

First Impressions



Glen Elder, KS

K-State Research and Extension







The Process

- Grainfield asked for First Impressions, Glen Elder agreed to be its partner; 2.5-hour drive.
- Volunteers in both communities were trained on how to conduct their visit.
- Photos of Glen Elder were taken on 2/9/2024.
- 4 visitors visited in December 2023 and January 2024.
- Results presented on 4/1/2024.
- Glen Elder uses the results for further discussion and action plans.



Why: First Impressions?

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/

• 2022 KS Certified Population: 363 | 18.4% since 2010

• 2020 U.S. Census: 362

• 2010 U.S. Census: 445

• Median household income: \$65,417 \$68,925

• High school or GED 99.3% 91.6%

• At least a B.S. Degree 14.5% 34.4%

Median Age: 42.7 years 37.6 years

• Persons 65 and Over 18.7% 17.2%

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

Knowledge forLife

(Source: Kansas Secretary of State Division of the Budget Certified Population Data 2022; Census.gov)





 Moved since Last Year (2021/2022):

5.1% 14.6%

Poverty rate

(% of people below poverty line)

12% 12%

Race/Ethnicity

White: 91.3% American Indian: 0%

Black: 0% Native Hawaiian/Other

Asian: 1.4% Pacific Islander: 0%

Other: 0% Two or more races: 3%

Not Hispanic or Latino: Hispanic or Latino:

95.6% 4.4%



Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

Source: 2022 ACS 1-year estimates https://data.census.gov)



Web Presence

Website

- Great website. Vibrant and robust, really well put together and easy to navigate.
 Worked well on mobile devices, too.
- The pictures were nice and the information was useful.
- Visitors noted a list of businesses with websites (if they had them) and phone numbers.
- They thought the history was nice to have.





Web Presence

2023 City Council Minutes

Select & Click Below to View (PDF)

- 03-04-24
- 02-05-24
- 01-02-24
- 12-04-23
- 11-06-23
- 10-02-23

Archives

2023

- 2022 2021 2020 2019 2018
- 2017 2016 2015 2014 2013
- 2012 2011 2010 2009 2008



Don't already have it... Click Here to download the FREE

Acrobat Reader which is needed to read the downloadable documents provided on this page.



- Pay My Utility Bill
- Pay a Another Type Fee

Note that upon clicking a link above, you will be taken to a secure Allpaid page.

Need Help or Have Questions? Contact

• 785-545-3322 | glcity@nckcn.com

City of Glen Elder 213 S. Market Glen Elder, KS 67447

Website

- Good to see the city minutes online.
- Great site to get all the information you need about utilities and elected officials.
- Noted there was no grocery and only one restaurant noted online. It looked like there were several places to stay.
- The content on the city
 website was an excellent
 reflection of the community.





- Seems like a nice place to live very clean and well kept. Quiet.
- Some houses have been redone to even 3-car garages. Maybe people store their boats and cars both in the same garage.
- Beautiful limestone buildings.







- Nice streets and sidewalks.
- On the drive-through, visitors wondered where residents would shop for food or go to school.
- Houses appear to be in really good condition and taken care of.
- Streets were marked well, but not a lot of directional signage to get you downtown or to other businesses.









- One visitor noted they didn't see a sign for the city at the K-24 entrance, but they did see a nice holiday sign on a pole with the city's name on it.
- Others noted welcome signs at all entrances.
- They felt the limestone signs were very nice and tied in well with the other limestone around town.



- There was a pretty messy house or business property coming in from the west that gave the wrong impression of what the town would be like.
- After further driving through town it was determined nuisance properties were not the norm.
- Overall a favorable first impression.







- Visitors appreciated the square with the playground.
- They noted the gazebo for picnics and the public restrooms and pop machines.
- All buildings in this area looked good and not run down, there just aren't many businesses to shop at.
- A restaurant and a tackle shop, which was closed (possibly seasonal?).
- City Hall was noticed just off the square.



