

# NCRPC NEWS

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www.ncrpc.org

## ROZ Program Benefits Rural Counties

The Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZ) Program, which provides financial incentive for a highly skilled and educated workforce in designated counties, has benefitted several individuals and employers in Kansas.

First created in 2011 to help reverse population loss, the ROZ Program now includes 77 Kansas counties that have been authorized to offer qualified individuals a 100 percent state income tax waiver for up to five years and repayment of up to \$3,000 per year (\$15,000 maximum) in outstanding student loans. The Kansas Department of Commerce, in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Revenue, administers the ROZ program.

The student loan repayment portion of the program is a county-state partnership, with each contributing half of the participant's student loan repayment each year. Counties must opt in to participate.

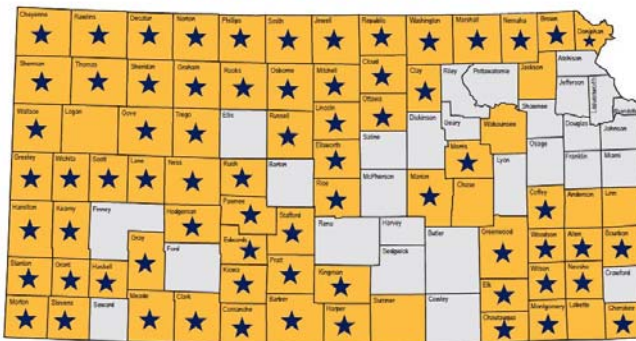
To be eligible for the state income tax waiver, individuals must have lived outside the state for at least the past five years prior to moving to a ROZ county and have Kansas source income of less than \$10,000 per year over the past five years.

The program also allows employers to sponsor ROZ applicants,

something that Heather Hartman, Mitchell County Community Development Director, says has helped further the program's reach.

"Mitchell County sponsored two applicants from the beginning and then increased it to six," Hartman says. "We have an additional nine that are employer sponsored and that has really grown in the past year."

### Kansas RURAL OPPORTUNITY ZONES



★ County is also participating in student loan program.

Map Provided Courtesy of Kansas Department of Commerce

Mallory Wittstruck, Director of Communications at Farmway Co-op, Inc., is one of the ROZ participants from Mitchell County.

"It's a great program to bring people into our rural communities and help them get established," Wittstruck says.

Sara Reiter, a ROZ participant from Jewell County and Enrolled Agent at Paul R. Wilson CPA in Mankato, agrees the program helps people get established more quickly.

(See ROZ, page 3)

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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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.

### Contact Us

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### Visit Us on the Web

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# Capital Improvement Planning Beneficial for Communities

A capital improvement plan (CIP) helps a local government take a critical look at itself, identify what is good, what could be improved and what opportunities for new projects exist. The CIP provides several benefits to local communities and counties. Those without a CIP may proceed with no solid priorities or direction for community development and community betterment.

Why have a CIP? The CIP process takes time but it offers a good return on the investment and a wealth of benefits. A capital improvement plan:

**1 Provides a framework for decisions about area growth and development.** Planning for water, sewer, transportation, public safety and recreation are as important to those who develop residential, commercial and industrial tracts as they are to public officials who regulate land use.

**2 Helps preserve existing property values.** A well-maintained infrastructure directly affects neighborhood property values and indirectly influences owners to better maintain their private property.

**3 Acts as an effective administrative tool.** It can help



Doug McKinney has been NCRPC Executive Director since 2008.

selected and appointed officials make more productive use of their time. It provides a “window” into the future, helps prevent surprises and reduces the time necessary for crisis management. It also provides a control

mechanism for judging departmental spending requests.

**4 Serves as a community education tool.** Citizens who are informed about a community’s overall needs and priorities for improvement can more readily understand why particular projects are implemented and others are postponed.

**5 Enhances opportunities for outside financial assistance.** The existence of a plan affords time to explore funding alternatives from state, federal and local sources. These sources and bond underwriters look more favorably on a community with a strategy for its capital investments.

**6 Promotes a more efficient government operation.** Coordination of capital projects can reduce scheduling problems and conflicts among several projects, thereby saving time and money. As many of you know, working on water lines in coordination with street surfacing saves time and overall expense if done simultaneously.

**7 Helps distribute costs more equitably over a longer period of time.** This avoids the need to impose a “crisis” rate and tax increases.

**8 Focuses community attention on priority goals, needs and capabilities.** A project may seem very desirable when considered independently; however, when included in a comprehensive plan in which it competes with other projects for limited funding, it may appear less important.

North Central Regional Planning Commission will be finishing a template and guidebook in 2016 to assist your community with Capital Improvement Planning. Stay tuned for more information on this and a workshop with an expert in this arena in the region in early 2016. ■

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, December 3, 2015**  
**Thursday, January 28, 2016**  
NCRPC Executive Board Meetings  
Beloit Office, 2 p.m.

**Holiday Reduced Office Hours**  
The NCRPC offices will close November 26-27 and at noon on December 24. Normal business hours will resume Monday, January 4, 2016.

**February 16, 2016**  
Final FY 2016 [CDBG KAN STEP](#)  
Applications Due

**For more funding resources:**  
[www.ncrpc.org/funding](http://www.ncrpc.org/funding)

## Executive Board Welcomes Moore

Scott Moore recently joined the NCRPC Executive Board of Directors after being named City Administrator for the City of Ellsworth. He previously served on the board from 1998-2005 when he had the same position in Ellsworth.

