

First Impressions



Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Cunningham applied for First Impressions.
 - Potwin accepted the partnership
- Visitors were trained on what to look for during their visits and how to fill out their assessment reports.
- Two visitors visited Tuesday, September 30, 2025.
- Photos taken December 16, 2025.
- Results presented on March 9, 2026.
- Cunningham 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.*

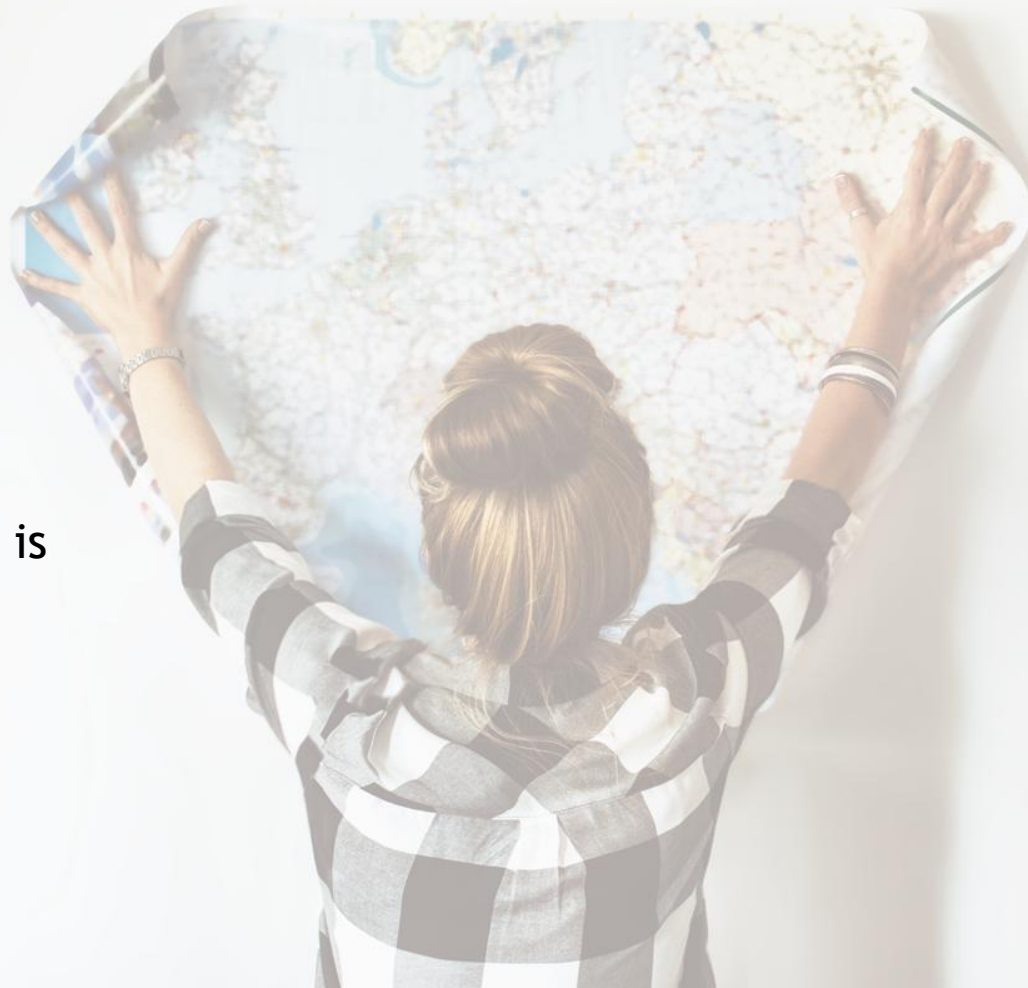
See the recordings at:

