

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: Welcome to your Urban Affairs Committee. I am Terrell McKinney, senator representing District 11, and I serve as the committee chair. The committee will take up bills in the order posted. This public hearing is your opportunity to be a part of the legislative process and to express your position on proposed legislation before us. If you are planning to testify today, please fill out one of the green testifier sheets that are on the table in the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill it out completely. When it is your turn to come forward to testify, give the testifier sheet to the page or the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify but would like to indicate your position on a bill, there are also yellow sign-in sheets on the back table for each bill. These sheets will be included as an exhibit in the official hearing record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name and spell your first and last to ensure we get an accurate record. We will begin each bill hearing today with the introducer's opening statement, followed by proponents of the bill, then opponents, and, finally, by anyone speaking in a neutral capacity. We will finish with a closing statement by the introducer if they wish to give one. We will be using a 5-minute light system for all testifiers. When you begin your testimony, the light on the table will be green. When the yellow light comes on, you will have 1 minute remaining. And the red light indicates you need to wrap up your final thoughts and stop. Questions from the committee may follow. Also, committee members may come and go during the hearing. This has nothing to do with the importance of the bill hearing-- being heard. It's just part of the process that senators may have bills to introduce in other committees. A few final items to facilitate today's hearing. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony please bring at least 12 copies and give them to the pages. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Verbal outbursts or applause are not permitted in the hearing room. Such behavior may be cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. Finally, committee procedures for all committees state that written position comments on a bill to be included in a hearing record must be submitted by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. The only acceptable method of submission is via the Legislature's website at nebraskalegislature.gov. Written position letters will be included in the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included on the committee statement. I will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting at my right.

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SORRENTINO: Tony Sorrentino, Legislative District 39, Elkhorn and Waterloo.

J. CAVANAUGH: Good afternoon. John Cavanaugh, District 9, midtown Omaha.

CLOUSE: Good afternoon. Stan Clouse, District 37, which is in Buffalo County, Kearney, Shelton, and Gibbon.

ROUNTREE: Good afternoon, Victor Rountree, District 3, Bellevue and Papillion.

ANDERSEN: Good afternoon. Senator Bob Andersen, I represent District 49, which is northwest Sarpy County in Omaha.

QUICK: Good afternoon, I'm Dan Quick, District 35, Grand Island.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Also assisting the committee today to my right is legal counsel Elsa Knight, and also to my right, committee clerk Sally Schultz. Our pages for today are Thomas, he's a junior at UNL, he's a poli sci major; and Kyanne, a senior at UNL, who is a sociology major. With that, we'll begin today's hearing with LB811. Senator Dover.

DOVER: Thank you, Chairman McKinney. I just want to say thank you for working with [INAUDIBLE] and your very wise staff, Elsa. It was really a pleasure working with your, your, your staff. Good afternoon, committee members. My name is, for the record, is Robert Dover, R-o-b-e-r-t D-o-v-e-r. I represent District 19, which is Madison and the south half of Pierce County. LB811 is a targeted update to the Nebraska Municipal Land Bank Act intended to expand access to land banks and make this proven redevelopment tool available to more communities across Nebraska. Under current law, only cities of a metropolitan and primary class may independently create a land bank. As a result, many municipalities facing similar challenges with vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties are limited to participating only through interlocal agreements or have no practical access to a land bank. Communities of all sizes across Nebraska-- across Nebraska are dealing with stalled proper-- stalled properties that slow housing development and neighborhood reinvestment. This bill gives those communities the same tool that larger cities already have to prepare land for redevelopment and housing construction in a timely and locally controlled manner. LB811 is about fairness, flexibility, and efficiency. It allows local governments to decide whether a land bank is the right tool for their community and ensures that

opportunity to use that tool is available statewide. I have had-- I've had numerous Zoom meetings and, and conversations with stakeholders from across the state over the interim. From these meetings, I have learned the purpose of a land bank is to acquire, secure, and dispose of problem properties and return them to the tax rolls. To accomplish this feat, the land bank has been given special powers, including, one, properties currently held by a land bank do not pay property taxes; and, two, they receive one half of the first 5 years of property taxes after conveyance of said property to fund their land bank. I've decided to add an amendment to address a recurring issue that some land banks are facing. The problem is that, that lots are being sold without any requirements regarding the construction time frame. To address this, I'm requiring that land banks offer their properties for sale to private builders for a minimum of 90 days on the condition that the builder agrees to begin construction within 1 year. And I apologize, because this is actually, we cut and pasted it, so sorry about that last, that last-- we missed that last sentence. I'll start here. A land bank must first offer property to private builders/developers for a period-- minimum of 2 years. The initial 90 days are reserved for those willing to commence construction within 1 year. The remaining of the time is open to developers, builders/developers, who will start construction within 2 years. If unsold after 2 years, the land bank can contract with a general contractor, sell to a nonprofit, or continue offering the property to anyone who will commence construction within 2 years of conveyance. I look forward to hearing, to hearing testimony from those who can speak to the practical need of this change. And would be happy to answer any, any of the questions. I apologize. So we had the amendment that went up, and I caught a mistake in the amendment. So we will be getting the amendment to you. I'd like, if I could, just talk generally about what the problem we're having that my amendment addresses. So-- and there aren't very many communities that have land banks and, and I'm not going to name names or anything like that, but basically what happened was we had-- like, there's a fire in a house, OK, the land bank gets it, take-- you know, demos the lot, gets it back to where there's still, there's still, you know, water and sewer to the, to the property and they dig out the foundation and they get, they get the compaction right and everything so someone can go in there and put another house in there. And what happens-- what's happening is, sometimes, like out in Morrill County, I was talking to the land bank out there, they can't find anybody to build, right? So they just will sell the lot off. And what happened in another one, I guess I named the name there, but anyway, in another one, they sold--

they were going to have the part to repurchase and they sold it and the person that bought it talked the city council into dropping that requirement and now it's been sitting there for 4 years. And it's just like, it's two blocks from our office building, and any-- if it had been sold to the right person with that agreement, they were going to commence construction, there would be a house there and we would be getting property taxes on that house. So that's what I'm trying, trying to do. It's just simply saying-- and I'm in real estate, [INAUDIBLE] license, in first time in 1983, so I kind of understand the process. So for 90 days a land bank has got to offer it to a private builder/developer that will say I'm going to start in a year. And in the amendment, it also says they can have a one-time, six-month extension due to extreme circumstances because it could be weather, right, could be the middle of winter, can't dig a basement, and those kind of things. So trust me, within 1 year and one, one 6-month extension, they should be OK. And then if-- so after that 90 days-- and they could offer it for the full 2 years. I mean, as long as they want to a person that's going to start in 1 year. But for the first 90 days you have to say-- that person has to say I'm going to start in 1 year once I get title to that property. After that 90 days, they can then offer it to someone who will say I'll start in 2 years. That addresses some concerns in small towns when you don't just have someone that can start in 1 year. And then at the end of those 2 years, because, you know, realistically, if you don't have something going on that lot in 2 years you just need to open it up, right? I don't think ever a government entity that gets tax dollars, whatever, should compete with the private industry. So I don't-- I think we give the private builders/developers a shot for 2 years. But after those 2 years is up, you know what, they can sell to a nonprofit, they can sell to Habitat, they can sell to NeighborWorks, they can sell to whoever. They could-- if they want to, they could build-- they could actually contract with a general contractor. Some, some land banks might have that expertise because they have a builder on there maybe, maybe they don't, or if they want to they can just keep offering that, that property for sale with the, with-- the only caveat is whoever buys it has to say, hey, I'm going to start in 2 years. And so that's basically what my amendment does and I'll answer any questions if anybody have-- and I've got a couple people that will, will speak behind me. Oh, sorry, this is important. What my bill-- my main bill did was back when they first came up with the land bank, I believe it was Hilgers, at the time, Senator Hilgers and, and Governor Ricketts did not want to have a municipality have to staff up and spend a bunch of extra money, so they said you-- if you're smaller and not Lincoln

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and Omaha, right, you had to enter local agreements thinking that they could pool resources, so like Norfolk and Pierce and Stanton or you can, you know, make up those numbers, whatever works in your district, would have to work together, and they could hire staff together. And it's a great thought, but guess what, it's, it's-- some towns don't want to get involved with other towns. Imagine that, right? So some little town-- in my district, it could be Pilger, it could be Newman Grove, Meadow Grove, whatever, if they have-- if they want to start, who are we to say a little town can't just start out on their own, right? And maybe they have a wealthy farmer in the area willing to give them, you know, 10 or 20, 30,000 because they grew up in that little town and they want to help. So what my bill does, is says any municipality can form a land bank. So I'll answer any questions that anybody might have.

McKINNEY: All right. Thank you, Senator Dover. Any questions from the committee? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Senator McKinney. You had me if you had an amendment.

DOVER: Well, you know, yeah, we had it.

CLOUSE: It's OK.

DOVER: I apolo-- I feel, I feel so bad, because I've, I've been on-- I've been in hearings where, well, [INAUDIBLE] amendment, have you had the amendment? And, no, and I had it but I wanted to correct it.

CLOUSE: So, so the other piece of this is just on the back page, page 9, where you talk about the village clerk, just, you know, helping with creation of that, so.

DOVER: Correct.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you.

McKINNEY: Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. And thanks, Senator Dover, for being here. I'm curious, how is a land bank funded, initially?

DOVER: So a, a land-- well, through, actually, grants, foundations, gifts, anything like that. So someone, you know, just through-- maybe a bank gave some money, maybe a foundation gave some money, however

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they get some money, that's how they start. Maybe a county could give some money, a city could give some money, so whoever just gives them some money. And then after that if they can get rolling, they will get one-half of the first 5 years of taxes. The only thing that's really important to understand about that is-- so basically that equates about 2.5 years of taxes. So if they use micro-TIF or TIF, you're cutting into that, usually at TIF-- 15-year TIF will get down to about 12 or 13 years. So you're really-- they're going to have to really adjust that pay off, because basically they're taking 2.5 years away from that 15-year period in taxes.

ANDERSEN: All right. Thanks.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Any other questions from the committee? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. So, so the first 90 days then a developer would have that option to say they're going to build or take over that property, because I know when I brought the bill, the original bill to expand it to the rest of the state there were-- I talked to some homebuilders and then some of the properties they said we can't take those properties on. So what happens if someone--

DOVER: Excuse me. Can you explain that a little bit?

QUICK: So they said that they wouldn't take some of those properties on because they were-- they would have to put too much money into them to actually get the return back.

DOVER: Right. Right.

QUICK: So they said--

DOVER: So that in rehabbing or--

QUICK: Yeah, that's in a rehab--

DOVER: Rehab, right, not at their lot.

QUICK: --that's not in a-- like, when you do the total demolition and then you start from scratch, but they were talking about the properties where they would come in and just rehab the house. So now those homes-- I mean, they're all going to be in the same group, right, if they have, like, homes that are still sitting there that they--

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DOVER: Right.

QUICK: --got secured. They've got homes that they've demolished. They're all in that same lot. So how does that-- the developer would get first choice on all of those?

DOVER: Yes. I want to make sure that the private builder, developer, whatever, gets first call and so they never compete against the government. It's only after that 2-year period is up because at 2 years we got to get something going there and get it back on the tax rolls, right? So-- and I just thought 2 years is probably long enough. So I don't know, hopefully that answered your question.

QUICK: Yeah. Well, I'm just wondering what happens if they say, well-- and that, that would be to start reconstruction, right, or start--

DOVER: Correct. Correct.

QUICK: It's not 2 years to get it done, it's 2 years for them to start.

DOVER: Just to start. And they do have-- and, and probably not so much-- I mean, I guess you could probably get it in properties, too, but they have a one-time 6-month extension, because weather or availability of contractors, you know, it can happen.

QUICK: Yeah. So what happens after that 2 years, and how do you hold them accountable to make sure that they're going to build?

DOVER: So, so the land bank, the land bank, if they don't fulfill the contract, has the right to purchase it back at the original purchase price.

QUICK: OK.

DOVER: And there were some people talking that-- I heard some people say, well, we have-- like, Omaha is very experienced at this, right? So they have all this stuff by putting in statute in their agreement, right? But other communities don't and small towns just lack the resources that Omaha has. And so I, I felt the need to put it in the statute because I know it's, I know it's happening now these problems, so hopefully this will, this will solve it. But, no-- so if you don't do it, like the lot I was talking about that is just north of our develop-- or our-- excuse me, our, our office building, had they had that in there, they could buy that back and someone else could have

built a home there. And it, and it would be built by now. So there were be a-- had they not-- you know, had they gone back, recaptured the lot, bought it back at the original purchase price, resold it, which they very easily could have in, in Norfolk, there would be a house there and it'd be paying, it'd be paying property tax on a brand new home.

QUICK: Yeah. I know a lot of the homes that we were trying to address with the homes that-- you know, Habitat for Humanity would take over and they would come in and, and renovate the home or build a home on there. Because-- and I'll be honest, in Grand Island there's-- we're running short of properties to actually build Habitat, Habitat homes on them. So that's been one of the concerns in Grand Island is making sure there's available property and the land bank was one of the ways to address that, so.

DOVER: Well, yeah.

QUICK: So, yeah.

DOVER: You know-- and, and, again, they have a benefit of once they're-- if they're holding that inside the, the entity they don't have to pay property tax. So they have-- there's no really cost except really maintenance on mowing and--

QUICK: Yeah. And isn't there a certain number of years they can actually hold the property?

DOVER: So my understanding is they can only-- they, they, they can't hold it for more-- well, yeah, they enter into an agreement That's the key. They can hold it indefinitely. A land bank can hold a property indefinitely. But if they enter into an agreement, say with a nonprofit or anybody-- any other entity, and also can correct me on this one, they can't hold it for more than a year unless two things happen. One, there's an existing lease which they have to honor. Two, is sometimes Habitat-- and there may be a problem clearing title. And so they're able to put it into the land bank. It may take a while to clear the title, more than the year maybe, and then, then once the title is clear they can bring it back out, and it's clean, ready to go, and, and they can build or whatever it may be or sell it or-- and then they can transfer clean-- clear title.

QUICK: Yeah, I'm glad you brought that up about clearing title, too, because that was one of the difficulties for some of the home builders

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didn't want to take them on because if they had to wait to clear the title they could be holding that property for quite a long time before they can even determine if they could start construction. If they bought it themselves not through the land bank, but if they wanted to take it on themselves.