- Not many abandoned buildings downtown, though the one on the southeast corner of the main street area would be amazing if fixed up.
- Some of the buildings had no signs on them so visitors weren't sure what was inside.
- It would have been nice to see information somewhere on the limestone building that looked like a former gas station. If it's lodging, phone numbers or contact information on how to reserve would help someone traveling through. This place should be a focus on the city website.







- Aside from the tackle shop, not really anywhere else was seen to shop.
- Visitors noted the barbecue restaurant, a senior center, the American Legion, and a post office on the square.
 Some service businesses, such as insurance, were also seen.
- It seemed like there was a lot of housing compared to the number of businesses.





 The feeling was what was there catered to lake visitors. Not many businesses downtown would bring people in from out of town on a daily basis except for the bank, insurance agency, restaurant and tackle shop.





- For customer service, some felt they got great customer service at the restaurant, others thought they weren't well received but found later that it wasn't the normal staff working at the time.
- Multiple notes of visitors wanting to buy shirts at the restaurant, but none being in stock.
- City and restaurant might benefit from advertising on the highway that there's an eating establishment in town.



Public Amenities Downtown

- Places to sit in the park as well as restrooms.
- Visitors appreciated the restrooms being open in the winter and that they were warm. A huge positive for the city.
- Plenty of trash bins around.
- Wi-fi was not noted by some, others indicated access was good.





Downtown Parking and More

- Plenty of parking on the square and you can access anywhere you'd want to go downtown from your parking spot.
- Parking slots around the square could use painted lines.
- Nice holiday lighting was observed, but because it was winter, no potted plants – would like to visit again in spring or summer.

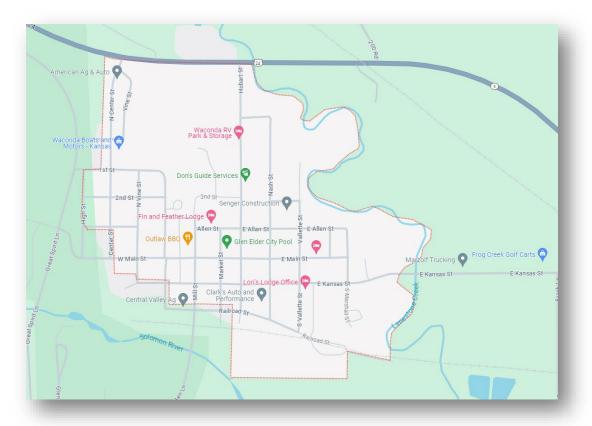


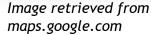




Other Retail Shopping Areas

Nothing was observed outside of downtown as potential shopping areas.









Industrial Parks/Commercial

 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

- A lot of grain elevators were mentioned. Some felt other than that, no real industrial areas existed.
- Others mentioned the old elementary school might be an opportunity for a commercial/industrial entity.
 It appears something is going on there with lots of trucks and pallets.

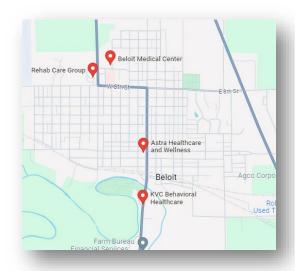






Health Care Services

- No visible healthcare seen in town or on the website.
- Visitors guessed that residents go to Beloit or Salina if they had a need.
- There also didn't look to be any long-term care or assisted living facilities.
- There was a very nice apartment complex (ranch style) observed that may be for seniors, but it wasn't readily apparent.







Housing

- Older houses and remodeled houses were seen. All different sizes from small to large.
- Housing stock looked to appeal to all income levels.
- Some properties were for sale during the visits but limited. Some noted they weren't sure what the market would be other than maybe as a rental since there weren't a lot of jobs nearby.
- Visitors felt there were a lot of AirBnBs and assumed that was for the lake-goers.
 Some were well labeled and looked charming.













