The success of Village West continues as the Unified Government continues to pay off millions of dollars in STAR Bonds ahead of schedule.

Because of strong revenues generated by The Legends Outlets and other Village West businesses, the Unified Government has pre-paid $50 million toward outstanding STAR Bond debt in the last six months. That’s money above and beyond the scheduled payments due. Sales tax revenues generated by The Legends and Village West are up 12% over the same period last year.

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The Unified Government issued nearly $295 million in STAR Bonds between 2001 and 2005. By June of 2012, only $62.4 million will remain. With this high level of prepayment, it’s projected the 2005 STAR Bonds used to help build The Legends Shopping Center will be paid off in 2013.

Once those 2005 STAR bonds are paid, revenues will then be used to pay-off the bonds used to build the LiveSTRONG Sporting Park. All of the Village West STAR Bonds are projected to be paid off by 2017, four years ahead of the original payment schedule.

Unified Government Mayor Joe Reardon recently presented Bonner Springs Mayor Clause Smith and Edwardsville Mayor John McGaggart with their cities’ first payment as part of the unprecedented interlocal agreement for the three cities to share casino revenues.

“This is a historic day for Wyandotte County. I doubt that you will find this level of cooperation anywhere else. I firmly believe that whatever is good for Bonner Springs is good for Edwardsville and the Unified Government,” said Mayor Smith. “By working together, we will all prosper.”

“We are excited today to receive the first of many checks from gaming revenues, which represent the spirit of cooperation in Wyandotte County”, said Edwardsville Mayor John “Tiny” McGaggart. “We are fortunate that the mayors representing the three cities in the county supported cooperation versus competition in bringing first class gaming to our community.”

The inter-local agreement established the criteria for the amount of revenue to be shared among all three cities. For the initial monthly distribution, the Unified Government share, including both Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, is 19%.

How Hollywood Casino Benefits the Community

Unified Government Mayor Joe Reardon is calling for millions of dollars in new casino revenues to be used for long term reductions in local property taxes. Reardon says cutting property taxes should be the first commitment Unified Government officials make with the casino revenues and he is urging other elected boards to follow.

“I commit to you today that I will support a budget that holds the line on property taxes next year and develops a plan for the long term property tax reduction our citizens deserve. Even in the midst of challenging economic times, it is time for the Unified Government to get to work, get back on track, and move forward with our long term strategy to lower property taxes,” declared Reardon.

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The Unified Government’s website is among the most transparent government websites in the nation, according to the national nonprofit organization Sunshine Review.

Sunshine Review, an organization that’s dedicated to promoting government transparency and citizen engagement, released the winners of the third annual Sunny Awards on Thursday. The award, which honors the most transparent government websites in the nation, went to 214 government entities. The Unified Government received an A for city and county websites.

“We’re constantly communicating and working collaboratively with the IT Department to provide easy access to useful information for residents who want to know more about their local government,” said Public Information Officer, Edwin Birch. “We are honored to receive a Sunny Award and committed to continuing efforts to ensure transparency by providing the necessary information to keep our citizens informed.”

For the 2012 awards, Editors at Sunshine Review analyzed more than 6,000 government websites and graded each on a 10-point transparency checklist. Editors looked at content available on government websites against what should be provided. They sought information on items such as budgets, meetings, lobbying, financial audits, contracts, academic performance, public records and taxes. The winners of the Sunny Award all received an “A” grade during the extensive grading process.

“The Sunny Awards recognize state and local governments that are doing an exemplary job at proactively disclosing information to taxpayers,” said Michael Barnhart, President of Sunshine Review. “We would like to congratulate the Unified Government for being a champion for transparency and serving as a leader to every state and local government around the nation.”

Six states earned nearly half of the 214 Sunny Awards given. Florida led all states on the list with the most Sunny Awards (28), Texas (21), Illinois (19), Virginia (14), Ohio (10) and Pennsylvania (10). In addition, ten states earned an “A” grade for their state government website including, Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, New York, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Washington and West Virginia. The winners also included school districts and city and county governments.

There were 2 school districts and a total of 7 local governments in the state of Kansas that received a Sunny Award. To see the full listing, visit the Sunshine Review website: http://sunshinereview.org/index.php/2012_Sunny_Awards

Sunshine Review is a nonprofit organization dedicated to state and local government transparency. Sunshine Review collaborates with individuals and organizations throughout America in the cause of an informed citizenry and a transparent government. Since its inception in 2008, Sunshine Review has analyzed the websites of all 50 states and more than 6,000 state and local entities.