DOVER: Yeah, we have-- I mean, there's towns all across Nebraska, small communities have racoon-infested houses, and they can't find out who owned it because the kids moved away and they lost track and the parents passed away and we just need to help those smaller communities, and all communities. I mean, Omaha, too, just clean it up and get, get good paying houses on the tax rolls.

QUICK: OK. All right. Thank you.

DOVER: Yeah.

McKINNEY: Thanks. Any other questions? No. Thank you, Senator Dover.

DOVER: Thank you. I'll be here to close.

McKINNEY: All right. I'll welcome up proponents.

CONNOR HERBERT: Thank you, Chairman McKinney and members of the Urban Affairs Committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Connor Herbert, C-o-n-n-o-r H-e-r-b-e-r-t, and I serve as a staffer with the Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs. The Commission on Africa American Affairs comes in support of LB811 today, as it expands the existing statutory structure of the Municipal Land Bank to be inclusive in Nebraska's smaller municipalities based on the success of land bank initiatives across the state. As stating in-- as stated in Nebraska Revised Code, Chapter 18, Section 3402, the Legislature adopted the Nebraska Municipal Land Bank Act after finding that Nebraska's municipalities are important to the social and economic vitality of the state, and many municipalities are struggling to cope with vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties. Vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties represent lost revenue to municipalities and large costs associated with demolition, safety hazards, and the deterioration of neighborhoods. There's an overriding public need to confront the problems caused by vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties, the creation of new tools from municipalities to use to turn vacant spaces into vibrant places. And land banks are one of the tools that can be utilized by municipalities to facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent

properties to productive use. From a, from a county standpoint, more than 40 of the state's 93 counties have housing stocks of which more than 15% of their units are vacant or in disrepair. At the extreme, 35% of Loup County's housing stock is vacant or in disrepair. Now that there are verifiable successes stemming from the Omaha Municipal Land Bank, whose creation was allowed by the Legislature in 2013, and the western, northeast, and southeast regional land banks, whose creations were allowed by the Legislature in 2020, the proposal being made by LB811 as a reasonable move to promote further direct development in Nebraska's smaller towns. While the Commission recognizes that a small sum of our constituency lives outside of Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties, we seek to promote a policy that promotes access to affordable housing, regardless of the zip code that benefits. And, of course, we can't really speak to the amendment being proposed-- proposed, but, yeah, we probably would be neutral on that, so.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? No. Thank you.

CONNOR HERBERT: Thank you.

McKINNEY: Next proponent.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Senator McKinney and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, my name is Christy Abraham, C-h-r-i-s-t-y A-b-r-a-h-a-m, here representing the League of Nebraska Municipalities. We first want to thank Senator Dover for introducing this bill, and we want to thank him for his enthusiasm about land banks. And, also, I just want to repeat what he said. Senator McKinney, you and your staff are so great to work with, and we appreciate you. So as this committee recalls, we had an interim study on land banks in Omaha. And you heard from amazing advocates from all across the state about land banks being formed. I am distributing a one-pager on land banks because, again, I hear when Senator McKinney says, hey, maybe a little background information would be nice. So we just put together this little land bank. I think the first-- Senator Dover and the first testifier really covered a lot of this, but I just want to be clear, land banks are something that municipalities create. They're really there to facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties. You can see that the history of land banks, first bill was in 2013. 2014, Omaha created their land bank. In 2020, our own Senator Quick had a bill that expanded it statewide. And since then, four additional land banks have been created besides Omaha. And, certainly, I think I say we just want more and more land banks if we can get them. So when you were having your interim study on land banks, we

asked our member municipalities, is there a reason you're not creating land banks? Is there some barriers in which you would like to tell us about so we could tell the Urban Affairs Committee? The number one thing they said is, please let us have our own land bank. Please let us be a stand-alone land bank. We appreciate, initially, that Lincoln and Omaha were identified as having stand-alone land banks, because they are the two largest municipalities. But we do think some of our larger first class cities, such as Grand Island, Bellevue, Hastings, they probably are able to have their own land bank as well. So we think Senator Dover's bill is really a great step and will create more land banks all across the state. I hate to leave on a negative note, Senator Dover's amendment is something we would want more discussion with Senator Dover and this committee on. As we discussed it with the Land Bank Association, they had some concerns about it. That isn't to say we can't work something out with Senator Dover, but on first blush, we do have concerns. One of the things we are hearing from our land banks is most land banks have an internal policy on how to advertise and sell property. And I think we would like to keep that at the policy level and not in state statute. We would be very willing to have some language that says the land bank must have a policy. You, you must adopt a policy on how you're going to deal with the properties that you have. But we do think providing that much detail in state law is-- it's probably just better to keep that in policy. So I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? No. Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thank you so much.

McKINNEY: Oh, Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, sorry, just trying to wrap my head around. So really on the amendment, and that was some of my concern too on the amendment was-- because I know originally it was-- so they're using foundation money and all these other dollars to try to establish a land bank to deal with these problem properties. And I know-- and I talked-- like I said, said to Senator Dover that we had issues with some of the home builders really didn't want to take on those properties. I mean, they-- it was just something they didn't want to mess with. But they did, if they could go through the Habitat and then the home builders go through the Habitat and help build those houses, they thought that was a great opportunity. I don't know if you want to elaborate any more on that.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: No, I, I, I appreciate what you're saying Senator Quick and there is a representative from the Omaha Municipal Land Bank that's going to follow me and I think she'll, she'll be able to talk about that Omaha does have a policy on, on how to take care of these properties and I think that's just where we feel it should be and she can talk about, you know, how they handle that situation. I certainly appreciate Senator Dover talking about that in these smaller municipalities they may need a little bit more guidance. We're just, we're just not ready, I don't think, for quite the detail that Senator Dover is.

QUICK: Yeah, because I know the land banks do a lot of work like clearing the title--

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Yes.

QUICK: --and securing the property or demolishing the property. So that's-- I mean, that's a lot of funding that they're putting towards that to make sure that's done.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: It is. It is. And, and I will add to Senator Dover's list of things that land banks can do. I think one of the most amazing things land banks can do, as you know well, is they can clear those, those special assessments and those liens that are on the property for public entities, and that suddenly can make a property right side up that maybe wasn't before. So land banks can really do great work.

QUICK: All right. Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Yep, thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? OK. Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thanks so much.

CLOUSE: Next proponent. OK. Any opponents? OK. Anyone in the neutral?

DEANA WALOCHA: Good afternoon. My name is Deana Walocha, D-e-a-n-a W-a-l-o-c-h-a. I am the real estate attorney for the Omaha Municipal Land Bank, and I am here testifying in a neutral position. We do support land banks for all communities in Nebraska. Our land bank has been active, we just celebrated our 10th birthday. So we can see truly how well a good tool land banks are for communities. And we think that all, all communities should be allowed to access this tool if they, if they choose to do so. And we also think that they should be able to do

it on their own and not have to either join us or join another community because every community is different and they're going to have different needs. And what the land bank essentially should do is cater to the needs of that specific community. And with respect to Senator Dover's amendment, we can't support that. We have-- currently in our inventory, I think we have over 300 properties. And we, we acquire most of our properties through tax foreclosures. So by the time that we get them and we're selling them, they do have a clean title. The physical condition of the property maybe is a different story. We did recently-- last year, we received grants from or grants from the Nebraska Department of Economics. And we for ARPA-- of ARPA funds and we are using those for our shovel-ready program. And on those lots that use those shovel-ready, it is required that affordable housing is to be built on those. So that's-- that is one way that a, that a land bank could control what goes on those properties. We also have in our policies, and I believe that was part of the statute, that our board created a hierarchy of what we feel is important to Omaha and what's going to serve Omaha best, whether it be affordable housing, whether it be-- could be commercial, it could be-- some of these smaller towns may need more businesses, that might be what they choose to focus on. But that's left up to the individual communities and what that means that, that community are and they put them in policy for that, and that's why we would support this without the amendment or with maybe-- as Christy said, maybe we can talk about a way to phrase that so it's not so constructive to a land bank. And I also wanted to talk about who we sell our properties to. We celebrate them to-- we sell them to private developers, we, we encourage private developers to build on land bank land. And we also have nonprofits. Habitat for Humanity is, is a big one, and Holy Name also does-- builds affordable housing. And we worked with-- there's a development in Omaha called Seventy Five North, and I'm sure Senator, Senator Cavanaugh is familiar with, and a lot of their properties originally ran through the land bank. And with that, I would take any questions.

CLOUSE: Are there any questions? Senator Sorrentino.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Vice Chair. Being from the Omaha area, have you done any work in the south Omaha area? I do a lot of work with nonprofits in that area. I just am not familiar with that.

DEANA WALOCHA: We have. I'll be here for Senator McKinney's bill. So I'll talk a little bit more about that, but most of our properties in Omaha are in District 2 and District 4. So we-- and we've worked with Canopy South.

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SORRENTINO: All right. Thank you very much.

DEANA WALOCHA: Uh-huh.

CLOUSE: OK. Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you. And I know a lot of the senators maybe not understand how you establish a land bank. Could you talk a little bit about, like for a community to actually start a land bank, what the process kind of is?

DEANA WALOCHA: Sure, you're established by your municipality, so we were established by the city of Omaha. And our, our board was selected by the mayor and then ratified by our city council. And so that's how-- and, and it started with a city ordinance-- I guess, I should back up a little, you start-- you create the ordinance and then they create the board. We do receive some funding from the city of Omaha, but not, not much compared to the rest of our funding. Most of our funding is through private philanthropy. And through-- now through our property sales as well.

QUICK: OK, and then I had the opportunity to meet some of the board members from when I served previously. Can you talk about some of the board makeup? Because I think it comes from a variety of different backgrounds to make sure that, that we, you know, are [INAUDIBLE].

DEANA WALOCHA: It, it is. The current form of the statute is pretty restrictive, but the bill that's coming up is opening that up. But we have, we have real estate-- we have realtors on our board. We have people in development on our board. We've had people in banking on our board. We've had people-- I believe Sharlon works for a, a hospital foundation. We've had members of the Omaha Chamber on our board. Those are the types of people. And, and that is in statute what, what the, what the community should look to when they're creating their board.

QUICK: OK. All right. Thank you.

DEANA WALOCHA: Mm-hmm.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? Yes, Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thanks, Vice Chair. Thanks for being here. Are land banks profitable or are they considered nonprofits by design?

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

DEANA WALOCHA: We are nonprofits by design. We're quasi-governmental nonprofits. But anything that-- any profit, any profit that we make, we throw back into operations. Especially in Omaha, when we have over 300 properties, that means we have 300 properties to mow and snow removal. And that's the biggest bulk of our budget is caring for those properties.

ANDERSEN: Do you have levying authority?

DEANA WALOCHA: No.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

DEANA WALOCHA: Mm-hmm.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other in the neutral? OK, thank you.

DEANA WALOCHA: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Or questions, sorry. Anyone else in the neutral? OK, Senator Dover, to close.

DOVER: So just kind of-- I guess, first of all, you know, I look forward to, to working with the League and anybody else. My main concern-- and, and Omaha does an exceptional job, so. And my, and my bill only applies to-- well, it wouldn't be to, to cities of the metropolitan class or a primary class, Lincoln and Omaha. This-- my bill does not apply to them. They don't really need help. They're, they're large and they have resources, they have staff, right? But many communities from where I come from aren't that way or that lucky, and so the main thing I'm concerned about-- you get into all kinds of things across the state and some of the senators here, I think, know what I'm talking about, but you can get in-- and I, and I don't in any way mean to say anything negative about any towns, but you could get into a, a good old boy group sometimes with the city council and things like that where-- and that's one of the situations why-- what my amendment meant to address was-- or a situation where somebody was buying lots for just to kind of sit on them and they'll sell them later and make some money and stuff like that. And so I hope to work with the League and anybody else that wants to work. But my main amendment needs to make sure that when those lots or houses come back to the market when the land bank wants to sell those to get them, you know, improved, back on the tax rolls, and those kind of things, that they offer those to-- and I believe private, private builders/developers first. You know, we talked about the fact that we

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

don't have-- just a second here-- we don't have builders like we used to have in towns, right, and we don't. I mean, we're old enough to remember where we had a lot of framers, builders, general contractors. And I'll say one reason we don't is because of-- well, [INAUDIBLE], some large builders coming into the community, sometimes even nonprofits and those kind of things, but I think we-- this could be an opportunity to help general contractors start out, maybe even a land bank could contract, contract with a builder, the general contractor, small builder saying I don't know if I want to buy this and take this on, but maybe that land bank would contract with them and build a house and after a couple of them, he said, you know, I think I can do this on my own. And you have now a general contractor, builder/developer, because that's how they start, right? And so I do want to make sure whatever I do with this bill on the amendment is that it does get, it, it does get offered to people that are going to say I want to build a house, and I want to build it now, right? And that's why it has a time frame in it. And after that time frame is-- I mean, after 2 years, if you can't get it done, you know, land bank, you do whatever you want to. But at least offer it first for 90 days to someone that wants to build within a year, and then the rest of the time, with someone to build within 2 years. And if not, after 2 years just sitting there, do what you need to do. But we really need to make sure that all the land banks across the state of Nebraska are offering it to people who are going to build a house right away, get a young family or whoever it may be in that house and pay taxes. So thank you, and any other questions I'd answer.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Thank you.

DOVER: All right. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Now what do we do? OK, we're going to take a pause for a minute.

[BREAK]

CLOUSE: Are we ready? OK. Senator McKinney, welcome.

