

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Lisa Burke, Executive Director

Visit North Platte

101 Halligan Drive, North Platte, NE 69101, (308) 532-4729

lburke@visitnorthplatte.com

Visit North Platte Awards \$2.7 Million in Improvement Grants

Visit North Platte has been awarding Improvement Fund Grants annually for the past seventeen years. Over this time, they have committed a total of \$3.2 million to improving tourism facilities and services in Lincoln County. On August 23, 2023, the Visit North Platte Board of Directors met to review applications and hear presentations from four local organizations before awarding this funding for the eighteenth year. The day ended with the largest commitment for a single grant cycle in the organization's history with \$2.7 million being awarded. Not only does this bring the total amount of Improvement Fund Grants awarded from Visit North Platte to \$5.9 million, but it also highlights the continued success of the travel and tourism industry in Lincoln County.

The money that flows into the Improvement Fund of Visit North Platte is generated entirely by a lodging tax on overnight lodging in Lincoln County. With ongoing efforts from Visit North Platte, tourism has seen success in North Platte and the surrounding area, which makes these funds a force for improving not only the services provided to visitors, but also for enhancing the quality of life for the residents of our communities.

The applications reviewed in this week's meeting had a total of \$2.75 million in requests for projects representing a total investment of \$48.8 million in improvements to area historical and recreational facilities. Considering the history of the fund in Lincoln County, the Improvement Fund Grant guidelines, and the precedence set by seventeen years of previous recommendations and awards, the Board of Directors at Visit North Platte have chosen to provide the following funding.

- ***The Board of Directors approved \$9,116 in funding for the Carriage House project at the Lincoln County Historical Museum.*** Jim Griffin presented an Improvement Fund Grant application to replace the roof on the historical Carriage House with a new wood shingle roof. The Lincoln County Historical Museum is truly a local treasure, proven by the fact that visitation has grown from 7,500 annually to more than 24,000 under the curatorship of Jim Griffin. Maintaining the condition and historical integrity of the artifacts, including the historical buildings, is an important part of attracting these visitors.
- ***The Board of Directors approved \$56,000 in funding to Legion Baseball for the purchase and installation of a tie back system at Bill Wood Field.*** Currently, the backstop system at Bill Wood Field between home plate and the spectator area

poses a safety risk for players and spectators alike. This dated metal structure is leaning due to wind damage and is not large enough to keep foul balls from entering the crowd. Replacing this outdated baskstop with a new tie back system that is not only sturdier, but also significantly larger, will offer a safer experience to all baseball enthusiasts at Bill Wood Field.

- ***The Board of Directors approved \$135,000 in funding to 308 BMX for the construction of an outdoor Bicycle Motocross Track in North Platte.*** Sports tourism is an ever-increasing segment of tourism in Lincoln County and having a Bicycle Motocross Track in our community will allow us to host multiple levels of BMX Races throughout the spring, summer, and even fall months. Visit North Platte has been working with 308 BMX since 2017 and is excited to see this project advance forward. Another component of the mission of the Visit North Platte is assisting in the development of amenities such as this for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.
- ***The Board of Directors approved \$2,500,000 in funding to the City of North Platte to help with the addition of six new regulation sized basketball courts in the expansion of the North Platte Rec Center.*** Multi-use facilities can propel a community to economic prosperity by bringing in major sporting events that have a significant impact on the area economy. Having a facility with six regulation sized basketball courts that can be used for a multitude of events such as basketball tournaments, volleyball tournaments, pickleball tournaments, and more is a huge asset to any community. It has been the vision of the Visit North Platte Board of Directors for many years to have a facility which will allow our community to host these types of sports tourism events year-round, especially during months with inclement weather. The board recognizes that the proposed investment in this facility will draw in positive economic impact by providing the space needed to host tournaments, while simultaneously benefiting North Platte residents. Funding will be distributed to the City of North Platte over a twenty-year period.

The next round of Improvement Grant Funding will open on January 1, 2024. April 1, 2024, is the deadline for intent to apply letters, with the application deadline being July 31, 2024. Anyone interested in submitting a grant application is encouraged to contact Lisa Burke, Executive Director of Visit North Platte, at 308-532-4729 to discuss their project.

It is very important to emphasize that the activities of Visit North Platte are funded solely through lodging tax revenue that consists of a 2% collection for promotion activities and a 2% collection for Improvement activities. No other public funds, not property taxes nor sales taxes, are administered by Visit North Platte. The Visit North Platte Board of Directors takes very seriously the responsibility entrusted to it to administer the funds received from lodging tax revenue. The traveling public who pays these taxes when they stay overnight in Lincoln County must have confidence that their investment is used to enhance their experience while in our communities. The Board of Directors believes that the above funding fulfills this trust and represents the greatest return on investment of the lodging tax revenue. Both our communities and our visitors will benefit from this further expansion.

###