Google Launches KCK Fiber Project

Google is starting construction in KCK on its ultra-high speed fiber project which will provide homes and businesses with the fastest internet connections anywhere.

In the Google Fiber project, googlefiberblog.blogspot.com, Google executive Kevin Lo posted the following message:

“We’ve measured utility poles; we’ve studied maps and surveyed neighborhoods; we’ve come up with a comprehensive set of detailed engineering plans; and we’ve eaten way too much barbecue. Now, starting today, we’re ready to lay fiber. At first, we’ll focus on building this solid fiber backbone. Then, as soon as we have an infrastructure that is up and running, we’ll be able to connect Google Fiber into homes across Kansas City!”

The company hasn’t said which neighborhoods will be connected first. The Google Fiber will deliver 1 gigabit-per-second Internet connections with downloads 100 times faster than most Americans can get in their homes with existing broadband services. Uploads of data to the Internet will move at the same speed, or roughly 1,000 times faster than most American households.

The Citizen Newsletter is published by the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, 66101. It is mailed to every residential address in Wyandotte County. Due to postage costs, copies are not mailed outside Wyandotte County. An electronic version is posted on the official Unified Government website at www.wycokck.org.

Comments or questions can be sent to Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director at mtaylor@wycokck.org.

In accordance with the Department of Justice regulations, the Unified Government’s Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEOP), is available on the Unified Government website at www.wycokck.org.
New Developments Grow Across County

The economic success of the Village West and Kansas Speedway developments grab a lot of attention, but that doesn’t mean the rest of the community has been forgotten. The tax revenue generated by the crowds of shoppers and tourists at Village West have stabilized the tax base and are helping pay for improvements in the older urban neighborhoods of KCK.

• Prescott Plaza at 18th and I-70 is a very successful project which brought the first new grocery store to the urban core in 30 years along with restaurants and shops. A new Sunfresh Market has opened in Turner and the new Happy Foods Grocery opened at 55th and Leavenworth Road.

• The 39 Rainbow Project is under construction in Rosedale near KU Med Center. It is a $40-million mixed use development with a hotel, retail stores and housing.

• New Dollar General and Family Dollar stores are opening in several urban neighborhoods bringing the convenience and economic boost of new retail to older areas of KCK.

• The $14-million Children’s Campus building in downtown KCK is a landmark project in both its benefits to downtown and its important work to help KCK children.

• The Unified Government commits $2-million a year to improve aging streets in the urban core. Parallel Parkway from 5th to 9th streets is reconstructed. State Avenue to Fairfax was repaved. New curbs and sidewalks have been built along a 10 block stretch of Quindaro Blvd. Millions have been spent across the urban core from Argentine and Armourdale to Quindaro and Midtown improving sewers to prevent flooding.

• The Complete Streets program will bring curbs, sidewalks and bike paths to urban neighborhoods. Using federal funds, the Unified Government built sidewalks along State Avenue in Midtown and is moving toward the start of Bus Rapid Transit from downtown Kansas City, Missouri to Village West.

• New housing has been constructed in Strawberry Hill, Quindaro, Rosedale, Turner and Midtown.

• The Indian Springs project, while not yet redeveloped, demonstrates the Unified Government commitment to improvements in the urban core and eastern part of KCK.

• AWG is constructing a new office complex

• Sara Lee opened a new state-of-the-art sliced meat manufacturing facility

• Cerner Corp is building two nine story office towers in Village West

• Zeolyst International is adding 43,000 square feet to its existing facility

• General Motors Fairfax Assembly Plant is investing $20m in machinery and equipment

State Avenue Transit Improvements

The State Avenue CONNEX project, funded by a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant, is nearing the end of the architectural design and engineering phase. The Unified Government was awarded the $10.5-million federal grant to construct enhanced bus stations along the State Avenue corridor in Kansas City, Kansas.

The improved and enhanced bus corridor is currently scheduled to include 32 new or improved bus stations as well as two brand new bus “MetroCenters” located at 7th and Minnesota Avenue and 47th and State Avenue. Construction on the State Avenue CONNEX project is scheduled to begin this Spring and be completed in Fall 2013.