McKINNEY: Thank you and thanks for waiting on me. I appreciate it. Good afternoon, members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y, and I represent District 11 in the Legislature and I'm here to present LB1135. Land banks are one of the most practical tools Nebraska communities have to deal with abandoned, deteriorating, or long-neglected properties. But

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

for land banks to work the way the public expects, they have to be competent, transparent, locally rooted, and clearly focused on community benefit. LB1135 strengthens those fundamentals. This bill comes from suggestions we received from LR147 this past summer, where multiple stakeholders in the land bank community came to share their, their current concerns. After many months of discussion, LB1135 is the result. For a land, for a land bank created by a single municipality, LB1135 sets the voting board at an odd number of voting members, totaling at least seven. Voting members must be residents of the municipality that created the land bank within 10 miles of such municipality, within the ETJ, or within the county. It also requires a board that collectively has real-world expertise and includes specific experience categories: banking, real estate development, realtor experience, nonprofit or affordable housing, large-scale rental, and chamber of commerce representation. In current law, land banks may enter into contracts to fix or charge leasehold payments for the, for, for the use of real property. But the contract shall not exceed 12 months. There are certain exceptions to this rule. However, LB1135 adds one more, specifying that the 1-year limit does not apply if the property of the land bank is held pursuant to an agreement with a nonprofit corporation or other private entity. This agreement outlined in the bill asks the land bank to, to enter into a community benefit agreement. This agreement is a contract between the land bank and local community groups, such as for affordable housing, local hiring, living wages, or community services. This bill is important because it protects the legitimacy of land banks by requiring credible, locally accountable governance. When a land bank makes a decision about acquiring, holding, and transferring property, those decisions shape neighborhoods. Provisions like board reform and community benefit agreements help guide the land bank to reach the conclusion that is best for each neighborhood. I look forward to the discussion. Thank you for listening.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Any questions? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thanks, Vice Chair. Thank you, Senator McKinney. You mentioned in your opening that it talks about increasing the qualification and diversity of experience, and all that stuff of the board numbers, but I'm not sure where-- I didn't see that in here, in here it actually looks like it limits-- it decreases the applicable skill sets of the board members.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: So you're right, but we have an amendment that I put in today to kind of take it back. Initially, we did make a change, then we talked to some land bank representatives and reverted it back to what it currently is, so. Yeah.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Thank you, Chairman. [INAUDIBLE] for the smaller land banks, I know that one of the-- and that's a concern for a lot of boards, finding people who would serve on those boards.

McKINNEY: Right.

QUICK: Does it address some of that, too, for the smaller [INAUDIBLE]?

McKINNEY: So that's what we tried to do and kind of trying to allow for land banks to be a little more flexible and kind of scale back the requirements a little bit, but I guess from their discussions with themselves they feel as though it might be better to keep them than take them and make it a little broad.

QUICK: OK. Because I'm going to guess they could find people from those different areas because you've expanded the, the--

McKINNEY: Right.

QUICK: --territory, right? So--

McKINNEY: Yeah.

QUICK: --so on that expansion of territory if, like, your-- if your community is on, like, a boundary of a county line and you wanted to go out to 10 miles, is it only 10 miles on the other side then or do you get more miles because-- you know what I'm saying? If you're-- like, Grand Island is close to Merrick County, so we're, like-- we border Merrick County actually, the city of Grand Island, so you wouldn't be able to go into Merrick County to have board members or would you have to go-- I don't know if you understand what I'm saying.

McKINNEY: I get what you're saying. It is my belief that you have to stay within a county, but I'll double-check with legal counsel.

QUICK: OK.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

QUICK: Yeah. And really for Grand Island, it probably wouldn't matter, we have enough people that would be able to serve on a board like that. I was just thinking of a smaller community where maybe, you know, if you got that border right on your-- say like a small community like Shelton, where they're, they're close to Hall County and Buffalo County, so would they-- if they wanted to do a land bank would it only be the 10 miles on the side that they weren't next to a county line so. That's my only-- that was my only question.

McKINNEY: All right. Thank you.

QUICK: Yeah. Yeah.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, thanks, Vice Chair. Kind of similar to what Senator Quick is addressing, but [INAUDIBLE] voting members of the board. I get, I get-- it says within the municipality, create a land bank, that makes sense. Why do you include the within 10 miles or within the ETJ or within a county? How do you expand it?

McKINNEY: Because, because of the issue of, especially in the smaller counties, being able to find people. So the expansion allows for a bigger pool of people, especially out west, to be able to. And in Omaha or in Douglas County, it wouldn't be an issue, but in our smaller counties that's kind of the mileage and those type of things would become an issue just to pool the people. Because maybe I'm wrong but you could have multiple municipalities under one county, for example. So, so I think that's, that's the reason why I wanted that.

ANDERSEN: It just seems like you're inviting somebody that has no skin in the game to be on your board, which I think could be, you know, if they don't have vested interest, how do you know they're going to actually do what's right for the, for the land bank?

McKINNEY: Yeah, I get what you're saying. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? I have one that plays into that, that 10 miles. Is that just an arbitrary number? And where, where I'm going with this is, and I was telling Senator Rountree this, that along, along the railroads they went 9 miles between communities because

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

that's where the [INAUDIBLE], where they had to, to get the water back when they settled the west. So to his-- Senator Andersen's point, you could have somebody from Gibbon sitting on Shelton, and somebody on Shelton sitting on Wood River, and I, I was wondering why 10 miles? That seemed to me that--

McKINNEY: It was suggested and maybe we could just clean that up in an amendment to make sure it's more cleaned up.

CLOUSE: And, and that's just my thought, maybe the League ought to weigh in on that one and see if that's an issue.

McKINNEY: Yep. I, I get it though. I understand.

CLOUSE: OK, thank you. Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thanks, Chairman, for bringing this interesting conversation about this, but this, this is just requir-- increasing people who are eligible. They still have to be appointed by the mayor, is that right? I'm trying to [INAUDIBLE]. I know we just heard this a few minutes ago but I'm--

McKINNEY: It's a-- yeah, it's a process where they get suggested, then they have to go through the whole process with the council and the mayor and all that.

J. CAVANAUGH: So whichever community couldn't say, we're so hard up, we're looking for somebody that [INAUDIBLE].

McKINNEY: Yeah, they still have, they, they still have to accept them regardless.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah, the community itself has to ask that person to serve on the board. It's not a-- we're not compelling them.

McKINNEY: Yeah, it's not like a free will, like they apply or not, you just don't automatically get on.

J. CAVANAUGH: All right. Thanks.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Just to kind of play on that. Even though they're within 10, 9 miles, they still won't [INAUDIBLE] because somebody broke their leg.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: I couldn't, I couldn't--

CLOUSE: Somebody broke their leg 20 years ago, so they'll never forgive them. They won't even consolidate schools because they're too close. Yeah, I'd like to take a look at that and have it based on the League.

McKINNEY: All right.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLOUSE: Any other questions, comments? Thank you.

McKINNEY: All right. Thanks.

CLOUSE: OK. Do we have any proponents for this bill?

DEANA WALOCHA: Good afternoon, I'm Deana Walocha. I'm real estate counsel for the Omaha Municipal blank-- Land Bank, and I'm also testifying in support of this bill on behalf of the Nebraska Economic Development Association. I thank you all for allowing me to testify this afternoon. And I also thank Senator McKinney for his work on this bill. The Omaha Municipal Land Bank has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. And I myself will be celebrating my fifth anniversary with the Land Bank on February 15. In addition to what we've learned through time spent doing the work, in the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024, we conducted several workshops throughout the community in order to revise our policies to make them more aligned with the wants and needs of the Omaha community and the people that we serve.

CLOUSE: Ms. Walocha, do you want to spell your name out?

DEANA WALOCHA: Oh, I'm sorry. Deana, D-e-a-n-a, Walocha, W-a-l-o-c-h-a.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you.

DEANA WALOCHA: The changes to-- that are in this bill to a land bank's board structure that are proposed will allow for more flexibility with respect to board members, which means that we will be able to structure our board so there's more board representation where the land bank owns more properties. For example, most of the properties that are currently in our inventory are located in city council

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

Districts 2 and 4, which are north and south Omaha. Under the current version of the Land Bank Act, we are limited to one voting member per, per city council district. If this bill is enacted into state law, Mayor Ewing would then have an option to add an additional voting member from Districts 2 and 4 so that there could be additional voices from those communities when it comes to the properties that are located in their districts. Additionally, we appreciate Senator McKinney's willingness to work with us to restore the powers to the depository statutes so that they work both for the land bank and for the community. The way the depository statutes work is usually it's a nonprofit. They get titled to a piece of property, and it may have special assessments or other-- a lot of taxes against it. And they can deposit it with the land bank, and then we can use our magic wand, as we like to call it, to clear those liens. And when the Land Bank Act was first created, we were able to hold those properties for up to 5 years. And that, that enabled these developers to assemble properties so they can do a bigger bill than just, you know, onesie twosies. And that way they were-- we were held for them tax free and so they could use those funds for other endeavors, endeavors or to develop other properties. In 2020 the law changed so we could only hold those properties for a year. What Senator McKinney has done is allowed us to hold those properties for longer than a year provided that the entity that is depositing the property and the land bank entered to a community benefits agreement as Senator McKinney explained in his opening. And we think that this will benefit both the land bank and our developers that are building affordable housing. And, again, I would like to thank Senator McKinney for his leadership and for the support of land banks in Nebraska. And I-- we would urge that the Urban Affairs Committee advance this bill to General File. And with that, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CLOUSE: OK. Do we have any questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. So-- and I know we're not talking about the previous bill, but does that amendment change the statute thing, because you can only hold the property for a year right now, right?

DEANA WALOCHA: For, for the-- in the depository?

QUICK: Yeah.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

DEANA WALOCHA: Yeah, for right now. That-- the amendment would change that. So if we were to enter that CBA, then that we could hold it for over a year.

QUICK: OK, and I was thinking of the previous bill when he had his amendment, because he was saying that you can hold him for, for longer periods of time, but I'm not sure.

DEANA WALOCHA: Well, when the land bank takes property into its own, takes titles in its own name, we, we can hold it indefinitely. But--

QUICK: Oh, OK.

DEANA WALOCHA: --I mean, that's not what we-- obviously that's not what we want to do. We want to get it back on the tax rolls because that's what we were created to do, but there isn't a time limit on that when we take it in our name, there's a time limit when we're holding it for another entity, either a nonprofit or another developer.

QUICK: So if you were holding for Habitat, you could only hold it for a year.

DEANA WALOCHA: Correct. Yeah.

QUICK: Now this would make it for 2 years, you can hold it for Habitat.

DEANA WALOCHA: Yep.

QUICK: OK. All right. That's-- that was my question. Sorry.

DEANA WALOCHA: Oh, no, no.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? OK, thank you.

DEANA WALOCHA: All right. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Do we have any additional proponents?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Senator Clouse and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, my name is Christy Abraham, C-h-r-i-s-t-y A-b-r-a-h-a-m, here representing the League of Nebraska Municipalities. We want to thank Senator McKinney and the Urban Affairs Committee for introducing this bill. We really appreciate how collaborative Senator McKinney and his team have been. Again, everyone talks about that interim study

that happened last fall. That was pretty important to our land banks across the state. They got really excited about some of the changes that were happening, many of which you've already heard. I just want to highlight just a couple of things. Board governance is a really big issue, particularly for these emerging land banks out in the panhandle, in particular. They're really looking for a broader pool of people that can serve on their board. The land bank that is being created in Morrill County is like four villages have come together to form a land bank. And what they indicated to this committee at that time was a lot of our most active people in our community live sort of in the ETJ. They live kind of just outside town. And if we could just expand a little bit, we could bring in some of these people that are very engaged in the community, but just don't happen to live in corporate boundaries. Certainly based on the conversation that I'm hearing this committee have, we can certainly work with those numbers. Maybe 10 miles is too far. We're happy to make that smaller. But we are very enthusiastic about having it be more than just the corporate boundaries, particularly for those land banks, as I mentioned, out in the panhandle. The, the other thing in the bill that gives us lots of flexibility is the issue of the kind of expertise that has to be on the board. We have, in our research, discovered that for most land banks across the country, they don't have that really specific list of people that need to serve on land banks the way Nebraska does. So this was an attempt to open that up and make us more consistent with other land banks in Nebraska. You will hear from the realtors. I understand they're coming in on a neutral position. The League and the land banks and the realtors have come to a compromise amendment. Senator McKinney referred to it, that for stand-alone land banks, they're still going to have that list of folks that they would like to have serve on their board. But if those people can't reasonably be found, there's some flexibility to find some other people as well. The other thing that I want to mention that actually was kind of a big deal for some of our land banks was there's a reporting requirement that the land bank report every to their municipality about how they're doing. And a lot of our land banks don't meet monthly. So we've changed the language to say, hey, you need to do a report every time you meet, but no less than four times a year. So that, it seems like a small change, but that's actually going to be very helpful. So, again, we just appreciate Senator McKinney being so responsive to everything that this committee heard last fall. And I'm happy to answer any questions.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

CLOUSE: OK. Do we have any questions? Mine. Does that 10 miles mean-- if it doesn't, if it doesn't matter to you, it doesn't matter to me, probably we'll just figure that out.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: No, no, I, I appreciate that. And I'm happy to think about 10 miles. I think that was obviously the number where we sort of started. Again, if this committee is feeling like, whoa, 10 miles outside of municipality, that maybe is a little bit far. We-- we're happy to have conversations with you. Again, I'm thinking of our, our land banks in the panhandle. There's just a lot of people that sort of live in the country, but that doesn't mean they're not very devoted and active in those communities that they live nearby. So we're just trying to sort of capture those people who we think would be great on the land bank.

CLOUSE: OK.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Yeah.

CLOUSE: Well, I can give you 470-some million reasons why that's not a high priority for me, but--

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: OK.

CLOUSE: --if you're good with that, I'm good with it. Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: You bet.

CLOUSE: Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. Yeah, my concern was, like, if they border a, a county line and you might have someone that's living in, let's just say, you know, let's see, so Shelton is in Buff-- or Hall County, right?

CLOUSE: Yep, right, [INAUDIBLE].

QUICK: So it's pretty close to the border, so if, if there are someone that works and is a banker or a realtor that lives just across the county line, but they're-- they really work in Shelton, Nebraska, you kind of-- now you're limiting your access on one side of the-- of, of that border. So I don't know how we do that and make sure it works for everybody because only smaller communities are struggling to find people to serve.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Yeah, no, that, that's exactly it. And I think that's what this language is intended for. And I appreciate that you have stumbled upon something that-- I was sitting out there, I was, like, that is such a great question. And your brilliant legal counsel is going to have an answer. Let me tell you how I read the language. So it says: the voting member of the board has to either reside in the municipality-- that's what it is now-- within 10 miles of the municipality, within the ETJ of the municipality, or within the county. So, I guess, what I'm interpreting with that word "or" is it has to be one of those four things. So if you have in your example somebody who's living in the next county over but still within 10 miles of that municipality, I think they could serve. But your brilliant legal counsel is going to correct me if I'm wrong on that. But I think that, I think that would be my interpretation of the language.

QUICK: And maybe I should have read it more closely.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: No, no. You have brought something up that's, that's very good for us to think about, so thank you.

QUICK: Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? OK, thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents? Good afternoon.

