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Visionary Statement

Kansas Small Towns Environment Program Grant

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City of Horton, Kansas, Community Building

I. Executive Summary. The Visionary Committee for the revitalization of the Horton Community Building has identified two goals for the rehabilitation of the Community Building: to make the facility multi-purpose and to make the facility a cornerstone to the economic development of the Horton community. The City, through its City Commission and City Administrator, have identified the goals of making the facility American's with Disabilities Act compliant, improving the energy efficiency of the facility, and making the facility available for use year-round.

II. The Visionary Committee.

The Visionary Committee was chosen through a nomination process by the project *Spark Plugs* that attempted to choose one-member from each community organization, including churches, business leaders, and strong community volunteers. Among those members who were in attendance and who have worked diligently over the last two-months to develop a comprehensive list of uses – or vision – for the Community Building were: Mrs. Donna Hallauer, Horton Chamber of Commerce and Secretary for Horton Senior Citizens, Inc.; Dr. Steve Davies, Parks & Recreation Commissioner and U.S.D. 430 Superintendent; Ms. Shirley Platt, community volunteer and organizer; Mr. Tom Reed, business owner and community volunteer; Mr. Rodney Paden, business owner, community volunteer, financial contributor and spark plug for grant process; Pastor John Wright, former pastor of the First Baptist Church and community volunteer; Mr. Keith Olsen, Brown County 4-H Fair Board member, organizer of the annual Better Beef Days event, and community volunteer; Mr. Harold "Hap" Arnold, a retired professional engineer with the Kansas Department of Transportation; Mrs. Pat Scott, Hospital Auxiliary Association; and Mr. Doug Schmitt, a community volunteer and spark plug for the grant process.

III. The Community.

The City of Horton was established on September 20, 1886, as a railroad community along the former Rock Island Railroad system. Within two-years of its incorporation, the community had over 4,000 residents. However, the railway system began to decline in the 1930s and 1940s and continued to decline until the last train rolled through Horton in 1984. While Horton was able to maintain one

company that was able to adapt into different product lines and still maintains its company headquarters and operations in Horton today, most of the industry that was associated with the railroad system left with the railroads,

According to the 2000 Census, Horton has approximately 1,967 residents. The per capita income in 1999 dollars was \$13,063.00; fifty-eight percent of the residents were classified as low-to-moderate income; and nearly one-quarter of the population over 25-years old are lacking a high school diploma or equivalent. These were all statistics reported to the Visionary Committee prior to their development of a vision, and they are statistics that the committee has formed much of their ideas and vision.

IV. History of Building & Building Purposes.

At the April 2, 1963 election, the voters and citizens of the City of Horton passed a question submitted proposition for the purpose of building a community building and to issue bonds in the amount of \$30,000.00.

The Community Building is a steel framed structure with tin-metal exterior walls and roofing, and the floor of the building is concrete. The exterior walls of the facility are not insulated, making the productivity of the facility in the winter a very rare occasion. The current floor plan of the building allows the building to be segregated into two sections; however, only one section has bathrooms.

Since the grand opening of the building, it has served a very diverse set of purposes, from Civil Defense trainings in the mid-to-late 1960s to auctions, flea markets, weddings and receptions, Pow-Wows, wrestling tournaments, and the exhibition of Brown County Fair 4-H items. Other distinct purposes of the building in past years has been for conduct of general government; however, with the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, polls in the City of Horton have been consolidated and general government is not longer conducted within the building.

V. The Vision.

The Visionary Committee was asked to envision a community facility that could accomplish two primary goals of the community: be available for use year round, be American's with Disabilities Act compliant, and improve the energy efficiency of the facility.

The Community Building, in its current state, cannot be used for year-round purposes, because the heating, ventilation, and insulation are insufficient to keep the building warm during the winter months. Improving the heating, ventilation and insulation of the building is, moreover, imperative, because the City currently incurs an average \$500.00 natural gas bill to keep the facility at a temperature that prevents

freezing of water lines within the building. Additionally, the Community Building is not American's with Disabilities Act compliant.

Taking these two objectives into consideration, the Visionary Committee has, over the period of several months, developed a vision for future uses and accommodations of the Horton Community Building. The Visionary Committee identified two main objectives with the rehabilitation of the Community Center: to allow the facility to be used for *multiple purposes* at one time and as a *cornerstone to economic development in the community*.

Currently, the building is divided into two sections; however, only one of the sections has bathrooms, causing interference if there are two different events being held in the facility. The Visionary Committee desires a floor plan that would segregate the restrooms from the rest of the building, and allow multiple events to be held without interference from other events. This vision would also help to decrease the costs of heating and cooling the facility, because it would allow the partitioning of the building; thus, increasing the energy efficiency of the facility.

