

First Impressions



Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Coffeyville applied for First Impressions.
- Augusta agreed to be their partner.
- Visitors were trained on what to look for during their visits and how to fill out their assessment reports.
- Three visitors visited in August 2025.
two on Aug 4 (Mon) and one on Aug 20 (Wed)
- Photos taken a soggy day, November 24, 2025.
- Results presented on February 12, 2026.
- Augusta uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

Community Feedback:

How does a first-time visitor view my town?

Evaluate successes,

Set goals and priorities for next steps.



Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary

Why: First Impressions?

- **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?

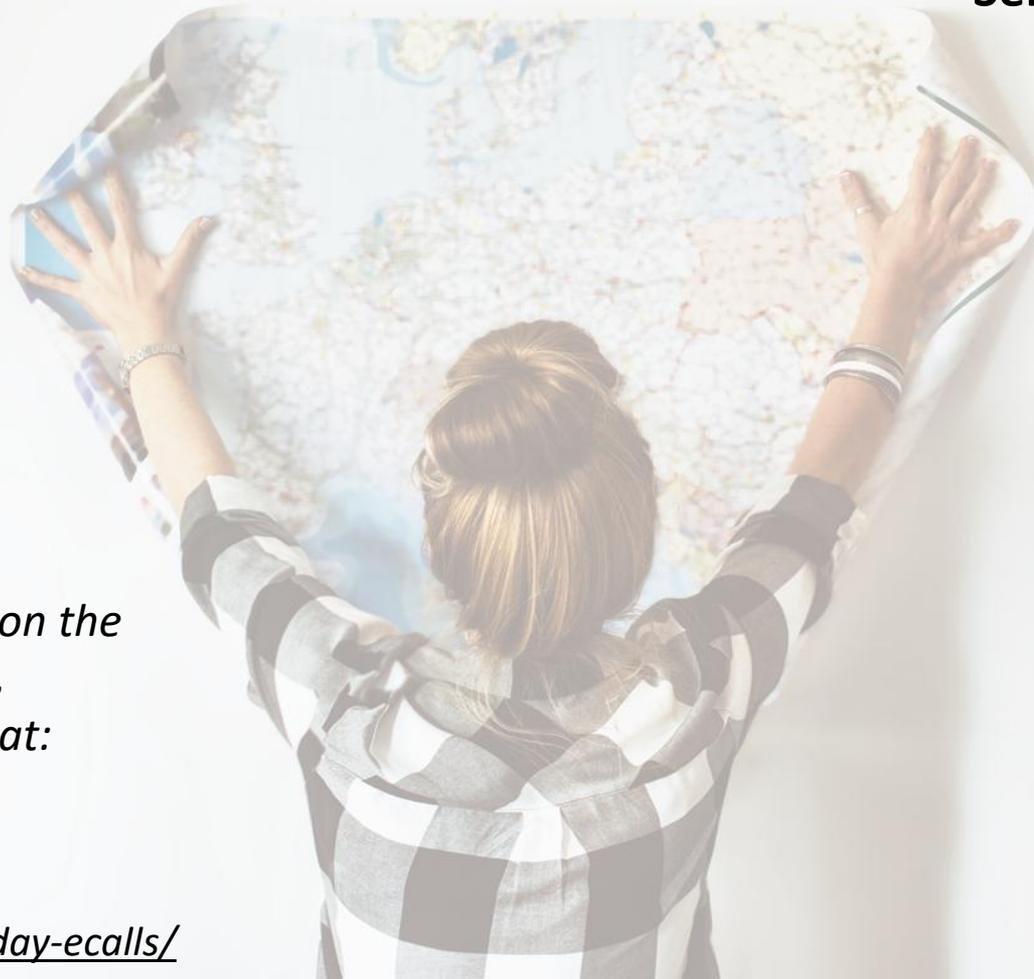
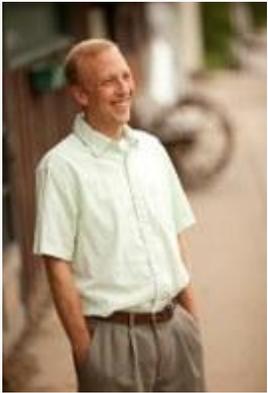
Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary



We need to change the narrative about rural.

**Ben Winchester,
Senior Research Fellow,
U of MN**



*Ben was our guest on the
First Friday e-Calls.*

See the recordings at:

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/program-areas/supporting-communities/first-friday-ecalls/>

People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.

Rural is in the middle of *everywhere*.



Brain Gain
(30-49 year olds
moving to rural) is
a “new trend”
that has been
happening since
the 70’s

Approximately 14% of Kansans moved during the previous year.



Communities can work together to attract newcomers and create quality of life for everyone.

- Simpler pace of life,
- Safety and security,
- Affordable housing,
- Outdoor recreation,
- Quality schools

