

NCRPC News

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Communities Plan Ahead for Project Needs

The benefit of doing preliminary planning for future project needs has potential for huge payoff for communities.

There are many ways communities can begin planning and budgeting for short and long-term needs. Starting early and gaining community support is always beneficial.

A local group of citizens in Lincoln are familiar with the benefit of doing just that. The Lincoln Community Improvement Committee (LCIC) is composed of seven residents of Lincoln County. It originally formed at the request of one interested citizen to brainstorm ideas of what to do with a vacant building after a business moved. That building sold to another business, but LCIC member Lisa Feldkamp says that didn't stop their group.

"We still had our desire to improve Lincoln, so we kept meeting to discuss what we could do," Feldkamp says.

Eventually the goal became having a community/wellness center. After reviewing possible funding sources, the community set its sights on applying for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) KAN STEP Project. First, it had to survey its residents to determine eligibility that the project would benefit at least 51% low- and moderate-income (LMI) individuals.

Mandy Fincham, NCRPC Community Development Specialist, says the LCIC successfully contacted many residents quickly.

"Out of 567 surveys sent, they had 455 returned," Fincham says. "Their committee did an excellent job."

Feldkamp says the LCIC worked with the City of Lincoln to include the LMI survey in a city bill mailing. After 30 days, the committee began going door-to-door to collect surveys. It also included a survey to help gauge what residents would like to see in the community and in a proposed building.

"One evening there was six of us out around town knocking on doors," Feldkamp says.

The City of Lincoln Center was able to prove its LMI status and is now eligible to apply for any CDBG funds to help improve the city such as the community center, housing, or water/sewer needs.

"If initial planning is complete, it creates an opportunity for a community to move quickly on an application."
— Deb Ohlde

The Kansas CDBG Program, administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce, has determined that surveys will be good until the next HUD census data is released unless the community experiences significant demographic or economic changes.

The City of Belleville also has chosen to plan for the future by completing a LMI survey, even without a project in mind.

Russ Piroutek, Belleville City Clerk, says the city has had CDBG projects in the past. As a result, it understands the program and benefits and wanted to

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About Us

Our Mission:

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

Our Vision:

By 2024, communities in rural Kansas will favor choices that embrace innovation, increase prosperity and demonstrate resilience.

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Communities Have Opportunities to Better Themselves This Year

In this New Year 2015, fuel prices are amazingly low and many commodity values are moderating while borrowing rates remain at all time minimal levels... for now. Are you pondering future opportunities? How are you showing concern for your community and local area well being? Make an effort to constructively engage your legislators. It will likely be a tough session for those in less affluent areas.

To help tackle issues in 2015, the North Central Regional Planning Commission will be going beyond its basic program objectives to bring innovative Strategic Doing techniques to the region via professional training authored by Purdue University. Part of the intent is taking on projects in your rural environs with civic discourse and with a means of achieving early and



long-term successes. The NCRPC wants to engage communities in such practices to help places to better themselves so they remain viable for many more decades.

Another effort of NCRPC will be to host a workshop on capital improvement planning so cities, townships, districts and counties can be more effective in budget preparation and planning.

As most of you are aware, rural population has been declining for decades. A book I recently read again is [Hollowing Out the Middle](#). The authors came from afar to study small town life for much of a year to better understand why the best and brightest are in many cases not encouraged to return to less urban places.

No county in this continent retains all of its young adults. However, a small

portion of rural America is seeing in-migration. Rural Kansas counties such as Ford and Ellsworth are experiencing “brain gains” as newcomers less than 49 years of age move in. St. James, Minnesota is another example of the exception to the norm. Employers are embracing young persons at elementary age levels and applauding them as they mature and gain capacity. Vibrancy is resulting. Some investments occur to send youth away to gain knowledge and practice it wherever they may. Other funding support has strings attached to incentivize persons back after they have been aided.

Another question comes to mind. Are we involving in key community decisions those who do remain as loyalists in our less populated villages? I have witnessed efforts at this in new community evaluations underway in Jewell and Lincoln Counties. The NCRPC and affiliate NCKCN are willing to invest dollars and time to help with similar ventures across the region. ■

Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 26, 2015

NCRPC Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Main Office, 2 p.m.

Remaining FY 2015 CDBG Deadlines

KAN STEP — Feb. 16, 2015

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

Kanstarter Training
Webster Conference Center, Salina
2:15-4:15 p.m.

For more information, contact the [Kansas Sampler Foundation](#)

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Strategic Doing Workshop
Life's Finer Moments Lodge, Clay Center
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
For more information, contact the NCRPC

Thursday, March 26, 2015

NCRPC Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Main Office, 2 p.m.

Cyr Retires from Organization After 34 Years

Long-time NCRPC staff member, John Cyr, retired in December.

Cyr began with the organization in 1980 and spent 22 years as its Executive Director before stepping down from that role in April 2008. Until recently, he worked part-time as Special Projects Director where he spent a great deal of time working with the six Regional Homeland Security Councils in Kansas for which the NCRPC serves as fiscal agent.



John Cyr

He also serves as Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Regional Development Organizations (KARDO) and plans to continue in that role.

Cyr's contributions to the NCRPC, region and state are numerous.

