



January 2019

Housing and HomeNE—a Great Combination!

Housing continues to be a hot topic in our communities, wouldn't you agree!?!? The **HomeNE** Learning Network was created and is designed to assist participants in moving toward resolution of housing issues. How? Through active participation in the **HomeNE** Learning Network community leaders can: (1) develop capacity to recognize their unique housing needs; and, (2) gain the tools necessary to achieve lasting solutions.

HomeNE is now entering the second year of providing learning opportunities, via monthly online webinars and semi-annual face-to-face gatherings, to rural citizens interested in tackling their housing issues head-on and in doing so, changing the future of their community.

If you haven't participated yet in **HomeNE** opportunities, **here's what you missed in 2018:**

Ten informative webinars that covered a variety of housing related topics such as:

- Land Banks
- Community Clean-up
- Network Building in your Community
- Rural Workforce Housing
- Big Ideas on Building Tiny Homes (non-traditional housing)
- LB 840's role in Incentivizing Housing Solutions
- Investment Clubs as a local tool
- The Story of Stuart, Nebraska (the power of perseverance)
- The Value of a Learning Network (learning from South Dakota)
- Potential Legislation affecting Housing in 2019

Two **HomeNE** Gatherings where participants came together in an informal setting and learned from one another about other communities and people who are purposefully changing their future! Topics at the Gatherings included:

- The Power of Making the Ask! (Asking the public for proposals to gather solutions)
- A Developer's Perspective
- Getting Good Appraisals
- The Value of One...One Investment, One Initiative, One Employer
- Tiny Houses/Cottages
- A Shot in the Arm for Housing!

The **HomeNE** Learning Network was developed with **YOU** in mind! *Don't miss any more opportunities to help change the housing story line of your community.* Details about the next Gathering and monthly webinars can be found at www.scedd.us/homene.

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A Conversational Chat About SCEDD Community Successes in 2018



It doesn't seem possible that 2019 has arrived...indeed, the 2018 calendar year has come and gone and South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) has much to share and celebrate with our regional communities!

As a team here at SCEDD, we are always blown away by the intensity, hard work and dedication of our community members. Several of the funded projects listed were simple concepts and dreams at the beginning of 2018. The enterprising volunteer spirit continues to transform our communities into thriving places where people desire to live and work!

The **City of Sutton** received a **CDBG planning grant** to assist the City in conducting a study of downtown with specific attention being given to ADA accessibility.

Three communities received **CDBG project implementation grants**:

The **City of Wood River** will utilize funds to undertake the construction of a new community child care facility.

The **City of Franklin** and **Village of Elm Creek** will invest CDBG funds into **owner-occupied rehabilitation projects**.

The **Cities of Hastings and Minden** were recipients of **Economic Development grant funds** through the Department of Economic

Development. The funds will be utilized in **Hastings** for the creation of a new business that will add six new jobs. **Minden's** funds will be utilized in the expansion of a local business that will add 20 new jobs.

The **City of St. Paul** was the recipient of **USDA-Rural Economic Development grant funds** to loan/assist Howard County Medical Center to undertake clinic expansion and help finance the construction of a new medical pod. The funds will eventually provide a pool of re-use dollars to be utilized by other eligible businesses in the area.

The **City of Red Cloud** was honored as the **2018 Governor's Showcase Community Award** winner. This marks the third consecutive year that a SCEDD community has received the award. Previous honorees include the **City of Superior** and the **City of Hastings**.

Nebraska Investment Finance Authority funds are also being utilized in the **Village of Elm Creek** to undertake the completion of a comprehensive plan, comprehensive needs assessment and housing study. These community tools will serve to provide the Village leadership a solid foundation to guide and direct future growth of their community.

Many of these projects started with an idea, followed by a conversation with SCEDD. Does your community have an idea or a dream similar to those outlined? Currently, SCEDD is working with approximately 22 active communities and projects utilizing available funding to make dreams and priorities a reality for their citizens. SCEDD is available to help guide your community through the process as well.

So, let's have a conversation in 2019!

SCEDD's Rural Workforce Housing Revolving Loan Fund

The *Nebraska Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act* went into effect in August 2017, allowing over 7 million dollars of funds to be transferred from the Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund to the *Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund*. This action was monumental for rural Nebraska, with lawmakers, government officials, and Nebraska-centered organizations seeing the need and coming together in a focused effort on building housing for Nebraska's workforce. With a large portion of our rural homes built prior to 1940 and very little development since the 1980's, our housing stock hasn't kept pace with the needs in our communities. The lack of housing that is affordable and attractive to today's workforce is a major factor inhibiting economic development. How can a business expand or fill existing job applications if the applicants come to town and find no suitable housing?

With the establishment of the *Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund*, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) developed a grant program for non-profit development organizations to apply for matching funds in order to develop workforce housing. The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) jumped on the opportunity and offered additional funds to grant recipients. This was an incredible opportunity for SCEDD's region and directly in line with SCEDD's focus of assisting communities with workforce housing. SCEDD applied for the grant, sought donations from businesses and entities across our region, and on May 1st, Governor Ricketts announced that SCEDD was one of the 14 recipients of the *Rural Workforce Housing Fund*. This grant brought almost \$680,000 into our region to assist with rebuilding our housing stock.