KURTH BRASHEAR: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Kurth Brashear, K-u-r-t-h B-r-a-s-h-e-a-r. I'm an attorney with Rembolt Ludtke and legal counsel for the South Jefferson Land Bank, which was formed by an interlocal agreement between Endicott, the village of Endicott, the city of Fairbury in 2024. I speak today in support of LB1135 as introduced and is specifically Section 1 and its proposed removal of specified requirements for voting members for a land bank's board of directors. Currently, state statute has six specific requirements for voting members: chamber of commerce representative, banking experience, real estate development experience, realtor experience, nonprofit experience, and large-scale residential or commercial property rental experience. While these requirements are sound from a policy perspective, given the work land banks engage in to restore real property to productive use, in practice they are often an obstacle for

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

communities outside Omaha and Lincoln, if it had one, that want to form and utilize land banks as intended. The South Jefferson Land Bank has an overall population of just over 4,000 residents in Fairbury and Endicott, and has been fortunate to meet its voting-- have its voting board members meet these requirements, but it has not been easy. Within the first 3 months of its organization, the realtor member needed to resign. In the last 3 months before this hearing, its banker moved outside the corporate limits of the member municipality, and its successor realtor took a new position and could no longer serve. While the Mayor of Fairbury and the Council Chair of Endicott are dutifully seeking replacements to fill these vacancies, there are only so many bankers and realtors in Fairbury and Endicott, not to mention real estate developers, commercial property developers, or nonprofit leaders. At its meeting in January, the South Jefferson Board of Directors supported the introduction of legislation to remove these requirements. Its concept being that the statute should instead require a majority of the voting members meet the requirements currently contained in statute. However, upon learning that LB1135 had been introduced, which would also remove some of that requirement, it decided not to introduce its own legislation and supports this idea being workable from a practical standpoint that this legislation and other legislation before the committee today would, ultimately, make land banks available as an option for more communities in the state. So we would respectfully suggest that these three requirements, community development, real estate, and housing, that are in the bill now, would still be somewhat difficult at times for communities to fill because those expertise may not exist there. As such, we would-- while supporting LB1135 as it's introduced, we would also raise for your consideration amending it to simply require a majority of the voting members satisfy the requirements currently in statute. And I thank you and would be glad to answer any questions you might have.

CLOUSE: Do we have any questions? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thanks, Vice Chair. Thank you for being here. Did you-- were you here for the opening comments by Senator McKinney?

KURTH BRASHEAR: On this bill?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

KURTH BRASHEAR: Yes, Senator.

ANDERSEN: OK, so he addressed the-- I asked about the qualification specifically, right?

KURTH BRASHEAR: Yeah.

ANDERSEN: And then what this does is kind of water them down and make a more broad brush as opposed to specific. But the amendment, I believe, that they are bringing is going to reinstate those. So does that mean that, at this point, you're, you're a proponent, if that amendment goes through, are you then neutral or opposing?

KURTH BRASHEAR: If that amendment goes through and kept the language that's currently in the statute, we would be neutral at best on this legislation. Ultimately, Senator, if I may, our goal would be to get it to not have. We have a seven-member board at South Jefferson, six of those slots are already required by the current state statute, that is simply becoming difficult to fill those six spots.

ANDERSEN: Sure. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. So, you know, like for your land bank, how many properties are they doing right now or are they able to do?

KURTH BRASHEAR: Roughly, South Jefferson has approximately 45 properties that it currently has title to.

QUICK: OK. All right. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? Senator Sorrentino.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair. I remember when your father was Speaker of this organization a long time ago. You testified mostly for some of the rural areas, and I know people contribute cash and property to these land banks. Is there a need for more land banks simply because-- are conservation easements an issue for you guys out west or not?

KURTH BRASHEAR: I can't speak to out west, sir. So we're down in Jefferson County, at least south of here. Conservation easements have not been an issue for the South Jefferson Land Bank, overall.

SORRENTINO: With this legislation perhaps we can have more land banks in more rural communities, would you see that as a benefit perhaps?

KURTH BRASHEAR: I, I think from my personal observation, not speaking for the land bank, I would say yes, land banks are a valuable tool that allow communities to redevelop properties that need to be addressed. For instance, in, if I may, Senator, our municipalities, one of the biggest issues is actually derelict properties that are a problem and need to be cleared off property. And so returning to productive use, as our member municipalities have said, part of that is clearing those properties off and simply having someone take care of those properties and not have them be a nuisance any longer. So land banks have provided a great deal of flexibility in that regard.

SORRENTINO: Thank you.

KURTH BRASHEAR: Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? OK. Thank you, Mr. Brashear.

KURTH BRASHEAR: Thank you for your time.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents?

CONNOR HERBERT: Thank you, Vice Chair Clouse and members of the Urban Affairs Committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Connor Herbert, C-o-n-n-o-r H-e-r-b-e-r-t, and I serve as a staffer with the Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs. The Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs is testifying in support of LB1135 because it strengthens the Municipal Land Bank Act in a way that supports local decision-making and responsible development. Land banks-- land banks play an important role in returning eligible properties to productive use, which directly contributes to stronger neighborhoods, increased housing supply, and healthier local tax bases. Under the current statute, board composition requirements can be difficult to meet, as the previous testifiers have attested to, particularly in smaller or regional communities where the pool of individuals fitting very specific professional categories may be limited. While expertise in banking, real estate, and development remains important, an overly rigid framework can slow down appointments and leave seats unfilled. Also, it's important to note that the initial creation of this law, you know, 2013, 2020, there's been a sort of procedural development where now we're looking at a situation where you all might even consider expanding it to the entire

state. So it made sense in that initial experiment and I think it, it, it makes sense as like a natural development in the process of, like, considering land banks in Nebraska. And, of course, that overly rigid framework weakens a, a land bank's ability to operate efficiently and respond to local redevelopment opportunities in a timely manner. LB1135 maintains the, the intent of ensuring relevant experience on land bank boards while giving communities more flexibility to appoint qualified individuals who understand local conditions and community needs. That balance supports accountability while recognizing that effective redeveloping often depends on practical knowledge of neighborhoods, property conditions, and local markets. For the Commission this matters because increasing the supply of attainable housing and revitalizing distressed properties are key components of long-term community stability. When land banks can function effectively, they help produce blight, support private investment, and expand housing options for working families. This bill also works well alongside, as I mentioned, other proposals aimed at supporting smaller municipalities where recruitment challenges are often greatest. LB1135 is a commonsense update that promotes development, local control, and more efficient use of existing tools. Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to pass it to General File.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Do we have any questions? Thank you.

CONNOR HERBERT: All right. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any additional proponents? OK, seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, any in the neutral capacity?

JUSTIN BRADY: Senator Clouse and members of the committee, my name is Justin Brady, J-u-s-t-i-n B-r-a-d-y. I appear before you today as the registered lobbyist for the Nebraska Realtors Association in a neutral capacity. Up until a few days ago, the realtors were opposed to this bill, and it's still a lot of what you've talked about, a couple of you, Senator Andersen, Quick, have pointed out there are specific members on this board that have expertise in real estate, that have expertise in property transfer. Land banks aren't just a process where attorneys are clearing title. It is truly, they are a property transfer company that's out there. And so when land banks first were created about 10 years ago, the realtors had a lot of concerns and questions about it. Part of that compromise was let's put a realtor member on there, let's put some people who have property management on there, and see how it works, and it has worked well in Omaha. So to see a bill that all of a sudden removes that gave them great concern.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

And so the compromise that has been created is, as I understand, that list that's on page 3, in essence, lines 14 through 26 will go back into the bill and it will say in those stand-alone land banks that you do this unless you cannot reasonably find somebody to fill those shoes. And so it does give some flexibility, but at least you have to start with the list of let's get people that understand property transfers and then go from there as opposed to just wipe it out. So with that amendment, the realtors would be neutral, and I'll try to answer any questions.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. So-- and I think you'd probably agree, probably out in the rural areas of Nebraska, there might be realtors that live in Kearney, but maybe serve surrounding communities because there may not be a realtor that lives in that community.

JUSTIN BRADY: Right.

QUICK: So that kind of helps address that with that, if they aren't--

JUSTIN BRADY: They try-- they first would have to try to find one. If they can't, then, then they could, in essence, waive that requirement.

QUICK: OK.

JUSTIN BRADY: Yes.

QUICK: Yeah, I appreciate that. Thank you.

JUSTIN BRADY: Yep.

CLOUSE: OK. Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thanks for being here, Mr. Brady. So the list has got a lot of things in it, and you're concerned primarily just with reinserting the requirement that there be at least an attempt to put a realtor on there or do you--

JUSTIN BRADY: That'd be their primary, yes, Senator. They also, you know-- I mean, you've got-- you also have the large-scale residential or commercial property rental. But, yes, their, their first-- what attracted their eye was the fact that realtors were being stricken from the board.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

J. CAVANAUGH: I guess if we were to pare it down and just say to leave out the other parts and just put back in those two, would that satisfy--

JUSTIN BRADY: I'd have to take that back to them, because, like I said, when we [INAUDIBLE], we'll start with that and if they can't fill it-- I mean, I think, you know, as Mr. Brashear talked about, if all of a sudden they couldn't find a realtor in Fairbury, they could move forward without one, but at least start with the idea of whether it's a banker or a realtor to sit on the board.

J. CAVANAUGH: So my read of it is, if you put that back in, they'd still have to get at least one in each of those.

JUSTIN BRADY: And, unfortunately, you don't have the amendment. In fact-- I mean, what it would say is that unless a specific representative cannot reasonably be found, the voting members of the board shall include. So it gives them an out that if they can't find, reasonably find somebody, then they don't have to follow the list.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK, I'm with you. I'm just saying if there's-- if other folks don't have a problem with leaving out, you know, somebody representing chamber of commerce or a banker or somebody in a nonprofit affordable housing.

JUSTIN BRADY: True, I see what you're saying.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah, like if we, if we could just leave it to the ones that we really feel like we have to have enumerated and then still give that out, that might give more flexibility to those.

JUSTIN BRADY: OK. Certainly willing to look at it.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thanks.

JUSTIN BRADY: Mm-hmm.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any other questions? OK. Thank you, Mr. Brady.

JUSTIN BRADY: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other in the neutral capacity? OK, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you and thank you to those who speak-- that spoke. So you'll, you'll get the amendment that we're discussing. So it would

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

say: The voting members of the board shall include the following individuals to the extent such individuals can reasonably be found. So that's a member representing the chamber of commerce, member experienced in banking, real estate, realtor, nonprofit affordable housing, large-scale residential commercial rental. It also states that a single member may satisfy more than one of the requirements of the section if he or she has the required qualifications. It is not necessary that there will be a different member to fulfill each such requirement. So it keeps those in, but it still keeps flexibility for areas like Fairbury. So I think that's a good compromise as much as possible. Besides that, I think trying to find ways to assist other communities and start land banks, but also finding ways to assist those that have been in existence to give them more flexibility. I think it's a great thing, especially when we're, you know, discussing, you know, affordable housing crisis and things like that, so. If anyone has any other suggestions or anything we need to clean up, please let me know and I'm open to it. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions for Senator McKinney? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thanks, Vice Chair. Senator McKinney, I, I thought you said that the amendment-- this is the amendment, right?

McKINNEY: Yeah.

ANDERSEN: AM2460. You said it was going to reinstate the specific qualification, like real estate.

McKINNEY: It does. On page, on page 2 starting at line 21 it puts them in. They-- because the, the bill took them out and then we-- so they're back in right there.

CLOUSE: Page 4 keeps it out, though. So probably don't need to reference it.

McKINNEY: But it's in there.

ANDERSEN: Page 2, starting at line--

McKINNEY: 21.

ANDERSEN: --10, right?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: No, 21. On line 21 it says: at least one member representing chamber of commerce, at least one member with experience in banking and so on.

ANDERSEN: OK, so deleted from one section, but--

McKINNEY: Yeah, it's in there.

ANDERSEN: Left unchanged [INAUDIBLE].

McKINNEY: Yeah. It's probably just how they drafted it, but it's in there.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? OK. Thank you, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLOUSE: That concludes LB1135. Senator McKinney is back up on LB799.

McKINNEY: No, I think LB1214. Good afternoon, Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y, and I represent District 11. I'm here to present LB1214, which proposes a pilot program to establish neighborhood data collaboratives aimed at supporting community-identified priorities. The purpose of LB1214 is to create a structured data-driven approach that allows neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations, and regional planning entities to work collaboratively to address local challenges. By strengthening access to shared data and analytical tools, these collaboratives are intended to support informed decision-making, improve coordination across organizations, and elevate resident leadership in identifying and responding to neighborhood needs. Under LB1214, the Department of Health and Human Services would be authorized to fund up to five neighborhood data collaborative pilot programs. These pilot sites are intended to reflect geographic and community diversity across the state and demonstrate readiness to move from planning to implementation. Each pilot program would include at least one regional planning organization, at least one local nonprofit, and at least three neighborhood associations. The bill specifies that these collaboratives must demonstrate shared governance and resident leadership to ensure that neighborhood voices are central to the work being conducted. LB1214 also clearly limits how funds may be used. Pilot program funding would support technology and data tools, community engagement, resident data training, staffing coordination, and evaluation activities. To ensure transparency, each neighborhood data collaborative would be required to submit an annual report to the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

Legislature. These reports would include information on activities, outcomes, resident participation, and any recommendation for scalability. This would allow the Legislature to evaluate effectiveness of the pilot program and consider future policy decisions. Finally, LB1214 appropriates \$250,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services to launch these pilots representing a critical shift towards precision governance. This bill empowers residents to address local issues with, with precision, whether, whether this is by mapping out the childcare and workforce gap that plagues rural, rural Nebraska or identifying food access gaps in communities like north Omaha. By uniting regional planners and regional planning and neighborhood associations, we stop guessing at community needs and start investing in what the data proves will work. This pilot is a strategic investment towards more efficient, evidence-based government that ensures Nebraska's neighborhood could thrive. This is similar to a lot of things that they do in Iowa. I know they have a, a data system in Iowa that they're using, and they work with their-- it's like MAPA, the Metro Area Planning Agency. Their version of that is kind of what houses it, and I think it's a good thing. I saw over the interim-- I went to MAPA and they showed me what Iowa does. And, you know, if you talk about a gap like in something-- I, I forget-- like, let's say employment, a workforce gap and things like that, you can see it on a map and see what's going on and it, it could help better plan and better, you know, think out what we should and shouldn't be doing, especially from a legislative perspective. And I think it could help guide a lot of good policy decisions especially not only for us as senators, but for the state as a whole to make sure that we're planning and moving in the right way. So with that, I'll take any questions. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions for Senator McKinney? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you. Senator McKinney, on the, the fiscal note, it is one-quarter of a person, is that right, one-quarter of an FTE?