Better Bus Stops Coming

New bus stop shelters, benches, and other passenger amenities are planned for the UG Transit bus system. Transportation experts are analyzing information to decide the best places for the improvements. Bus stop and amenity installation is determined by many variables. The primary factors that determine installation are funding, boarding activity at that stop, space availability and right-of-way issues at specific locations.
Budget and Tax Facts

How One of Your 2011 Tax Dollars Is Spent for a Household in USD #500

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Unified Government Budget Facts

- The Unified Government has a long history of excellence in its budget and accounting practices. The Unified Government has been awarded the prestigious Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada for 11 consecutive years.

- The 2012 Unified Government Budget is in compliance with all State budget laws and accepted governmental accounting practices. It is a balanced budget which accurately reflects the policy decisions adopted by the Unified Government Board of Commissioners.

- The increase in property tax rate was necessary to avoid further cuts in service, employee lay-offs and rebuild cash reserves. Even with the tax rate increase, property owners will pay less in city-county property tax for the 2012 budget than they paid in 2009.

- The property tax rate is still much lower than before the Unified Government was created. In 1997 it was 97 mills. Now it’s 81.6 mills.

- The Unified Government receives less than half of the total tax bill paid by a Wyandotte County resident.

- Unified Government debt, the money borrowed to pay for streets, sewers and other public improvements, is in line with other communities. The total Unified Government bonded debt per citizen is $1,741. The total city-county debt per person for Overland Park is $1,536. The total city-county debt per person in Olathe is $2,108.

- The Unified Government can and will repay the money it’s borrowed. While the Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s credit rating agencies expressed caution about low cash reserves, both give the Unified Government a “AA” bond rating.

- The Village West and Kansas Speedway development is an economic success. The STAR Bonds used to finance the development will be paid off in 2017, four years ahead of schedule freeing up millions a year in sales tax now used to retire the STAR Bonds.

- Unlike the Power and Light District in downtown Kansas City or the Bass Pro development in Independence, the taxpayers of Wyandotte County are not at risk if the Village West development would fail and the bond payments fall short. That’s because the STAR bonds are backed by private investors, not taxpayers.

- The Unified Government will soon collect millions a year in property taxes and gaming revenues from the Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway.
Economic Development Facts

**Business Licenses Issued, 2002 - 2011**

![Graph showing business licenses issued from 2002 to 2011](image)

**Village West Real & Personal Property Taxes Levied, 2003-2011**

![Graph showing village west property taxes levied from 2003 to 2011](image)

**Major Kansas City, Kansas Developments in 2010 & 2011**

- **Permit Owner**
  - LC Sporting
  - Beatrice Meats (Sara Lee)
  - USD 450
  - PO Corporation (2011)
  - Providence Medical Center
  - 39th & Rainbow Develop. (2011)
  - United Gov’t/BPU
  - Performance Toyota
  - Kansas University Endowment
  - General Motors (2011)
  - Cerner Corporation (2011)
  - Kohls
  - Kansas Speedway
  - USD 450 (2011)
  - Piper School Dist. (2011)
  - Kansas Speedway Corp.
  - Kansas City KS Comm. Collage (2011)
  - KC Sporting
  - CVS Pharmacy
  - Red Lobster
  - Liberty Fruit
  - Kansas City KS Comm. Collage
  - Casey’s General Store

- **Permit Value**
  - $124,420,253
  - $128,887,000
  - $34,500,000
  - $12,320,000
  - $10,875,806
  - $9,777,000
  - $8,050,000
  - $7,945,000
  - $6,350,000
  - $6,000,000
  - $5,400,000
  - $5,253,000
  - $3,850,000
  - $3,500,000
  - $3,034,446
  - $2,500,000
  - $2,087,863
  - $1,719,730
  - $1,588,695
  - $1,500,000
  - $1,419,962
  - $1,367,000
  - $1,230,000
  - $1,011,800

- **Type of Business/Improvement**
  - New Soccer Stadium
  - New Casino
  - Sara Lee Remodel/Addition
  - Education Center/Admin. Bldg.
  - Two New Chemical Manuf. Facilities
  - Adult Care Facility
  - New Hotel
  - Switching & Step-Down Substation
  - New Car Dealership
  - New Headquarters Bldg.
  - Room and Body Shop Additions
  - Street Improvements & other pre-construction work
  - New Retail Store
  - Speedy Lights Installation
  - Additions to Thomas A. Edison Elem. School
  - Middle School Addition & Remodel
  - Casino (site utilities)
  - Interior Remodel of Tech. Educ. Centers I & II
  - Site Grading
  - New Pharmacy
  - New Restaurant
  - Building Addition
  - New Police Training Academy
  - New Convenience Store

**Village West Facts**

- 10-million visitors annually.
- $811-million in combined public/private investment.
- 114 stores and restaurants.
- $11.5-million in property taxes paid annually by Village West businesses.
- $41-million in sales taxes collected.
- 5,000 employees-Village West.
- 4,000 employees-Cerner Corporation.
- 1,000 employees-Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway.
Finance Department Receives Achievement Award

The Unified Government’s Finance Department was honored with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR).

