

West Central Nebraska Development District
ANNUAL REPORT

2021
2022



Budget

The budget is intended to address the needs and priorities of the member communities and counties within the West Central Nebraska Development District, Inc. region. Every effort has been made to leverage and match every dollar to its maximum potential.

The budget reflects operations to be handled with the five current full/time employees, with potential for hiring another. WCNDD continually looks towards the future in developing potential revenue streams to assure budget dollars exist.

When looking at revenues for the fiscal year, the CARES Act funding through EDA, originally awarded in 2020, has been granted an extension through December 2022 to allow WCNDD to use the funding to its fullest potential. The revenue for the Nuisance Abatement Program for 2022/23 will increase again this year and it is expected that payment of dues assessments will remain steady. The agency is working toward other projects that have revenue potential, however those are not included within the budget, but would certainly allow us to set aside more in our cash reserve and/or provide us budget dollars to expand services.

On the expense side of the budget, postage costs are increased. The majority of postage costs are taken into account on revenues within the nuisance abatement program. The budgeted expenses are based upon actual expenditures from the previous year with inflation being considered. A notable budget increase is custodial expenses, which will allow the agency to ensure more efficient use of staff time. Due to the increase in nuisance work and potential projects, we are poised to hire an additional staff member.

A message from WCNDD Board Chairman Edward Dunn



This year will go down in the record books. West Central Nebraska Development District survived the COVID-19 scare and is coming out on top!

We said farewell to Executive Director CJ Poltack, an integral part of why WCNDD has been successful over the last multiple years, and we welcomed a new Executive Director, Amber Kuskie, a vibrant spark of youthful energy that will lead WCNDD into the unforeseeable future. The staff continues to grow and learn with two new employees this year, Erica Bush and Taylor Stone, both diving headfirst into the world of nuisance, economic development, and all things WCNDD.

Owner Occupied Rehab continues with 14 homes this year and has been a very successful adventure for WCNDD and the staff. This year WCNDD took on a new management role in Perkins County as the Perkins County Planning and Zoning Administrator. Lincoln County Commissioners contacted WCNDD to help with the administration of some off their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and the staff of WCNDD were pleased to be able to help.

One of the core duties of WCNDD, Nuisance Abatement, is soaring high this year with 17 contracts and the staff is poised to once again excel in this enterprise. WCNDD is helping the community of Mullen administer its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and has successfully written and been awarded four scrap tire grants for the communities of Cozad, Frontier County, Palisade, and Hayes County. CARES Act funding was essential in providing Business Resiliency and Pandemic Preparedness funds to aid business within the region and to provide a landlord assistance program that wrapped up this year.

WCNDD lead the charge this year in educating people and communities on bridging the digital divide and finished collecting data for broadband speeds across the region. The future is bright for this organization, and I can guarantee that whatever obstacle is thrown its way will be met with a tenacity unlike any other.

Guest Speaker



Richard Dupin

Richard "Rick" Dupin is the vice president of operations for American ShiZuki Corp, and the president of Unlock Your Potential. Both organizations are based where Rick resides in Ogallala, NE. He has an MBA in Organizational Leadership and is pursuing a doctorate in the same subject matter.

Rick's professional experience has led him to believe that learning and growth occurs when collaborative communications are embraced. He views leadership as a lifestyle, not a title.

Rick, has been a refreshing resource tapped into by many of WCNDD contracted consultants through EDA CARES Act funding. (further explained on page 8).

Rick is a vibrant, energetic, impactful speaker whose message can benefit all. He has nearly 30 years of leadership and team building experience and sees business development as an everchanging landscape that must be navigated by effective leaders who display qualities like empathy, active listening, and leading by ethical example.

Rick has been happily married for 23 years and, with his wife Deb, shares eight children and four grandchildren. His hobbies are working around the house/yard and spending time with his family.

Our Team



Amber Kuskie

Executive Director

Amber began her employment with WCNDD in 2020 as a community economic development specialist and was promoted to regional program coordinator and then deputy director. In March, Amber was named executive director of the agency. Amber enjoys interacting with a variety of people and stakeholders within all the communities we serve. She is looking forward to creating new projects in the future and continuing the projects that have built WCNDD's strong reputation.



Cody Fenwick

Community Economic Development Specialist

Cody has been with WCNDD for five years. She has been instrumental in grant writing/administration, serving several communities as a nuisance officer and assisting property owners in Keith County with their zoning needs. Cody strives to assist communities and individuals fulfil their goals.