- Houses that were for sale seemed affordable.
- More housing than you would think for a city this size.
- The west side had newer homes with a lake view.
- There were a few dilapidated homes, but not many.



Housing

- For rentals, the apartment complex mentioned earlier and also a school that looks to have been converted into apartments. Not any vacancy or for rent signs seen.
- Visitors couldn't tell if the high school apartment complex was still in operation. No real welcoming amenities indicate it is in use. There was a sign up front. Eventually they found information online that it was available for rent and lodging.
- Public housing facilities were noted.
- Some lodging, like the Barnwood Hideaway, but that would be for shorter term stays.
 Several other lodging units were seen with no signage.









Housing Data

Kansas

1.15m

65.3%

34.7%

124k

Occupied Housing Units: 171

Owner Occupied: 74.8%

Renter Occupied: 25.2%

Vacant Housing Units: 57

- For rent: 0

- For sale: 1

- Sold, not occupied: 0

- Seasonal/recreational: 54

- All other vacants: 2

Average Household Size: 2.1 2.48

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

Data Source: Census.gov 2020 Census & ACS 5-year Narrative Profile (Household Size)



Housing Data

Kansas

 Average Travel Time to Work:

13 mins 19.6 mins

Households without

a computer*:

33 (12%) 45k (3.8%)

Households without

an internet subscription:

50 (18.2%) 108k (9.2%)

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

Knowledge forLife

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

Data Source: Census.gov 2022 ACS 1-Year

Estimates



Resources & Grants

- 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/





Schools



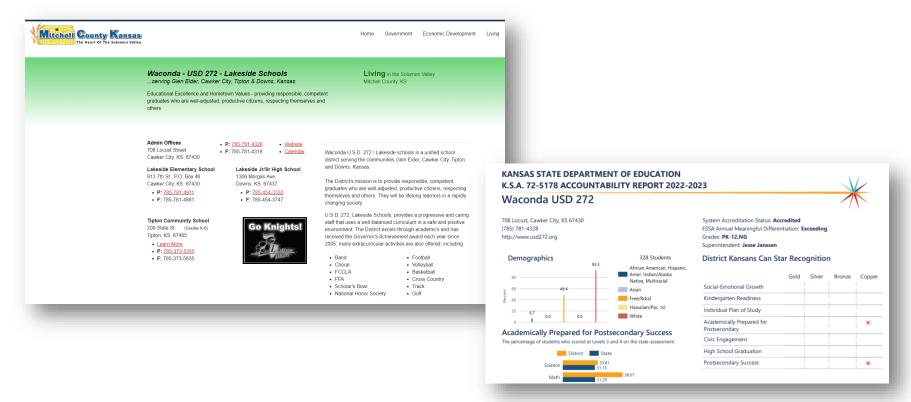


- There is a preschool in Glen Elder with a nice playground.
- No other schools in town, but it looks like a few school districts in the area where kids could attend.
- The old elementary school was noted again and visitors being curious as to what's happening there. One noted it is likely in clear violation of nuisance codes due to disrepair.



School Information

 There was information found online about the quality of education in the area and educational facilities that serve the community. The information was readily available.





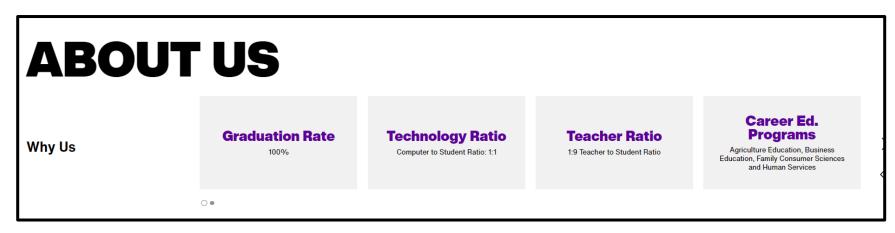


One Good Example

"Potential Students" are an audience for your website.

- This is Mound City, MO:
- "Why choose us" info on home page.