<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

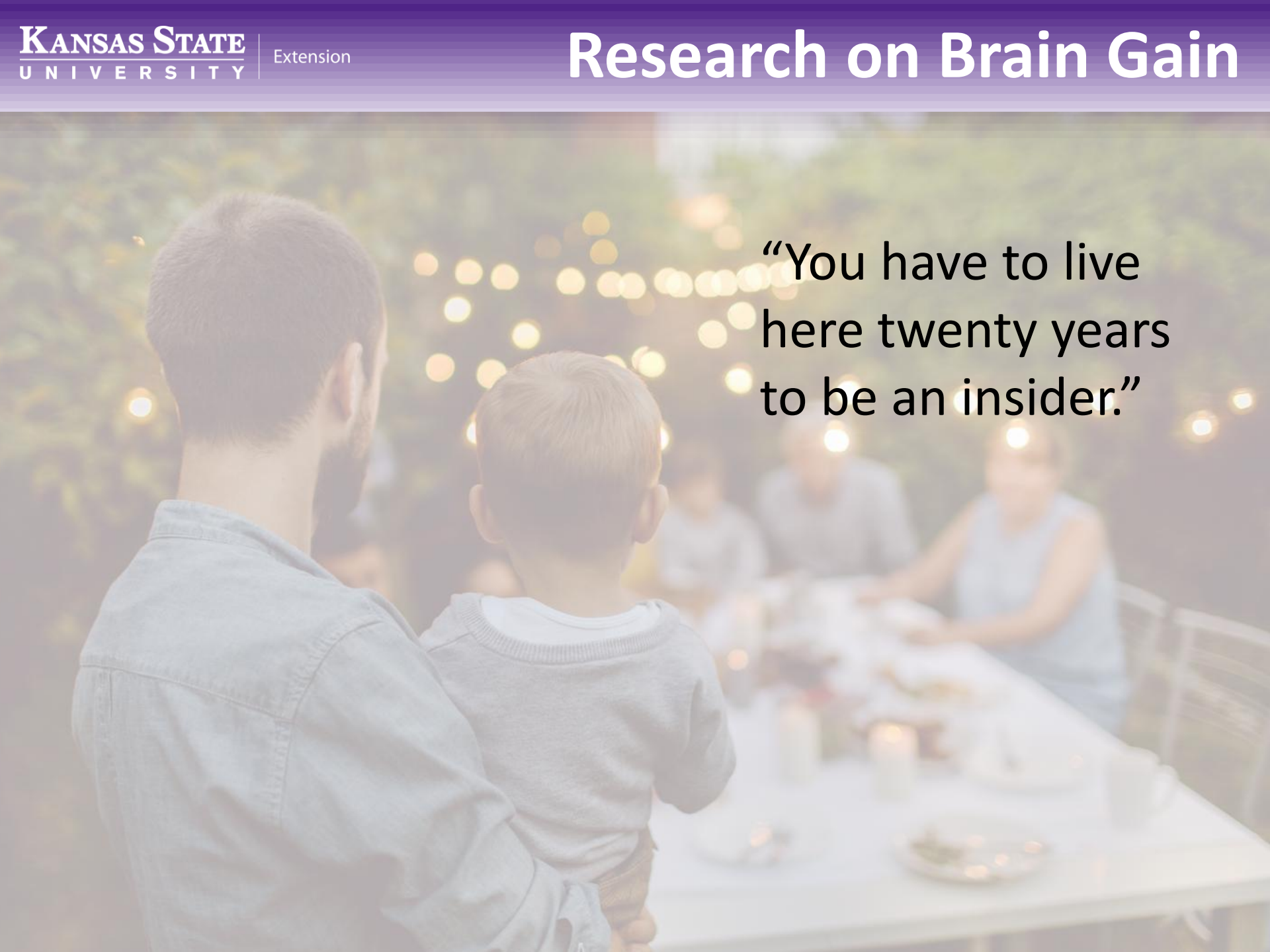
“A job” isn’t in the top 10 reasons.