Moore has extensive experience in city government and has been Assistant City Manager in Wichita and City Manager in Peoria, Illinois, and Glenn Heights and Poteet, Texas. In addition, he was a budget analyst for the City of Austin. He has a bachelor’s degree from Texas State



University and a Master of Public Administration degree from Wichita State University. In his spare time, Scott enjoys spending time with his wife, Tammy, and other family members and coaching youth sports. He looks forward to becoming involved again both locally and regionally. ■

University and a Master of Public Administration degree from Wichita State University.

In his spare time, Scott

### (Continued from page 1)

“It allows you to put resources toward other expenses,” Reiter says.

Paul Wilson sponsors Reiter’s participation in the program. Wilson says it is an incentive employers can offer that does not cost a lot.

“These are the sorts of carrots you can offer young people who are now coming out of school with a significant amount of debt,” Wilson says. “They can really get established in the five-year time period.”

Luke Mahin, Republic County Economic Development Director, says the program has grown in his county. Republic County began by sponsoring applicants with donations. Now the Republic County Hospital sponsors two applicants as well.

“The employers that have used this program as a recruiting and retention tool have been healthcare and education,” Mahin says.

This mirrors the statewide data the Department of Commerce presented to the Legislature in February 2015. According to that report, education (29 percent) and healthcare (23 percent) are the leading professions

among ROZ applicants. Professional services (13 percent) and agriculture (7 percent) are also common. The remaining applicants are divided among the categories of Other, Government and Retail.

Matthew Keith, Department of Commerce Marketing Executive, says more than 1,200 ROZ applications have been approved as of June 30. The Legislature extended the program during the 2015 session so it will now sunset on January 1, 2022.

Mahin says the program is beneficial for rural counties.

“It has allowed many graduates the ability to afford home loans rather than renting because it frees up money that would have been spent on student loan debt. Also we’ve seen graduates invest more money into a business,” Mahin says. “Essentially we look at it as an economic catalyst for our county while providing incentives for a highly skilled and educated workforce.”

For more information about the ROZ program, visit the website at [www.kansascommerce.com/ruralopportunityzones](http://www.kansascommerce.com/ruralopportunityzones). ■

## Weatherization Program a Success for Salina Home

Improvements to a Salina home, which were completed in July 2014, have made a big difference in the utility bills for one resident.

With the help of the Weatherization Assistance Program, the home has received air sealing,



attic insulation, a carbon

monoxide detector, and a new high-efficiency forced air furnace.

The original furnace worked, but the home was primarily heated with a woodstove because the homeowner was afraid to use the old and very noisy furnace. The old furnace was occasionally used, but only for a few minutes at a time during the coldest times of the year.

Now utility usage — even running the furnace 100 percent — is less than when the furnace ran only three to four hours per week. A side benefit has been a great improvement in the comfort of one bedroom that was always colder or hotter than the rest of the home. The heating contractor discovered collapsed ductwork and repaired it.

The NCRPC administers the Weatherization Assistance Program in 35 Kansas counties. For more information about the program, visit the website at [www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/weatherization/](http://www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/weatherization/). For energy efficiency tips, see the article on the left. ■

Utility bills for this Salina home have decreased.

## Boost Energy Efficiency in Cold Months



According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heating and cooling account for about 48% of the energy use in a typical U.S. home. While not an exhaustive list, below are some tips to help prepare for the cold weather months ahead.

- In winter months, open your curtains during the day to naturally heat your home and close them at night to keep the heat inside.
- Use a programmable thermostat to set your heater back while you are away or asleep.
- Consider air sealing your home and adding insulation to your walls and attic to help retain your home’s heat. Up to 25 percent of your home’s heat is lost through small cracks and holes throughout your home.
- Set your ceiling fan to spin clockwise to blow the rising hot air down.
- Weather strip around doors and windows to keep warm air from escaping. *Source: Energy Saver ([www.energy.gov/energysaver](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver))*



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# New Beloit Business Offers Specialty Beverages, Local Foods

Owning a business had always been a dream for Beloit residents B and Mandy Fincham. That dream came true with the opening of Kettle in downtown Beloit in June.

Kettle is a coffee bar and restaurant that also features a variety of craft beers and wine. The food is made from scratch with as many locally grown ingredients used as possible. A popular feature is a grilled cheese special of the week. In addition, Kettle offers promotions and entertainment including live music two to three times per month.

The Fincham's did extensive research to get ideas for what they wanted Kettle to be and finding local products and beverages.

"It's important to us to buy and promote local, whether that is

Mitchell County, our north central region or the State of Kansas," Mandy says.



Kettle has created three full-time and eight part-time jobs.

Mandy, who previously worked at the NCRPC, manages the day-to-day operations of the business. B is an elementary teacher and works in the business in the evenings, weekends and summers.

This project was made possible with funding from Central National Bank, the NCKCN-Four Rivers Loan Fund, and investment by the owners.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business



Courtesy Photo

Kettle is located at 204 S. Mill Street in Beloit. Finance Director, at 785-738-2218 or by email at [dpeters@nckcn.com](mailto:dpeters@nckcn.com).

For more about the business, visit [www.kettlebeloit.com](http://www.kettlebeloit.com) or find them on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. ■