



News Release
For Immediate Release
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STAR Fund allocates Grants to Seven Projects; New Virtual Reality Arcade to Open in Williston

A new virtual reality arcade is coming to Williston. The Williston City Commission approved up to \$5,000 for VRkade, LLC, a business startup, at its October 8, 2019 meeting. The commission also approved STAR Fund requests for six other projects totalling \$147,000.

Owner Heath Crawford said VRkade will offer virtual reality gaming and business training.

"It is truly an indescribable event that is akin to relearning how to use your senses and realizing how to walk and see the world with a new set of eyes," said Crawford.

The new business will be housed in the Harvest Plaza near Meg-a-Latte and Exhale Yoga & Wellness. Crawford says his closest competition is in Billings, Montana. The store will feature more than 200 titles, merchandise, pizza by the slice and drinks.

"A large portion of our efforts is going to be focused on bringing educational experiences to the forefront by offering the ability to take an underwater tour of the ocean, painting in a three-dimensional space, seeing a cutaway of the human body, and many other STEM-related informational fields," said Crawford.



VRkade will utilize the STAR Fund Mini Match program for startup costs including building computers and purchasing electronic components.

“Initial costs of starting a business are nothing to shake a stick at and knowing that we have the confidence of the city in providing an entertainment facility in Williston that supports all ages will help us immensely,” said Crawford.

Crawford initially met Shawn Wenko, Williston Economic Development executive director and Keith Olson, Small Business Development Center regional director, at the annual North Dakota Downtowner Conference in Williston in late August.

“We were blown away learning about what economic development could offer new and existing businesses. Both Shawn and Keith were very welcoming and have been supportive of VRkade. Their common-sense approach and guidance have helped us navigate starting a new venture and making sure that we have the proper tools needed to succeed that will help both us and Williston as a whole,” said Crawford.

VRkade is planning celebrate its grand opening on December 2, 2019.

In other STAR Fund business, grants were approved to six additional projects totaling \$147,000.

Flex PACE Interest Buydown: B & D Storage, up to \$57,000 to build new storage facility.

Mini Match: Shining Star Preschool, up to \$5,000 for development of new licensed preschool.

C4Facade Program: MacMaster, Geltel and Siewert, LTD up to \$40,000 for exterior improvements on two sides of building.

Community Build/Growth: Lutheran Social Services, up to \$35,000 to complete a new daycare facility; Dagmar Co-op Association, up to \$10,000 to repair the roof of Dagmar’s multi-use facility.

The STAR Fund is administered by a seven-member board of directors. The group meets monthly. The program is funded by a portion of the City’s one cent sales tax.