



DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission

New Housing Program Launches

"Demo to Dirt" Provides Help to Remove Dilapidated Housing

A new housing initiative launched in several counties in North Central Kansas this Fall, aimed at addressing the issue of dilapidated residential structures. The "Demo to Dirt" program provides financial assistance to help property owners remove unsafe or blighted housing, contributing to safer neighborhoods and enhancing the overall appearance of communities.

The NCRPC is administering the program with support from a 2025 grant by The Patterson Family Foundation.

Eligible applicants may qualify for reimbursement grants of up to \$4,000 toward demolition costs for deteriorated residential homes, garages, and sheds that pose safety risks or detract from neighborhood quality. There are no income requirements for the program. Assistance is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Property owners are required to contribute a 25% match and cover any costs that exceed the \$4,000 grant.

This program is available for a limited time in incorporated cities located within select counties of the



NCRPC service area, including Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, and Washington.

"We appreciate The Patterson Family Foundation's support in aiding this initiative," said Keegan Bailey, NCRPC Assistant Director and Housing Director. "This program helps remove financial barriers for property owners while fostering safer neighborhoods and opening the door to future investment and housing opportunities."

Property owners interested in learning more can visit www.ncrpc.org/demotodirt.



NCRPC HOUSING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Did you know? Limited funds are still available in select Kansas counties through the NCRPC Housing Initiative, including the Moderate Income Housing Rehabilitation Pilot Program and the Demolition Pilot Program. Learn more: www.ncrpc.org/housinginitiative

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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: City of Miltonvale Completes Street Improvements

KDOT Cost Share Program Provides Assistance for Long-Term Solution

After completing a major project to update problematic waterline infrastructure, the City of Miltonvale was ready to turn its attention to finding a long-term solution to improving its streets.

The city explored options and ultimately learned that it was awarded a \$600,000 grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation Cost Share Program in Spring 2021. The project included addressing safety issues on the historic downtown brick streets, replacing dangerous curb/gutter and sidewalks in front of downtown businesses, and replacing two dangerous intersections.

Although substantial completion of the project was nearly two years ago, residents and businesses continue to appreciate its long-term benefits.

"The project encompasses several street issues in the community, all of

which were in need of critical repairs," said Darla Bebbber, former Miltonvale City Clerk who was on staff when the project was completed. "Every resident in our community has benefited from the project, which would not have been possible without the KDOT grant involvement."

Other non-funding project partners included project engineer CES Group, Inc., and contractor Jadwin Construction & Development, LLC. The NCRPC provided planning assistance, grant writing, and project administration.

"We worked with NCRPC staff to put together a game plan and project that would best prioritize the needs of our community and budget," Bebbber said.

KDOT opens the Cost Share program for applications twice a year,



Miltonvale's project repaired historic brick streets and improved sidewalk accessibility, curbing, drainage issues, and more. (Courtesy Photo)

generally in the fall and spring. Several other communities in the region have received funding in recent years. For more information on the program or for past award lists, go to <https://bit.ly/kdotcostshare>.

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.

Funding Available in Eligible Kansas Counties for New Home Construction

Over the past year, the NCRPC has served as fiscal sponsor for the Kansas Housing Cooperative Loan Program. The program provides forgivable loans to developers, builders, and/or homeowners to address increasing housing costs and appraisal gaps that present a barrier to homeownership or affordable rental housing. Funding for the program is provided by the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, State of Kansas, and local communities.

This program covers the Innovation Center's 26-county area in North Central and Northwest Kansas. Through the program, homeowners can receive forgivable loans to build new homes in communities of 10,000 residents or



fewer. The total loan amount including the local match will not exceed 17% of the total development cost and be capped at \$55,000 per single-family home and \$50,000 per unit for rental housing. Applications are funded on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more about the program and eligibility criteria at nwkeici.org/programs/kansas-housing-cooperative-program.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Do you live or work in Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, Saline, or Washington County? If so, we need your input! Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on regional challenges and opportunities. Your feedback will help update the region's five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and ensure community needs and priorities are reflected in plans to support a strong, thriving region. To take the survey, scan the QR code or visit: www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026ncksurvey



NCRPC Announces Staffing Updates

Organization Sees Leadership, Department Role Updates

The NCRPC is pleased to officially announce several staff role updates that have taken place over the past year.

"When I was appointed Executive Director in May, my long-term vision was to create an organization leadership team, and we have done just that by defining new roles for Keegan Bailey and Pepper Roberg," said Deb Ohlde, NCRPC Executive Director.