Because there are currently no non-denominational facilities available for wedding receptions, family and class reunions, economic development forums, and business development trainings, the City of Horton is in need of a building that serves a wider set of purposes.

A. Class & Family Reunions, Marriages, and Wedding Receptions.

While the current building is suitable for class and family reunions in the summertime, in the spring, fall or winter, it can become difficult to due to weather. For example, in the spring, when the rain falls, it is impossible to speak person-to-person without dramatically increasing the volume of voices. Additionally, the building does not have a kitchen that is available for all to use. While there is a kitchen in the building, the kitchen was privately constructed by the Hospital Auxiliary Association in the 1970s with the blessing of the Horton City Commission for use during the County Fair for the purpose of raising funds to support the hospital. The Visionary Committee has envisioned a full-use kitchen that is available to all parties who are requesting the use of the Community Building.

B. Economic Development.

The City of Horton is a funding member of Enterprise Facilitation, an organization funded in part by a grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce, which is based on a conceptual framework developed by Ernesto Sirolli of the Sirolli Institute for small business development. This organization rotates its meeting place to highlight the attractions of the communities hosting the meetings. The City of

Horton, however, is unable at this point to host such a large group given the poor acoustics and environment of the Community Building.

Additionally, the City of Horton has two members who are on the Executive Board of the Northeast Kansas Rural Development Association, which also focuses on providing grants for small business start-up and acting as an intermediary between local governments for the abatement of taxes under such programs as Neighborhood Revitalization and Downtown Revitalization. Again, the City of Horton is unable to host these events and provide local entrepreneurs with an opportunity within close proximity to their places of business or homes.

C. Small Business Development.

Glacial Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is currently and has for the last four-to-five years conducted small business development trainings in the Horton City Hall. The classes usually last four-to-six weeks, and often conflict with city committee meetings. The Visionary Committee identified the Community Building as a facility that could be used for small business and entrepreneurial development.

D. Watershed Restoration and Best Management Practice Seminars.

In the April 2005 city-school election, the voters of the City of Horton authorized the issuing of \$4 million in bonds for the rehabilitation of the city's central water supply, Mission Lake. In 2002, Mission Lake was listed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment as exceeding the total daily maximum loadings for phosphorus and atrizene under the Clean Water Act and, thereby, excluded as a source of municipal water for the City.

In executing the rehabilitation project, the City of Horton has become a vested stakeholder with Glacial Hills RC&D in the administration of a Kansas Department of Health and Environment grant for the restoration and protection of the Delaware River watershed. This project, known as Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS), will ensure that the taxpayer's money will not be wasted and future of Mission Lake will again not fall victim to pollution and poor water quality control standards.

On Tuesday, April 11, 2006, the City of Horton held a WRAPS forum, which was demonstrative of the need for an updated Community Building. Approximately half-way through the forum, it began to rain, at which point it became impossible to hear persons speaking from across the room, let alone within close proximity. The meeting was adjourned, with nearly half of the agenda remaining.

E. General Education & Expansion of Regional College Courses.

A cornerstone to developing the Horton economy is education. As cited under the 2000 Census figures, nearly one-quarter of the adult population of the City of Horton lacks a high school diploma or equivalent. This statistic is not only facially startling, but it is also a major contributor to the lack of industry and professional positions available in the Horton community. Dr. Steve Davies, a Visionary Committee member and also Superintendent of the Unified School District 430, has begun working with several individuals so that they may reach their high school equivalency. Additionally, as persons are able to reach their equivalency, the Visionary Committee, as well as the Horton City Planning Commission and contracted City Planning Consultant, expect that some of these individuals will seek to continue their education. Currently, there are approximately 12 classes held annually during the fall, spring and summer by Highland Community College for persons seeking college credit. The Visionary Committee believed the Community Building would provide an excellent facility to expand courses currently being offered in Horton.

VI. The Plan.

Members of the Visionary Committee believe that, structurally, the Community Building is sound. It is, rather, the lack of insulation and ventilation, poor floor design, and poor acoustics that contribute to the facility being antiquated for the needs of the community nearly 42-years after its construction. The Visionary Committee, therefore, felt that the facility, rather than being completely demolished, could be rehabilitated much easier by volunteers and would be able to meet the demands of the new century. The plan, therefore, is to remove all exterior and interior walls, leaving only the concrete pad and steel structure to the building, and to rebuild the facility around the existing steel structure to meet the needs and vision identified by the Visionary Committee.

VII. Conclusion.

In sum, the City of Horton, as a community, does not have an appropriate facility for the conduct of any economic or business development trainings, forums for legislative or not-for-profit community development, or for trainings. Conducting these events is imperative for the economic well-being of the Horton community, which has economically declined since the last railway freight train rolled through town in 1984.