



HOUSING

During the 2019 ORP Listening Tour, rural communities overwhelmingly identified access to safe, affordable, quality housing as a barrier to community growth. ORP partnered with the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) to lead the charge to address these concerns.

“ Home has never been more important. Our homes have always provided safety and shelter, but in the midst of the COVID pandemic, home has also become our virtual workplace, classroom, marketplace, and gathering space. ”

- Ryan Vincent, Kansas Housing Resources Corporation

ORP HOUSING WORK GROUP

In early 2020, ORP established an interagency team of leaders committed to finding collaborative solutions to the state's affordable housing shortage. The Housing Work Group was challenged to focus on public/private partnerships, expand moderate-income housing, encourage redevelopment of historic property, and coordinate state funds to maximize impact. A comprehensive statewide housing study was identified as a crucial first step in reaching these goals, as the study will establish the baseline data needed to evaluate current housing needs and resources and identify benchmarks for growth and development. The study is expected to be completed by the Spring of 2022 and will be the first statewide housing study completed since 1993.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

KHRC's housing development programs, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits, HOME Rental Development, and the National Housing Trust Fund, provide incentives to developers who create affordable housing opportunities for communities in need.

Local communities report that a lack of qualified developers in their region is one of the biggest barriers to expanding housing in rural areas, where profit margins are often low and overhead expenses high. KHRC has implemented several initiatives in the past year to encourage development in these underserved areas. Examples include revising the Qualified Allocation Plan, which governs how tax credits and housing resources are allocated across the state, to prioritize underserved communities. KHRC has also increased communication with development partners to ensure that programs and processes are transparent and expectations are clear.

KHRC Programs Across the State

THE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT (ESG) program works with a network of service providers to offer assistance to those who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless, including survivors of domestic violence.

THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG) program aims to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

TENANT BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE (TBRA) helps income-eligible households with rent and security and/or utility deposit payments. Assistance is distributed via a statewide network of grantees.

KHRC'S FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER PROGRAM helps income-eligible households purchase their first home by providing down payment assistance.

THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM helps income-eligible households improve their home's energy efficiency and reduce utility bills.



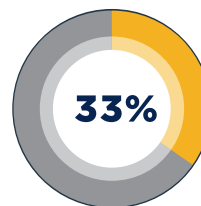
MODERATE INCOME HOUSING

Kansas' sole state-financed housing development program, [Moderate Income Housing \(MIH\)](#), serves the needs of rural households that don't qualify for federal housing assistance, yet often can't afford market-rate housing. MIH grants and/or loans are awarded to cities and counties to spur development of multifamily rental units and single-family, for-purchase homes in communities with populations of fewer than 60,000 people.

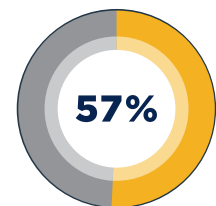
Since the program's establishment in 2012, the Kansas Legislature has allocated \$2 million annually to the initiative. KHRC, which administers the program at no cost to the state, has supplemented \$500,000 in additional funding. The MIH program has achieved a leverage factor of almost \$6 for every \$1 of state resources spent.

MIH groundbreaking Lindsborg, KS

From 2012-2020, KHRC received **164 applications** from communities requesting more than **\$48.5 million** in MIH funding. The program has **awarded more than \$16.7 million to 58 communities**. In 2020 alone, the program saw a 33% increase in applications and a 57% increase in requests, demonstrating the ongoing and growing need for this crucial assistance.



INCREASE IN MIH
APPLICATIONS IN 2020



INCREASE IN MIH
REQUESTS IN 2020

COVID RESPONSE

KHRC responded to heightened needs during the pandemic by scaling up ESG and CSBG operations. Supplemental ESG funding supported the operation of domestic violence and emergency housing shelters, financed crucial shelter renovations and improvements, and provided rapid rehousing and homeless prevention services. Supplemental CSBG funding supported rental and utility assistance, internet access, home winterization services, food assistance, and more for Kansans in need.

In response to the crisis over looming evictions, KHRC received \$20 million from the SPARK Taskforce to establish the [Kansas Eviction Prevention Program \(KEPP\)](#). While moratoriums provided tenants with temporary protection from eviction, KEPP assisted tenants by paying down accrued rent and landlords with monthly income and money to manage maintenance and upkeep.



Kansas Housing Resources Corporation is a self-supporting, nonprofit public corporation that administers housing and community programs across Kansas. Its mission is simple: help Kansans access the safe, affordable housing they need and the dignity they deserve.

