



North Central Regional
Planning Commission
Serving Kansans Since 1972

20
23
—

YEAR IN REVIEW

Working together for a stronger region



From the Director

When I came to Kansas a year and a half ago, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had never been to the state before and was unfamiliar with the rural



John Shea,
Executive Director

demographic and area served by the NCRPC. However, I feel I've learned a great deal since my arrival. I learned the commitment and passion the NCRPC Executive Board and staff have for the organization's mission, I learned that the communities in our 12 counties offer so much exciting opportunity and potential for growth, and I learned that Glen Elder is a place, not a person.

The existential threats facing North Central Kansas – population decline and

an aging demographic – are not new. But with a new Strategic Plan (www.ncrpc.org/about/reports), the NCRPC is better positioned than it has ever been in over 50 years of serving the region to successfully address these challenges.

This report is a look back at some of the highlights of our work over this past year — all made possible because of great partnerships and collaborations. We are excited about the future and continuing our efforts together to create the prosperous, sustainable future that the region deserves and for which so many prior generations strived. Please feel free to reach out to us anytime with questions. We look forward to great things in the new year!



Photos on the Cover:

Top Row from Left: 1) Tree removal and channel clearing was the first phase of an EDA funded project in the City of Salina for the Centennial Road drainage and road improvements for private business expansion. **2)** A Moderate Income Housing Rehabilitation Pilot Program launched in six more counties in 2023 thanks to the NCRPC Housing Initiative. The programs are administered by NCRPC through a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation. **3)** A school bus was converted to an emergency response transport unit for use in Southwest Kansas. The project was completed by the Southwest Regional Homeland Security Council with funding from the Department of Homeland Security. **4)** Astra Healthcare & Wellness, LLC, opened in downtown Beloit. This start-up business project was made possible through assistance from the NCK Business Down Payment Assistance Loan Program (NCRPC Business Finance Program), Mitchell County E-Community Loan Program, bank financing, and investment by the owner.

Middle Row from Left: 1) Members of the NCRPC Executive Board and guests participated in a legislative forum during the August board meeting at The FARM & The Odd Fellows, Minneapolis. **2)** A new water source was the primary focus of the first phase of a water improvement project in the City of Vermillion located in eastern Marshall County. Funding came from the city, a USDA SEARCH grant, Kansas Department of Commerce CDBG grant, and USDA Rural Development loan and grant. **3)** Weatherization assistance improvements at this multi-family apartment complex in Osborne increased comfort and energy efficiency for its tenants.

Bottom: NCRPC has helped to administer a street improvement project in the City of Miltonvale with funding from the Kansas Department of Transportation Cost Share Program.

At a Glance

Our mission is to advance rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

15

Directors serving on the NCRPC Executive Board

20

Staff members
(Including full and part-time positions)

18

Trainings/events the NCRPC facilitated or hosted



The NCRPC Region:

12

Counties

83

Cities

133,806

People

(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-Year Estimates)



Community Development



The NCRPC **supported 37 organizations and communities** by assisting them in securing private or public funds for various projects. This assistance included guiding communities through environmental reviews, pre-applications, and applications for funding from sources like the Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC) including the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), USDA Rural Development Loan/Grant programs, Kansas Department of Health and Environment State Revolving Loan Fund programs (KDHE), Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Economic Development Administration (EDA), US Department of Transportation (DOT), and private foundations. Upon completion, **approximately \$19.5 million** will be invested in the region from the projects funded in these categories.

Additionally, the NCRPC hosted and facilitated several meetings in an effort to keep communities and the region informed about current and upcoming funding opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels; played a **vital role in building partnerships** through collaboration; and facilitated numerous **vision and goal-setting sessions** for regional communities and organizations.

Business Finance



The NCRPC assisted **6 projects** in obtaining funding to either start, improve, expand, or purchase a business. The NCRPC Business Finance Program assisted these projects with direct loans and/or in obtaining financing through its loan packaging services for projects **totaling \$1.8 million**. These projects plan to **retain 11 jobs and create 6** in our core 12-county service area.

The NCRPC administers an Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES Act-funded revolving loan fund (RLF) in its core 12-county service area. The program has **disbursed \$1,301,000 in loan capital to 19 businesses in the region**, including 5 manufacturers, 4 retailers and 10 service-type businesses. Other project funding sources have contributed an additional \$3.8 million. The businesses that were assisted plan to retain 109 jobs and create 14.

Housing



The NCRPC continued to collaborate with local, regional and state stakeholders on housing challenges and solutions in the region. Key highlights for the year include:

- Administered Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation projects for **3 communities** in the region.
- Provided a variety of inspection services for governmental entities and private property owners.
- **Hosted two lead safe work practice trainings** for 21 contractors as part of a larger effort to address a contractor shortage.
- Continued to administer the NCRPC Housing Initiative, which is a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation. It includes financial assistance for moderate-income housing rehabilitation and demolition of dilapidated residential structures. The first-year funding helped make possible **70 rehabilitation projects and 57 demolitions across the 6 counties included**. The second year launched in 6 more counties in June and is ongoing.
- Concluded the NCK Regional Relocation Pilot Program, which **attracted 38 new residents and assisted in the purchase of 25 homes in the region**. NCRPC continues to work through its two housing nonprofits to expand housing opportunities in all counties it serves.

Household Weatherization Assistance



The NCRPC administers the Weatherization Assistance Program for **41 counties in Kansas**. The program provides weatherization assistance to low-income households to increase the energy efficiency of their homes. This reduces residents' energy costs and ensures their health and safety. In 2023, **113 homes were weatherized with approximately 283 people served**.

Homeland Security Program Fiscal Agent



The NCRPC supports safe and secure communities by serving as fiscal agent for **6 Regional Homeland Security Councils in Kansas**. Project investments address the planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs to help build local and regional response capabilities and encourage citizen safety and preparedness.

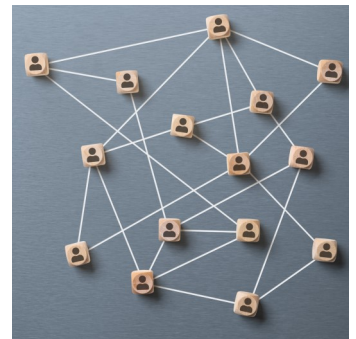
North Central Kansas Community Network Co. (NCKCN)



NCKCN (a NCRPC affiliate) **helps keep rural households, businesses, and communities connected**. For more than 25 years, NCKCN has partnered with Cunningham Communications based in Glen Elder, Kansas, to deliver quality Internet access and services to thousands of customers across North Central Kansas. In 2015, NCKCN and Cunningham Communications began setting up NCK-WiFi hotspots across the region and currently have **22 active hotspots throughout 9 communities**. Cunningham Communications has made significant investments in upgrades for the area through a number of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) projects and is an important partner to NCKCN and the region. NCKCN continues to work with Cunningham Communications to facilitate Fiber-to-the-Home access to more and more residents in our area.

Thank You!

We thank our members and the many who volunteer their time with the NCRPC and NCKCN serving on boards and committees. We look forward to working together in 2024!




Contact

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