Keegan Bailey has been named Assistant Director. In this role, she supports the Executive Director and other department leaders, focusing on program delivery and project implementation. Bailey has been with the NCRPC since 2015 and will continue to serve as Housing Director, leading the organization's housing programs and efforts to address regional housing needs.

Pepper Roberg has been named Director of Operations and Personnel. In this senior management role, she focuses on internal operations, physical assets, and financial management. Roberg joined the NCRPC in 2004 and has served as Office Manager since 2008. She continues to oversee office accounting, general administration, and personnel functions.

"Having Keegan and Pepper in these roles helps us benefit from multiple perspectives," Ohlde said. "Our decisions are stronger when we work together."

The Weatherization Assistance Program has transitioned to a collaborative management model, appointing **Dell Gier** as Technical Supervisor and **Amanda Augustine** as Administrative Supervisor to co-lead the program. Augustine, who



first joined the NCRPC in 2014, brings 10 years of program experience to her new role. Gier has worked as a Housing Inspector since joining the NCRPC in 2002.

Other recent position changes include the naming of **Kristina Harrison** as Homeland Security Coordinator and **Chelsea Smith** as Administrative Manager. Harrison, who joined the NCRPC in 2024, oversees fiscal agent responsibilities and collaborates with project managers from each of six regional homeland security councils. Smith, who has been with the organization since 2022, provides in-house technical support and manages accounts receivable for the NCRPC affiliate, NCKCN.

Additionally, in 2024, **Brett Beck** was named Managing Technician for NCKCN and **Lori Thielen** was named Communications Director, recognizing their roles and long-time service to the organization. Beck has been a full-time employee since April 2006, and Thielen first joined the NCRPC in 2004.

"The organization is fortunate to have dedicated staff who are passionate about rural Kansas and helping communities achieve their goals," Ohlde said. "We have a large amount of experience on our staff and that allows us to provide dependable and professional service to the region."

High School Seniors Invited to Enter Rural Voices Youth Contest

High school seniors in North Central Kansas are invited to showcase their creativity and ideas for a chance to win \$1,000 in the Rural Voices Youth Contest. Students may submit either an essay or a short video reflecting on the 2025-2026 theme: "Rural Kansas...Tomorrow's Possibilities."



The top two entries will each receive a \$1,000 cash award. Now in its 20th year, the NCRPC has awarded more than \$30,000 to local youth since the contest began.

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 3, 2026. For more information, visit www.ncrpc.org/ruralvoices.

EVENTS & MORE

Holiday Office Closure Notice
The NCRPC will close for an extended holiday break beginning at noon on December 24 and will reopen on Monday, January 5, 2026.

Executive Board Meeting
January 29, 2026

Lead-Safe Work Practices Initial Training
February 19, 2026
www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/contractor-opportunities



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Local Business Opportunity Attracts Couple to Concordia

NCRPC Business Finance Program Assists in Business Purchase Project

The opportunity to purchase a local business in Concordia, Kansas, has made moving back home a reality for Samantha Parker and her husband, Cameron Morris. In July, they acquired Liquor Outlet, which first opened its doors in March 2001.

Located at 1250 Lincoln Street in Concordia, Liquor Outlet offers a wide selection of beer, wine, and spirits and is open daily. Its primary customer base includes residents of Concordia and Cloud County, as well as travelers along U.S. Highway 81.

Samantha and Cameron recently relocated from Aurora, Colorado, to Samantha's hometown of Concordia to purchase the business along with her parents, Tim and Carrie Parker. The Parkers previously owned the Taco John's franchise in Concordia.

Samantha Parker graduated from Concordia High School and Washburn University. She has previous experience working as an Occupational Therapist Assistant. Cameron Morris graduated from Goodland High School and has several years of experience managing liquor stores in both Colorado and Kansas. He manages the day-to-day operations of the business, with support from Samantha and her parents.

"We were excited about the chance to move back and be closer to family and friends while operating a local business," said Samantha.

The business purchase project was made possible through investments from the owners, assistance from The Citizens National Bank in Concordia, and the NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund



Samantha Parker and her husband, Cameron Morris, along with Tim and Carrie Parker, are the new owners of the Liquor Outlet, located in Concordia, Kansas, along US Highway 81. (Courtesy Photo)

Program. To learn more about the financing program used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director, at dpeters@nckn.com or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business. To learn more about the business, visit them on Facebook.