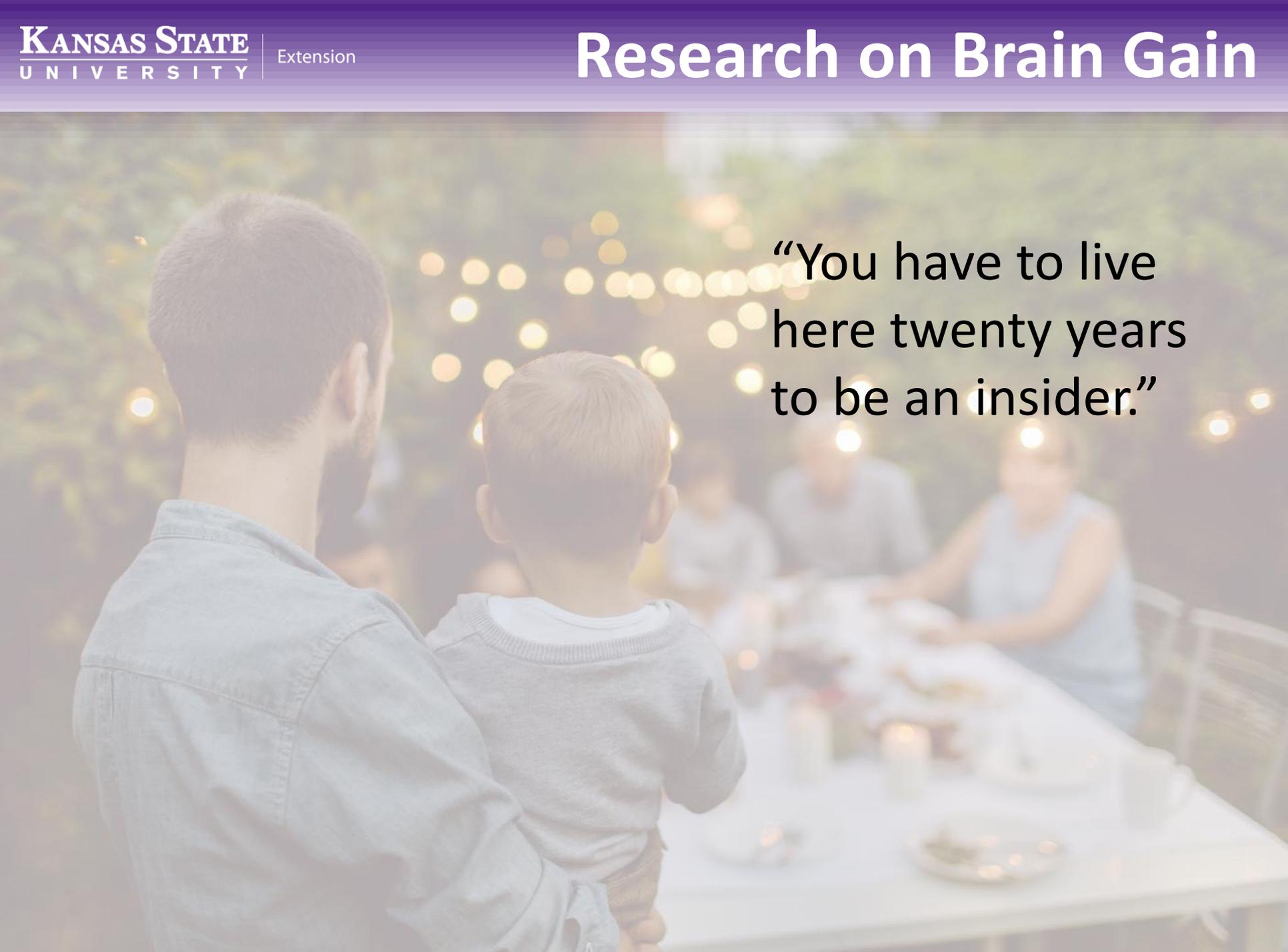
“A job” isn’t in the top 10 reasons.

Research on Brain Gain

“In small towns everyone knows each other.”

false

Get to know each other, invite them to a newcomers' meal.

A photograph of a man and a young boy in the foreground, seen from behind, looking towards a group of people dining at an outdoor table at night. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing string lights, creating a bokeh effect in the background. The man is wearing a denim shirt, and the boy is wearing a grey sweater. The dining table is set with white plates, glasses, and silverware. The overall atmosphere is warm and social.

“You have to live here twenty years to be an insider.”

A photograph of a man and a young boy in the foreground, seen from behind, looking towards a group of people dining at an outdoor table at night. The scene is illuminated by warm, bokeh-style string lights, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere. The background shows several people seated around a table, engaged in conversation and dining. The overall mood is warm and welcoming.

Welcome!
We're glad you're here

Research on Brain Gain

A photograph of a man and a young boy standing together, looking out over a town square at night. The man is on the left, wearing a denim shirt, and the boy is on the right, wearing a grey sweater. They are both looking towards a table set for a meal in the foreground, which is slightly out of focus. In the background, there are trees and a string of warm, glowing lights that create a bokeh effect. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and community-oriented.

If you bring 20 people to a 2,000-person town every year, in 10 years you'll have a 10% increase.

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.





Data

Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- **Poverty rate** 11.3% 11.5%
(% of people below poverty line)

Race/Ethnicity

White: 90%	American Indian: 1%
Black: 0%	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 0%
Asian: 0%	Two or more races: 2%
Other: 0%	Hispanic or Latino: 7%
Not Hispanic or Latino: 93%	

In Augusta, 17.4% of the population moved in the last year. Kansas, 14.8%

What would it take to attract them to Augusta?



