

First Impressions



Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Lyons applied for First Impressions.
- Visitors were trained on what to look for during their visits and how to fill out their assessment reports.
- Three visitors visited Tuesday, September 16, 2025.
- Photos taken December 16, 2025.
- Results presented on February 4, 2026.
- Lyons 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?

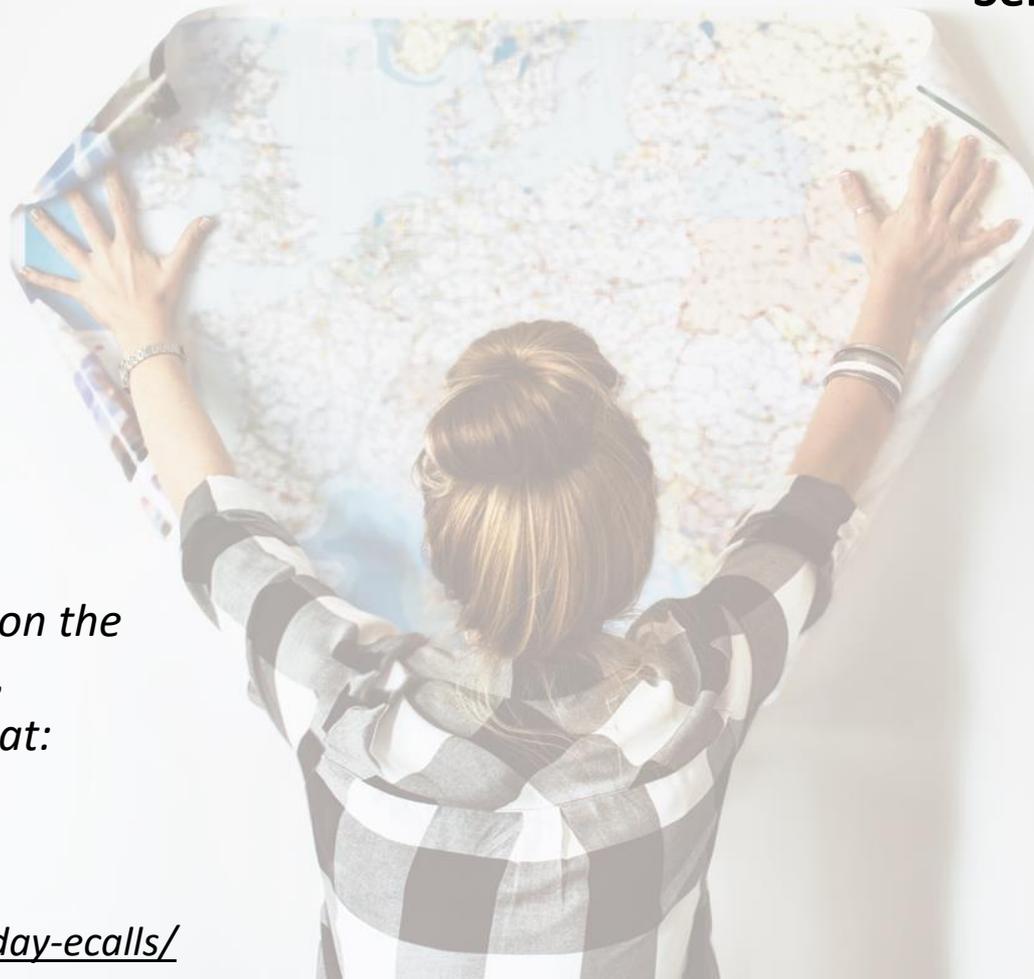
Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-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.