McKINNEY: I'm looking at the fiscal note, where's that at? Where are you seeing that at?

ANDERSEN: It's under DHHS.

McKINNEY: Yeah, yep.

ANDERSEN: So one-quarter of an FTE is \$250,000?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: Well, we picked the number, that was \$250,000, because usually with things like this in the Legislature, since I've been here, it's been about \$250,000. It could be less, but they didn't-- I guess they didn't put a number, so I guess they're assuming the same as well.

ANDERSEN: It's interesting-- yeah, a quarter FTE, that means a guy makes \$1 million a year, right, at 250 for a quarter. Is there going to be a workspace for this person? I mean, are they going to have space somewhere else? Is there-- are they going to have to lease space? Are they going to have to travel? You're talking about five--

McKINNEY: I mean, I would assume they would have to travel because they would have to work with different planning agencies across the state in different municipalities. So, yeah, they would travel but I'm assuming they would have office space or space in DHHS somewhere.

ANDERSEN: OK.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

ANDERSEN: So the fiscal note is actually significantly higher than a quarter million.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

QUICK: Yeah.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Are you done?

ANDERSEN: No, actually, can you, can you kind of expound on-- in the fiscal note in the narrative it talks about implementation of up to five neighborhood data collaborative pilot projects, doesn't specify what type of data or set the boundaries. What, what are you expecting for this implementation person, they call them, what, what data are you expecting to have?

McKINNEY: The expectation is for them to work with five different municipalities across the state to do these data collaboratives so each municipality would have their own map, essentially, data map.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

ANDERSEN: So it's not-- in here it says five neighborhoods, so it's not five neighborhoods if you're talking--

McKINNEY: I mean, yeah.

ANDERSEN: --five cities across the state.

McKINNEY: Five neighborhoods, yeah.

ANDERSEN: Which?

McKINNEY: Across the state, five.

ANDERSEN: OK.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

CLOUSE: OK.

ANDERSEN: I, I read this to be, like, five neighborhoods in the greater Omaha area.

McKINNEY: Oh, no.

ANDERSEN: Something like that, you're talking about.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

ANDERSEN: OK. Thanks.

CLOUSE: Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thanks, Vice Chair. Thanks, Chair McKinney, for bringing this. I just kind of go back to the, the fiscal note. So the, the bill appropriates \$250,000 to carry it out.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

J. CAVANAUGH: I think my read of the fiscal note would be that DHHS says that they need a one-quarter FTE to facilitate that, and \$250,000 is not for that person. It's for the program itself--

McKINNEY: Yeah, we just--

J. CAVANAUGH: --to include the things like: the funds shall be used for technology, data tools, community engagement, resident data

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

training, staffing, coordinating, evaluating activities. And then funds are intended to support and implement rather than planning alone. So it would be used for [INAUDIBLE].

McKINNEY: Yeah, it will be used for collecting the data and the collaborative and working with the individuals in the communities.

J. CAVANAUGH: And that one-quarter FTE probably does come out of the \$250,000. So it's \$250,000 total. The amount going to the community will be less than 250 because we'll have to pay, you know, the--

McKINNEY: Right.

J. CAVANAUGH: --one-quarter FTE at-- I think it did put-- well, this doesn't say position level. Does it? GI-- yeah, an Information II GIS professional. So whatever that level is. So that was my reading of it, I just thought I'd interject that. Thank you for bringing it.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLOUSE: OK. Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. Just my experience with some of the fiscal notes, too, in DHHS, I know in HHS committee that [INAUDIBLE] and then somebody already working there.

McKINNEY: Somebody is probably doing it,--

QUICK: [INAUDIBLE]

McKINNEY: --they're just adding work.

QUICK: Yeah, they're not adding another employee, they're just saying that that, that person's going to do-- that's already working there is going to do a quarter of that work.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? Thanks, Senator McKinney. Do we have any proponents for LB1214?

KIMARA SNIPES: Good afternoon, Chair McKinney, Vice Chair Clouse, and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Kimara Snipes, I'm the Executive Director of One Omaha, and my work is about strengthening neighborhood leadership and helping communities use practical tools to solve problems where people live. In plain

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

language, LB1214 creates a pilot program for neighborhood data collaboratives, partnerships among resident-led neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and regional planning organizations; they use data to support community-identified priorities. And what I appreciate about this bill is it's not data for data's sake. Let me give you a practical example. When we worked with residents around Highway 75 for the Metro Area Planning Agency, we conducted a community survey to better understand how infrastructure decisions were affecting daily life. Traffic patterns, safety concerns, neighborhood connectivity. We also did the same for Spark CDI's North Omaha Trail. What we found about Highway 75 wasn't just data points, it was clarity. Residents were able to articulate patterns and priorities that weren't always visible in aggregate reports. That information strengthened conversations with partners and decision-makers because it grounded the discussion in both lived experience and structured input. What we learned from Highway 75 is that when residents have structured ways to gather and interpret information, infrastructure conversations become more precise and less reactive. In rural communities, where transportation corridors often define economic opportunity and safety, that level of clarity is just as critical, if not more. LB1214 helps make that kind of clarity more accessible and sustainable, not just for one corridor project, but for the neighborhoods across Nebraska. It's implementation focused. The bill specifies that funding can support technology and data tools, community engagement, resident data training, staffing, coordination, and evaluation, and it requires annual reporting on activities, outcomes, resident participation, lessons learned, and scalability. That's important to me because, in Nebraska, we value local problem-solving. We also value stewardship, using limited dollars wisely, and being able to show what we learned and what changed. Truly, this bill is common sense. It supports local control, neighborhood associations, and local partners identifying priorities. It funds capacity so communities can do the work effectively instead of guessing, and it requires reporting and accountability, so we learn what works before scaling. Now, I also want to explicitly name why this matters for rural Nebraska and not just Omaha. LB1214 defines regional planning organizations broadly and even names Nebraska examples like the South Central Economic Development District, which serves multiple counties and communities. That matters because rural communities often face a real challenge. The data that exists is not granular enough, not timely enough, or not easy to interpret without staff capacity. Researchers studying rural data challenges have found that rural practitioners need better data access and partnerships to

interpret and use data for local decisions. So when we talk about tools, we're talking about the ability of a small town or a multi-county region to answer practical questions like where are housing pressures showing up first? Which roads and infrastructure investments will have the biggest community impact? What safety strategies are working and where are the gaps? And how do we compete for grants if we can't quickly produce the local story the data is telling? The National Conference of State Legislatures has emphasized that using data and evidence helps states make strategic, results-driven decisions, especially when budgets are tight. So resources go to approaches that are most effective. At its core, LB1214 is a pilot that says, let's test the model where resident leadership and local partners are equipped to use information well, then report back and scale only what proves valuable. I support LB1214 because it strengthens the middle layer Nebraska needs, not just state policy on one end and individual projects on the other, but durable local infrastructure that helps communities solve problems with clarity and not confusion. Thank you for your time, and I respectfully ask you to advance LB1214, and I am open to any questions.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Senator Sorrentino.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Vice Chair. I thank you for your testimony, Ms. Snipes.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

SORRENTINO: We live in a dangerous world of information sharing, I guess you'll say. I'm concerned on the bill that there isn't any mention of privacy protocols or protections that I can see for neighborhood residences. Can you comment on that, please?

KIMARA SNIPES: So the bill focuses on public aggregate information. It's not about tracking people. It's really about helping residents interpret trends that already inform policy. There's tons of data out here already. The problem is that it's usually not accessible. It's usually not available in language that people can interpret. So what we want to do is bring information down to that resident level. Late, excuse me, resident level, so that way people understand truly what is happening in their communities. And then when they want to make decisions about it, they have that information. They can show up with it.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

SORRENTINO: Could you help me on this last question, what exactly are we tracking? I'm confused.

KIMARA SNIPES: It could be--

SORRENTINO: Can you give an example or two?

KIMARA SNIPES: -it could be a number of things. So, for instance, sometimes Public Works, right, they'll report total numbers of repairs completed, planning reports overall traffic volume, police reports overall calls for service by precinct. Those are broad summaries, they're often district level and not neighborhood block level and not always contextualized with resident input. So this is really about giving residents access to this information, again, at a level that is absorbable by them.

SORRENTINO: So it wouldn't be anything like personal health information, financial, political, things like that to be personally identifiable to one of those Nebraska neighborhood residents?

KIMARA SNIPES: It could be any sort of data, but it's data that's already available. But, again, bringing it instead of maybe a zip code level, now we're going further down to a neighborhood level.

SORRENTINO: I told you an untruth, one last question.

KIMARA SNIPES: Absolutely.

SORRENTINO: Then who gets the data?

KIMARA SNIPES: Who gets the data?

SORRENTINO: Who-- well-- who-- yeah, who gets the data that we were just discussing? Once you've gathered it, who is it sent to or made available?

KIMARA SNIPES: I think that's open to discussion.

SORRENTINO: I'm sorry?

KIMARA SNIPES: I think that's open to discussion. But, like I said, this data already exists. There's so much data out here, I think about in the city of Omaha right now. There's a program called Vision Zero. There's so much data embedded in that dashboard, right? But if I go to a neighborhood association meeting, right, and I'm chatting with

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

someone who maybe they don't often visit the city website, all that data in there really means nothing to them. So how do we take that data and make it mean something to them? And not just mean something to them, but that way when they're making decisions or maybe they're working with their city council person or their state legislator, right, they can bring that data with them that they truly understand and really use it to help them and whoever they're working with make decisions as well.

SORRENTINO: Thank you.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? I have one. Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead, Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Vice Chair. I just want to read a comment as we were talking about data. But this is from, from Jose Flores Jr., he's-- just want to read his proponent comments: As president of the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, SONA, I support LB1214 in an effort to collect data and share findings that will benefit all neighborhoods. So we have a unique opportunity with this partnership to bring concrete findings to help with many issues we are facing, such as housing, job development, and homelessness. As they say, numbers don't lie. As an organization with a mission statement to work towards bettering our neighborhoods, we would look forward to participating in a neighborhood data collaborative pilot program funded by this bill. Thank you for your attention. And so as we talked during the study this summer, we had the hearing, we were talking about getting a type of a system that could pull all of this together so it could be "dashboarded." And neighborhoods across the state could see what's happening in different neighborhoods. If it's something that's working in my neighborhood already, it could work with them as well. I have it in a central place. So I'll support what Flores is saying as well.

KIMARA SNIPES: And can I add to that?

ROUNTREE: Yes, ma'am.

KIMARA SNIPES: I think about Ms. Harris, who rode down with me today, and I was listening to testimony about the land banks. And something Ms. Harris was talking about were all the vacant properties in her neighborhood, right? So someone may report that we have, you know,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

three vacant houses. So now they're worried about break-ins. They're worried about illegal dumping. Unfortunately, there's no really, like, organized neighborhood-level data that shows patterns, right? So with this, now we can show patterns when we go to our local precinct advisory council meeting, right, and we talk about the things that we're seeing, and we have that data to really prove it.

ROUNTREE: OK.

KIMARA SNIPES: Yeah.

ROUNTREE: Thank you.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? I have one. It's really when you talk about the Highway 75 project, so you conducted-- that's your-- how-- was that thorough enough and who did it and how did you pay for it?

KIMARA SNIPES: So Metro Area Planning Agency paid for that. It was very thorough, and I was also told that it was the most grassroots level information that they had received. They had actually applied for some federal funding and were unable to get it. I actually did the survey myself, administered it, did all the data analysis as well, and created the report that was submitted with their second application, which they actually did get because of that information. And we had well over 100 respondents to that as well.

CLOUSE: So MAP-- MAPA did that, you said?

KIMARA SNIPES: I'm sorry?

CLOUSE: MAPA?

KIMARA SNIPES: Metro Area Planning Agency, correct, specifically working with WSP.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you for asking.

CLOUSE: Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thanks for being here, Ms. Snipes.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

J. CAVANAUGH: I was actually going to ask you originally about-- I liked that line about how we can-- tight budget times, we can make the, let's see, what is it, resources go to approaches that are most effective, so I appreciate that.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

J. CAVANAUGH: But now I'm excited by what Senator Clouse just asked you about, which is-- so collected this type of data, and then we're able to use it to get-- bring in more money.

KIMARA SNIPES: Technically, absolutely. That's absolutely a byproduct, right? Because people know that this information you're gathering, again, is at that level. It was, it was surprising to me being in this position, having done a few of these different surveys. I hate to say it, there's a lot of surveys happening, but I don't know how many surveys are really getting to that grassroots level. That neighborhood level data is so important. And so I also follow, at times, the Urban Institute, and they have what's called the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, which is actually where the idea came from to do the interim study that was done earlier. Having that information could just be so helpful. I also spent time within the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance and remember showing up for city council in these different spaces, but not having that information. I can imagine how much more powerful it would be. And it's not just about advocacy at all either. You know, this is about tools, technology, training, I would say, and coordination, so residents can really, again, understand just public information. I love for people to be able to just understand information. We can do so much more, but, unfortunately, people always don't have the confidence to even say that they don't understand. But I know this, this year actually marks, I know I look great, but this marks my 20th year of attending my first neighborhood association meeting. So I've seen this for literally decades now. And so being able to grow and to practice intellectual curiosity, see what others are doing really is what gave me this idea, and I appreciate Senator McKinney for listening to me and helping me work on this as well.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thanks for being here.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you for the question.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

CLOUSE: Other questions? Thank you.

KIMARA SNIPES: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents?

RAJA PHILIP: Hello, my name is Raja Philip, that's R-a-j-a P-h-i-l-i-p. I first want to thank Senator McKinney for introducing this bill and for the Urban Affairs Committee for hearing us today. I live in the Walnut Hill neighborhood, which is right off of Saddle Creek in Omaha, Nebraska. I've lived in this neighborhood for 9 years now. The role that I play is, is an active parent and community member who wants my community to be safe and thrive. Unfortunately, there are a lot of unhoused people in this area, unhoused people who deal with a lack of access, drug use, mental health problems, and public safety issues. These lead to bigger problems for the children and families in my neighborhood. Public safety isn't just about police response but also about prevention. This bill helps neighborhoods gather and interpret information themselves instead of waiting for the city to hand them a summary once per year. When neighborhoods don't have organized data, we're the last to get the resources. I ask that you all would please advance LB1214 so that we are able to have clear neighborhood data that will allow us to understand what's going on and how to resolve it. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Any questions? Ms. Philip, thank you.

