

CITY OF FORT SCOTT, KANSAS 66701

ESTABLISHED IN 1842®

To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Robert Uhler, Community Dev. Director, City of Fort Scott

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2314

Date: Friday, February 22, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to visited with you in support of HB 2314

The City of Fort Scott supports legislation to streamline and expedite the process for local governments, neighborhood organizations, and private businesses to deal with the blight of abandoned, nuisance, and foreclosed property. This issue affects all cities in Kansas — from small to large.

Abandoned structures erodes property values for adjacent landowners, creates dangerous conditions for public safety officers, generates code enforcement complaints, and leads to an influx of vermin and pests. That property also affects the health, safety, and the welfare of the entire community, including property owners and residents of rental property. These abandoned properties lead to an increase in police calls for theft, intruders, drug issues, and squatting. Not only are these properties a problem for law enforcement, they also lead to an increase in fire calls from accidental fires and arson.

These properties also lead to many code enforcement issues that include overgrown vegetation, dilapidated structures, wildfires, illegal dumping, and additional demand for sanitation services. Abandoned properties have the potential to become dangerous structures as they deteriorate. Abandoned properties can result in unpaid property taxes, which in turn creates a higher tax burden on other property owners for government resources. As these properties fall further into disrepair, the neglect will cause a blighting effect on the surrounding properties, and it rapidly leads to a loss in values to surrounding properties. This loss in property value makes it difficult for surrounding property owners to secure financing to improve their property and for protentional buyers to obtain a mortgage.

The City of Fort Scott believes HB 2314 would give us the same ability to deal with abandoned and blighted real estate as we now have when dealing with dangerous structures. HB 2314 would allow rehabilitation action to be taken before the property became a “dangerous structure.”

Thank you!

