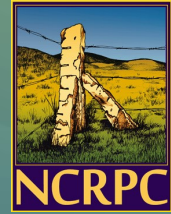


NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission



ABOUT US

Our Mission

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

Our Commitment

At the NCRPC, we are committed to giving our member Cities and Counties the best service possible. If you ever have questions or concerns, please reach out to Executive Director Emily Benedick at 785-738-2218 or executivedirector@ncrpc.org.

Contact Us

109 N. Mill, PO Box 565
Beloit, KS 67420 | 785-738-2218
www.ncrpc.org

facebook.com/ncrpcbeloit

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Tom Claussen, *Mitchell County*

Vice Chair: Heather Hartman, *Mitchell County Community Development*

Secretary/Treasurer: Vicki Steffens, *Appointed Position*

Ellen Barber, *Marshall County Partnership for Growth*

Greg Bender, *Ellsworth County*

Craig Chamberlin, *Dickinson County*

Ron Copple, *Cloud County*

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Luke Mahin, *Republic County Economic Development*

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Stacie Schmidt, *City of Ellsworth*

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STRATEGIC PLANNING UNDERWAY

SURVEY RESULTS HELP IDENTIFY REGION'S CURRENT PRIORITIES

As an Economic Development Administration (EDA) partnership planning grantee, the NCRPC is responsible for updating a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) at least every 5 years. A CEDS is a document that serves as a tool to help guide regional economic development efforts.

The NCRPC recently conducted a survey to ensure the 2021 CEDS update reflects the current needs and priorities of the region. Several trends emerged as current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for North Central Kansas. The top five of each are listed below. The complete lists will be included in the CEDS draft document that will be available on our website in August.

“Understanding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats



of our region through the eyes and from the hearts of those who live and work here is so important for our organization,” NCRPC Executive Director Emily Benedick said.

If you would like to learn more about the CEDS planning process, contact Emily Benedick at executivedirector@ncrpc.org.

Listed below are the Top 5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for North Central Kansas gathered from a 2021 public survey conducted by the NCRPC.

STRENGTHS

Quality of life/low crime rates
Sense of community
Rural landscape
Educational systems and opportunities
Central location

OPPORTUNITIES

Entrepreneurship/entrepreneurial growth
Housing rehabilitation/development
Remote working
Youth engagement and retention
Business development and support

WEAKNESSES

Housing (quality affordable housing)
Aging infrastructure/vacant buildings
Childcare availability
Loss of population
Aging workforce without replacements

THREATS

Competition from online retail for local businesses
Declining rural population
Lack of industry/job diversity
Competition from urban areas for graduates
Aging and/or low skilled workforce

NEWS BRIEFS

Haver Joins NCRPC Staff

We are pleased to announce that Craig Haver has joined the NCRPC as Weatherization Inspector. In this role, he conducts inspections for the Weatherization Assistance Program funded by the Department of Energy and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program to ensure compliance with program requirements. The NCRPC administers the weatherization program in 41 counties in North Central and Northwest Kansas.



Craig Haver

Craig joins the organization with more than 10 years of experience working with the Weatherization Assistance Program for a non-profit in Wisconsin. Prior to that, he worked on a carpentry crew building homes. He also has owned a flooring installation company since 2011 and has been installing flooring since 1993.

As a military family with a father who retired Captain in the Army, Craig has traveled a fair amount. He now resides in Ellis. He previously lived in Kansas as a young boy, Michigan and, most recently, Wisconsin for 34 years.

“I am excited to start as an energy auditor/inspector for NCRPC and look forward to getting to know and work alongside everyone,” Haver says. “The weatherization program is a great service and we should all be proud to help the people in the communities we live in!”

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

CITY OF BLUE RAPIDS ENHANCES SUMMER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

A recently completed project in the City of Blue Rapids is making a splash this summer.

The project was made possible, in part, through a special round of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding awarded in 2019. The grant award was \$763,411. The Small Cities CDBG program is administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce. The city also contributed more than \$580,000 through general obligation bonds and local fundraising efforts.

The project included demolition of the existing swimming pool and construction of an accessible, zero entry swimming pool. The newly constructed pool opened on May 25 with 200 people attending the opening ceremony. The pool closed a month early last summer to begin project demolition and construction.

“The best part of the project is that people are really glad to be able to come to a clean pool and a fun environment,” Blue Rapids City Clerk Chrystal Busey said.

The original facility was built in the early 1950s and repairs had become increasingly burdensome for the community. Local fundraising efforts had been underway for a number of years to update the swimming pool.

“Blue Rapids was presented with a unique opportunity when Kansas Department of Commerce announced this special round of funding,” NCRPC Executive Director Emily Benedick said. “The community had already been working toward updating its pool



The City of Blue Rapids swimming pool project was completed earlier this year. (Photo courtesy of Tom Parker)

“The best part of the project is that people are really glad to be able to come to a clean pool and a fun environment.”

— Chrystal Busey, Blue Rapids City Clerk

and that commitment helped pave the way for a successful application.”

The resulting project has enhanced summer recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the community. The swimming pool is located in Blue Rapids' City Park located at one of the main entry points into the city along KS HWY 9/US HWY 77. It is also adjacent to the Marshall County Fairgrounds and baseball fields and playgrounds.