Amy Sauer

Community Economic Development Specialist

Amy has been with WCNDD since April 2020. Amy has hit the ground running with the nuisance program and has been tasked with writing scrap tire grants and administering our regional OOR program to rehab 17 homes in our region. Amy has a passion for cleaning up communities, not only by abating nuisance properties, but by assisting folks with rehabilitating their homes. Amy makes friends wherever she goes.



Erica Bush

Economic Development Associate

Erica has been with WCNDD since 2021. She has brought great enthusiasm assisting Keith County by promoting growth and development through planning and zoning. She also serves as a nuisance officer for four communities in our region. Erica has a passion for people and families, so community building is her driving force.



Taylor Stone

Economic Development Associate

Taylor has been with WCNDD since 2021. Her specialties lie within marketing, graphic design, and grant writing. Taylor is also a nuisance officer for WCNDD and serves the office however she can. Taylor has a strong passion for helping local Nebraska communities grow and reach their full potential to serve their community members.

- Nuisance Abatement -

14

| Communities Served

1,781

| Properties Reviewed

24

| Abated Properties

315

| Declared Properties

2021

1

| Structures Removed



With the assistance of the Creighton University School of Law, WCNDD developed ordinances that enable communities to abate nuisances effectively and efficiently.

By utilizing WCNDD as a nuisance officer, it ensures that an impartial and equitable process is in place for all community members.

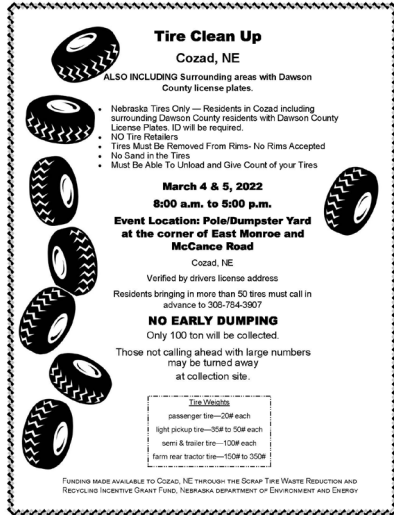
- 2022 -

Nuisance Program

WCNDD has reviewed 1,151 properties in 17 communities for the 2022 nuisance season.

2021 Scrap Tire Grants

WCNDD assisted six communities in its region with applying for funding for recycling tires. Out of the six applications, four communities were awarded funding through a Scrap Tire Grant from the Nebraska DED: City of Cozad, Village of Palisade, Frontier County, and Hayes County. The total awards funded for the region in 2021, through scrap tire grants, was \$74,659.



Funds Awarded:

Cozad	\$14,806
Palisade	\$18,671
Frontier Co.	\$20,806
Hayes Co.	\$20,376

Total: \$74,659

Owner Occupied Rehabilitation

The mission of the OOR program is to assist homeowners with repairs to make their homes safe and sanitary, and provides opportunity to repair homes before they become severely deteriorated. The OOR program allows communities to invest in the opportunity to promote housing preservation by improving the quality of its existing affordable housing.

WCNDD has had great success with OOR programs in the past and is in the process of completing a current regional OOR program. During the past year, rehabilitation has been completed on two homes in Bartley, three in Curtis, two in Grant, one in Hershey, and five homes in Ogallala.

WCNDD is excited to continue OOR efforts in the future to enhance the housing stock in the region.

Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a document which is essential for long-term planning for cities and counties. The plan is framework and guidance for the community to accomplish its identified aspirations and intentions. It outlines goals and objectives and recommends courses of action for future growth and development.

This year WCNDD, aided two member communities with updating their comprehensive plans. Comprehensive planning is very much related to the economic prosperity of communities, of which WCNDD is excited to be a part of.

CCCFF

Through Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF), the state of Nebraska awards funding to municipalities for an array of capital construction projects or planning thereof. The grants can be used to build or improve community facilities. The local minimum cost-share of the grant is 1:1.

CCCFF grants are awarded annually on a competitive basis. The 2022 application cycle had 37 applicants, with only eight applicants being awarded funding. WCNDD assisted in the preparation of three applications for communities within the region, unfortunately none were awarded.

The CCCFF program is funded through turnback taxes associated with the large arena and convention centers in Omaha, Lincoln and Ralston. Due to a large number of events in 2020 and 2021 being cancelled due to COVID-19, a significant reduction in revenue was available to fund the grants.

Update your Comprehensive Plan Today!

WCNDD OFFERS

Competitive Pricing

Individualized Approach to Each Community

Community Involvement

Contact us for more information today!

