



NCRPC NEWS

A publication of the North Central Regional Planning Commission

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www.ncrpc.org

Mankato Takes Innovative Approach to Address Community's Housing Needs

Creative thinking has helped one community renovate four downtown loft apartments and create more available rental units.

A four-person team of volunteers in Mankato began meeting to complete a Housing Assessment Tool (HAT) in summer 2012.

“One thing that the HAT made clear was that Mankato needed to increase its rental capacity, so we tried to find a solution to help solve that need,” Rick Diamond, President of the State Exchange Bank in Mankato and HAT committee member, says.

The community ultimately applied for and received \$400,000 in funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in early 2013. With the help of that funding, four downtown loft apartments have been rehabilitated, 9 homes have been rehabilitated and 11 dilapidated houses have been demolished.

Rehabilitation of the loft apartments, located at 101-107 N. Commercial Street over three commercial buildings, became the cornerstone of the community's housing project application. The

project utilized available empty space in the community and transformed it into a useful housing asset.

Paul and Luann Wilson purchased the downtown property in 2004. The four existing apartments had been vacant since that time because they required significant improvements.

“Until this project came along, I didn't see how we could fix the apartments up the way they needed to be, so we never rented them out,” Wilson says.



Rehabilitation of four loft apartments located at 101-107 N. Commercial Street in Mankato is now complete.

The Wilson's committed the 25% leverage to the project that the CDBG program requires of its rental units and ended up spending well beyond that minimum amount.

“The key for successfully completing the creative portion of this project was the landlord

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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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Locals Encouraged to Advocate for Community Needs

Governing bodies, board members and local decision-makers in communities and organizations, you are the folks who must speak out and communicate concerns and advocacy with larger policy-setters such as legislators and federally elected officials. Those law-makers are keen on information and knowledge from community leaders and constituents who have their feet on the ground in rural America.

The motivations behind local board members and governing officials are viewed much differently than that of paid lobbyists or even legislative staff. When an unpaid or low-paid volunteer board leader takes time to speak with them about an issue of community importance, they seem to pay attention. You (we) have more influence than you might realize.



Doug McKinney has been NCRPC Executive Director since 2008.

Per Form 990 and local government data sources, there are more than 19.5 million board members in the United States. That means communities have highly connected and potentially influential leaders on a range of topics.

Networks make a difference. You have those, more extensive than you might think. All of us who serve on governing bodies at various levels have the power to partner with 'big' decision-makers to align priorities with what our communities need.

Community leaders are a powerful and influential group of individuals who are committed to a few areas of focus. But, when teamed with their neighbors, they have the opportunity to leverage the constructive potential of their broader reaching leadership, and to expand it outside of the small meeting room.

Tactfully communicate with enthusiasm and transparency about what your leadership place is in this world and why your efforts mean something not only to your customer base but to those who are making grand decisions that can have an impact on your charge. North Central Regional Planning Commission Executive Board members did just that with the recent privilege of engaging several legislative officials at its August board meeting. We encourage you to do the same. ■

Housing

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involvement," Carol Torkelson, NCRPC Housing Director, says. "They were willing to contribute more than the required 25% match in order to do the work necessary to complete the units and have them available for rent."

Another landlord also participated in the project and contributed the required leverage for rehabilitation work done on a single family home rental unit.

The major work that went into the loft rehabilitation included adding insulation, installing central heat and air, restoring the ceilings back to the original 12-foot height, and restoring the south windows back to their original height. The Wilson's had recently replaced the roof. In addition, Paul refinished the original hardwood floors and had all new plumbing fixtures installed. The

project was completed in August and two of the four units are rented.

"We are very pleased with how the building turned out and it should help with the need for rentals in the community as well," Wilson says. "People have to have a long term view and be willing to invest to make a project like this work."

The CDBG housing program encourages creative thinking to solve community housing needs. In the past, the maximum grant amount a community could apply for was \$400,000. That has changed.

"Currently the maximum is \$300,000 unless there is something creative proposed," Torkelson says.

Diamond says the housing project as a whole has been beneficial for Mankato and its residents.

