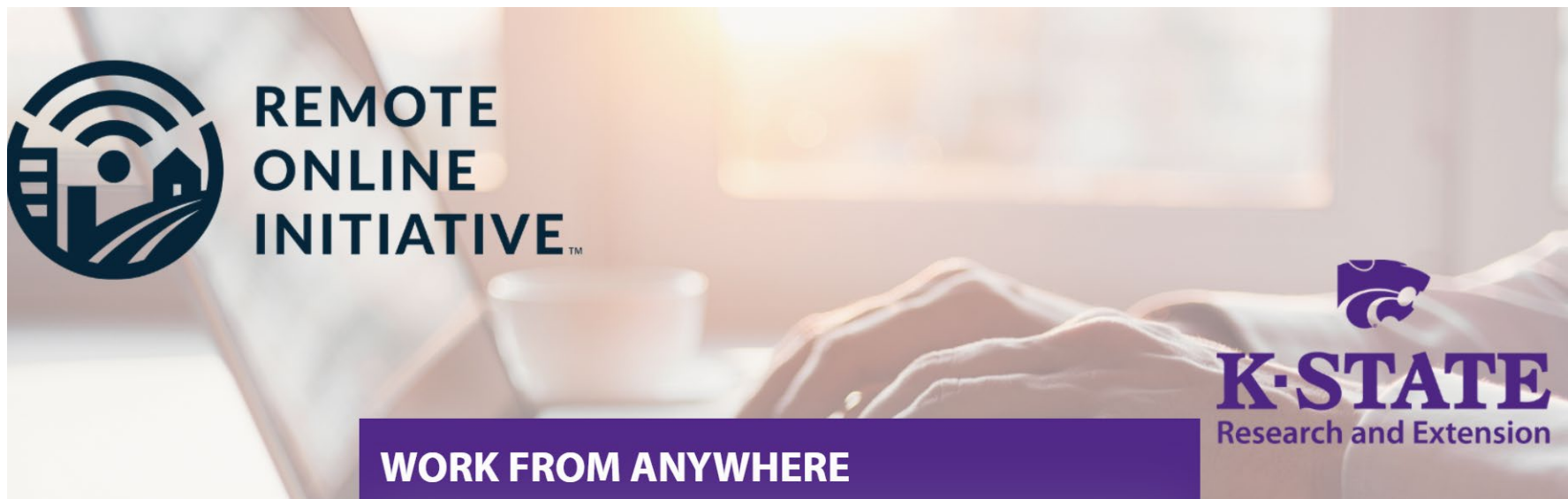
– Previous calls are recorded at

<https://ksre-learn.com/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*
- Monthly Classes: <https://kansasremotework.com/>



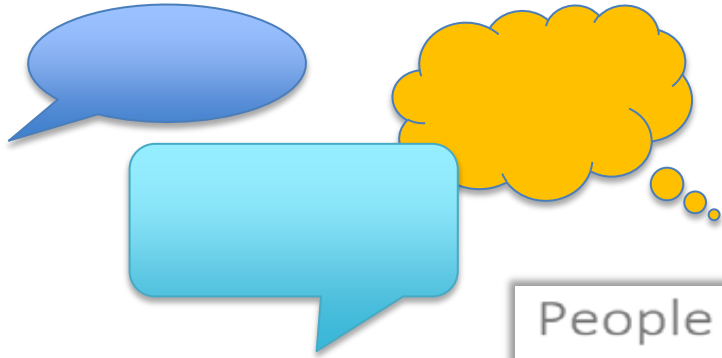
Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

- **Goal:** Increase access to affordable, 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/>



What did you hear?



What will we do?



People move in the direction of their conversations