SCEDD sends a huge THANK YOU to the organizations and donors who contributed financial matches and made possible this opportunity for South Central Nebraska!

- NDED (Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund)
- NIFA
- SCEDD
- Glenwood, Blue Hill
- First State Bank, Holdrege
- Bruning State Bank, Holdrege
- Minden Exchange & Trust, Minden

With this grant, SCEDD established a **Rural Workforce Housing Revolving Loan Fund**

to provide construction loans for workforce housing efforts in the SCEDD region. As a home is built and sold, the money is repaid to the fund and re-loaned for another project, creating a perpetual funding vehicle for our region.

Qualified Activities: Construction Loans for single family and multifamily housing built within SCEDD's region.

Eligible Entities: Communities, CDA/CRA, For-Profit entities, Not-For-Profit entities

Loan Amounts: \$50,000 - \$275,000 per owner-occupied unit
SCEDD currently has approved funding for projects in Holdrege, Central City, and St Paul. If you know of builders or organizations who are interested in building homes that are attractive and marketable to the workforce in your communities, let them know about this great program! **A simple, 1-page pre-application starts the process.**



Stam Rouse, CEO/General Manager of Glenwood, Blue Hill, presents a financial matching contribution to SCEDD Executive Director, Sharon Huefle.

Communities Implementing Nuisance Abatement See **SUCCESS!**

Nine communities contracted with SCEDD for the Nuisance Abatement Program in 2018. The assessment of over 1,000 parcels resulted in many property owners diligently cleaning up. This challenging program has proven to be very rewarding for towns seeking to deal with distressed properties. **These communities have found solutions for deteriorating homes with absentee owners, and chronically vacant and dilapidated properties.**

Distressed properties are pixels that negatively impact a community's image. One key element of the Nuisance Abatement Program is setting the stage to turn those distressed properties into viable assets in the community. We have seen communities like Superior and Franklin acquire some of the distressed properties identified in their Nuisance Program, demolish the dilapidated structures, and clear the properties with the intent of using them for future housing opportunities. Although this approach isn't possible for every nuisance property, taking advantage of opportunities that arise is an important step to development. Successfully resolving these properties is not for the faint of heart. It takes committed long-term leadership to address these complex problems within a community. Kudos to the communities of **Axtell, Bertrand, Blue Hill, Chapman, Clay Center, Franklin, Glenvil, Loomis, and Superior** for staying the course. Contact SCEDD if your community is interested in this program.



SCEDD STAFF

Sharon Hueftle
Executive Director
sharonh@scedd.us

Levi Adam
Deputy Director
levi@scedd.us

Lori Ferguson
Community Consultant
lorif@scedd.us

Sheri Alber
Fiscal Officer
sheri@scedd.us

Linda Martin
Staff Assistant
lindam@scedd.us

Kristy Borden
Grant Assistant
kristy@scedd.us

2018 Workshops – An Opportunity to Share and Learn from Others

SCEDD staff participated in the coordination and development of two successful workshops during 2018.

“Workforce Childcare – It’s Not just Child’s Play” was a very successful afternoon attended by over 35 individuals from across the state to gain a better understanding of how other communities have utilized different childcare approaches to satisfy the need to provide quality childcare to local employees and residents. Speakers from Kearney, Central City, Shickley and St. Paul spoke of their success in the development of their child care centers. Each speaker shared in detail the history of their center and what was instrumental in their development and operation. Resource providers from USDA-Rural Development, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Division as well as the Food Service Program, also spoke about funding and resource opportunities available to interested attendees looking to open or expand a childcare center.



“Flip It! Tips & Tools for Redeveloping Properties in your Community” – A Brownfields Resources Workshop was hosted by the City of Wood River in October. Approximately 30 individuals from a variety of communities and agencies gathered to learn about Brownfield properties and steps for successful redevelopment of the sites. Attendees also participated in a “field trip” to an existing Brownfield site in Wood River to gain firsthand knowledge and a better understanding of the true definition of a Brownfield. Speakers included representatives from the following:

- Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality,
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
- Kansas State University/Technical Assistance to Brownfields,
- Hall County Regional Planning, and
- Amos Anson (Grand Island) who has successfully renovated several downtown Grand Island buildings.

Participants left with a deeper knowledge that the presence of Brownfields are not an end to a community – but rather opportunities for clean-up and future redevelopment.

Interested in knowing more about these topics? Contact any of our SCEDD staff for assistance...we are here to help!

2019 Board Meeting Dates & Locations

- Jan 31, Adams County
- March 28, Buffalo County
- May 30, Clay County
- July 25, Franklin County
- Sept 26, Hall County
- Nov 28, Hamilton County

SCEDD Board Meetings are open to the public and begin at 5:30 PM on the last Thursday of odd months. More information can be found on <http://www.scedd.us>



401 East Avenue, 2nd Floor
PO Box 79
Holdrege, NE 68949
308.455.4770



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