Comments:

- Some childcare service was observed while in town. It looked like it was for toddlers. Visitors didn't stop to ask about pricing or availability.
- Other visitors didn't feel childcare was visible.
- Advertisements for local childcare options were not seen during the visit.
- Some noted that daycare services were noted on the community website.

Mitchell County Data:

- Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need 63%
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
 785-823-3343





Faith/Religion

- Several (5) churches were seen in town and all were nice looking – not run down.
- One visitor wondered if any of the churches were involved with the senior center.
- A wide range of denominations.
- No obvious faith-based community services were seen.
- The little church building in the middle of the park was cute, but not sure what the purpose of it was.









- The American Legion and senior center were noted.
- The community center was also the senior center and appeared to be a nice facility.
- According to the city website, Glen Elder has a good mix of community organizations.
 - The Nutrition Center adjacent to the square seemed well utilized.
 - The "Community Club" concept, as referenced on the website, is a great asset if it is active.





- For evidence of civic organization activity in town, the park does have nice metal signs with names – possibly from donors.
- A lot of advertising for the American Legion Pancake Breakfast.
- Others didn't really see any civic organization activity during their visit.



Public Infrastructure

- The streets were all paved, which was appreciated.
- The streets did seem very narrow to visitors but were well marked.
- Sidewalks were noted.
- All homes seemed to have mowed yards and were well kept.
- No directional signage around town to help you find things.
- Not a lot of lighting or streetscaping outside of downtown.
- Several dead-end streets observed.
- Some felt the streets were a little confusing an example was visitors noted a ball diamond (saw the lights) but were unable to find out how to get to it.



City Hall

 Visitors did see the city hall and noted it was readily identifiable within the community, but either ran out of time to visit or it wasn't open during their visit.





Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Some didn't notice any police or fire stations and wondered if Glen Elder relies on these services from outside the community.
- Others found the fire department but said it wasn't immediately apparent since there was no signage. They had to use Google Maps to find it.
- City council minutes online noted a newer fire truck was recently purchased.
- While the city doesn't directly provide law enforcement, it appeared that a deputy sheriff resides in town.









Library

- The library's web presence is well done and it is an attractive facility and well marked, some mentioned.
- The hours of operation seemed appropriate for a small town.
- One visitor felt the signage could be bigger as they almost missed it.
- If printing or computers were available to patrons, visitors felt it might be nice to have a note on the door indicating that.
- Some visitors came to town when the library was not open, so were unable to go inside.







City Parks

- Other than the square, no city parks were observed.
- No walking trails, ballparks, or sports complexes were seen, other than the mention of a potential ballpark earlier after seeing the lights. It was determined by some that it was the old grade school that has the ballpark.
- The pool was seen and looked nice. It was thought to be small, but impressive and a definite benefit to town.
- The sand volleyball court was a positive observation.







City Parks

- More mentions of the positives of the park in the square.
- It would be nice to see the city
 work on a project to restore
 their mini Liberty statue.
 Maybe communities with
 similar statues in the area could
 host a tour to bring people to
 their towns.
- If there was a fitness center or similar facility in town, visitors didn't see one.





Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- No real slogan seen while in town or on the website.
- The lake would bring people in for fishing and boating, and maybe hunting.
- Some felt the welcome signs communicated the lake was nearby well, others thought if it wasn't for the boat sales and tackle shop, it wouldn't have been apparent the lake was close.
- Definitely impressed by the swimming pool.
- The only event that would be of interest to residents and visitors is probably the Pancake Breakfast.



Image retrieved from Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The lake, lots of campgrounds, lodges, and small hotels within driving distance. The lake is likely a significant source of revenue for the community.
- Spots for RVs.
- The world's largest ball of twine nearby.
- The beautiful limestone buildings.









Visitor's Center

- No visitor's center or chamber of commerce seen.
- Visitors felt with city hall being just off the square that it might serve that purpose.
- Some saw a visitor information center while leaving town but were unable to turn around once they noticed it. No signs on the highway indicated it was there – maybe an opportunity to market it more. There was note of a visitor center for the lake just west of town that was closed for the season.