The award has a special meaning for the Finance and Accounting staff. It recognizes that the government’s annual financial statement merits acknowledgment for the presentation of its financial data. The annual financial statement serves as the basis for preparing the annual Unified Government budget. This is the 12th consecutive year the Finance Department has been awarded for its CAFR.

“We wanted to make sure our community as a whole truly benefited. So in the development agreement we reached with our great partners, we did include requirements for minorities and women and local businesses to participate.” Wyandotte County Mayor Joe Reardon

CASINO BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY

City, was $337,944.79; the Bonner Springs’ portion was $70,810.70 and Edwardsville’s portion was $41,837.56.

“We wanted to make sure our community as a whole truly benefited. So in the development agreement we reached with our great partners, we did include requirements for minorities and women and local businesses to participate. We made sure that over 1,700 workers that built this facility were paid prevailing wage. We expressed in our partnership what our goals were for the community and we exceeded our goals on all fronts,” Reardon said.

The Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway project created more than $91-million worth of business for local, minority and women owned businesses in Wyandotte County.

“Everyone from our elected officials to our local business community, has worked tirelessly to make this project a complete success,” said Jason Banks, Unified Government Contract Compliance Director.

Hollywood Casino employs more than 1,000 employees. 26-percent of them are Wyandotte County residents. 63-percent live in Kansas. The casino’s 2012 payroll, including benefits, is expected to total $26.7-million. The casino will also contribute more than $1.1-million a year in annual charitable contributions. (see chart).

The Hollywood Casino is expected to draw 4 million guests annually and create an estimated $220 million a year in economic benefit. Economic benefits related to the Hollywood Casino are also coming from Kansas Speedway itself. As part of the casino agreement, Kansas Speedway started hosting a second NASCAR Sprint Cup which generates $110-million in economic activity for KC metro region. The Kansas Speedway track is undergoing a massive renovation project that includes repaving of the existing track surface, reconfiguration of the oval, and the addition of a new infield road course which will bring Grand-AM style sports car racing to KCK.

The $411-million casino has 2,000 slot machines and 52 tables for blackjack, roulette, craps and carnival-style games. Eventually, it could have 3,000 slots and 80 game tables. The gaming floor is surrounded by Final Cut Steakhouse, Epic Buffet, Turn 2 Lounge, and Hollywood and Grind Coffee Bar.


Wyandotte County
Mayor Joe Reardon
Government is strong and the community is poised to continue our progress and ready to rise to our new challenges.”

Reardon touted a long list of economic development successes in Wyandotte County, including construction of the Corner Corporation Office complex in Village West; a new corporate headquarters for Associated Wholesale Grocers; the opening of LiveStrong Sporting Park and the Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway. Those developments are creating thousands of new jobs.

But Reardon emphasized the historic growth is not just in Village West, but throughout the entire city, ranging from entertainment venues, manufacturing plants, health care facilities, new grocery stores and new retail stores across the city.

Mayor Reardon outlined a plan to spend the 1% of casino revenues designated for community projects on improving the health of children, seniors, and young persons in KCK. Reardon is proposing a new health and wellness center in the urban core providing “young people, families and senior citizens a first class place to gather, exercise, swim, learn about healthy eating and lifestyles.” Reardon wants construction of the health and wellness center to begin as soon as 2013.

The Mayor also proposes an innovative new program to improve neighborhood parks. The program would provide $25,000 grants to 4 parks each year. Neighborhood groups would help select the parks that need the most attention and warrant improvements.

Mayor Reardon stressed the important role of public safety in providing a quality community, noting that while last year showed a slight increase in overall crime, 2011 marked the 4th consecutive year KCK experienced less than 1,000 violent crimes. The number of violent crimes in KCK has dropped 65% since its high in 1991.

Reardon praised citizens for the dramatic successes in Wyandotte County.