308.284.6077 | West-Central-Nebraska.com

akuskie@west-central-nebraska.com | Like us on Facebook

CARES Act

The CARES Act program continued this year assisting businesses with pandemic preparedness and business resiliency in each county of the region. WCNDD contracted with local providers through funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. While the program will end in December 2022, a remarkable number of businesses were provided opportunities for improvement at no cost. Many businesses took advantage of courses and education that was offered for employee training and web presence among other things.

Thank you and congratulations should be offered to our contracted agencies for successfully completing their contracts and making a huge impact on the businesses within the WCNDD region. By the end of the fiscal year these agencies have accomplished \$216,404 in business opportunities. Contracted agencies for this project include the City of Imperial, Keith County Area Development, Mid-Plains Community College, McCook Chamber of Commerce, and Dawson Area Development. Due to their efforts, small businesses within the region have been successful in pandemic preparedness and resiliency.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE STATE-WIDE CONFERENCE

On March 21, 2022, Nebraska Regional Officials Council (NROC) held a state-wide broadband conference to educate community leaders and stakeholders of the importance of broadband expansion, and how public-private partnerships can bring better broadband to their communities. The conference also included discussion about funding that will be made available in 2022 for broadband and digital inclusion. WCNDD hosted at 3 locations: Ogallala, Imperial and North Platte. The total attendance for the conference at our hosting sites (in-person) was 18 people, while the total attendance virtually was 59 people. Statewide the conference hosted 205 individuals.

Another vital piece of the CARES Act funding went to partnership in a statewide broadband mapping initiative that accurately collects data that can be used to plan for future broadband infrastructure expansion or enhancement projects. The partnership included all Nebraska Development Districts and Nebraska Regional Officials Council (NROC). The initiative earned NROC and the project partners the National Association of Development Organizations 2021 Aliceann Wolbruck Impact Award, which recognizes innovative approaches to regional economic and community development.

Please take the
secure one minute
speed test at
speedtestne.org



Lincoln County American Rescue Plan

While the American Rescue Plan Act is multifaceted, and includes, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), which delivered funding to governments across the country to combat the effects of COVID-19.



NROC
Nebraska Regional
Officials Council

WCNDD is a proud member of The Nebraska Regional Officials Council (NROC). NROC is the state-wide organization of Nebraska's eight Economic Development Districts. These professional organizations represent the entire state and are committed to enhancing the communities and businesses within each region.

WCNDD entered into contract with Lincoln County to administer the county's SLFRF. As a result, staff became versed in the federal program guidelines. Within one month of entering into agreement, WCNDD aided Lincoln County in providing more than \$83,000 in emergency funding to food banks prior to Christmas. In May, \$60,100 was awarded to eligible entities. Currently round two of funding applications are being accepted and reviewed by WCNDD, which will allow Lincoln County to provide assistance to additional entities with SLFRF in July.

Planning and Zoning Administration

- Keith County -

161

| Zoning Permits

\$37,992

| Zoning Permit
Fees collected

10

| Conditional Use Permits |

2021 - 2022

July - May

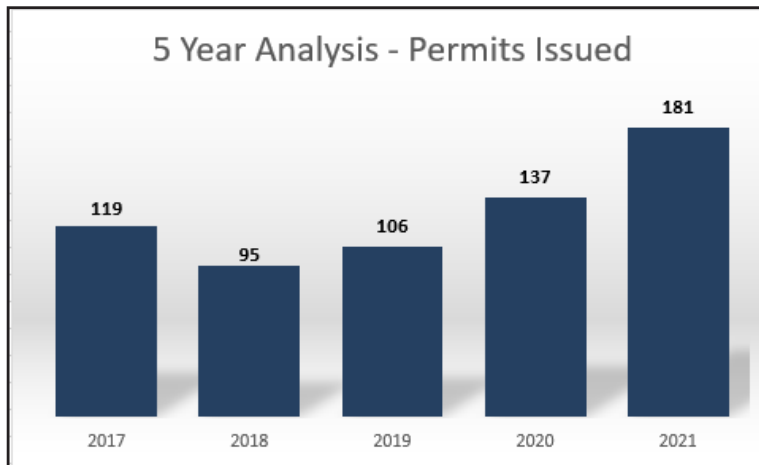
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| Vacation Rentals