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, bokeh-style string lights, creating a soft, intimate atmosphere. The man is wearing a denim shirt, and the boy is wearing a grey sweater. The background shows several people seated at a table with a white tablecloth, engaged in conversation and eating. The overall mood is warm and social.

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



Welcome!
We're glad you're here

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 out of focus. In the background, there are string lights and other people sitting at tables, creating a warm, social atmosphere.

If you bring 4 people to a 400-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

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- 2024 KS Certified Population: 403
- 2014 KS Certified Population: 470 ↓ 14% since 2014
- Median household income: \$38,521 \$72,639
- High school or GED 92.8% 91.9%
- At least a B.S. Degree 24.5% 35.2%
- Median Age: 53.8 years 37.2 years
- Persons 65 and Over 32% 17%

- Poverty rate**
6.3% **11.5%**

(% of people below poverty line)

Race/Ethnicity

White: 99.8%	American Indian: 0%
Black: 0%	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 0%
Asian: 0%	Two or more races: .7%
Other: 0%	Hispanic or Latino: 9%
Not Hispanic or Latino: 91%	

***8.9%** of your population moved since last year.

In Kansas, 14.8%

***2%** from the same county, ***6%** from a different county or state.

**at least a 10% margin of error*

Blue: [Kansas Comparison Data](#)
Source: [Census.gov](#)

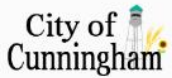


Social Media & Website

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Website: <https://cunninghamks.net/>