“What rests at the heart of our efforts is our community’s willingness to overcome any obstacle or adversity put before us, rolling up our sleeves, and senior citizens a first class place to gather, exercise, swim, learn about healthy eating and lifestyles.” Reardon wants construction of the health and wellness center to begin as soon as 2013.

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“What rests at the heart of our efforts is our community’s willingness to overcome any obstacle or adversity put before us, rolling up our sleeves, standing side-by-side, and believing that together we can make Wyandotte County a better place to live, work, learn, play and raise our children.”

BPU Offers Free Programmable Thermostat to Customers

The Kansas City Kansas Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has launched the 2 DEGREES 2 SAVE program, a new initiative that is intended to reduce energy usage, lower customers’ heating and cooling costs, and protect the environment.

Participants that sign up for this BPU program will receive a free Honeywell programmable thermostat professionally installed (a $300.00 value). The initiative utilizes a programmable thermostat which allows BPU to raise participants’ temperature setting by 2 degrees during peak energy use hours. By doing this, air conditioners work less, and cycle more frequently which when combined with the air conditioners of all participants means that fewer are running at the same time and BPU’s peak load is reduced.

BPU will only adjust the temperature of a participant’s home by 2 degrees from where they actually set it. Adjustments, if they occur, will only happen on weekdays from June through September, and will occur only when necessary (generally just a few times each summer). Events are never scheduled on weekends or holidays, making adjustments even less noticeable.

Because the new thermostat is both programmable and more accurate than conventional thermostats, participants could save up to 15% on their annual heating and cooling costs. Participants will even be able to set their thermostat from any computer connected to the Internet. To be eligible for the 2 DEGREES 2 SAVE program, customers must have a central air conditioning or heat pump system in good working condition, have space where their current thermostat is to mount a new 6-inch x 7-inch thermostat, and be a homeowner or have the property owner’s written permission to participate in the program.

To enroll or get more information about the 2 DEGREES 2 SAVE program, call 1-888-267-6609 or e-mail BPU at 2degrees2save@bpu.com.

The Benefits of a Public Utility

BPU is a municipal utility company owned by the Unified Government. The utility operates as a community enterprise, which holds down costs and allows all citizens to take part in making decisions about utility services. As not-for-profit utility, BPU rates are competitive and viable. As a publicly-owned utility company, BPU answers to Main Street citizens not Wall Street investors.

- Community Ownership
  Municipal utilities are customer-owned and operated and measured by how much money stays in the community, not profits for private stockholders.

- Local Control
  Business decisions are made by local BPU management staff, while policy matters are made by a locally elected board. All board meetings and hearings are open to the public.

- Reliability
  BPU staff can respond quickly to community needs and emergencies because they live in the community. It is a recipient of the 2011 RP3 Award for Safety and Reliability, a designation achieved by less than 5% of our nation’s public utilities. BPU also has A+ ratings from Fitch and Standard and Poor’s for its financial performance.

- Community Investment
  Municipal utilities like BPU contribute far more to the community monetarily than simply providing electric and water service. From its Annual Charity Golf tournament which has raised over $400,000 to its Summer Youth Program, customer ownership of BPU has paid dividends to Wyandotte County again and again.

UG Launches High School Internship Program

By Astrid Vega and Josephina Rosas
Unified Government Interns
The Unified Government has partnered with the KCK Public School District to launch an internship program for local high school students. The program initiated in September 2011 with two students from J.C. Harmon High School. The pilot internship program started in the Unified Government Public Relations Department.

The internship program has now expanded to include students in various departments within the Unified Government.

The students are given the opportunity to work several hours per week with professionals in their department. The aim of the internship program is to give students valuable work experience while they learn more about their community. The KCK students participating in the program are Jhonatan Batez, Christopher Webb, Trina Durham, Kina Flournoy, Astrid Vega and Josephina Rosas.

“I have gained knowledge which will be useful in my future careers.”
Said Jhonatan, Wyandotte High School senior interning with the 311 Operations Department.

The internship program has also opened a window of opportunities for the interns; it has allowed them to explore different career options.

“I hope the beginning of this internship will continue and grow to be a bigger picture in the future” said Lori Hewitt, College and Career Specialist with the KCK school district.

Christopher Webb, a J.C. Harmon High School senior also interning with the 311 Department said, “I would love to have a career here at the Unified Government and this internship experience could make it happen”