RAJA PHILIP: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents?

CATHIE HARRIS: [INAUDIBLE], it's so cold in here. Oh, my gosh. I'll be glad when I get up out of here. I don't plan to stay long, if you got some questions, come on with it, but. I'm Cathie Harris, C-a-t-h-i-e. Let's see, I'm for LB1214. This is new to me, so don't be, you know-- anyway.

CLOUSE: You're doing fine.

CATHIE HARRIS: OK. I support this. I have been in-- I'm a president of a, of a neighborhood association which is called Binney Wirt Spencer Neighborhood Association, and I have been in my area for 60 years in north Omaha. I've seen many things come, go. I'm up for changes if it's going to help, you know, make some-- do some good. And I believe this is necessary. We have-- I may not go to protocol, you all want me

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

to go, so I'm just going to spit it out so I can get up out of here. OK. We have different things going on. We don't find out about it until later. City planning does something where they don't get the letters out in time. Just numerous of things that where we need help in trying to understand what's going on, having the data, will help support us to make better decisions on what we do for different things going up in our, in our, in our community. All you know-- next thing you know you see a building going up. You see them putting stuff out there on a lot, next thing, you know, boom, there it is. So I think that we have vacant lots that need to be taken care of. There's numerous of other things, so I do support. You all have any questions for me, come on with them, because it's cold. Any questions?

CLOUSE: OK. Sally, did you get, did you get the name?

SALLY SCHULTZ: Yes.

CLOUSE: You're good there, OK. Any questions? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thanks for being here, Ms. Harris. I just-- I wrote it down fast-- what was the name of your neighborhood association?

CATHIE HARRIS: Binney Wirt Spencer.

J. CAVANAUGH: Binney Wirt Spencer.

CATHIE HARRIS: Mm-hmm.

J. CAVANAUGH: All right. And you raised, I mean, a good point in your testimony about folks finding out about stuff after it's already happened. Right?

CATHIE HARRIS: Mm-hmm. Oh, I have my sheet. I have one, I just need-- forget to bring it up, babe, it's cold.

J. CAVANAUGH: It's too cold. Well, thank, thank you for being here. And just trying to understand a little bit about folks. So does that mean, like, you find out about a building being built and you would have maybe objected or had some consideration if you had an opportunity to be heard ahead of time? Is that--

CATHIE HARRIS: I might have, and I might have, you know, you know, went along with it, you don't know, you know. Here's the deal-- can I be, you know, be real with you?

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah, please.

CATHIE HARRIS: Our taxes are going up. You got vacant lots here and there, and you got all kind of stuff going on. And we're some of the last ones to find out about it. You wouldn't want that going on in your community, would you?

J. CAVANAUGH: I, I want people to be as engaged as they can be.

CATHIE HARRIS: That's right. And so, you know, you want to know what's going on and you don't want to be the last one and to find out and then others are looking to me to tell them something. I don't have anything to tell them. So you-- with the resources, you can convey them a little bit better and, and kind of come together. And if it's something that we need to go to our city council or something with a meeting, we have some information that we can do that with. You know, like the, what is that, OPPD, they got their own board and everything. They pick their own people. So, so you got a whole lot of stuff going on. So it's better to know what's going on.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah.

CATHIE HARRIS: It's like driving, if you don't have the signs on the road, you don't know a ditch is coming up or to get over unless you have information. So you need-- with anything, you need some-- you know, even the smallest little trinket, it comes with some kind of instructions. So the bottom line is that we do need some information to be given to us and have it accessible that we can get to it. And so to make it more real to us that what, what we got coming and what's going away.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thanks for being here.

CATHIE HARRIS: Mm-hmm.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Vice Chair. Thank you so much, ma'am, for being here. 60 years in the neighborhood.

CATHIE HARRIS: Correct. 60 plus.

ROUNTREE: 60-plus years in the neighborhood.

CATHIE HARRIS: Absolutely.

ROUNTREE: So you've seen change after change after change.

CATHIE HARRIS: Absolutely.

ROUNTREE: Absolutely. So, right now, how is-- how do you all get information? I see what this bill wants to do. So that we can have it right here at hand, but where are the gaps right now? And you said things have already happened and then you find out about it. How is any information getting out to you? I know that you probably relay it to everybody else when you get it, but how is it getting out?

CATHIE HARRIS: Well, it's by hearsay--

ROUNTREE: Hearsay?

CATHIE HARRIS: --or you happen to hear about a meeting that might be going on. And, and sometimes you hear about the meetings, you don't have time to put it in your schedule because it's, you know-- and then is it the proper questions that are being asked? Is it-- you know, a lot of the-- some of the people that don't know how to hold on to their houses, they-- they're, they're-- they might have-- they might be low on their taxes-- you know, behind on their taxes. So if someone can help educate them, these things are, are, are made available, resources. Some of them are selling their houses for \$20,000. I mean, come on, you know, this is things that are going on right under people's noses. And I think people need to be educated that you don't have to do that. There's other resources that can help you stay in your place or whatever may come. You have access to it. And, like I said, it's just like going down the road, if you don't know a curve is coming, you're going to keep driving straight. So there's a lot of things that can-- that it can help. I, I believe that it can improve. And I wouldn't have come down here to be telling you if I didn't believe in it.

ROUNTREE: Well, I appreciate it and you made a statement that really just kind of helped me to see that board, that dashboard. We talk about what kind of information is just going to track it and you talked about delinquent taxes in your neighborhood. I'm looking at it here on the screen in the Wirt Spencer neighborhood and all, but that information compiled on this dashboard, you would know that X number of homes in your neighborhood with delinquent taxes and coming up probably before failure, which allows you to get ahead of that and to get to-- get more active in the community to help those situations out.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

CATHIE HARRIS: Absolutely. You know, like I said, a handbook comes with everything. You need, you need some. Even when you buy a new car, once you got a new car, anybody got a car? Don't it come with a handbook? Don't it tell you what's in your-- how to turn your dash lights on, how to do this on it. Am I right or wrong? So you need information. Information is valuable and it helps you to find out who's the resource, who do you go to? My neighborhood parks, I have to find out information for myself, when you call these numbers, you get spinned around so much trying to call somebody, and you can't even get the person you need. And we're paying-- our tax dollars is paying these people to answer the phone. We can't even get nobody. They got cell phones, but they, they home-- their, their buddies got their phone number, but we can't call them. And they're supposed to be working for us. So having the resources available, who you contact, where do you go, if there's a meeting going-- if there's meetings going on, whatever the case may be, you're able to access this information so that you can help your community, you can help yourself.

ROUNTREE: All right. Thank you so much. I appreciate that. Thank you. And it is chilly.

CATHIE HARRIS: Yeah, it's cold. It ain't chilly, it's cold.

CLOUSE: OK, thank you very much, you did great.

CATHIE HARRIS: All right.

CLOUSE: Thank you. OK. Any other proponents? Good afternoon.

JOSEPH HIGGINS: Good afternoon. Thank you for holding this hearing, Senators. As you know, Kimara Snipes started this conversation. She asked me to come by.

CLOUSE: Your name.

JOSEPH HIGGINS: Oh, Joseph Higgins, J-o-s-e-p-h H-i-g-g-i-n-s.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

JOSEPH HIGGINS: I'm the President of the Levi Carter Sherman Neighborhood Association and serve on various committees in Omaha. My experience in my neighborhood, I moved to that particular neighborhood in 2013 and I started a neighborhood association in 2015. The reason why we feel that this-- and I feel that this bill matters is that,

overall, there's a lot of funding shortfalls. And just in the time that I've been a neighborhood association, I've watched the neighborhood staff be reduced at not only One Omaha, but the city planning in Omaha. And so I think the collaboration at the lowest level is important and the engagement is important. People don't show up because they're uninformed, and they feel like they're frustrated by the process. I'm probably known for being in the Levi Carter Sherman neighborhood because of the Inland Port Authority and the airport business park, and that was a prime example. I spent a year and a half trying to explain to neighbors that eminent domain was not part of the process, and they, they ignored that and the news played on that. But they weren't engaged. I reached out to Senator Wayne, I think it was March, the year when he was just talking about writing the bill. And the information isn't dissimilated, people don't know. So I think having a combined collaborative resource is important. We talk about how to move forward. And I think we want to-- community betterment is our goal. And as part of my background, just so you know, I've lived in Arlington, Nebraska, Fremont, Nebraska, Colorado Springs, but I'm a resident of Omaha, born and raised here. I've-- other than the short stints out of town, I've been here longer than anybody else that's been before this committee. So I think our role-- I consider myself a community advocate and I run cleanups, I help with the park infrastructure, various things like that, but I feel inadequate to supply the role that I need to do and I think this bill will help us advocate and make better communities. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Let's see if we have any questions? Nope. Thank you for being here.

JOSEPH HIGGINS: Did that mean I did good or I did bad?

CLOUSE: Thank you. Any other proponents?

BEATRIZ GARCIA: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Beatriz Garcia. I am here in strong support of LB1214. I'm a mother and a resident of north Omaha and families like mine are tired of being statistics instead of stakeholders. Where I live, data is often used to justify decisions about us rather than help us. Neighborhoods are labeled high risk, families are flagged as problems, and interventions escalate without addressing root causes. When the same outcomes happen over and over again to the same communities, that is not coincidence. That's systemic failure. I have lived what that failure looks like. Systems meant to protect and support families do not work together. CPS and the courts, child support enforcement and

employment systems operate in silos. One system triggers another, barriers compound and families become trapped in supervision, debt and instability instead of being helped towards safety and self-sufficiency. When a household includes a felony record, child support arrears, or prior system involvement, opportunities shrink fast. That is not because families do not want to do better, it is because the system repeatedly blocks the path forward. If systems are a part of the problem, then they must also be a part of the solution. Data should not be only used to monitor, punish, or predict failure. It should be used to prevent harm, coordinate services, and remove barriers that keep families stuck. That is why LB1214 matters. Neighborhood data collaboratives with shared governments-- governance and resident leadership create accountability to the people most affected. They turn repeated failure into informed action. This bill prioritizes implementation, not just planning. Communities do not need more reports explaining why we struggle. We need coordinated solutions that actually change outcomes. LB1214 recognizes dignity. It treats residents as partners and not patterns. I urge you to support LB1214 and choose collaboration over control, solutions over statistics, and accountability over repetition. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Do we have any questions? No? OK. Thank you. You did fine. Any other proponents?

LISA ROSE: Good afternoon, Chairperson, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Lisa Rose, L-i-s-a R-o-s-e. I serve on the One Omaha Advisory Board. I represent the Benson neighborhood. I am a small business owner and a former public servant. I've lived in several different neighborhoods across Omaha and Lincoln for more than 40 years. I've also left the state and have come back recently. What I've learned is that strong communities do not happen by accident. They happen when residents have the tools and support to understand their challenges, speak with a clear voice, and take part in decisions that affect their lives. For example, I live near the main thoroughfare of Ames Avenue. Local businesses are dwindling, medical facilities are few, boarded up buildings are many, roadways are pitted, and walkability is low. Residents see these challenges every day, they know what needs attention, but too often they lack the data and support needed to turn these concerns into action and investment. LB1214 helps change that by supporting partnerships that put residents at the center and gives neighborhoods practical tools to turn lived experience into informed action. It allows communities to better understand what's working, what isn't,

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

and how limited resources can be used more effectively. LB1214 is about giving neighborhoods a fair chance to succeed and giving policymakers better insight to what truly works. I respectfully urge the committee to advance this bill. Thank you for your time today.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions?

LISA ROSE: Any questions?

CLOUSE: Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Vice Chair. And thank you, Ms. Rose, for being here.

LISA ROSE: Yes.

ANDERSEN: In your own words, what would you expect to get out of this pilot program?

LISA ROSE: I expect to be able to give communities, especially communities like mine, the ability to have a voice, to have more than just conjecture, more than their feelings, to just have the data behind it, to make these informed decisions. A lot of people come to committees like this with information, they come with information in their heart. But they need the data to drive actual legislation. And I know that's important to you. And I feel that that is what we're going to do that we can do to help these communities. Having that data is power, that knowledge of being able to understand it. I work as a project manager daily. I know what it is to have a bunch of data, but you have no idea how to read it. It's important.

ANDERSEN: Right. And I agree, because data is just data. It's just information--

LISA ROSE: Correct.

ANDERSEN: --that doesn't mean anything until you put it in context, and to extrapolate some, some kind of nugget of intelligence on it that is meaningful, right?

LISA ROSE: Yes.

ANDERSEN: And, and that's kind of the challenge I have, because I'm not really sure. I, I agree with gathering data to try and find a

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

solution or find a resolution to a problem. I'm just not sure which problem we're trying to fix.

LISA ROSE: Well, I think a lot of that will be decided. I can only speak for myself. I am, you know, I'm new to the board. I joined this board because I felt it was important, because it is community driven. It's not CEO driven, it's, it's base level. What I'm hoping that comes from this, and I think it could, is the ability to take that information and we can see where those problems lie. We know where a lot of the problems are, but as Kimara said, we need to get more granular. We all have issues in all of our neighborhoods, but we need to get granular and figure out where we can be most effective with the money we have and with the information we have available. So a lot of that, I think, will come over time. You know, I don't have all of the answers, but I'm hoping to be a part of one that actually can.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I'm thinking Ms., Ms. Harris didn't give us a lot of the answers after 60-plus years in the neighborhood.

LISA ROSE: Yes.

CATHIE HARRIS: What do you need?

ANDERSEN: You ain't got that kind of time. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

LISA ROSE: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any more proponents?