RESIDENTS + BUSINESS GOVERNMENT +

ONLINE BILL PAY



Welcome to
Cunningham

KANSAS

 Online Bill Pay

 Employment

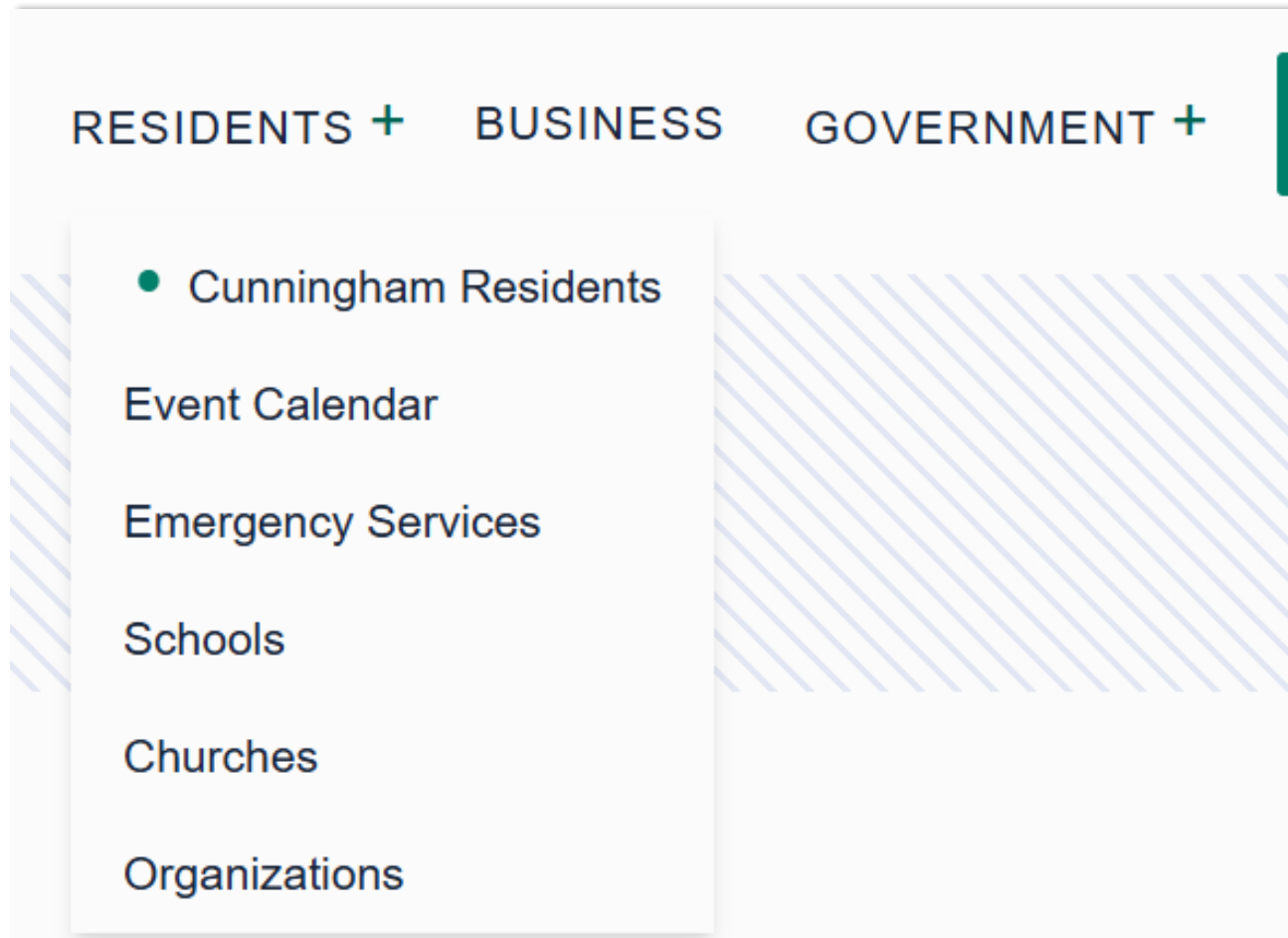
 Building Permit

 Emergency Services

- Kudos for including nearby services in Pratt and Kingman.

Question:

In March 2026, the only events are City Council meetings. Do other community events get posted here?



- Visitors had a good idea of what the community was like from the web search.
- The City Website has the same address and information for Sacred Heart Catholic Church as the Christian Church

The Churches of Cunningham welcome you!



Christian Church

125 W. First

298-3201

Pastor: Mike McGovney

Christian Church Sunday School – Sunday 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship – Sunday 10:45 a.m.

Bible Study – Sunday 6:00p.m.

Prayer Meeting – Wednesday 7:00p.m.



Sacred Heart Catholic Church

125 W. First

298-3201

Pastor: Mike McGovney

Christian Church Sunday School – Sunday 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship – Sunday 10:45 a.m.

Bible Study – Sunday 6:00p.m.

Prayer Meeting – Wednesday 7:00p.m.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064651875398>

There are weekly posts.



City of Cunningham KS

788 followers • 14 following

City Hall



Message

Follow

Search





5-Minute Impression

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

“Five-Minute” Impression



- A very clean town with some really nice homes and well-kept yards.
- Downtown had fall decorations for the fall festival.
- Sign on Hwy 54 showed the exit to Cunningham.



We saw Hilltop Manor, Skyland Grain, Catholic Church, the school, park with the baseball field, swimming pool, and playground, but no signs directing us to them or the business district.

Not all street signs were easy to read; most were.

Very Few Trees

“Five-Minute” Impression

Love’s is the main gas station just off 400





Downtown Business Area

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- The buildings were attractive and the signs easy to read.
- Two places to eat!
- There was no merchandise to purchase.



The museum's visibility to a pedestrian would be improved with an additional eye-level sign.



Visitors ate at Cozy's:

- Very busy but everyone was friendly and gave good service.
- The City Hall lady handed us menus.



- In December, outside decorations were plentiful for a different season.
- Benches evident, some trash cans.
- All very clean.





Photos by Molly Morgan,
3-6-2026



Photos by Molly Morgan, 3-6-2026

Love's and Subway are the secondary retail areas.





