



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND HOUSING**

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To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

From: Quentin Holmes | Director of Community Development & Housing | Pittsburg, KS
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Subject: Testimony in Support of HB2314

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Good Afternoon, we represent the departments within the City of Pittsburg that directly address and handle dilapidated structures. As professionals that deal with this issue daily in our community, we support HB2314. As many rural towns, we struggle to successfully enforce codes in our city. Unfortunately, the metaphorical teeth we have don't appear until properties are dilapidated to a point of demolition.

This multifaceted issue becomes more complex with the state of our County's property tax management. Effects of this can be seen not only in the absence of a tax sale in the past decade, but also in the increased number of dilapidated and unsafe structures that appear frequently around town.

The issue that these cause go beyond blight; it directly impacts community and economic development. Nearly 50% of inspected homes for our local Public Housing Authority fails HQS Inspections. In the past five years, the City of Pittsburg has spent over \$300,000.00 in demolition at the hands of dilapidation due to owner neglect. Our community is tired of seeing tax dollars poured into properties that have stood abandoned, ignored, and tax delinquent for years. So tired of it, that many choose not to inhabit the city they work in; with over 70% of Pittsburg employees living outside city limits. Over half of those commuters state the reason as undesirable housing or an overall lack of housing. It's also notable that 16.5% of those individuals are commuting from another state.

This issue is devastating when correlated to economic development. Within our Downtown District, properties are not only dilapidated, but infrastructurally dependent on one another, leading one property owner's ignorance to damage their neighbors as well. It is clear that the state of a city can be seen in the vibrancy of their downtown. Unfortunately, the state of disrepair that has been left after several generations of careless abuse has rendered these properties nearly unsalvageable for the average community member to revive. This leaves properties in the hands of careless owners and continues the cycle of abandoned, deteriorating downtown properties.

By taking actions to increase the enforcement and power that municipalities have to hold their property owners to an average standard, we can reverse the status quo that currently exists in our community.

Thank you for your consideration.