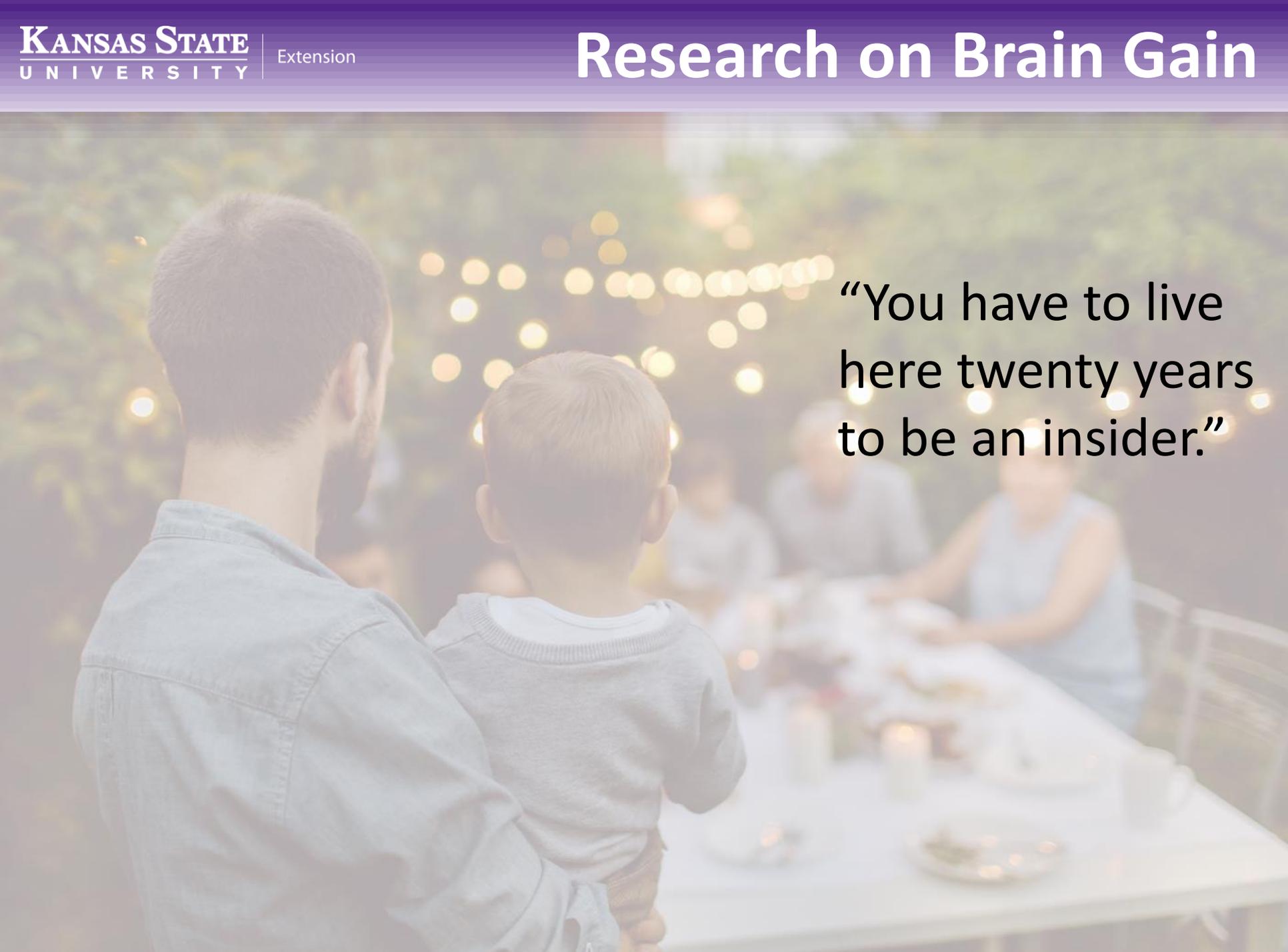
Research on Brain Gain

“In small towns everyone knows each other.”

false

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



A photograph of a man and a young boy standing together, looking towards a group of people seated at an outdoor dinner table at night. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing string lights, creating a bokeh effect in the background. The man is on the left, wearing a denim shirt, and the boy is in the center, wearing a grey sweater. The table in the foreground 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.”



