

# 2020

# ANNUAL REPORT

## North Central Regional Planning Commission

### WELCOME

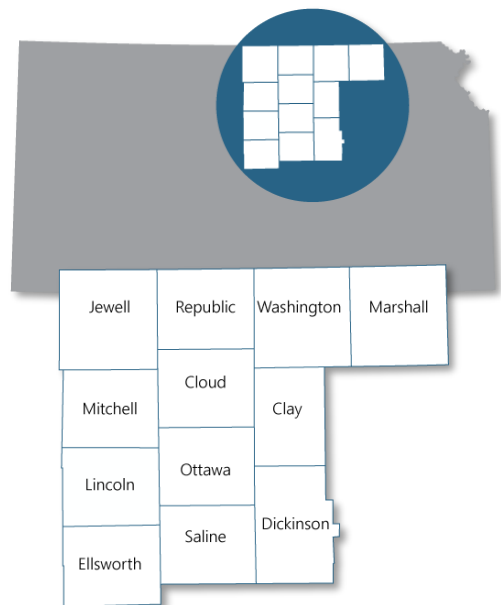
This was a year of change, adaptability and growth at the North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC). We knew the year would bring major change with the retirement of Executive Director Doug McKinney in the spring, but no one could have predicted the challenges 2020 would bring to our region and the world. For many of us, 2020 brought about a multitude of change in our work practices and communication, both challenged and solidified our commitment to serving North Central Kansas, and tested everyone's adaptability and patience. Through it all, one thing remained consistent — the unwavering collaboration and partnerships that worked together to make communities more innovative, prosperous, and resilient.

This report contains some of the highlights that were accomplished over the past year.

**Thank you for your support!** Our work would not be possible without the involvement of many partners as well as the individuals who volunteer their time to serve on boards and committees of the NCRPC and its affiliate, NCKCN. **We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2021.**

### OUR MISSION

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.



Jewell	Republic	Washington	Marshall
Mitchell	Cloud	Clay	
Lincoln	Ottawa		
Ellsworth	Saline	Dickinson	

### ABOUT US

The NCRPC is a multi-county comprehensive planning and development organization that includes 12 counties in North Central Kansas and 83 member cities. In addition, a number of programs/services extend into much of Kansas.



North Central Regional  
Planning Commission

*Serving Kansans Since 1972*

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# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



## HELPING COMMUNITIES PROSPER

NCRPC assisted organizations and communities with numerous projects that were awarded private or public funds. With assistance from NCRPC, **9 Cities were awarded Community Development Block Grant funding for FY2020** to assist two downtown commercial rehabilitation projects, a new fire station, a new fire truck, three comprehensive water projects, and two sanitary sewer improvement projects. When completed, these projects will have invested over **\$14 million** back into the region.

### Also in 2020:

- Assisted 4 cities with **project planning and application preparation** for FY2021 Community Development Block Grant projects. The results of these applications will be announced in January 2021.
- Assisted multiple entities in preparing **environmental reviews, pre-applications, and applications** for the USDA Rural Development Loan/Grant Funding programs and the KDHE State Revolving Loan Fund programs.

**Photo:** NCRPC administered a truck route project in the City of Frankfort located in Marshall County. The project was funded through a combination of a CDBG grant and a USDA Rural Development loan. *(Photo Courtesy of Frankfort Area News)*

## BUSINESS FINANCE SOLUTIONS

In 2020 the NCRPC Business Finance Program assisted **21 projects** in obtaining funding (4 manufacturers, 10 service, and 7 retail businesses) to either start, improve, expand, or purchase a business. The Business Finance Program assisted these projects with direct loans and/or in obtaining financing through its loan packaging services in the amount of **\$1,006,000 for projects totaling \$3,665,300**. These projects plan to **create 16 jobs and retained 99** in our 12-county service area.



## IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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 energy costs and ensures the health and safety of residents. In 2020, there were **95 homes weatherized** with approximately **237 residents served**.



Learn more about NCRPC services at:  
[ncrpc.org/services](https://ncrpc.org/services)

## STRENGTHENING HOUSING

NCRPC addressed local housing needs by administering housing rehabilitation projects and related inspection services. In 2020, **rehabilitation was completed on 14 homes in 4 communities** in the region. **Nearly \$385,000** was invested in the service area through these projects (CDBG and local match funds).



