

Date: March 17, 2021  
To: House Commerce  
From: Trey Cocking, Deputy Director  
Re: Testimony in Support of SB 90

I want to thank Chairman Tarwater and the Committee members for allowing the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to testify in support of SB 90.

Small and large cities in Kansas are facing a crisis when it comes to housing. At the same time, Kansas has a high number of existing structures that could be easily converted to housing. The conversion of downtown structures to housing is beneficial, creates life in a community, is cheaper to build, and utilizes existing services.

One of the benchmarks for successful cities is a strong presence of downtown living. It creates a 24-hour use of downtown, improves downtown buildings, and brings traffic to restaurants, bars, stores, and gyms. It is also more likely that a person will spend locally when they do not have to get in their car to run errands.

The cost of new housing construction is often one of the largest barriers to any project getting off the ground. The conversion of downtown housing allows for a project to be constructed at times for a lower cost since the structure of the building already exists. Public services already exist downtown and additional infrastructure is not needed to serve these renovations.

We have been in contact with the City of Atchison and have worked with the Department of Commerce on an amendment to SB 90, and we would ask you to include the amendment when you work the bill.

The expansion of the Rural Housing Incentive Districts to allow for the construction of downtown living units on upper floors of downtown buildings is a strong addition to existing law and we would urge this committee to include an amendment from Atchison and report SB 90 out favorably for passage.