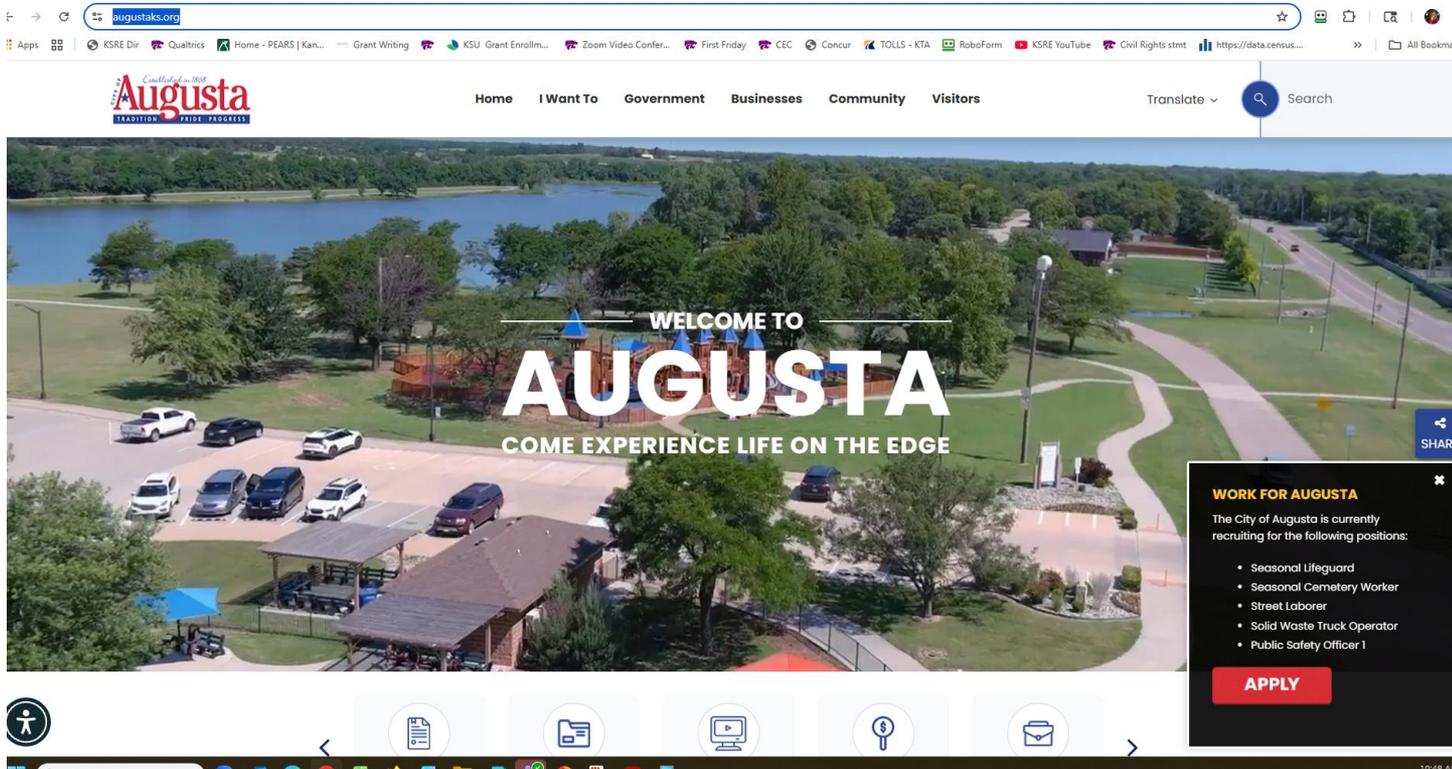
Social Media & Website

Augusta, KS

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Website:

- City website was clean and organized- loved the pop-up job listing. <https://www.augustaks.org/>



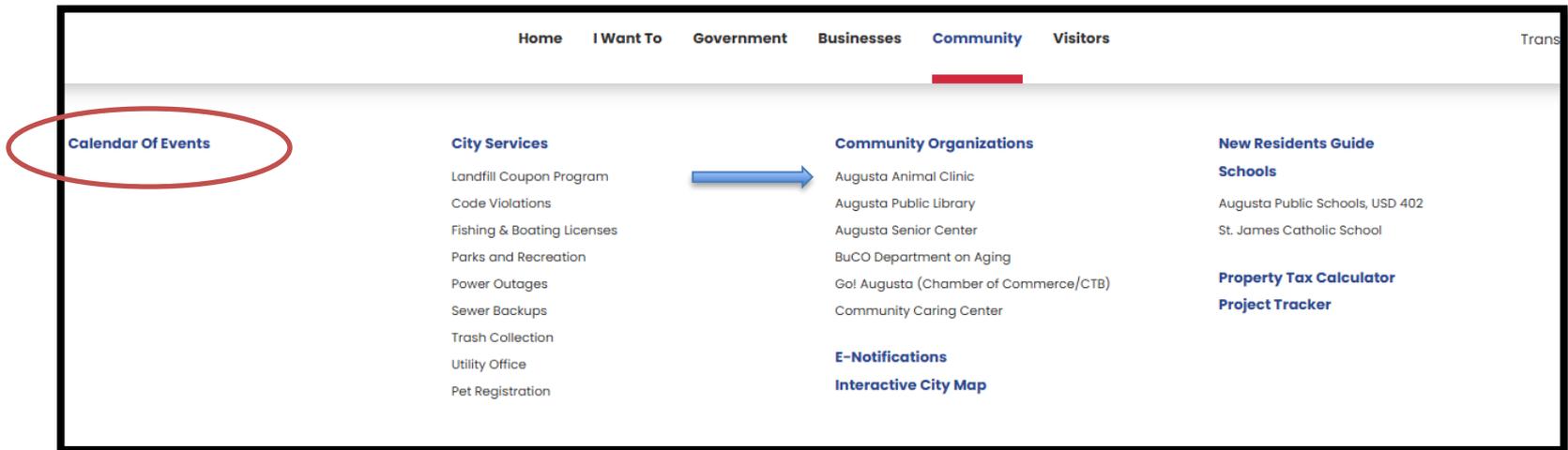
Website:

- There is a link from the City website to the other important city sites, including Go Augusta.
- The GoAugusta site for the Chamber and Tourism was helpful.
<https://www.goaugusta.org/>
- “Events” are listed on this website, including “Cox Affordability” program.
- Both websites came up near the top of the search page.