### Also in 2020:

- Staff completed a variety of **inspection services** including asbestos inspections, radon measurements, First Time Homebuyer inspections, energy audits, and lead risk assessments/clearance.
- Staff continued to **manage 2 affordable housing units** for local developments.
- Home Ownership Pilot Programs were launched in **3 counties** including Ottawa, Republic, and Dickinson Counties. The program assisted in the purchase of **24 homes** in the region through down payment and closing cost assistance.

Photo: Housing rehabilitation was completed on 14 homes in 2020.

## IMPROVING AND PROTECTING HEALTH

NCRPC continued to work with **13 local health departments** through the North Central Kansas Public Health Initiative (NCKPHI) to improve and protect the health of their communities. The NCRPC provides administrative, fiscal and support services through the regional public health emergency preparedness and response grant. COVID tested the plans and mitigation strategies that the NCKPHI prepares for through planning, training and exercise in the event that a pandemic or any disaster occurs.



Photo: North Central Kansas Public Health Initiative participants continued to meet and work together using Zoom.



## SUPPORTING SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITIES

NCRPC continued to serve as fiscal agent for **6 Regional Homeland Security Councils** in Kansas. Project investments address the planning, organization, equipment, training and exercise needs that help build local and regional response capabilities and encourage citizen safety and preparedness. Many adjustments were made this year due to COVID including no in-person trainings and exercises. Equipment purchased through Homeland Security continues to be used around the state to fill gaps including the use of trailers used for COVID testing in some regions.

## NORTH CENTRAL KANSAS COMMUNITY NETWORK

NCKCN (a NCRPC affiliate) connects rural households and businesses to the Internet by providing high speed fixed wireless Internet in **20 locations within 6 counties**. NCKCN also provides **free NCK-WiFi hotspots at 20 locations in 9 cities** through a partnership with Cunningham Telephone & Cable (CTC).

NCKCN is currently extending its fixed high-speed wireless access to pockets of unserved and underserved broadband areas in **4 North Central Kansas counties**. This project is made possible, in part, through a Connectivity Emergency Response Grant, which was created to address the increased need for internet connectivity in Kansas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

See the coverage map: [www.nckcn.com/coverage](http://www.nckcn.com/coverage)



## COVID RESPONSE

As the region continues to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our team has been working to partner with communities and organizations to seek resources for response and recovery.



### CDBG-CV and SPARK

Several cities and counties in North Central Kansas were awarded funds from the Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Response Supplement (CDBG-CV) program this summer. The grants were for Economic Development and

Meal Programs and were part of the state's allocation from the Federal CARES Act. Counties also received Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) funding through the state's CARES Act allocation. NCRPC staff are working with cities and counties in the region to provide administration assistance for **14 CDBG-CV and 3 SPARK projects**.

### NCK Business Relief Loan Program

The NCRPC began administering a **new NCK Business Relief Loan Program**, which assists North Central Kansas businesses adversely impacted by COVID-19. The U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) will provide \$1.1 million of funds.

### NKCN

NKCN (a NCRPC affiliate) participated in the Kids Connect Program in 2020. Working with Cunningham Telephone & Cable (CTC) and **8 area school districts**, the program **provides free Internet** access during the COVID-19 crisis to students in rural households that did not have Internet to allow those students to attend their respective schools remotely. NKCN and CTC also installed Kids Connect hotspots so schools could hold remote, social distanced classes. Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. also provided utility poles at households with challenges to access the NKCN Fixed Wireless.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The NCRPC was awarded funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to help coordinate a response to the pandemic's economic effects within the 12 counties the NCRPC serves. In November, a full-time Regional Economic Disaster Recovery Coordinator was hired to assist with those efforts. Free training opportunities will be offered in 2021 for entrepreneurs, businesses, and nonprofits in North Central Kansas. More information will be available in the near future.

Resources continue to change rapidly. We will continue to work to provide tools and information to help navigate during these challenging times. For current information on COVID-19 resources available in the region, visit our resources page:

**[www.ncrpc.org/resources/covid-19](http://www.ncrpc.org/resources/covid-19)**