“In these last six years I have seen John go from advocating local collaborations to be successful with nurturing regional team-building for better disaster response preparation in much of Kansas,” Doug McKinney, NCRPC Executive Director, says.

Deb Ohlde, NCRPC Assistant Director, says she appreciates the challenging conversations with John and the fact that he is forward thinking.

“For example, he took a chance very early on with some alternate staffing ideas that are now more commonplace,” Ohlde says.

For a more in-depth look at some highlights of Cyr's legacy, visit www.ncrpc.org/news/newsletters/2008/0804.pdf. ■

Two Board Members Thanked for Service



Outgoing NCRPC Board members were recently recognized for their years of service to the organization. Pictured above is Johnita Crawford (left) receiving a certificate from Board President Tim Vandall (right). Crawford served on the NCRPC Board as a representative of



Cloud County since 2009. Also pictured above is Frank Rytych (left) receiving a certificate from Vandall (right). Rytych has served on the NCRPC Board as a representative of Republic County since 2007. We thank these individuals for their time and dedication to serving NC Kansas.

NCRPC to Host Strategic Doing Workshop in March

Teaching community leaders and business persons to form swift collaborations that will result in innovative solutions will be the topic of a Strategic Doing workshop on March 11 at 10 a.m. at the Life's Finer Moments Lodge near Clay Center. The session will end around 3 p.m.

The Strategic Doing framework, designed by the Purdue Center for Regional Development, is intended to help translate thinking into action when implementing strategy. The March 11 training will be lead by Purdue University.

The workshop will be repeated in various regions around the state, but this is the only one in North Central Kansas. The Kansas Association of Regional Development Organizations (KARDO) is sponsoring the workshops.

For more information on the Strategic Doing concept, visit www.pcrd.purdue.edu/signature-programs/strategic-doing.php. For more information or to reserve a spot, contact the NCRPC. ■

Board Revises Mission, Vision Statements

New NCRPC Mission and Vision statements were approved at the December board meeting. The prior Mission and Vision statements had been guiding the organization for at least the last decade. The revised statements are on page 1.

Extensive collaboration took place to arrive at the revised Mission and Vision, including board and staff input and training from [BoardSource](#). ■

Planning

(Continued from Page 1)

survey early to have that done and verify eligibility.

Initially the city mailed a letter with the survey, but eventually went door-to-door to get the remaining responses with many city employees getting involved. The city council added an incentive for completing the survey by offering the chance for one customer to win one month of paid utilities.

“The employees were great and they knew the value of it too since they’re the ones going out and working on waterlines or sewer or other things that might possibly have a need for funding in the future,” Piroutek says.

Deb Ohlde, NCRPC Assistant Director, says completing an LMI survey early allows a community to determine if CDBG funding is a possibility for them and it saves a community from trying to complete a survey while at the same time working on project planning details.

“If initial planning is complete, it creates an opportunity for a community to move quickly on an application,” Ohlde says.

For communities with housing needs, completing a Housing

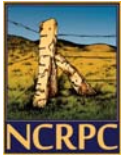
Assessment Tool (HAT) early in the planning process is recommended.

Carol Torkelson, NCRPC Housing Director, says the HAT can help a community identify its greatest housing needs and seek funding.

“It’s best to start early and form a committee to gather the information and talk to the different community stakeholders,” Torkelson says.

Completion of the HAT is a requirement for submittal of a CDBG housing application. Another option for communities considering a housing project is to participate in a Housing Interagency Advisory Committee (HIAC) meeting. While a HIAC meeting is not required, it is figured into the points awarded. The HIAC has representation from agencies involved in the financing of housing. It meets monthly from March through July and has limited availability each month.

For staff assistance with project planning, contact the NCRPC. For more information on these programs, visit www.kansascommerce.com/cdbg and click on “Annual Competitive Round.” The HAT is listed under “Applications” and the LMI Sample Survey is listed under “Surveys.” ■



North Central
Regional Planning Commission

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Blue Rapids Business Completes Construction, Expansion Project

Sharp Manufacturing, LLC completed an expansion project in 2014 to help meet its increased production demands. The business manufactures and sells more than 20 different sizes and models of enclosed trailers.

The Blue Rapids company began in 2003 and was owned by Rob Swearingen and Don Stryker. Since 2012, Rob and Karen Swearingen have been the sole owners and both work in the business full-time.

The enclosed trailers are primarily sold through a 40-plus dealer network throughout the Midwest. To streamline the production process and create increased work flow efficiencies, the business recently constructed a 15,840 square foot building in the Blue Rapids Industrial Park. The new building serves as the manufacturing finishing

area, office, and storage. The manufacturing had previously been completed in three buildings in downtown Blue Rapids. The welding operation will continue in the downtown locations.

This project was made possible with funding from the Citizens State Bank of Marysville, NCKCN-Four Rivers Loan Pool, NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund, NCKCN-NCK Rural Business Development Initiative Loan Program, StartUp Kansas, and investment by the owners.

For more information about the financing programs used contact



Sharp Manufacturing, LLC owners Rob and Karen Swearingen are pictured in front of a trailer at their new facility located at 1201 Industrial Way in the Blue Rapids Industrial Park.

Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director, at 785-738-2218 or dpeters@nckcn.com. To learn more about the business, visit www.sharpmanufacturing.com. ■