Website:

The “Community Page” on City Website:

- The Veterinarian also serves as the Animal Shelter.
- The Calendar of Events is empty for community events and gets lost on the top of the page.



[Calendar of Events](#)

Browse through our calendar of community events and city meetings to stay up to date on what's happening in our great city.

City Website

I haven't seen many city websites with Mission, Vision, Values, and the Athenian Oath.
Love it.

Mission, Vision, And Values

Mission

We cultivate pride by creating a family-friendly community for residents, businesses, and visitors, rooted in professional service delivery.

Vision

Augusta is an inviting city with a thriving local economy, excellent schools, and a proud community that works in partnership to solve problems and accomplish great things.

Values

Integrity

We set high standards for our personal, professional, and organizational conduct and we are accountable for our actions.

Community Pride

We present a positive image of the City organization and community in all our actions and communications.

Professionalism

We treat people with courtesy and respect at all times and behave in a manner that sustains public confidence in our organization.

Innovation

We seek creative solutions and encourage new methods and ideas to improve delivery of services.



5-Minute Impression

Augusta, KS

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“Five-Minute” Impression

- Nothing stood out as good or bad on the initial drive through.
- Brick Streets are beautiful and in good repair.
- Brick street bumpiness would be a problem over time.
- The welcome signs need cleaning.



“Five-Minute” Impression

“Downtown gave me the vibe of the city.”





Downtown Business Area

Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- We didn't see downtown signage. (2 comments)
- We loved the park right in the downtown area, it creates a destination downtown.
- I got a great feeling about the downtown businesses. There were so many and the citizens I spoke to indicated businesses are well supported.
- The buildings are well-maintained.



Apply Now

The SIGNS Grant application opens on January 1, 2026 and closes at 11:59 PM on February 28, 2026.
For program inquiries, please contact SIGNS.Grant@ks.gov

[REGISTER YOUR ACCOUNT](#)

[APPLY HERE](#)

- An opportunity for downtown business signs:
- Kansas Commerce SIGNS grants, due February 28.
- Up to \$25,000 for 3-5 business signs.
- <https://www.kansascommerce.gov/qpd/signs/>

Downtown Business Area



- Great variety of stores- tattoos, retail, barber, and unique offerings, too.
- Very few empty buildings.
- Most storefronts were appealing and welcoming. There were maybe a few that needed improvement.
- The fudge shop was great and the owner was wonderful. He sells out almost every Saturday.

Downtown Business Area





Downtown Living: The owner of the fudge shop told us about the upstairs apartments in the downtown area.

- The Marketplace had a wonderful selection of items from gifts, to clothing, and more. It made you feel like you were in an old-fashioned store, a great feeling for small towns.
- The drugstore had a little bit of everything, and it also gave an old-time vibe.



Downtown Business Area



- Everyone was friendly! No one was very chatty; they waited for us to ask questions and engage.
- A business owner who owns multiple businesses was wonderful to talk to. He has such a passion for downtown and Augusta.
- Very friendly people. I was greeted when I walked in.

Downtown Business Area





Downtown Amenities, Parking & More

Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- We loved the downtown park; it creates a destination for visitors downtown.
- There was a public restroom at the park.
- Car charging station was impressive.



- Trash receptacles were in good locations and on the corners were 3 smaller pots with plants that are well cared for.
- The trees had mulch around them with no grass; they are well maintained.
- Parking places are well marked and plentiful.





Other Retail Shopping Areas

Augusta, KS

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- There were multiple areas, including the main street corridor, but also near the lake and other main roads.



Industrial Parks Commercial



Augusta, KS

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- The industrial park wasn't obvious; we found a few industries in one area that seemed like an opportunity for growth.

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.*



Health Care Services

Augusta, KS

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- There are dentists, optometrists, and other medical professionals.
- I really liked this part of the visits- I saw lots of offices for medical services.



- Several family practice offices.
- Urgent care, but no hospital, which is worrisome.



- We think we saw several senior living services, but their signage wasn't obvious.
- Online we were able to locate several.





Housing

Augusta, KS

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- Great variety of housing for low, middle, and higher income.
- Didn't see a lot of for sale signs, however we did see a new housing development.
- Very few dilapidated houses!
- Some new construction; looks like room to expand.
- A+ on this- homeowners seem to really care about their town and properties, everything is well cared for.









- We were able to get a list of landlords, so we know there are several properties.
- We were told about some apartments city workers live in, and they seem to be of good quality.

Kansas

- Occupied Housing Units: 3,738
- Owner Occupied: 70.6 % 65.3%
- Renter Occupied: 29.4% 34.7%
- Vacant Housing Units: 137 (3.7%)
 - For rent: 25
 - For sale:
 - Sold, not occupied: 8
 - Seasonal/recreational: 0
 - All other vacants: 104
- Average Household Size: 2.44 2.48

Housing Assessment Tool (HAT)

<https://www.kansascommerce.gov/housing/>



K-State Housing TransDisciplinary Team (TDT)

Email: ksecv@ksu.edu

KANSAS

COMMERCE

Housing Resources in Kansas

For additional funding information, visit the Housing Resources in Kansas page at www.kansascommerce.gov/housing.