*Welcome!
We're glad you're here.*

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting at an outdoor dining table at night. They are both looking towards a string of warm, glowing lights in the background. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue denim shirt, and the boy is on the right, wearing a grey sweater. The table in front of them has white plates and glasses. The background is softly blurred, showing other people and more lights.

If you bring 10 people to a 1,000-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

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- **Poverty rate** 8.3% 11.5%
(% of people below poverty line)

Race/Ethnicity

White: 70%	American Indian: 0%
Black: 2%	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 0%
Asian: 0%	Two or more races: 5%
Other: 0%	Hispanic or Latino: 21%
Not Hispanic or Latino: 79%	

**In Lyons, 13.6% of the population moved since last year.
In Kansas, 14.8%**

What would it take to attract them to Lyons?

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



Social Media & Website

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Website: Lyonsks.com

- Easy to find
- Lots of great information
- Contacts to businesses and business resources
- Resources to encourage new businesses and home improvements.



A strong website gives numerous, easy- to-find resources for visitors, residents, homeowners are grouped under Community.





5-Minute Impression

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

“Five-Minute” Impression

- The intersections are confusing, but it’s a highway.
- A few closed businesses on the highway.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Courthouse square was attractive from every direction.



A beautiful event venue on the east was noticed by everyone.



A treasure from the past!



Recommendation: Engage KSU TAB to evaluate how to take this property from “scary” to productive. (It’s FREE!)

<https://www.ksutab.org/>



Downtown Business Area

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Lots of services: finance, insurance, beauty, community foundation, Chamber of Commerce.

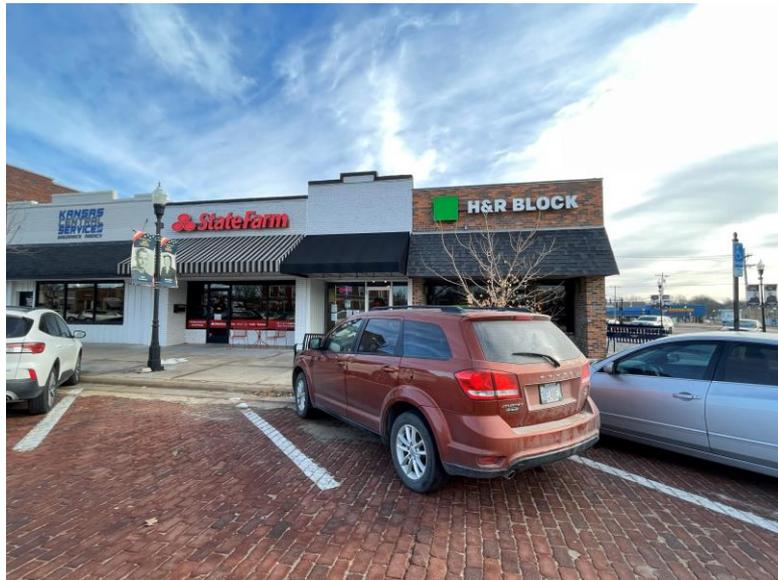


- Not much retail.

Is this true?

- Beautiful brick streets.









Opportunities for 2nd story downtown living?



Kansas Department of Commerce
[SIGNS grants](#): Due Feb 28



- **Kansas Department of Commerce**
[ROOMS grants](#):
Watch for next round in Sept.



Downtown Amenities, Parking & More

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Downtown looks active and vibrant.
- Well-defined parking lines, curbs, and crosswalks.
- Plenty of parking available



Solar phone charging station and bench near the World's Largest Saltshaker



This corner makes a strong statement about the past, present, and the future.



- Plenty of benches, art.
- Lovely streetlamps
- Well-cared for veteran's banners
- Visitors saw beautiful flowers in September

Other Retail Shopping Areas



Easy access to retail on the west side of town.