\$30,042,937

| Estimated cost
of improvements

5 Year Analysis - Permits Issued



Perkins County

2021 - 2022

October - May

9

| Zoning Permits

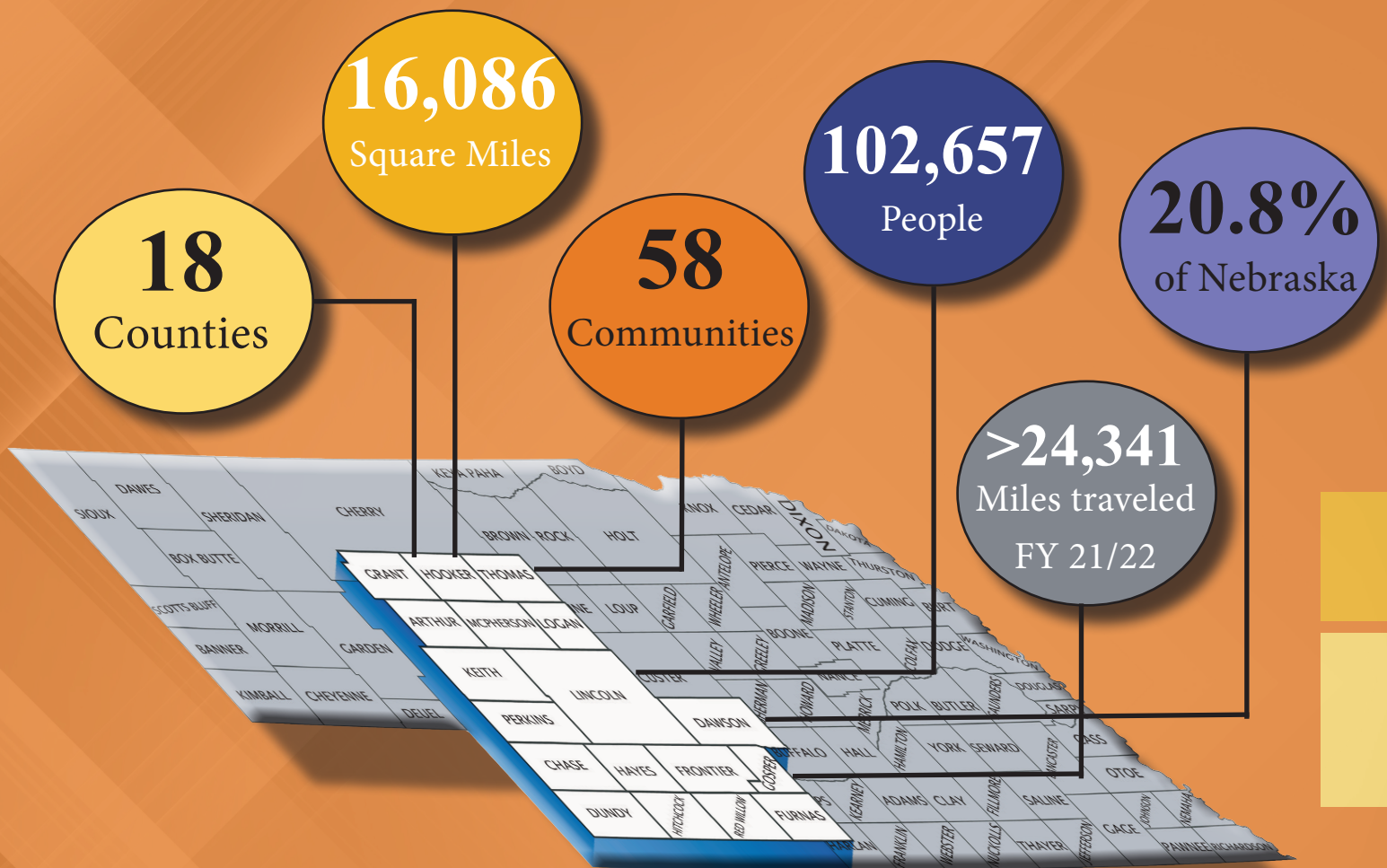
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| Conditional Use Permits |

Since 2017, WCNDD has administered, enforced, and interpreted the planning and zoning regulations for Keith County through proper legal channels, issuing zoning permits and maintaining records thereof, and providing a public information bureau relative to the regulations.

As of October of 2021, WCNDD assumed the same responsibilities for Perkins County.

- WCNDD IMPACT -



Local Solutions - Regional Impact

Is your community ready to take the next step?

We invite you to call or email us with your questions. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your community needs, plans, and initiatives.

Let us help your community grow!



Member of



NROC
Nebraska Regional
Officials Council

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