DEVELOPERS						
Program	Type	Eligible Grantees	Description / Eligible Activities	Award Max.	Dates	Contact
Startup Housing Opportunity Venture Loan (SHOVL) KDC	Loan	Developers	Funds developer expenses prior to the closing of permanent financing for housing development in communities under 10,000	\$25k	Ongoing (Subject to funding availability)	Kerri Falletti Kerri.Falletti@ks.gov
Reinvestment Housing Incentive District (RHID) KDC	Reimbursement	Developers	Aids developers in building housing by financing housing development infrastructure, renovations of buildings over 25 years old in central business districts, or infill housing. RHID captures incremental increase in property taxes created by housing development projects for up to 25 years.	Varies	Ongoing	Robert North Robert.North@ks.gov Questions: Kerri Falletti Kerri.Falletti@ks.gov
Affordable Housing Program (AHP) FHLB	Grant	For-profit entities/ Developers	Finance the purchase, construction, or rehabilitation of owner- and rental-occupied housing for low- or moderate-income households through subsidized advances and direct subsidies.	\$1.5 million	Application Period July 1 – Aug. 15	Dustie Humphreys dustie.humphreys@ fhlbtopeka.com
Kansas Historic Tax Credits SHPO	Tax Credit	Developers	Offered for qualified rehabilitation projects on properties listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.	Varies	Ongoing	SHPO Staff ksks.taxcredits@ks.gov
Rural Rental Housing Program USDA-RD	Loan	Developers	Provides financing for affordable multi-family rental housing for low-income, elderly, or disabled individuals and families in eligible rural areas. Eligible activities include buying and improving land and infrastructure.	Varies	Ongoing	Midwest Regional Mailbox MFHFODMidwest@usda.gov



Schools

Augusta, KS

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- Great variety of preschool, Head Start, and other grades, including private school.
- Lots of Elementary Schools.



AUGUSTA
HIGH SCHOOL



AUGUSTA
MIDDLE SCHOOL



EWALT
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



GARFIELD
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



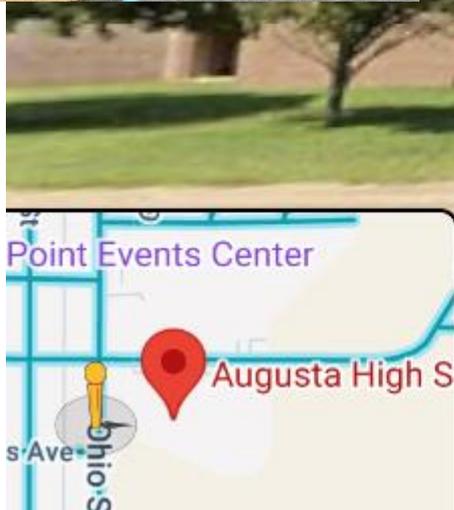
LINCOLN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



SUNFLOWER
VIRTUAL ACADEMY



- It was hard to tell what the high school was. The name is hidden by trees.