Industrial Parks Commercial

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Not sure if there is a specific area for new manufacturing, but we were told that seven graduates of Cunningham High were involved in a newer businesses around 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 53 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

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension



- A clinic on main street
- Hospitals and doctors are in Kingman, Pratt, Hutch, Wichita, none of which are far away.
- Consider adding a Health Care tab on City website.
 - One small town listed “Minutes of travel” to health care.



Hilltop Manor is a skilled nursing and rehab center; they also have home health and hospice care.





Housing

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- There are not many houses available to rent and fewer to buy.
- There is not a printed list of landlords, but the City Clerk was very willing to give a personal tour of what's available.







Is there housing
downtown?

Kansas

- Occupied Housing Units: 201
 - Owner Occupied: 84 % 65.3%
 - Renter Occupied: 16% 34.7%
 - Vacant Housing Units: (17%)
- Average Household Size: 2.2 2.48

The margin of error is at least 10%, be careful with housing statistics.

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data
Data Source: Census.gov

Kansas

- | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| • Average Travel Time to Work: | 18.5 mins | 19.6 mins |
| • Households without a computer device*: | 73 (4.8%) | 45k (3.8%) |
| • Households without an internet subscription: | 158 (10.6%) | 108k (9.2%) |

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

Data Source: MySidewalk; Census.gov

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

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension



- Cunningham is part of a consolidated district with pre-K to 6th grade and 7th- 12th Grade Jr/Senior High.
- The new building was completed about two years ago and the grounds and building look good.



- The district website is focused on students and teachers and very business-like.
- The site has a link to the accountability reports.
- There are things to brag about, but the reader has to find them

District Information

- BOARD OF EDUCATION ▶
- BUDGET
- NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT
- DISTRICT PLAN FOR SAFE RETURN
- 24-25 NEEDS ASSESSMENT
- EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION
- CONTACT US
- LETTER TO HOUSEHOLD

SOCIAL MEDIA

Cunningham USD...
Follow Page

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS
For children birth to 5 years old who reside in Barber, Condonville, Harper, Kingman, Kincaid, Pratt, Chantrelle & a portion of Edwards counties. Areas covered: motor, cognitive, communication, social, self-help, vision and hearing.

2025	2026
Aug 4 Med. Lodge	Jan 9 Stafford
Sept 5 Coldwater	Jan 23 Lewis
Oct 3 Pratt	Feb 13 Med. Lodge
Oct 17 Harper	Mar 6 Harper
Nov 7 Kingman	Mar 27 Pratt
Nov 12 Greensburg	Apr 13 St. John
	Apr 24 Coldwater
	May 8 Kingman
	June 1 Greensburg

Call South Central Special Education Cooperative today to schedule your FREE appointment!
620-672-7500

2025-2026 BOE Policy
January 28, 2026
BOE Policy
[read more](#)

Letter to Household
August 18, 2025
2025-2026 Letter to Household
[read more](#)

'25-26 Calendar
June 2, 2025
[read more](#)

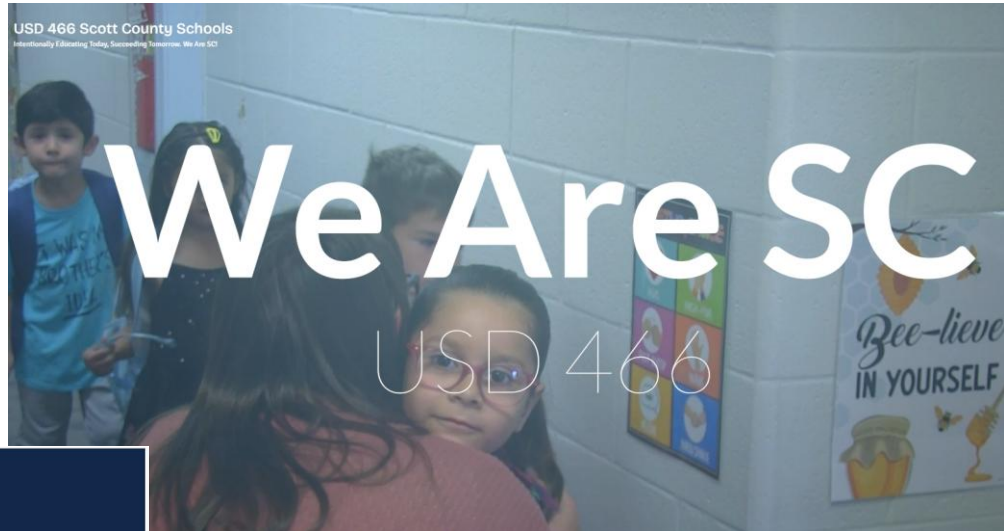
2024-2025 Calendar
May 20, 2024
[read more](#)

