

Available Housing Among Hiawatha Needs

(KNZA)--Hiawatha industry and business leaders have identified a lack of employees in the local area as the biggest issue they face.

Hiawatha Foundation for Economic Development Director Kristen Hillyer told the City Commission Monday evening that twenty business and industry leaders attended a recent round table hosted by HFED. Lyle Peterson from the Kansas Department of Commerce helped facilitate the conversation.

Hillyer said at least three of the community's larger businesses are bussing in employees daily from Topeka or St. Joseph to fill positions, with a lack of housing identified as a big issue in Hiawatha. "A lot of people were saying, you know, that there's a need for a house under \$200,000 with at least three bedrooms, two bathrooms. While there may be some of those houses on the market, they might need a considerable amount of work to update them at the moment and those people may not have the resources or the time to do that," Hillyer told the Commission. "I know some of the people at the round table discussed that they might have somebody who is able to work coming in from another town, but those people aren't able to find housing."

Hillyer said a lack of contractors was also raised as a concern, including the difficulty to find a contractor without a long waiting list, and those willing to complete small projects. "We hope that we can get a group of local contractors here to talk with us about how we might be able to help them, or if working with the Highland Community College Trade Center or the Manhattan school or the school in Beloit, to just talk about what we need and how we get those people again to come back here."

Beautifying Hiawatha was also addressed during the round table, including concerns regarding the city's image to out of area visitors, such as the site of dilapidated homes in some parts of town.

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