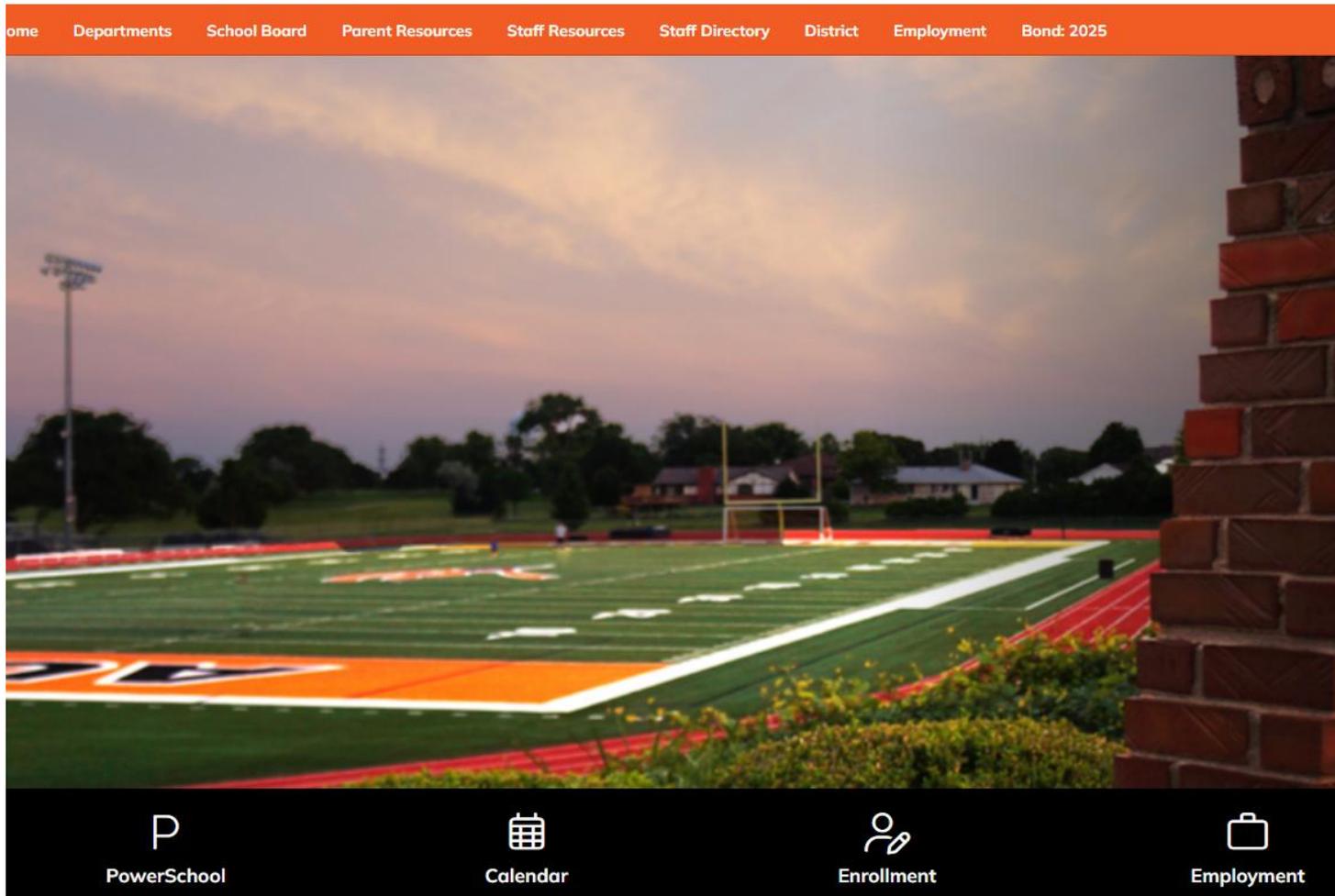


Google Maps, August 2025, Retrieved 2-8-26

The high school was the only school that did not have aesthetically pleasing grounds.



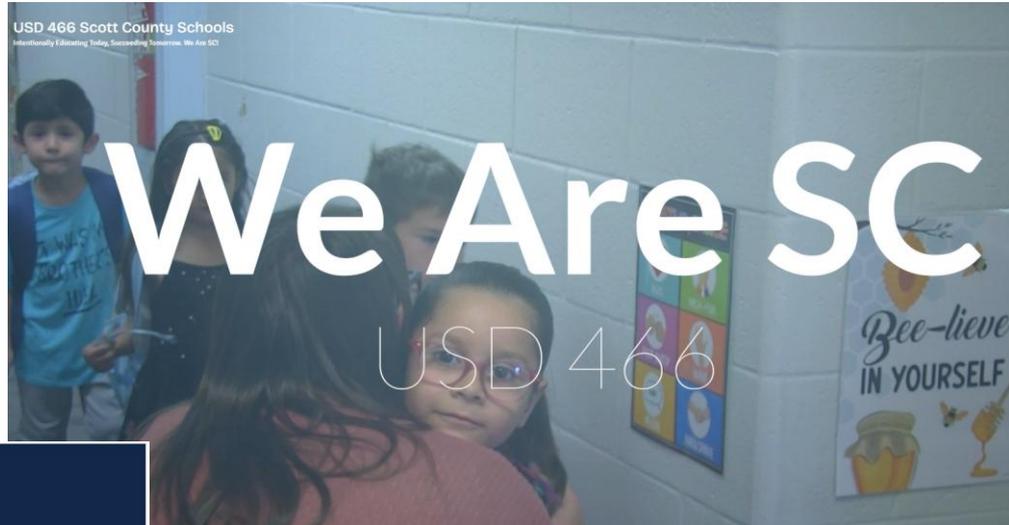
Visitors didn't see a lot of information about the school system online.



The website is helpful for current students, but not descriptive for potential students.

A Reminder:

“Potential Students” are an audience for your website.



On the front page, Scott County Schools gives a good description of the types of school settings (traditional classroom or multiple teachers with electives) and awards received.



Childcare

Augusta, KS

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Neither the Chamber nor the city was able to give much information about childcare.



Butler County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need: 39%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343



Faith & Religion

Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

There are lots of churches.



- The physical appearances were wonderful and in good condition.
- The landscaping was well done.

Evidence of Faith Community Activity:
Visitors didn't comment on activity; visitors seldom see faith or civic activity.







Civic Organizations

Augusta, KS

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The only thing we saw was on the way out of town, a sign that said Lions and VFW on the side of the shed.



Did you see civic activity?

Free Thanksgiving Day Lunch at the Senior Center.



Public Infrastructure & Services

Augusta, KS

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- Some areas were well lit, nice sidewalks and parking; some were just ok, but all seemed mostly taken care of.
- We loved the brick streets; well maintained.



- City Hall was surrounded by buildings that were not taken care of. It left the impression that the city building was in a bad area.
- City Hall needed to be painted.





Community Development Building was awesome and looked like a new construction or remodel.



Impressive Public Safety facilities



- Loved the children's area.
- The staff was so nice and helpful- we loved them.
- Nicest people in town!!!



So many great parks,
especially two unique
playground attractions.



- Loved the lake area and the walking path.
- The lake and parks would make this a nice place to retire.







Recreation & Tourism

Augusta, KS

Kansas State University Extension

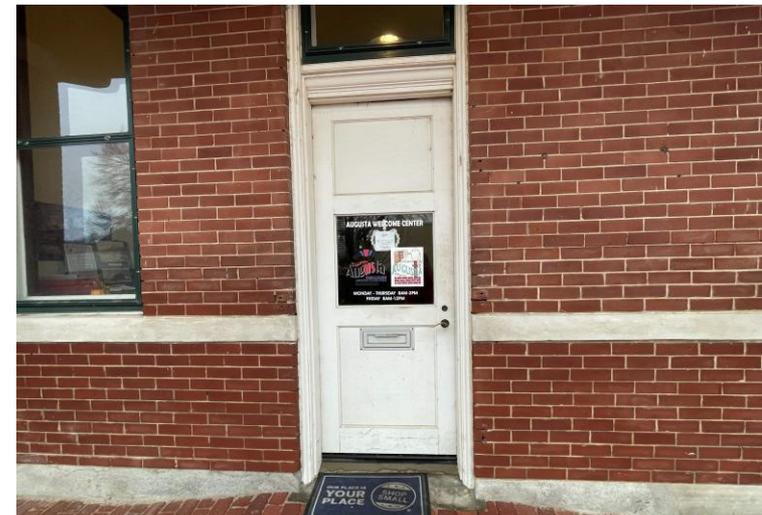
Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The depot park is an item of pride, as well as the lake.
- Not sure on events, although multiple people remarked about a recent car show.
- In December, a Christmas drive-through display was evident.
- The area for the outdoor community stage was an intriguing spot for events.