Industrial Parks Commercial



Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension



Lyons has a strong industrial presence.

Everything looks neat and clean even in the barren winter.



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

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension



An impressive assortment of health care facilities



Hospital, Medical Center, Independent Living Community, Skilled Nursing, Chiropractic, Optometrist, Orthodontist, Veterinary!



These services are well documented on the city website with descriptions, phone numbers, and locations.

Visitors were impressed with the hospital, assisted living and independent living all in one area.





Housing

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Visitors were shocked to find lower-priced homes compared to Scott City.

Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes: \$104,200.

Approximately half the Kansas median: \$203,400

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2043525-lyons-ks/> Retrieved from internet 1/23/2026



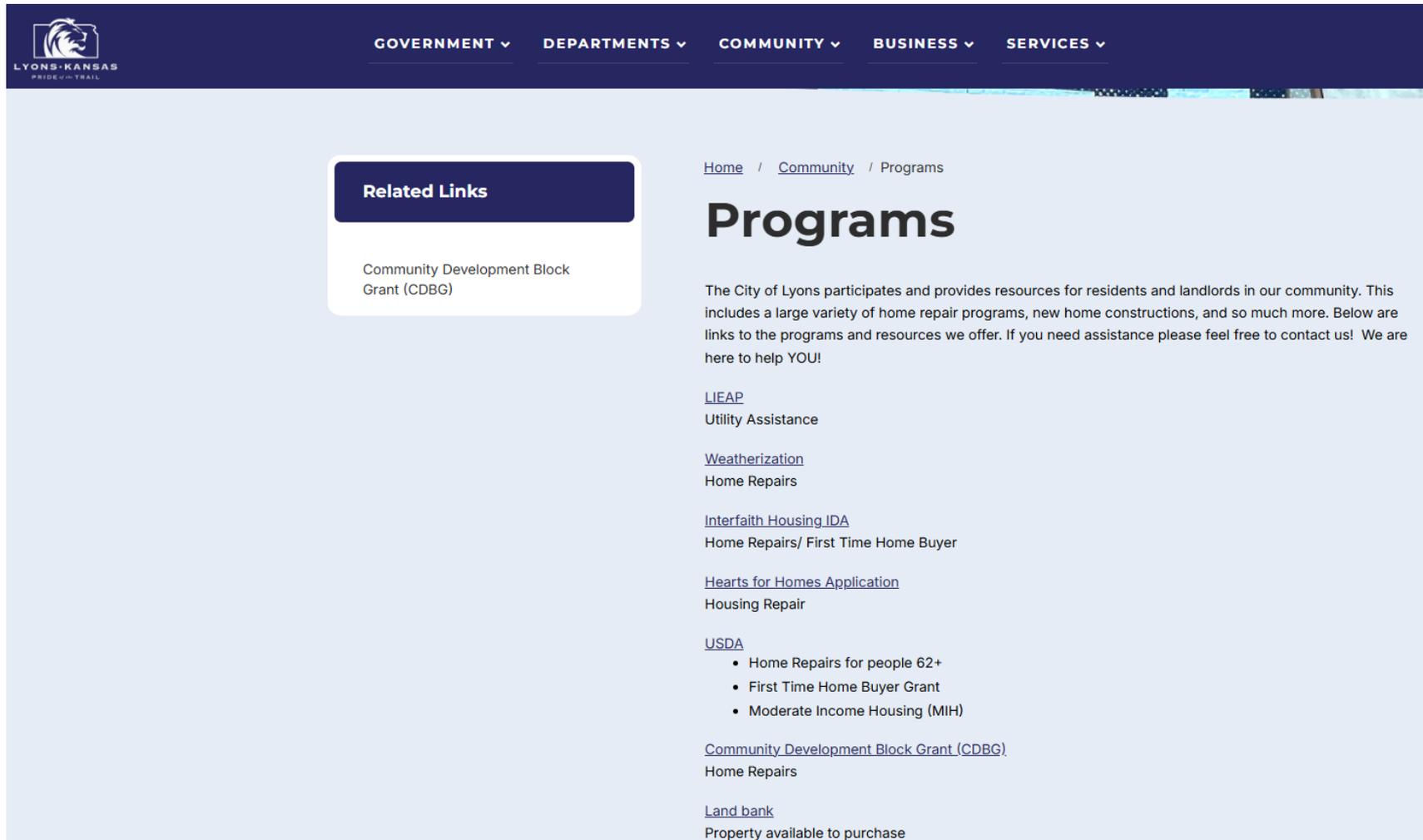
There is a range of housing, including rentals.





