
Northwest Economic Development Funding & STAR Bond Updates
Rachel Willis, Director of Legislative Affairs, Kansas Department of Commerce
Legislative Budget Committee
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Room 548 S

Thank you for allowing us to provide an update regarding the funding for economic development in Northwest Kansas. Currently, the grant agreements for the projects are being completed. The agency also continues to work with the developers and communities for each of the STAR Bond districts (Colby, Mattel and American Royal STAR Bond projects).

The funding allocation for Northwest Kansas economic development will serve as the catalyst to continue to enhance the region by improving infrastructure related to housing and commercial development. Each project includes a local contribution. The contributions vary, but generally include funding, resources and support from local government entities, programs, businesses and community organizations.

Below are some details about each project. Once the funding is dispersed, the grantee will be required to complete reporting, submit receipts or paid invoices and submit documentation of the project.

Atwood South 7th Street Project - \$750,000

The agency is working with a developer who will build nine houses in Atwood through the funding and utilization of the Reinvestment Housing Incentive District (RHID). RHID captures the incremental increase in real property taxes created by a housing development project for up to 25 years. The revenue can be used for reimbursement for incurred costs or to pay debt service on bonds.

Colby Drive-thru Access Project - \$427,325

The focus of this project is to redevelop an access road in Colby to improve customer traffic flow and safety in the area near the local Starbucks and the other retail and restaurants in the area. Grading, drainage, and utilities are other components in this project.

Colby Retail Development - \$4,736,125

This project will transform Colby into a major regional attraction. It will include a multi-purpose arena and equestrian center. Retail and hotel accommodations will surround the center making it a true destination attraction. The funding will support grading drainage, utilities and an access road on land located on the southwest side of I-70 and KS 25.

Hays 27th Street Project - \$4,447,000

The funding will be utilized for the development of the retail shopping center adjacent to the Home Depot. Specifically, the funding will support costs associated to land acquisition, architectural design, engineering and grading and similar infrastructure costs to another property located at the intersection of I-70 and Commerce Parkway.

Sharon Springs Infrastructure Improvement Project - \$1,000,000

The agency is working with developers who will develop 24 new lots on the west side of Sharon Springs. This will be the first housing project in this community in decades. This project will also utilize RHID.

Dane G. Hansen Foundation Housing Cooperative Project - \$4,000,000

Through a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation (\$1,000,000) and local communities, the project will include the development of more the 75 houses and 80 apartments. Both the foundation and local communities are financially contributing to the project and will continue to contribute into the future.

Russell Maple and Main Residential Development Project - \$1,500,000

Russell County and the City of Russell are partnering together for a multiple phase housing project that includes senior housing, single family homes and a community center. RHID will be utilized as well as other local economic development tools such as TIF and IRB.

STAR Bond Projects

Due to the size and complexity of a STAR Bond project, the planning and approval process takes time and is critically important. More details about the projects will be available after each of the districts are approved and bonds have been issued.

- Colby: The agency continues to work with the developer, and the project is progressing. They are working to finalize the district. The city approved a resolution authorizing the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding and a Funding Agreement in July. It will be located south of I-70 and west of KS 25. Tentatively, the project includes a multi-purpose arena and equestrian center that will focus on rodeos.
- Mattel: Currently, the developer is working with the city, and the project is progressing. The district has been established and the project is in an eligible area. The district will include an area in Bonner Springs that is west of Urbn Outfitters Fulfillment Center and at the corner of State Ave and Speedway Blvd. According to information publicly shared by Mattel earlier this spring, the new entertainment destination is set to open in 2026. It will include Hot Wheels roller coasters, larger-than-life Barbie Beach House and other Mattel themed activities and experiences.
- American Royal: The developer continues to work with the city to finalize the complete project plan. They have broken ground and begun construction. The location is just east of 118th Street and State Avenue and northwest of the Kansas Speedway. It will include almost seven football fields worth of space. Currently, the project will include arenas, a state-of-the-art learning and engagement center and 100 acres of space for livestock shows, the World Series of Barbecue competition and agricultural education.