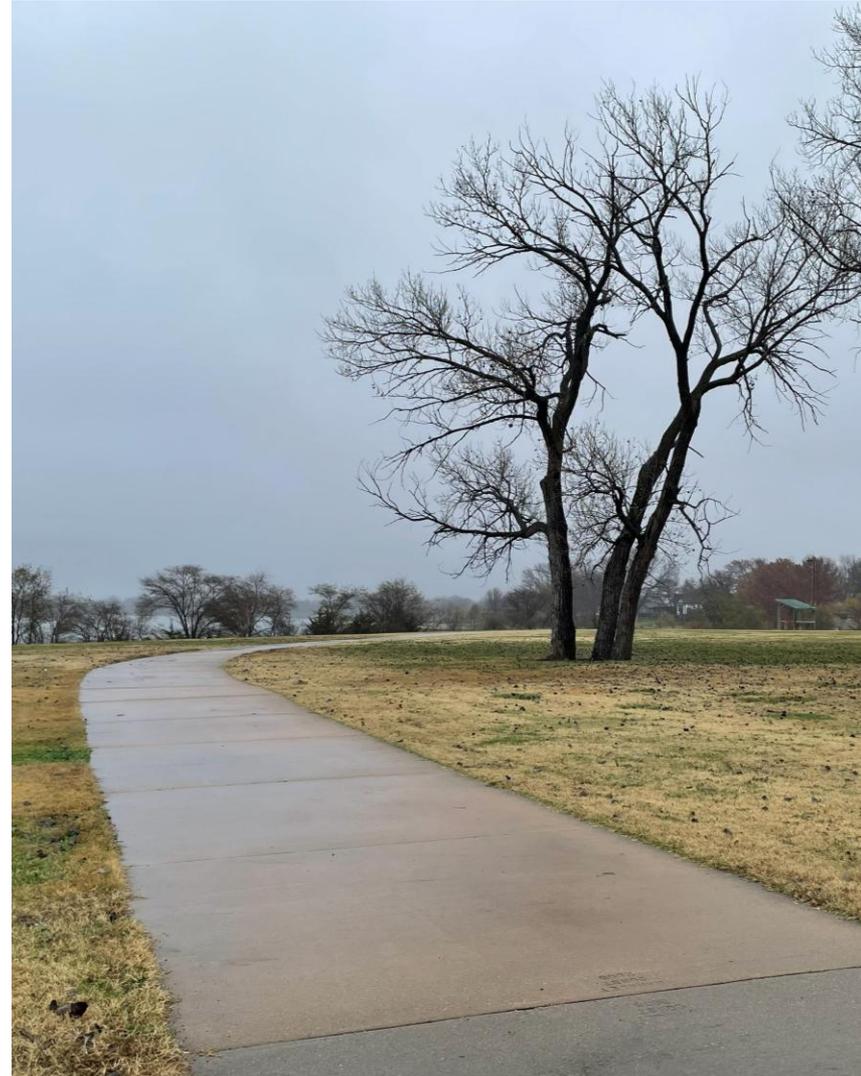
Visitor's Center

- It was difficult to find the Chamber office. There were no signs on the street or building to indicate what it was. Only after asking around could we find it and even then, it wasn't obvious where to enter.
- Minimal information inside. No visitor's brochures, no relocation information. No Augusta items to purchase. Overall, not very welcoming environment. Staff was nice, but not very engaging.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

The lake and walking trail were great.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The roundabout with the clock was a nice touch, but the area beyond it is run down and a bit disappointing.
- I was surprised to find the historical features after the roundabout. I didn't notice signage.





Visitors didn't notice this museum.
They probably weren't the target audience.



What would bring you back?

- Loved the Marketplace, the fudge shop, and the bouncy fitness place.
- We'd bring the kids to the downtown park attraction and the other castle park by the lake.
- Will be back for the parks with the grandkids. The Marketplace and tattoo parlors I'd visit again, and the bungee jumping classes.
- Love to see the businesses open on Saturdays from 8-2 pm. It makes it easy to come back on the weekend.

Most Positive Observations

- Clean and well-kept homes and yards, in fact, it took some driving around to even find an area that seemed more run down or less desirable or safe.
- Unique family attractions/parks.
- Loved to shop downtown. It all seemed so inviting.
- On a Saturday we could go shopping, grab a beer, and play some cornhole (while our dogs hang out with us on the dog patio). Then we could head to the park and the castle, watch a movie at the theater in the afternoon, grab lunch then some fudge, and finish it off by going to the bowling alley for dinner and fun.
- There's a lot going on in Augusta and a lot going on for them.
- Very well-maintained neighborhoods.

- Entrances could be more inviting, like lights on the bridge, some colorful trees or plants.
- Could use some better signage to the main street, maybe a type of overhead, large sign that says, “Augusta Downtown.”
- City and Chamber need more visibility in their building; maybe that would make them more welcoming to visitors and prospective residents.
- City brochures, flyers, etc. that talk about the unique strengths of the community in case a visitor stops in – talk about the education system, childcare, housing, business opportunities.

- Doug Griffiths, author of *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*, writes,
“Your community needs to know
 - Who you were (history),
 - Who you are (culture),
 - Who you are becoming (vision).