<https://www.lyonsks.org/residents/programs/index.php>

Lyons webpage shows PROGRAMS for residents to buy, maintain, and build a home.



Related Links

[Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#)

[Home](#) / [Community](#) / [Programs](#)

Programs

The City of Lyons participates and provides resources for residents and landlords in our community. This includes a large variety of home repair programs, new home constructions, and so much more. Below are links to the programs and resources we offer. If you need assistance please feel free to contact us! We are here to help YOU!

[LIEAP](#)
Utility Assistance

[Weatherization](#)
Home Repairs

[Interfaith Housing IDA](#)
Home Repairs/ First Time Home Buyer

[Hearts for Homes Application](#)
Housing Repair

[USDA](#)

- Home Repairs for people 62+
- First Time Home Buyer Grant
- Moderate Income Housing (MIH)

[Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#)
Home Repairs

[Land bank](#)
Property available to purchase

- Total Houses: 1,826 Kansas
- Occupied Housing Units: 1,069
- Owner Occupied: 71.5 % 65.3%
- Renter Occupied: 28.5% 34.7%
- Vacant Housing Units: 331 (18%) 9% 

 - For rent: 38
 - For sale: 82
 - Sold, not occupied: 0
 - Seasonal/recreational: 0
 - All other vacants: 211

- Average Household Size: 2.32 2.48

Kansas

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| • Average Travel Time to Work: | 18.5 mins | 19.6 mins |
| • Households without a computer device*: | 73 (4.9%) | 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

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

The Early Learning Center at Park Elementary is appealing.

Very nice schools and playgrounds





Newer junior and senior high schools are pretty.



- The school website had great information for students and parents.
- A video gives testimonials from teachers, students, and parents
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=6242688115860866&ref=sharing>

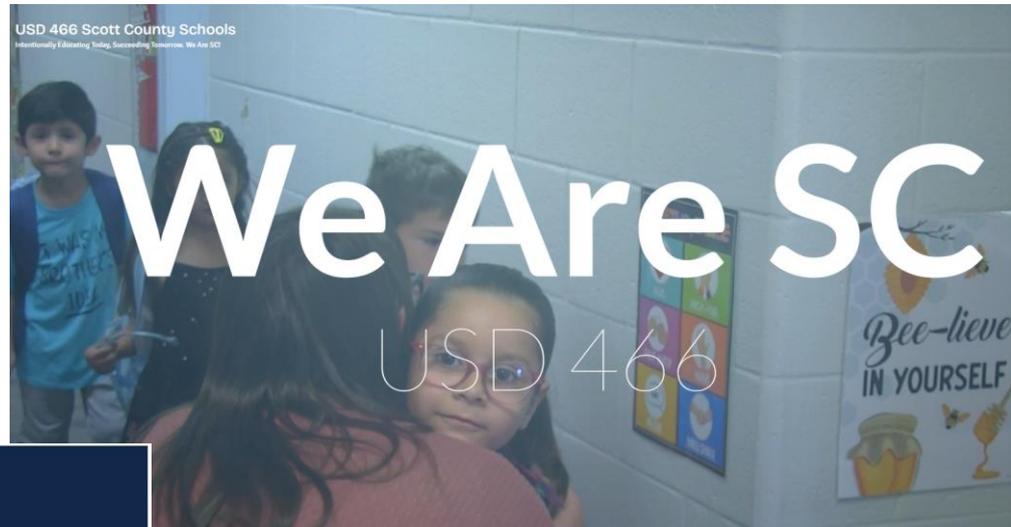
- Lots of online photos brought out the school's sense of fun and commitment to community.



