

Housing, Workforce, Key Concerns In Hiawatha (KNZA)--Building the local workforce and a lack of housing.

Those remain the two key areas of need identified by Hiawatha based businesses, as relayed to the Hiawatha Foundation for Economic Development.

Executive Director Kristen Hillyer recently took the information to the Hiawatha City Commission, presented as part of HFED's quarterly report.

Hillyer said steps are being taken to address the issues, including ways to increase the local workforce. "Starting this fall, we are going to be covering the cost for high school juniors to take the ACT Work Keys Assessment. The cost to cover the test is \$15.00 per student. [It's] a tool to help both the student and the employer and eventually it can help a community as well as a recruiting tool for economic development."

Hillyer says housing needs are also being addressed, with a meeting recently held with an Excel Corporation representative focused on options related to that issue. "There are three different options: Low Income, Senior Living, and Market Rate. The Low Income Housing option would require resident to meet income guidelines. The Senior Living Complex would require incoming and age requirements, and then the Market Rate would require a group of investors to cover the cost of the home, but there would not be any income restrictions on those homes."

No decision is yet made on which, if any of the options, might be pursued.

Additionally, Hillyer says a special informational seminar is being planned, with the session to provide planning assistance to those entering their retirement years. "We're also working with the Washburn Small Business Development Center to offer a transition seminar in Hiawatha. This seminar would focus on contingency planning, legal issues, evaluation, and financial planning. The cost is going to be \$45.00 and we plan to offer a discounted rate to HFED members with HFED covering the additional cost of the training."

The 3-hour training seminar will be scheduled for sometime in the fall.

Along with the update, Hillyer formally presented HFED's budget request for 2016, with the organization seeking assistance in the amount of \$17,000.

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