Doug was a guest on our First Friday e-Call, 8-2-2024:

<https://ksre-learn.com/entrepreneurship>

<https://www.13waysinc.com/post/13-ways-to-transform-a-community>

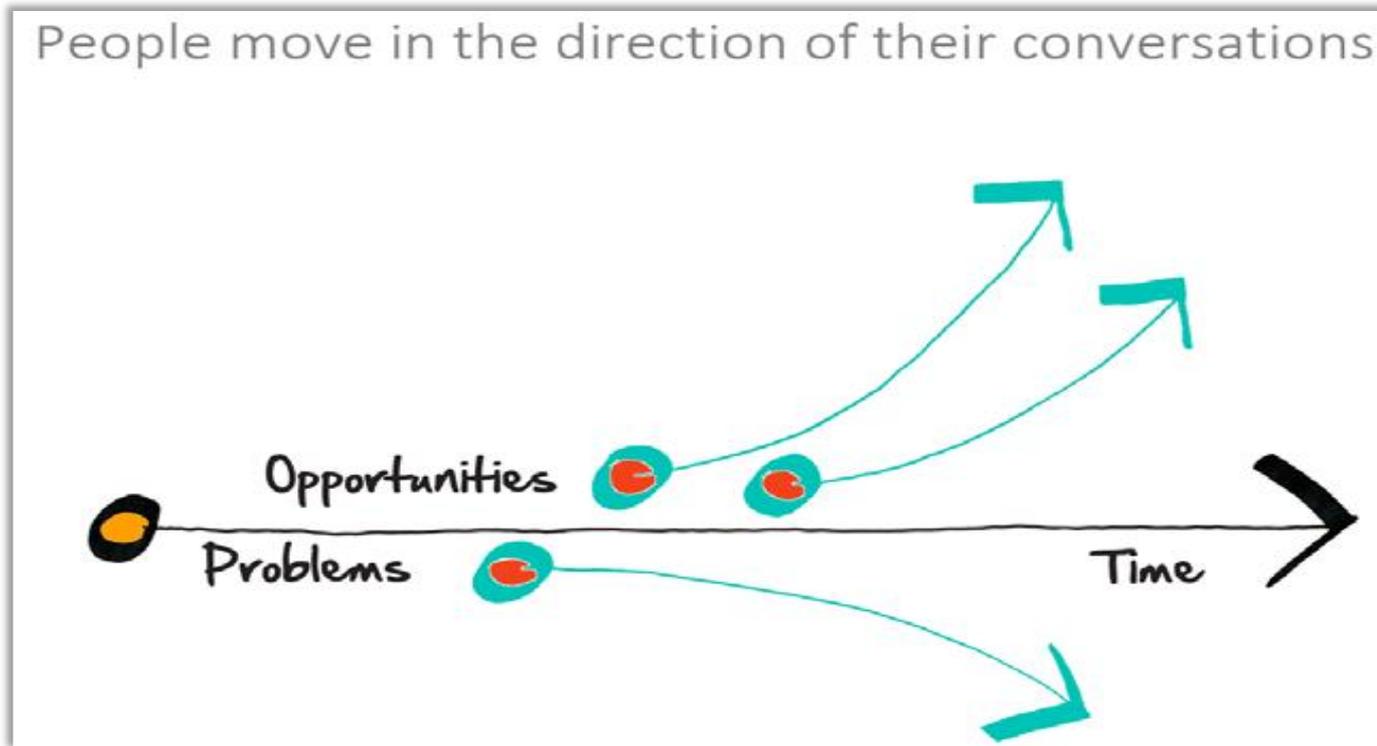
Retrieved from internet, 2/9/2026

What will you remember?

- How much Augusta is growing and doing good in the downtown area and the new housing development.
- This would be a great place to live.

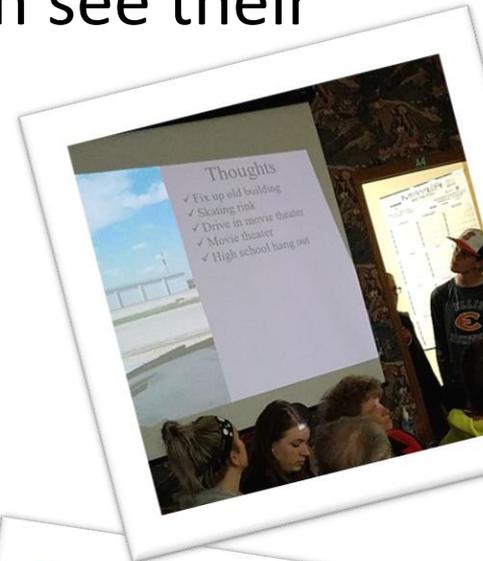
What did you hear?

What will we do?



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.



4 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 GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving more than \$100 million in successful grants. Discover in-person and online classes at ksre-learn.com/community-events. 
- 2 A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT COURSE**
An 8-week course dedicated to helping you complete a fundable proposal. Register for the course at ksre-learn.com/GrantWriting. 
- 3 SUPPORT BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS**
Our professionals will search K-State's subscription grant databases to suggest grants appropriate for your project. Our staff also offers reviewing of grant proposals.
- 4 GRANT WRITING RESOURCES**
We have excellent resources for those wanting to bring more to their communities. We can connect you with contract writers to help shape your proposals.

For more information about our grant writing resources, email KSRECV@k-state.edu.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
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23227 | Updated Apr. 2025

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.

- Kansas Remote Online Initiative
 - Certified Remote Work Professional
 - Certified Remote Work Leader
- *Certification in 4-weeks*
- Monthly Classes: <https://kansasremotework.com/>



**REMOTE
ONLINE
INITIATIVE™**



K-STATE
Research and Extension

WORK FROM ANYWHERE

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/>