"It has improved the community's appearance, it has increased the rental



The newly renovated downtown loft apartments in Mankato feature original hardwood floors and 12-foot ceilings.

capacity, and it has helped individuals and families make necessary improvements to their homes," Diamond says. ■

CDBG Special Round Projects Funded

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce, offered a special round of funding in June.

Several communities from the region applied and were awarded funds that will help complete a variety of improvement projects.

The City of Assaria will receive \$186,098 for playground and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$18,610.

The City of Barnes will receive \$280,000 for sidewalk and park improvements. The city will contribute a match \$28,000.

The City of Belleville will receive \$350,000 for sidewalk and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$45,000.

The City of Chapman will receive \$200,000 for sidewalk improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$20,000.

The City of Frankfort will receive \$291,227 for storm shelter construction and sidewalk and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$29,123.

The City of Glen Elder will receive \$343,164 for sidewalk improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$34,316.

The City of Green will receive \$250,000 for sidewalk and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$25,590.

The City of Gypsum will receive \$176,753 for sidewalk, playground

and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$21,876.

The City of Miltonvale will receive \$350,000 for sidewalk and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$35,825.

The City of Sylvan Grove will receive \$223,000 for sidewalk, playground and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$22,300.

The City of Tipton will receive \$339,300 for sidewalk, playground and park improvements. The city will contribute a match of \$52,400.

In addition to assisting with development and administration of these projects, the NCRPC also assisted four counties in applying for and receiving the first ever Multi-County Housing Accessibility project. This project awarded \$300,000 to Mitchell, Dickinson, Ottawa and Saline Counties.

These counties will work together to provide needed accessibility improvements for their residents. The eligible improvements will include bathroom modifications, ramps, utility rooms, driveways, sidewalks, doorways and other accessibility improvements. As a result of this project, it is estimated that approximately 17 homes will be assisted to provide better mobility.

For more information about the CDBG program, visit the site at www.kansascommerce.com/cdbg or contact the NCRPC office for project questions or assistance. ■

NEWS BRIEFS

Staffing Changes Take Place at NCRPC

Two NCRPC staff members have accepted new positions within the organization while another is scaling back to work part time.

Margaret Cathey, Weatherization Director since 2007, began a phased retirement this month and will return in



Margaret Cathey

November on a part-time basis. Cathey first joined the NCRPC in 1990.

Amanda Peterson has been named Assistant Weatherization Director and has been training with Cathey since February. Peterson began working with the NCRPC in 2014.



Amanda Peterson

Nichole McDaniel has been named Community Development Representative. She will also continue to manage affordable housing units for area communities that have contracted with the NCRPC for this service. McDaniel first joined the NCRPC in 2009.



Nichole McDaniel

To learn more about the NCRPC staff, visit www.ncrpc.org/about/staff. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS AND DEADLINES

Thursday, September 24, 2015
Thursday, October 29, 2015
NCRPC Executive Board Meetings
Beloit Office, 2 p.m.

Upcoming Funding Deadlines
September 30, 2015
FY 2016 CDBG Water & Sewer
November 2, 2015
FY 2016 CDBG Community Facilities



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Sanitation Service in North Central Kansas has New Owners

When Oscar and Regina Sheetz purchased Bel-Con Sanitation, Inc. in September 2014 and renamed it BellCon Sanitation, Inc., the slight name change was likely the only difference customers may have noticed.

BellCon Sanitation, Inc. provides residential and business curbside trash removal in the communities of Belleville, Scandia, Courtland, Cuba, Republic and the surrounding areas.

Oscar and Regina live near Munden and have experience operating their own businesses. Oscar farms and raises cattle and Regina operates a daycare business in Belleville. Oscar now works full-time in BellCon Sanitation, Inc. and the business has two other full-time and two part-time employees.

The business painted its dumpsters neon green and added new signage to them. Sheetz says this change to increase visibility, along with their customer service, has helped them gain new customers.

“A year ago when I purchased the company I didn’t know it would expand so rapidly,” Sheetz says.

This project was made possible with funding from The Citizens National Bank, NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund, Republic County E-



Courtesy Photo

BellCon Sanitation, Inc. owners Oscar and Regina Sheetz are pictured with their children, Gunnar and Conner, in front of their new business.

Communities Program, and investment by the owners.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director, at 785-738-2218 or by email at dpeters@nckcn.com. ■