CONNOR HERBERT: Thank you, Vice Chair Clouse and members of the Urban Affairs Committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Connor Herbert, C-o-n-n-o-r H-e-r-b-e-r-t, and I serve as a staffer with the Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs. The Nebraska Commission on African American Affairs supports LB1214 because it promotes better local decision-making, stronger community partnerships, and more efficient use of public resources. The bill's neighborhood data collaborative pilot program recognizes that the people closest to local challenges often have the clearest understanding of what is working, what is not, and where limited dollars can have the greatest impact. By bringing together local neighborhood associations, local nonprofits, and regional planning organizations, LB1214 supports a bottom-up approach rather than a one-size-fits-all model. This structure encourages practical

problem-solving driven by local knowledge, which is especially important in a state with diverse communities and varying economic conditions. When communities can track trends, measure outcomes, and share information responsibly, they're better positioned to address issues early, strengthen neighborhoods, and support long-term economic stability. The pilot's focus on technology, community engagement, resident training, and evaluation helps build local capacity instead of creating permanent state dependency. It equips communities and government stakeholders with tools to identify priorities, coordinate services, and make smarter investments that support workforce participation, safe neighborhoods, and stable housings. All of which contributes to a stronger local economy. LB1214 also emphasizes transparency through annual reporting on outcomes and lessons learned. This ensures accountability and allows the Legislature to evaluate what works before considering broader expansion. Encouraging participation from a wide range of neighborhoods, including those that have historically had fewer resources, helps ensure that economic opportunity strategies are informed by local-- real local conditions. LB1214 is a practical, locally focused step toward more effective governance and stronger Nebraska communities. And as, as an aside, I personally did a Fulbright scholarship to the number 11 geography program in the world at Durham University, where we learned a lot. Well, my master's is in research methods in geography. And we learned a lot about geographers can help communities develop like-- basically like data sets for understanding local issues and going to, not just like legislatures, but you know, local city councils and other groups to-- well, it could be-- it's basically built like a narrative case for issues that they might face. And I think the basic, basic argument for the, the data collaborative proposal here is that those five neighborhoods, you know, one of those neighborhoods might face issues with unhoused folks. One of those communities might face issues with trying to figure out, well, how can we get our property values to go up or something like that? And I think the-- that the idea behind the pilot program is not to set-- like address a specific issue at the outset, but from a bottom-up like direction, encourage local stakeholders to figure out, well, like what kind of problems do we want to address and put these resources that we've, you know, written a grant out for towards? And so in that way I think making use of, like, this kind of program to not only empower, like, neighborhoods but also empower neighborhoods to work with higher level, you know, governance authorities that might be able to better assess and create positive legislation would be super helpful. Obviously, not just in Omaha, but across the state, I know there are issues with all kinds of

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

things and places as far-flung as Chadron and Scottsbluff, Valentine, so on and so forth. So, yeah. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Vice Chair. Mr. Herbert, just out of curiosity, are you, are you a lobbyist or are you actually with the Commission?

CONNOR HERBERT: I'm a staffer with the Commission, yeah.

ANDERSEN: OK. They need to update their website then.

CONNOR HERBERT: [INAUDIBLE]

ANDERSEN: Hmm?

CONNOR HERBERT: Like, I, I actually run the website, so in what way?

ANDERSEN: Well, I don't see your name on the website.

CONNOR HERBERT: OK.

ANDERSEN: You must have put everybody on there except for yourself.

CONNOR HERBERT: We don't have any of the staff on the website except for the commissioners, but, yeah, we can address that, for sure.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? Thank you.

CONNOR HERBERT: Absolutely.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents?

ZEKE ROUSE: Vice Chair Clouse, members of the Urban Affairs Committee, good afternoon. My name is Zeke Rouse, that's Z-e-k-e R-o-u-s-e, and I serve as a policy analyst and lobbyist at Spark, a nonprofit organization based in Omaha, focused on revitalizing disinvested neighborhoods. I'm here today in strong support of LB1214. Neighborhoods are the foundational building blocks of communities. Neighborhoods are where the good life is found, so we ought to invest in them. The bill is designed requiring collaboration between neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and regional planning organizations aligned with best practices identified by the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, or NNIP.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

This research from 2024 emphasizes that local data becomes most powerful when they are paired with community knowledge and resident leadership. Across the country, NNIP partners have demonstrated that when residents co-lead data analysis policies become more relevant, equitable, and effective, whether addressing housing stability, public health, or neighborhood change. As a specific example, we can also look to the data-informed community engagement model, abbreviated as DICE, developed by Rutgers University and championed by the National League of Cities, as further evidence of the power of this approach. In cities like Newark, New Jersey, and Dallas, Texas, partnerships between residents, nonprofits, and city agencies turned crime data into community action. In Newark, the DICE collaborative used geospatial data alongside residents' risk narratives to inform public safety improvements, leading to a 35% reduction in violent crime after targeted interventions such as street light replacements. In Dallas, data shared through the Child Poverty Action Lab helped transform a vacant lot, once known for violence, into a community plaza, resulting in a 23% drop in crime and a 59% reduction in arrests in that area. These success stories illustrate the same principle that LB1214 embodies. Data alone doesn't change communities, people do. But when residents are equipped with the right tools, partnerships, and governance structures, data can amplify local leadership and accelerate neighborhood transformation. In doing so, we invest not only in better data, but in the people and neighborhoods that make the good life possible. For these reasons, I urge the committee to advance LB1214, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions, comments? OK. Thank you.

ZEKE ROUSE: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other proponents? Any other proponents? OK. Any opponents? Any neutral? OK. Senator McKinney to close.

McKINNEY: Thank you and thank you to everyone who came and testified today in support of LB1214. The problem that LB1214 is trying to solve is just a lack of data, especially for those who are on the ground and doing the grassroots work. What it would do if passed, it would allow community members to better advocate for themselves because they would have access to more information and more data. It doesn't solve a specific problem, but, as stated by some of the testifiers, it could help lead to better problem-solving. So if you have a data map and it shows that over this period of time there's been this increase in a lack of affordable housing, you could better address the issue and be

more specific with, let's say if in the Legislature the, the middle-income workforce housing program, we could better utilize those dollars for specific areas, but we don't have the data, we can't be more specific on where those dollars are deployed. But if you have more data, you can better address issues more effectively, and maybe we'll start seeing better results instead of broad approaches to problems. That's the point of it is to equip ourselves, but also community members with data so they can go to a city council meeting and say I looked at the data and there's been an increase in liquor stores in our, in our neighborhood. You could come to the Legislature and say, based on the data in my neighborhood, we have more vacant houses than we did 10 years ago. So just stuff like that so people could better advocate for themselves, better advocate for the issues, and maybe we'll see better improvements in our communities. Thank you.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions for Senator McKinney? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thanks, Senator McKinney. In the pilot, it says-- it talks about five different neighborhoods. Do you have thoughts on where those would be?

McKINNEY: No, I don't have thoughts. I think by allowing the Department of Health and Human Services by opening up an application, the hope would be that five different neighborhoods would apply to the department and they would choose which neighborhoods to pick to pilot the program.

ANDERSEN: Do you have thoughts on which size or which class of cities?

McKINNEY: I mean, it would be my hope to see it in multiple sizes, so a metropolitan, primary, second class, a village. I would love to see it in, in, in just different sizes, just so you can see how it was used and so you could better kind of score on whether the pilot was effective in different communities. I wouldn't want to see it only used in neighborhoods in Omaha, for example. I would like to see it used in a primary class city and a second class city and a village and those type of things, just so we can see how it was used, what was good and what was bad and all. And then if by the end of it, at the end of the pilot, the state or the Legislature choose to keep housing that data, you could better improve the system going forward, so no.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

ANDERSEN: And in the bill, it says: Pilot sites should reflect geographic and community diversity. How do you-- how would you factor that in?

McKINNEY: I think it, it goes back to why I would love to see it in multiple spaces. I think there's a different geographic and community diversity in Omaha versus Grand Island. So the pilot should reflect the differences in the class of cities and just rural versus urban. I, I, I think that's what it should reflect.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

McKINNEY: Mm-hmm.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Thank you, Vice Chair. And I'm, I'm glad you brought that up, too, and pointed that out. I know even in Grand Island, you know, you might go to one neighborhood and it could be very affluent houses, wealthy people living right there, and then a block away you have a really poverty-stricken neighborhood, and so I think having that input from maybe everybody in that certain neighborhood would be really important to collect the data to see what we're doing for improvements maybe in one part and they just border each other so closely.

McKINNEY: Right.

QUICK: So I, I, I can see the use for that to help in our communities, so.

McKINNEY: Yep. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? OK. Thanks, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLOUSE: That concludes LB1214. Now, we'll move right into LB799.

ANDERSEN: It's the Senator McKinney show.

CLOUSE: Yeah, McKinney is just Urban Affairs.

McKINNEY: Good afternoon, Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y, and I represent District 11. I'm here to present LB799 which adopts the Service Contract Reporting Act to require our state's largest political entities and agencies to

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

annually report on their service contract awards. Under this act, cities of the metropolitan class, counties with over 500,000 residents and state agencies must submit a report to the Materiel Division of the Department of Administrative Services by August 1 each year. These reports must detail the total dollar value of service contracts ranging from IT to snow removal, with a specific focus on identifying contract awards to businesses within economic redevelopment and qualified census tracts. This legislation establishes a vital transparency framework by requiring Nebraska's largest entities and state agencies to annually report on the distribution of their service contracts. By formalizing this disclosure, we move away from ambiguous spending towards a model of accountability, ensuring that public funds are being utilized to support economic well-being of communities they serve. By seeing exactly where our public funds are going, we ensure these dollars are being used with, with precision. To ensure that this is not merely a procedural requirement, LB799 includes significant enforcement mechanisms. If a city or county fails to submit its required annual report, the State Treasurer is authorized to suspend all distributions of state aid until compliance is met. This ensures that every major public entity is committed to this standard of transparency. By standardizing the disclosure of these contracts, this bill ensures that the distribution of public funds is both visible and that the distribution of service contracts can be monitored with accuracy and that significant public spending remains documented and accountable. Thank you for your time and attention, and I will answer any questions.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Do we have any questions?
Senator Sorrentino.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Real quick question.

McKINNEY: Yep.

SORRENTINO: Sometimes we, the Legislature, get in trouble when we have exceptions for ourselves. I just wondered, it doesn't apply to the Legislature and a couple of other places, just curious why you decided to do something? There's probably a good reason, but I want to be able to defend myself when somebody asks.

McKINNEY: That is a fair question. I agree with you. I don't know, I just wanted to start on a municipal level and if we needed to move up to the state, I'm open to that, too. I, I think everything should be

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

transparent and accountable, so it's nothing I'm against. I just wanted to start at a municipal level.

SORRENTINO: I just wanted to make sure. Perfect.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Vice Chair. Senator McKinney, aren't these reports already generated when they actually generated a contract? Don't they have to-- don't all municipalities have to register as well as when they actually pay the contract, they have to register?

McKINNEY: Yes and no. I believe there is some reporting, but as far as having a clear understanding of where these contracts are going and who they're going to, I don't think that's completely clear. I don't think that's easily accessible. So, yes, they probably are doing some reporting but I would argue that the accessibility of that information isn't as easy as you might think.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I just know when I observed, like, a Sarpy County Commissioner Board meeting, you know, they, they talk about when they actually pay out, they're authorizing funds to be paid for this contract for this service or when they issue-- left contracts.
[INAUDIBLE]

McKINNEY: I think they--

ANDERSEN: [INAUDIBLE] got to report them if you--

McKINNEY: Yeah, I think they have it, which is probably why it's not a bunch of them in this room right now saying, no, we can't do some-- do this type of reporting. But I think the accessibility of it is probably more the issue than anything. But I, but I would say you're probably right that they do have it somewhere or they should have it.

CLOUSE: Is that it? Any other questions? OK. Thank you.

McKINNEY: All right.

CLOUSE: Do we have any proponents for LB799? OK. Any opponents? Any neutral? Senator McKinney.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

McKINNEY: Back fast. Well, it'll, it'll be a fast close. I think my assumption is right and you're probably right, Senator Andersen. They probably do track this somewhere, which is probably why the room isn't filled, but I just think it probably needs to be a little more accessible for just the layperson to see and understand. So with that, I'll close.

CLOUSE: OK. Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you. I see there's a, a fiscal note. There's one from Douglas County and that's the only one that actually submitted a fiscal note. It would seem like if Douglas County has a cost-- there's only \$38,000, I think.

McKINNEY: How much was it?

ANDERSEN: What's that?

McKINNEY: How much was the cost?

ANDERSEN: \$38,589.

McKINNEY: OK.

ANDERSEN: Do you think that all 93 counties-- I mean, you're talking about all levels. You're talking from the village, from the city, through the county, through the state.

McKINNEY: Yeah, but the way the bill is written it's only for counties with over 500,000 residents and, and it should be state agencies actually, Senator Sorrentino, and then the city of the metropolitan class, so it doesn't include all 93 counties, it's just--

ANDERSEN: So you're just starting with Douglas County, then?

McKINNEY: Yeah. But--

ANDERSEN: OK.

McKINNEY: All right.

CLOUSE: OK. Any other questions? OK. Thank you.

McKINNEY: All right. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Now, we'll move into LB1114. Senator.

McKINNEY: All right. Good afternoon, Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y. I represent District 11. I'm here to present LB1114. LB1114 makes a targeted change to Nebraska's Community Development Law by updating eligibility requirements for expedited review of certain redevelopment plans. Under current law, a city may choose to allow expedited review for redevelopment plans that meet defined criteria, including that a structure must be within corporate limits of a city for at least 60 years. LB1114 changes how old-- how-- changes the how old requirement from 60 years to 25 years. This simple change will allow cities to productively use expedited TIF and not have to wait two generations to help. This bill also allows for redevelopment of platted lots or nonconforming lots of record for expedited TIF projects. Again, this change will carefully expand projects eligible. LB14 [SIC] is a narrow commonsense refinement. It expands the expedited redeveloping process while also keeping it in check. And, and this change comes from just discussions with individuals from the League and other municipalities about the need for this change. I think when micro-TIF was passed-- well, not that I think, when it was passed, they put in a 60-year requirement and I think after it has been in place for some time I think it's been shown to be more prohibitive than helpful for, for some communities. There still would be some time where a community couldn't just TIF everything, but also with the understanding that if something has been in a community for 25 years plus, or 25 years or 25 years plus, and it's not-- and, and it's blighted or extremely blighted, it should be eligible for TIF for development to help some communities. So with that, I'll take any questions. But there are individuals here to speak to the issue and why the bill was proposed.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions on this? OK. Thanks, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLOUSE: Any proponents?