LMS Lions in Lyons Day



“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

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Comments:

- Local residents told visitors there were “several child care providers.”
- We don’t expect to “see” childcare.
- Kudos to USD 405 for their preschool.

Rice County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need: 54%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343
- Rice County Childcare costs are **18%** of median income



Faith & Religion

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Visitors saw various faith communities all over town.



- All seemed well-maintained and attractive. We did not observe any faith community activity.





Civic Organizations

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

- Visitors were aware of Rotary and Kiwanis
- We saw the Rice County Senior Center



- Visitors did not observe any civic group activity.



Public Infrastructure & Services

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Public Library

An inviting library is conveniently located next to city Hall



- A weekly story time for preschoolers.
- Library Facebook page has more activities listed for K-5 and 6th -12th Grades.

City Hall

- We received prompt service at City Hall.
- Although visitors said there was City information, their reports were not explicit.
 - Landlord information?
 - Childcare information?
 - Maps, locators?
 - Opportunities to get involved?

Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Very visible Fire and Police protection



Parks were well maintained and accessible, with picnic areas, playgrounds, restrooms, and bridges for people to get across waterways.

There was even a dog park.

Parking at the recreational areas was great.



Decorated Salt Cars provide gave a nice touch around town.

Beautiful Walking Trail



- City swimming pool looked like fun with areas for socializing and swimming





We couldn't tell what this building was.

With some sleuthing, it appears to be Ironworks Fitness, from the Lyons Rec Department



Recreation & Tourism

Lyons, KS

Kansas State University Extension

Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The world's largest saltshaker!
- The Coronado Quivira Museum is an asset the visitors didn't name. The city website has a link to the museum website.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The City website has a link to Tourism:
 - The video is excellent- a teaser would help entice views



- The [Rice County Tourism](#) link leads to a site which has no apparent Rice County connection

By Staff Writer | 2025-02-15

Culinary Tourism: Exploring Cultures Through Food

Specialized food tours now account for 23% of all experiential travel bookings, with culinary tourism transforming from a niche interest into a major driver of global travel decisions as travelers seek authentic cultural connections through local cuisine.

Related searches

Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The murals and salt carts were noticed.
- Other possibilities to be expanded:
 - The Santa Fe and Chisholm Trail and Coronado history

Visitor's Center

- Visitors mentioned asking questions at the Community Foundation.



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The murals and salt carts were noted.
- Other Possibilities to expand:
 - The Santa Fe and Chisholm Trail
 - Connections to the Coronado history
- Outdoor concert area is intriguing.
- We couldn't find annual events posted on your website.



What would bring you back?

- The County Seat Bar & Grill
- Dairy Queen
- Outside seating was appealing
- The coffee house looked amazing.

- The Celebration Center is awesome.
- The town is clean and friendly.
- Nice Schools.
- There's a hospital