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KANSAS RURAL CENTER TOWNHALL

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) invited Lieutenant Governor Rogers and ORP to participate in their 2020 virtual townhall series. Focusing on Rural Revitalization, Lieutenant Governor Rogers joined a panel moderated by rural advocate Sarah Green that included Andi Dale from Dale Family Farms in Protection, Kansas, Kendal Carswell from Fort Hays State University, Matt O'Malley from Live Well Crawford County, and Ben Whiteside from Butler Rural Electric Cooperative. In addition to discussing issues ranging from food deserts

to broadband access, the Lieutenant Governor and other panelists shared their optimism that rural residents and those who would like to be rural often bring an entrepreneurial spirit to the challenges they face. By focusing on improving access to good paying jobs, building a sense of community belonging, and ensuring a high quality of life where everyone can raise a family, rural Kansas communities can unite around common goals and cultivate new leaders to carry their efforts forward.

HOUSING IMPACTS ON WORKFORCE

Communities throughout Kansas have expressed the need for quality, affordable, and accessible housing. In North Central Kansas, economic development foundations are particularly concerned about how housing and rental options impact a community's ability to recruit and retain a thriving workforce. The Kansas Sampler Foundation led a discussion with ORP and representatives from Lincoln, Republic, Ellsworth, and Cloud counties to discuss communities' challenges and possible solutions.

Participants noted that since COVID, they have seen an increase in young people trying to return home to enjoy small-town life but are hindered due to the lack of housing options. While this was a problem well before the pandemic, the lack of quality housing and rental options has been exacerbated. More people are willing to consider moving back to or remaining in rural areas with increased remote work options. Available homes in rural communities often need renovations, but cost and time for renovations make it more difficult for employers to attract and recruit employees. As discussed throughout

this report, recruiting and retaining workforce in rural areas is reliant on other priorities such as adequate housing, broadband, childcare, and other aspects that lead to a high quality of life.

Local communities are looking into possible solutions that include helping residents improve their spaces, renovate, and make additions. Participants from Lincoln County expressed that the distance between houses and nearby towns is a major problem. Area real estate agents, sellers, and buyers collaborated to showcase available housing options in surrounding communities. Republic County Economic Development is working closely with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation to help assess demand for housing while promoting a homeownership program funded by the foundation that offers low-interest housing payment loans. Additionally, Kansas Housing Resources Corporation is working with ORP to continue to expand statewide programs and resources and provide local communities with data and strategies to address their local housing needs.

EXPANDING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation's Virtual Housing Conference, Lieutenant Governor Rogers shared ORP's priorities and work to expand affordable, quality housing across the state. The session explored potential strategies to preserve and develop housing opportunities, bring growth and prosperity to rural communities, and serve

the state's most vulnerable citizens. With Kansas not having a comprehensive statewide housing study since 1993, ORP is excited to work with KHRC and other key agencies and stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive study provides effective data, recommendations, and strategies to respond to housing needs across the state.

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN NORTHWEST KANSAS

In recent years, attention has been drawn to data that show an increase in suicide rates among Kansas farmers, especially in Northwest Kansas (NWKS). One group involved in this effort, LiveWell Northwest Kansas, coordinated a series of regional mental health forums to begin addressing critical needs with healthcare providers, schools, regional non-profit organizations, and regional mental healthcare providers. These forums identified potential areas for growth in the region including building awareness for adverse childhood experiences, training residents in compassionate listening and the role of family trauma, identifying initiatives to address social isolation, and creating awareness around mental health issues impacting NWKS.

ORP met with key stakeholders who coordinated the forums, as well as other stakeholders across Kansas including health foundations, education advocates, and the Commissioner of Behavioral Health Services for the State of Kansas. Key issues discussed included the recommendations of the 2018-2019 Mental Health Taskforce, which the Kansas Department of Disability and Aging Services is working to implement with the legislature,

the Governor, and stakeholders to make the behavioral health system more seamless and accessible. Recommendations include expanding Medicaid, restoring and increasing outpatient services, improving drug and substance abuse services, increasing inpatient psychiatric facilities, improving regional infrastructure, and increasing short-term psychiatric care to relieve pressure on long-term care facilities.

While COVID-19 has caused delays or complicated efforts to implement necessary programs to address mental and behavioral health, rural communities have benefited from increased accessibility to telehealth services. Patients, providers, and hospitals all agreed that the distance to care is a major obstacle regardless of the public health crisis and access to telehealth will remain a priority. This is especially true for farmers, who are sometimes unable to adjust their schedules to planting and harvesting conditions. By increasing accessibility through remote services, they will be more likely to talk to someone — even if it means simply pulling over their tractor to have that important conversation.