SUE CRAWFORD: Good afternoon, Urban Affairs Committee and staff. It's a pleasure to be with you today, and I really appreciate Senator McKinney's effort to bring this bill forward. My name is Sue Crawford, S-u-e C-r-a-w-f-o-r-d. I'm testifying on behalf of the city of York, York Economic Development Corporation, and the Nebraska Economic Developers Association in favor of LB1114. Expedited tax increment financing has been a useful tool for housing development in the city of York so far. The one-page, no lawyer process has been valuable-- a

valuable innovation. And I appreciate the efforts of this committee to pass that bill and to, to keep refining the bill to make it work better. And I believe that LB1114 is the next step in that process. So the city of York has used expedited tax increment financing to work with small local developers to add 9 workforce housing units and about 40 temporary workforce housing units in our community. And these projects represent the most efficient kind of housing stock expansion, renovations of existing buildings where you have infrastructure. And also just to paint a picture, the nine units were renovated by a young entrepreneur and he did most of the work himself, and it took two single-family houses and one apartment complex that had seven apartments and renovated them into lovely places that are now an asset to the community. So they were kind of run down, and now they're assets and it's additional housing. So it, it was working-- it's working in the way it's intended to work. So, just a reminder, expedited tax increment financing can only be used where regular tax increment financing can be used. So it's only-- can only be used in parts of the community that are determined to be blighted and substandard, which, as you know, requires meeting multiple specific standards and requires multiple notifications, public hearings, publications, etcetera. So the tool can only be used in those areas that are qualified for tax increment financing, in general. So my argument to you is that if an area of our community qualifies as blighted and substandard for large, expensive tax increment projects, why not allow smaller housing developers, smaller commercial developers, to have a part in opportunities to redevelop that area? So LB1114 reduces a barrier to small housing developers and small business and small industry owners to allow them to be a part of that redevelopment in areas of a part of our city that have been at least 25 years instead of the higher level of 60. While I'm sitting in this chair, I'm just going to say if you want to eliminate the barrier, that would be fine as well in our communities. Again, it can only be used, where, in the blighted, substandard areas. So you've already had public designation that this area needs reinvestment so why not allow the smaller business owners, the smaller developers to have a chance to do that? If I have time, I'll just paint a picture of one example of a situation where this was a barrier for us. I know that the York Economic Development Corporation, I believe they put in some examples in what they submitted for this bill. So we had a young couple that purchased an older one-story motel at the edge of-- I mean, at the edge of the town near Highway 34. So it's an area that could use development. It's an area that qualified for tax increment financing by all those standards. And they wanted to turn that into housing.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

Great example. Turn an old motel into apartments. And they were interested, but since it had been-- it had not been in the city for 60 years, it was not-- it did not qualify. So, again, a big developer with a lawyer could have come in and purchased it and done the redevelopment, but a small person who wants to just take advantage of doing a small project one at a time and not have \$17,000 or whatever to pay for lawyer fees was not able to step in and, and create that housing for our community.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. Any questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah, thank you, Chairman. Not so much a question, but glad to have you back here.

SUE CRAWFORD: Thank you.

QUICK: Good to see you again.

SUE CRAWFORD: Thank you.

QUICK: I know you used to chair this committee at one time.

SUE CRAWFORD: Yes, I did.

QUICK: So really good to see you again.

SUE CRAWFORD: Thank you. I appreciate that. Again, I appreciate your work. This is an important tool that I'm seeing used in multiple communities.

CLOUSE: I was going to go there, too, but it was more along the lines of when this-- were you in the body when this was put in at 60 years?

SUE CRAWFORD: I think I, I think I probably was, and I just don't-- I don't remember, you know, what the--

CLOUSE: And it's probably because the senator at that time was totally against TIF at all costs.

SUE CRAWFORD: I think that may be, yeah.

CLOUSE: So do you think that-- you said get rid of the 25 years even. I think the, the concern was that you'd have a community that would just annex it just to get there to get it done. He thought there should be a waiting period.

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

SUE CRAWFORD: Oh, I see. I see.

CLOUSE: So there's a lack of trust for the municipality that you're going to see an area, you're just going to go ahead and annex it now, it's automatic for TIF.

SUE CRAWFORD: Right. So, again, I think the fact that it has to be done in areas that qualify as blighted, substandard is an important check on that. I would say what I see now being in a rural community is that TIF-- a purpose of TIF is to get investment in areas where it wouldn't otherwise happen, and especially with housing. It's so easy for a housing developer to build all the houses that they can possibly build in Omaha and Lincoln, right? And so to actually get houses built in smaller communities, tax increment financing is an important piece of making that happen. So even if it was only annexed yesterday-- well, that wouldn't be true because you would have-- this whole process to declare it's blighted and substandard. But even if it only annexed recently, it's still, if it's in need of redevelopment, and, again, if larger developers can come in and, and have access to TIF in that area, why not let the small?

CLOUSE: So to redevelop in areas, do they go outside the corporate limits?

SUE CRAWFORD: No.

CLOUSE: So--

SUE CRAWFORD: No.

CLOUSE: --so it wouldn't be in one until it was annexed, then they went through the study.

SUE CRAWFORD: Correct.

CLOUSE: So what do you think would be a good number? 5 years, 2 years?

SUE CRAWFORD: Oh, I'm not-- if, if you have a number, I'm not opposed to the-- to 25 in a sense that I'm guessing that came from some conversations. I'm just saying if you would like to eliminate the barrier, that would be another option for you to consider.

CLOUSE: OK. And then while I have you here, on another topic, I have a bill in another committee that's going to talk about getting rid of blighted and substandard and go to development and redevelopment. We

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

talk about this all the time. Would that help you as you are seeing projects in York?

SUE CRAWFORD: So I think that that language does become a barrier for, for people sometimes. And I'm sorry that I haven't read the details to comment on the details of the proposal, but--

CLOUSE: [INAUDIBLE]

SUE CRAWFORD: --it is true that that language becomes a barrier. It really is an area in need of redevelopment. And the words themselves are sometimes-- make it difficult for people to get on board with, yes, our area does need redevelopment, you know.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you.

SUE CRAWFORD: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other comments, questions? OK.

SUE CRAWFORD: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Any other proponents?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Senator Clouse and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, my name is Christy Abraham, C-h-r-i-s-t-y A-b-r-a-h-a-m. Sue Crawford has done such a great job. I feel like you don't need me. But, but I'm up here anyway, and I am distributing something, and you all can make fun of me when I leave. I do a TIF presentation twice a year at the League conference, and this is just one of my slides in my PowerPoint. In my mind, there are three types of TIF. Now, there is probably a TIF attorney out there watching me saying, Christy, there are many, many types of TIF. But in my, in my brain, there are three kinds of TIF. One, I have cleverly called regular TIF. So that is the TIF project I think most of us think about. You have a substandard and blighted area, you have a redevelopment project, you move in. Up to 15 years, that's how long it can last. Extremely blighted TIF is like regular TIF, only more. So then you have to meet the definition of extremely blighted in order to have a project in the extremely blighted area. And what's beneficial about that is that project can last up to 20 years. So that gives developers just a little bit more time to make their money on a 20-year project. LB1114 is about expedited review. I call it micro-TIF. I don't know where that term micro-TIF came, but that's what I call it, micro-TIF. Micro-TIF is, as Sue talked about, for really small projects. You're talking about--

you're doing one house. And it's designed so you don't need an attorney to help you. You can just be a person, you can go in, there's a one-page form that you fill out, and then you can be eligible for micro-TIF to do these smaller projects. And, again, as I think Sue described so well, that's what's, that's what's happening in York. These individual people are coming and, and rehabbing these houses and turning them into affordable housing. This bill, as she talked about, is changing that 60-year requirement, 60 years of that structure or that vacant lot has to be within corporate boundaries down to 25 years. When Sue testified at an interim study, she, she said that she wanted zero years, and that is originally how we thought we would present the bill to you, is at zero years. The League's attorney subcommittee got involved in this bill, and they felt that the 25 years was a better number. They wanted to preserve some idea of it has to be in the municipality for some number of years. So that's where the 25 came from. We are certainly open to making that a lesser number if that committee is open to that. But I just wanted to let you know that's where the 25 years came from, is from the TIF attorneys that the lead consults with. So I'm happy to answer any questions. And thanks to Senator McKinney for this bill, we appreciate it.

CLOUSE: Any questions? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Vice Chair. I got a TIF question. When you talk about--

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: OK.

ANDERSEN: --you talk about 15 years, is that the repayment?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Right. Thank you. I should have been more clear. That's right. So--

ANDERSEN: Well, it's my loss, not yours.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: This is-- it's not all that helpful So, yes, when you have a regular TIF project, what that means is those property taxes, the increment, the increase in property tax amount is what goes back to the redeveloper to help pay for the project? And so that-- those projects can last up to 15 years. My experience is most TIF projects don't last quite 15 years, usually the debt is paid off closer to 12, but it can go up to 15 years if needed.

ANDERSEN: So the developer does the financing and they get repaid through the increase in, in property taxes.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Right. Some sort of debt is incurred with a note or a bond of some kind and then when that redeveloper pays his or her property taxes, then the base amount goes to the blighted subdivisions that would get that property taxes with the increment, which is where the tax increment financing comes, that-- the amount above that base amount, then that goes back to the redeveloper to help pay for those public infrastructure, public purpose improvements,--

ANDERSEN: Sure.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: --that was part of the project.

ANDERSEN: So in the recent years when we've had the exponential increase in valuations and significant increases in property taxes, that means that TIF repayment periods have been shorter. Is that to assume?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: I, I think, I think there might be something to that, Senator. I think that's why you're seeing that. The latest data that I have seen is it usually doesn't take quite 15 years, that they're usually getting repaid sooner.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: You're welcome.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Senator Quick.

QUICK: Thank you, Vice Chair. So like on the-- for the micro-TIF then, does it-- you know, the application process is, is a little easier or made easier.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Right. Yes.

QUICK: But it still goes-- the rest of the process still has to be approved by a city council or zoning committee or how's that?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: This is a great question, Senator Quick. So it's called expedited review because it's exempted from several requirements of TIF. So they don't need to go through the Planning Commission. They don't, they, they don't have to create a redevelopment plan. Like, all those steps in regular TIF or expedited, or excuse me, extremely blighted TIF, all of those steps, you don't have to do that. The only thing you need to do is you need to go in to your city clerk, if your city has decided to do micro-TIF, and there

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Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

is literally a one-page form, that's a standardized form that the state creates. You fill it out. And then the city has 30 days to approve it. And there are actually some pretty narrow reasons why they can deny it. Like, we've had too many applications already. I'm sorry, we can't do one more. But, in general, the, the thought is they're supposed to just sort of be routinely approved and so that's what happens and you can have even a city official approve these applications. It doesn't necessarily need to go back to the city council for approval. You could, but it doesn't have to. And that's why they're just so easy to do and so nice for these small developers because it just doesn't-- you don't have to hire an attorney. You don't have to go through all this process. It's just a really easy process for you to follow in order to do it.

QUICK: OK. Are there certain areas that are picked out for that or do, do they just put the application and then they look at that and go, that, that will work for this certain spot or this certain location?

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: No, that's a, that's a great question. So as, as Sue mentioned, it has to obviously be in an area that's substandard and blighted. And then after that, the city-- I was just going to see, it has to be consistent with the city's comprehensive development plan. And-- but that's about, that's about the only limitation that it has, other than if the city-- like if the city of Grand Island says we're only going to do 50 micro-TIF projects this year, and you're number 52, you might get denied. But as long as it's consistent with the city's plan and you're in there on time, you should get approved.

QUICK: OK. All right.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Yeah.

QUICK: Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: You're welcome.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? I, I guess, I'm in the same camp as Senator Crawford. I, I think that 25 years is--

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: It's a good camp to be in.

CLOUSE: --25 years is too long.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: OK.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

CLOUSE: You know, if you have a redevelopment area and you want to annex it so that you can get city services and somebody who wants to do something, I, I think that-- I'm surprised that the, the League attorney group went to 25. I, I-- to me, that's too restrictive. I think the reason-- the logic behind this bill when it was put in here a number of years ago is because we had a senator that was absolutely against TIF at, at all costs. And so this was-- 60 years, I mean that's crazy when you get growing communities and some of those things and, and you could have-- you know, 25 years driving through the town, and it's just the entrance of your town and somebody wants to do something with it and you just-- you got to wait 25 years for somebody can give them a little help to fix it up. I-- that, that seems illogical to me, but.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: I, I appreciate your comments, Senator, and I will, I will say that the League is, is happy to have that number reduced. I will tell you I just want to defend my city attorneys just a tiny bit if you don't mind letting me do that.

CLOUSE: No.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: I think there are some city attorneys who feel that sort of one of the basic tenets of TIF is to redevelop urban core. And they really want to have a revitalized main street, downtown, and I think they just didn't want to get away from what they think is one of sort of the basic tenets of TIF is let's make sure our urban core is strong. Again, we're happy to have that number reduced.

CLOUSE: Yeah, and, and I look at it, and like you said this-- and she said because it has to be a regular part of a regular area designated and that's based on a percentage and it's based on studies. So that just doesn't happen overnight. I, I just-- I don't know, I guess we can have some more discussion on it at some point, but.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Glad to do that, Senator, anytime.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any other questions? Thank you.

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thank you so much. We appreciate it.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Urban Affairs Committee February 10, 2026
Rough Draft

CLOUSE: Any other proponents? Any opponents? Any neutral? OK. Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you and thank you to those who came and testified in support of LB1114. I think bringing it down from 60 to 25 is a step. And, Senator Clouse, I'm definitely open to discussions about even something lower than that. Another reason I think that was considered was currently at 60, we can't go to 60 to zero, trying to be, you know, reasonable-- I, I, I get what you're saying as well. I didn't also feel like we should-- I don't know, maybe there's some people who feel like 60 is right and I didn't want to completely shock the system, if you get what I'm saying, by going from 60 to zero. So maybe there is another in-between number somewhere we could discuss further, but I'm open to that. I just, you know, brought it and wanted to try to be as helpful as possible and just be reasonable considering the circumstances. Thank you.

CLOUSE: Any questions? We do a lot of stuff with shock value, so.

McKINNEY: True.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you. And with-- as far as the online comments: LB799, zero-- well, I couldn't access them, zero comments; LB811, 5 proponents, zero opponents, zero neutral, and no ADA; LB1114, 3 proponents, zero opponents, zero neutral, and no ADA; LB1135, 7 proponents, zero opponents, zero neutral, and zero ADA; and LB1214, 10 proponents, 45 opponents, zero neutral, and zero ADA. Senator McKinney, it's all yours.

McKINNEY: All right, well, that'll end our hearings for today.