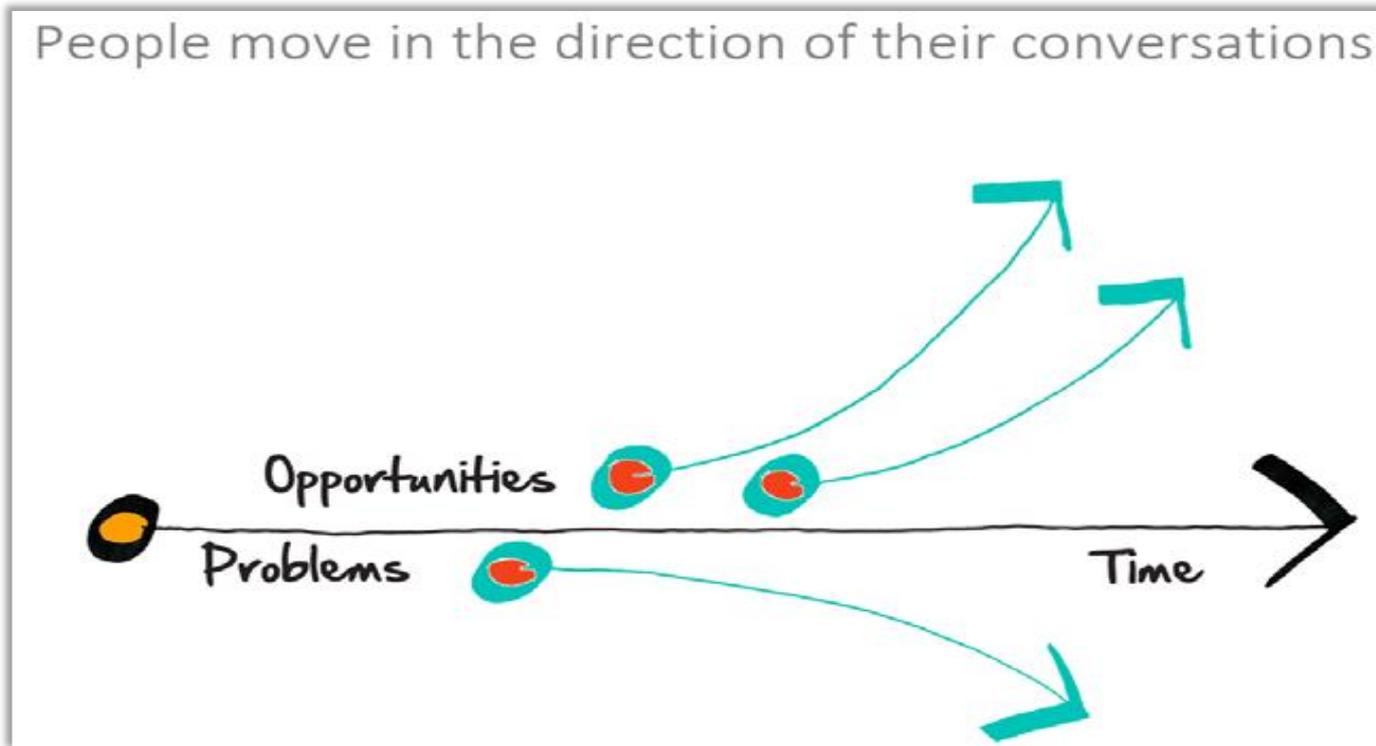
- Very little in the way of retail other than the hardware or farm and ranch needs.

What will you remember?

- So quaint and looks very nice.
- **Would be a great place to live.**

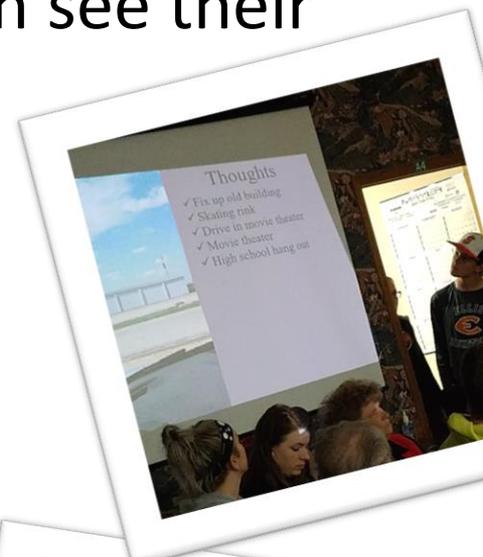
What did you hear?

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
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity employer and provider
25227 | 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/>

