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Hays named 2025 Community of the Year



By **Gaille Pike**
Special to the Hays Daily News

Media platform Community Playmaker named Hays as its 2025 Community of the Year this week. Community Playmaker, which is dedicated to celebrating and empowering civic leaders announced the honor on January 22nd. The Community Playmaker Community of the Year Award is given annually to recognize cities, towns, parishes and counties across the United States for their outstanding commitment to enhancing quality of life through innovative programs, visionary leadership and community-driven solutions.

This award highlights impactful initiatives in areas such as economic development, community engagement, public safety, arts and culture, environmental stewardship, and the creation of inclusive, high-quality environments.



Photos courtesy of the Hays Convention and Visitors Bureau

Finalists are selected for their measurable progress, strong civic partnerships, and clear vision for the future. Hays rose to the top from a competitive field of communities nationwide, including fellow 2025 finalists: Port St. Lucie, Florida and Monessen, Pennsylvania.

“Hays is a powerful example of what happens when a community commits to long-term, balanced growth,” said Ashley Whittaker, editor-in-chief of Community Playmaker. She commented that from protecting scarce water

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Side streets are left unplowed for a reason

By **Gaille Pike**
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Why aren’t side streets cleared after snowstorms? According to Hays Public Works (PW) Director Jesse Rohr, residents ask every year why residential streets go unplowed while major roads are cleared “curb-to-curb.”

“The decision to leave residential streets unplowed in all but the most severe events is a strategic one, centered on resident access and resource management,” said Director Rohr. He explained that the primary logistical challenge on side streets is snow storage. When a plow passes down a street, the snow is displaced to the side, forming a ridge known as windrow. On wide arterial roads, this snow is pushed to the shoulder. However,

on residential streets, the snow is inevitably pushed across private driveways.

“If we were to plow every residential street for a standard 3-inch snowfall, we would create a 12-to-18-inch ridge of heavy, compacted snow across the end of every single driveway in town,” Director Rohr said. He explained that this often traps residents, particularly the elderly or those without heavy snow blowers, in their homes. “Leaving the snow to be packed down by traffic is often less disruptive to residents than blocking their driveways with plow debris,” said Director Rohr.

Director Rohr also noted that the City monitors road conditions continuously. He explained that in the event of catastrophic accumulation, where snow depths



render standard passenger vehicles inoperable, the City may declare a special operation to open residential lanes.

“However, for typical winter events, residents should expect side streets to remain snow-packed,” said Director Rohr said.

On Thursday morning, Director Rohr announced that PW crews had begun pre-treating roads and loading sand spreaders in anticipation of the incoming winter weather system. The City’s January 21st Newsflash also urges residents to also prepare ahead of the storm by checking their tire tread and planning for off-street parking.

The City strongly encourages ALL residents to park off-street if possible. Director Rohr explained that pre-treatment helps to prevent ice from freezing directly to asphalt, making it easier to scrape off later. However, he urged residents to drive with caution on untreated surfaces and to schedule travel on major routes whenever possible.

USD489 accepting sealed bids for property north of former HMS

By **Gaille Pike**
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USD489 is now accepting sealed bids/proposals to purchase 7.23 acres located north of the Hays Middle School football field at 201 West 29th Street. Last month, a month the School Board voted to sell this undeveloped property the District no longer needs through a sealed bid process. The appraised value

of the property is \$630,000. Sealed bids marked “Felton Property Bid” may be submitted to USD Superintendent Ron Wilson, Rockwell Administration Center, 323 W. 12th, Hays, KS 67601. All sealed bids must be received on or before 4 p.m., March 4, 2026. Bids received after the deadline will be returned unopened. The bids are to be mailed or delivered. Because of the sealed bid requirement, faxing or

emailing of bids will not be accepted.

As part of the bid, parties interested in purchasing the property are asked to provide a statement of intended use and development time frame for the property. The District’s Notice of Real Estate For Sale of this property explains that K.S.A. 72-3216 provides that the Board of Education may dispose of property in such manner and on such terms and

conditions as the Board considers in the best interest of the District. That is why a statement of use intent and development timeline are being requested as part of the bidding process for the sale of this property.

USD489 reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any informalities in the bid procedure.

Questions should be directed to Superintendent Wilson at 765-623-2400.

