



NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission

Housing Assessment Tool a Resource for Addressing Community Housing Needs

Technical Assistance Grants Available in Some Areas

Although specific housing challenges may vary among communities, what remains the same is there are no simple solutions when it comes to addressing those needs.



A good first step is evaluating existing housing stock and determining goals and priorities. If a community is interested in applying for outside funding for a housing project, most funding agencies require some type of a housing study or housing needs assessment.

"I recommend that each community complete or update their Housing Assessment Tool to be ready for funding opportunities," said Keegan Bailey, NCRPC Housing Director.

Completing a Housing Assessment Tool, also known as the HAT, is required to apply for a Housing Rehabilitation and Demolition Project through the Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The HAT is also useful for other funding programs. It helps communities assess their housing inventory and needs and may eliminate the need to hire a consultant to perform a housing study. A HAT is good for five years unless there are major changes in the community, such as losing or gaining a large employer.

"Although the HAT is a community-led effort, we are ready to work with communities to answer questions and help guide you every step of the way to develop a plan," Bailey said.

For communities located in the 26-county service area of the Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, Inc., there is now grant funding that can help. The K-State 105 Technical Assistance Grant provides funding for professional services to assist rural communities in developing or updating their HAT. The Innovation Center is a K-State 105 partner. K-State 105 is Kansas State University's answer to the call for a comprehensive economic growth and advancement solution for Kansas.

The maximum grant amount for technical assistance for each new HAT is \$1,500. A local match of \$500 is required, which can be cash or in-kind service directly related to the development of the HAT. For

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ABOUT US

Our primary service area includes 12 counties and 83 cities in North Central Kansas.

OUR MISSION


Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

CONTACT US

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 If you have a story idea or would like to update your address, email us at: communications@ncrpc.org

Project Spotlight: Commercial Rehabilitation Project in Lincoln

Project Restores Historic Lincoln Building, Fulfills Community Need for a Fitness Center

The need for a fitness center had been talked about in the City of Lincoln, Kansas, for several years. A committee was even formed to focus efforts on developing one, but funding challenges hindered progress.

When Kelly Gourley purchased a vacant, historic property in downtown Lincoln in 2019, opening a fitness center was not at the top of her list of ideas for the space. However, her journey to open a business brought the conversations about the need for a fitness center full circle. Today, Gourley owns/operates Post Rock Fitness in addition to serving as Executive Director of Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation.

Post Rock Fitness opened in August 2022 at 113 West Lincoln Avenue in the newly renovated historic building in downtown Lincoln. The fitness center is membership-based offering walk-in passes, one-week passes, or monthly memberships. Members have access to the facility 19 hours/day, 7 days a week through a mobile app.

The process to bring the vacant building to new life was long and costly. Securing outside funding was critical to success. The City of Lincoln was awarded a \$250,000 Commercial Rehabilitation grant in 2020 through the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which is administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce.

Also key in helping Gourley move the project forward was the timely rollout of the Historic Economic Asset Lifeline (HEAL) program, also from Kansas Department of Commerce, and the ability to apply for State and Federal Historic Tax Credits due to the designation of the community's historic downtown district.

"Although I knew a fitness center was a need in the community, I knew it wasn't going to be able to support the level of renovations the building



Many of the defining historical features were covered in the building located at 113 W. Lincoln Avenue in downtown Lincoln, KS (top photo). Renovations helped bring the building back to new life as a fitness center and were made possible through funding from the owner, awards from the CDBG Commercial Rehabilitation and HEAL programs, and State and Federal Historic Tax Credits. (Courtesy Photos)

required," Gourley said. "The CDBG program was able to bridge the gap between the cost of renovations and the financing the business could support."

According to Gourley, the project was not without its challenges.

"Because CDBG is a federal program, there are requirements that local contractors have a hard time meeting. Even more challenging was trying to launch the project right as the cost of construction was skyrocketing after COVID," Gourley said. "Once the project finally got under construction, it was exciting to see several years' worth of planning finally coming to life!"

Due to rising costs, the project had to be scaled back from its original scope of work. In addition to roof

repairs, improvements mostly focused on the interior such as electrical and plumbing updates along with HVAC, insulating and repairing damaged floors, walls, and ceiling. Gourley has since completed additional front facade improvements.

The NCRPC provided planning assistance, grant writing and project administration for the CDBG Commercial Rehabilitation portion of the project. Other non-funding key partners involved with the project were Bruce McMillian Architects, Manhattan, Kansas; and Wiens & Company Construction Inc., Hutchinson, Kansas.

"I could not have done this without the help of the NCRPC, especially Bri Beck," Gourley said. "She is a pro and made sure that all of us were always staying on track

with the requirements of the CDBG program."

While restoring a vacant historic building and opening a business were the primary results of this project, perhaps just as important has been enhancing quality of life for residents and bringing the community together – even if it is informally through Wednesday night yoga classes. To learn more about the business, visit postrockfitness.com.