2024-2025 School Calendar
May 20, 2024
[read more](#)

Bond Steering committee
January 25, 2022
The Bond Steering committee meeting scheduled for tonight has been postponed. Rescheduled for Wednesday February 2nd, 7pm.
[read more](#)




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.

PS: You're great too!

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Copper
Social-Emotional Growth				
Kindergarten Readiness				
Individual Plan of Study				
Academically Prepared for Postsecondary				
Civic Engagement				
High School Graduation				
Postsecondary Success				

Retrieved from internet 3-06-26: USD332.org [Accountability Reports/Current Year](#)



Childcare

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Comments:

There is a childcare center for up to 12 years old.



Kingman County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need: 69%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343



Faith & Religion

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension



There are three churches and all are very well kept.

Visitors didn't see any faith activity.

There was "Free Bread" in December.





Photo by Molly Morgan, 3-6-2026



Civic Organizations

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Organizations include 4-H, American Legion, Lions Club, Women's Club, and PRIDE. The Lions Club maintains a playground and park and decorated city hall for the Fall Festival. PRIDE does a Christmas celebration.
- People were happy that citizens had planned the fall festival



Per City Website:

Organizations

4-H Club

The 4-H Club meets the 1st Sunday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center

American Legion

American Legion: Carter – Luce Post 114
Bernie Albers, Commander

Lions Club

Lions Club meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center
Frank McClellan, President

Pride Committee

Jerree Fitzsimmons, Chairperson

Legacy in Action

Casey Renner

Jackie Ruckle

Shae Napier



Public Infrastructure & Services

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Most of the streets were in good repair.
- Street signs were available, but not all were easy to read.
- There was no signage for downtown, swimming pool, or the library. It's small enough you can drive until you find them, but it would feel more friendly if signs directed you.





- City hall is small, but the clerk was very friendly and helpful. She drove us around to look at possible places to rent or buy when we asked.
- A list of landlords would be handy.



- Volunteer fire department.
- Police services are provided by the Kingman County Sheriff Department.

- The library is a newer building downtown. The library aide was very friendly and told us the museum was open and we should visit.
- Children's room, lots of books, and three computers for people to use.
- Very impressive!



- There is a large city park with a baseball diamond, swimming pool, and a shelter house.
- A small downtown park with a gazebo.
- Nice grassy areas.







City Parks





Recreation & Tourism

Cunningham, KS

Kansas State University Extension



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- This is the second year for fall festival. There were no signs of it other than flyers and posters at the businesses.
- They have one of the best museums I have been in.

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The museum, the swimming pool and the train depot.

Visitor's Center

- City hall serves the needs of the visitors. Everyone we met at Cozy's Pizza, the museum and the library were good ambassadors to visitors.

What would bring you back?

- I'm 90 minutes away, so probably not, but if I were in the area, I would definitely bring a friend to the museum or Cozy Pizza.

- It is a very clean and friendly town. It looks like they have lots of community involvement. The museum is very impressive and is getting a new area because of a community member.
- Their friendliness, their pride in their town, and the festival. The cleanliness of the streets and the good condition of the buildings and houses.
- Having a swimming pool.
- The way they supported the people planning activities was impressive— **I was about ready to move here.**

- Not having available housing.
- One trailer house with weeds and vehicles in the yard.