On its own, the city also financed a bath house separate from the swimming pool project.

Key partners involved with the project included project engineers CES Group of Marysville and Trinium Contractors, Inc of Manhattan. NCRPC staff provided project planning assistance, grant writing and administration.

There are many great things happening in North Central Kansas. Project Spotlight shares stories from communities around the region and how they solved challenges.

INNOVATION STIMULUS PROGRAM ASSISTS BUSINESS

SHARP MANUFACTURING LLC SELECTED TO RECEIVE ENGINEERING SERVICES

Over the past year, many businesses were forced to innovate, adapt or pivot operations. One North Central Kansas business took the opportunity to improve internal functions for manufacturing its trailer variations.

Sharp Manufacturing, LLC was selected to receive “no cost” engineering services through the Innovation Stimulus Program. The program provided support to innovators and manufacturers across the region that were negatively impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Innovation Stimulus Program was a partnership between the Technology Development Institute (TDI) at Kansas State University and the NCRPC. It was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act.

Located in Blue Rapids, Sharp Manufacturing, LLC manufactures and sells enclosed trailers through a 50-plus dealer network throughout the Midwest. The company’s product lineup includes more than 20 different sizes and models of trailers.

Sharp Manufacturing was one of three North Central Kansas businesses assisted through the Innovation Stimulus Program. Through the program, Technology Development Institute developed technical drawings of some of Sharp Manufacturing’s product lines. The goals were to increase consistency in fabrication and provide a resource for customers who choose to customize their trailer once purchased.

“Having this information will benefit the company both in terms of product quality and increased sales,” said Jeff Tucker, executive director of the institute. “We were excited to assist Sharp as we see this as a critical step in their future growth plans.”

Technology Development Institute created SolidWorks models of three different trailer widths as well as variations in length, height and number of axles. These models were used to create drawing packages and a bill of material for each trailer variation.

“Working with Jeff and his team through TDI was great,” said Heather Anderson of Sharp Manufacturing. “Getting our trailers into drawings has been something we’ve talked about for



Heather Anderson (pictured above), one of the owner/operators of Sharp Manufacturing, worked with Technology Development Institute to develop technical drawings of some of the company’s trailers. (Courtesy photo)

a while, we just didn’t have time to get the project complete. We now have the information needed to make modifications per customer request in a timely manner.”

Learn more:

www.sharpmanufacturing.com
www.k-state.edu/tidi

MEET THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Greg Bender joined the NCRPC Executive Board in 2021 as a representative of Ellsworth County. Currently Greg serves on the Ellsworth County Board of Commissioners. He retired in 2014 from Independent Salt Co. after 38 years of service. He was a volunteer First Responder & EMT for many years and is a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Ellsworth Historical Society, Kiwanis Club of Ellsworth and is Kansas District Chair for the Kiwanis Children’s Fund.

A long-time Ellsworth resident, Greg’s family moved 39 times to 35



Greg Bender

different Kansas towns from the time he was born until he was 16 years old. “But Ellsworth was always my family’s hometown where we always wanted to come back,” Bender says.

Greg and his wife, Cynthia, have a blended family of six children and their four spouses. He enjoys hunting and the outdoors and has been a hunter safety instructor for 20 years.

EVENTS & DEADLINES

NCRPC Executive Board Meetings
Thursday, July 29, 2021 - 2 p.m.
Emergency Services Building
Miltonvale, KS

Thursday, August 26, 2021 - 2 p.m.
Ottawa County Courthouse
Minneapolis, KS

Free Trainings

FREE trainings for businesses and non-profits in the region are now being scheduled.

To view the training calendar, learn more, or register for a course, visit:
www.ncrpc.org/resources/trainings/



North Central Regional Planning Commission

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LOAN FUNDS PROVIDE RELIEF TO NCK BUSINESSES

PROGRAM ASSISTS 15 BUSINESSES IN THE REGION

A total of 15 businesses located in North Central Kansas received assistance through the NCK Business Relief Loan Program.

The program was made available in November 2020 to assist North Central Kansas businesses adversely impacted by COVID-19. It was made possible through funding from the U.S.

Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act. The NCRPC administered the NCK Business Relief Loan Program. All 15 loans were closed by the end of April 2021.

“Demand for the program was strong,” NCRPC Business Finance Director Debra Peters said. “We were glad to be able to make this program available quickly during what has been a very challenging time for businesses.



We appreciate our stakeholders who helped us get the word out to businesses needing assistance.”

The program has disbursed \$980,000 in loan capital to 15 businesses in the region including 5 manufacturers, 2 retailers and 8 service-type businesses. Other project funding sources have contributed another nearly \$2.5 million. The businesses that were assisted plan to retain 98 full-time

jobs. In addition, 3 businesses plan to pivot operations as a result of the pandemic and create 5 new full-time jobs. Although funds for this program are currently exhausted, as loan funds are repaid, recaptured funds will be available to re-lend to for-profit businesses in the NCRPC 12-county service area.

“This program was an overall positive for the region really on two levels,” Peters said. “It provided support to businesses that were impacted by the pandemic and it also becomes a permanent financing tool to assist future businesses in North Central Kansas.”

To learn more about the NCRPC Business Finance Program, contact Debra Peters at 785-738-2218 or businessfinance@ncrpc.org or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business.