What would bring you back?

- The lake during warmer weather.
- The barbecue restaurant was good but wouldn't travel to town just for that specifically.
- The Castle Lodge was an attractive building with charm.
- Other than the lake, not much would pull visitors off the highway.





Most Positive Observations

- Clean and tidy.
- Some areas that could be built on and it looked like there was some new construction happening.
- Great town if you're ok with driving for groceries, hardware, etc.
- The limestone buildings and accents. The limestone gas station turned into a house or maybe lodging.
- The lake is beautiful and there are good views from town.
- Most houses were well kept.





Most Positive Observations

- A lot of lodging bringing in visitors to support the two or three businesses.
- The square downtown.
- The swimming pool.
- Nice to have a restaurant here.
- Restrooms available.
- Peaceful town.
- Well maintained streets properly maintained public infrastructure and neighborhoods.
- City-owned and operated car wash? Great concept!



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- No grocery or hardware stores, but Beloit is close.
- No schools. Maybe this is more of a bedroom community.
- Not enough businesses or progress towards expanding.
- No advertising along the highway for what's available including the giant bobber, restaurant, and restrooms.
- No apparent locations for businesses to come to town.
- No list of available properties to rent or buy.
- The businesses that were here likely wouldn't be a big draw for people to come to town.
- Like any rural community, housing and education issues seem to be the largest obstacle.



6 Months from Now

What will you remember?

- Positive feeling will return for fishing possibly.
- The Castle Lodge such a cool and charming place.
- The giant bobber
- The clever children's menu at the restaurant.
- The swimming pool.
- The restrooms.
- The welcome signs.
- The potential of the dilapidated corner building.
- Would love it here if looking for a quiet life. Great town!
- Glen Elder should be proud!
- The town square.
- The former elementary school and its current condition.



Dollars Spent During Visits

 Visitors spent the following amounts individually while in town: \$20, \$15, \$35, \$20 for a total of = \$100

No one can do everything,

but everyone can do something.





Follow Up

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 me if you need resources or have questions:

Jan Steen

Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

785.532.5840

jmsteen@ksu.edu



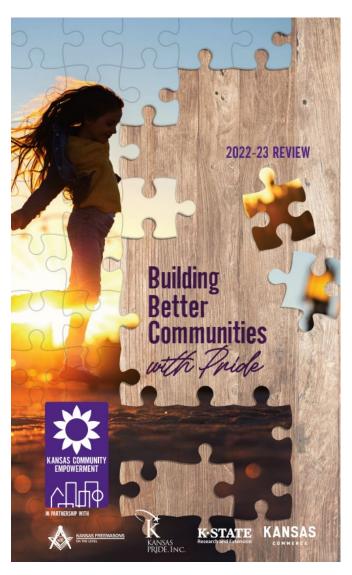


KSRE Resources

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.





KSRE Resources

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















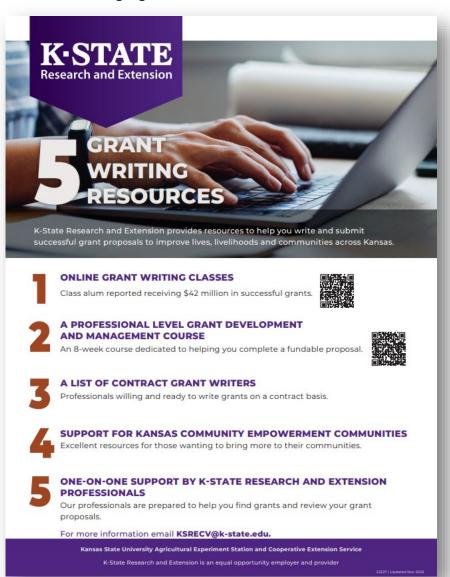
KSRE Resources

Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.









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



Remote Work

- 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





Remote Work Certification

- 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 will we do?