What will you remember?

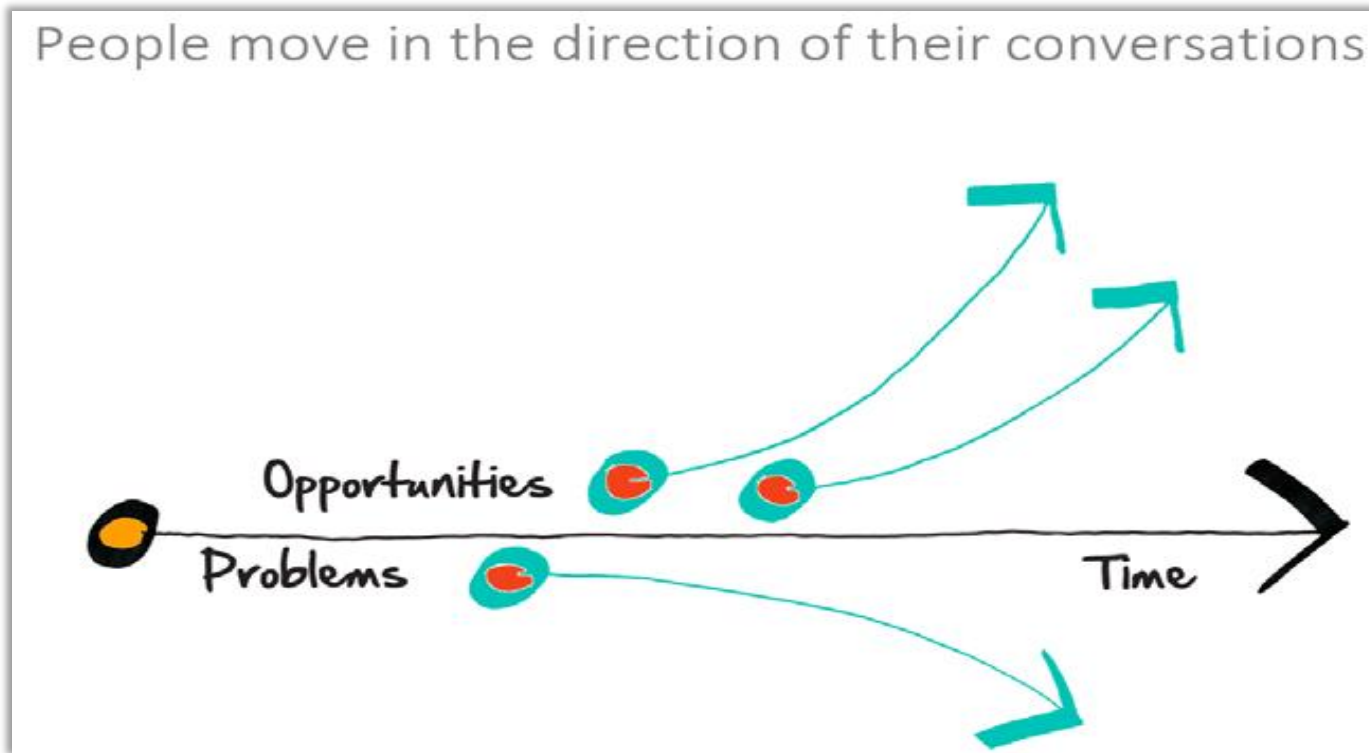
- I will remember it as a very clean and friendly town with an impressive museum.
- The ride around the community with the city hall lady. The museum director. The ladies at Cozy Pizza.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Maya Angelou

What did you hear?

What will we do?





**No one can do everything,
but everyone can do something.**

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

KSECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



K-STATE
Research and Extension

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
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity employer and provider
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/>