— PROJECT —
SPOTLIGHT

There are many great things happening in North Central Kansas. Project Spotlight shares stories from communities around the region and how they solved challenges. View more at www.ncrpc.org/tag/project-spotlight.

Kansas Nonprofit Security Grant Program Offers Funding for Security Enhancements

Prepare Now for FY24 Application Cycle

Funding is available for physical security enhancements and other security-related activities for nonprofit organizations at high risk of a terrorist attack. The funding comes from the Kansas Nonprofit Security Grant Programs (NSGP). The program also seeks to integrate the preparedness activities of nonprofit organizations with broader state and local preparedness efforts, such as enhancing the protection of crowded areas.

The Kansas Highway Patrol is the State Administrative Agency for the grant program. While the FY23 projects have already been awarded, eligible nonprofits can begin preparing now to be ready for the FY24 application period.

The facility you are applying for must be completed (not under construction), occupied, and operational by the time of application and located in Kansas. Eligible nonprofits can apply for \$150,000 per facility up to three facilities to enhance the security of these working facilities



to prepare and protect your soft targets from acts of terrorism.

For more information and to preview application requirements, visit <http://www.datacounts.net/nsgp>.

"We will begin our educational application phase in January with webinars, so make sure you register to place your name on our contact list," said Lt. Edna Cordner, Grants Manager, Kansas Highway Patrol.

To subscribe directly to NSGP emails, visit <https://astrakansas.com/nsgp>. Astra is the new online system to sign-up for Kansas NSGP updates. It will also be used for FY24 project submissions when the grant opportunity is released in 2024.

Housing Assessment, *From page 1*

communities only needing to update their HAT, the maximum grant amount is \$750 for technical assistance with a \$250 local match required. To view the Innovation Center service area, visit <https://nwkeici.org/programs>.

"We know that understanding the complexities of housing and the various funding sources available can be overwhelming," Bailey said. "We are here to be a resource for communities and to help simplify the process as much as possible."

Funding is also available from the Innovation Center to assist rural communities in creating a

Reinvestment Housing Incentive District (RHID) — including the Housing Needs Analysis. More information about RHIDs and the HAT can be found at the Innovation Center website.



Keegan Bailey, NCRPC Housing Director

For questions about the HAT or to get started, contact NCRPC Housing Director Keegan Bailey at 785-738-2218 or housing@ncrpc.org.



High School Seniors Invited to Enter Rural Voices Youth Contest

High school seniors in North Central Kansas are once again invited to compete for a chance to win \$1,000 by submitting an essay or short video in the Rural Voices Youth Contest. The 2023-2024 contest theme is "Rural Kansas...Success Through Innovation."

Students submitting the top two entries will each receive a cash award of \$1,000. The winning entries will also be published on the NCRPC website. The NCRPC has sponsored the contest annually since 2006 in honor of long-time former executive director John Cyr.

Any senior in high school who lives in or attends a school in the 12-county NCRPC service area is eligible to enter.

The deadline to submit an entry is February 1, 2024. Additional information and registration details are available at www.ncrpc.org/ruralvoices.

EVENTS & MORE

Executive Board Meeting
January 25, 2024

Rural Voices Contest Deadline
February 1, 2024

Funding sources and deadlines:
» www.ncrpc.org/funding



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Convenience Store in Wilson Fully Transitioned to New Owner

Loan Programs Assist Women-Owned Business

Stop 2 Shop in Wilson, Kansas, has long been the local source in the community to fuel your day – whether it be with needed gas or diesel, or in the form of food and beverages.

The gas station/convenience store serves local customers from Wilson and the Wilson Lake area as well as travelers on Kansas Highway 232 and Interstate 70. Since 2017 Niki (Whitmer) Mikulecky has operated the business as sole owner/President of NC Convenience Inc. while renting the physical assets from the previous owner. Prior to that, Niki worked for the previous operator for six years.

Earlier this year, NC Convenience Inc. officially purchased the real estate, equipment and fuel inventory. Other than a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating Niki's purchase, operations



A project to purchase the real estate and equipment at Stop 2 Shop located at 2720 Avenue E, Wilson, KS, was completed earlier in 2023. (Courtesy Photo by Keith Gustin)

continued as normal ensuring a seamless transition for customers.

The facility has three fuel pumps with two offering highway or E-10 gas and one offering highway or farm diesel. The kitchen features daily specials with lunch and dinner options including pizza, cheese burgers, fried

chicken and other fried foods. Customers can enjoy indoor seating or take food "to go."

In addition to Niki working full-time as owner/manager, the business employs four others in varying capacities.

This project was made possible with investment by the owner as well as funding from First Bank Kansas of Ellsworth, the NCK Business Down Payment Assistance Loan Program and NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund offered through the NCRPC Business Finance Program.

For more information about the NCRPC Business Finance program, contact Debra Peters or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business. For more information about the business, find it on Facebook.