

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Economic Recovery Special Committee September 19, 2022
Rough Draft

WAYNE: Good morning and welcome to the Economic Recovery Special Committee joint hearing and public information session. My name is Justin Wayne and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. I serve as Chair of the committee. We'll start off by first having senators introduce themselves and the district they are starting with my right, Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Mike McDonnell, LD 5. Mike McDonnell, LD 5. south Omaha.

VARGAS: Tony Vargas, District 7.

HILGERS: Mike Hilgers, District 21, northwest Lincoln.

WAYNE: I also have staff, committee clerk, Angenita, and then committee legal counsel, Trevor Fitzgerald. I want to also recognize the staff members from Olsson who are here in the room. If you guys will kind of raise your hand so people can know. So this morning,-- thank you all-- I also want to recognize some elected officials. I see Senator McCollister. Will you stand? And then I have Commissioner Chris Rodgers. Commissioner Roger Garcia. Councilman Don Preister. And I'm just kind of shooting from the hip. So if I miss somebody like Senator McKinney walking in, I apologize for that. All right, let's get--

McKINNEY: Senator Terrell McKinney, District 11, north Omaha.

WAYNE: So this morning, this committee will receive public testimony regarding potential uses of funds underneath the Economic Recovery Act, LB1024. Before I begin, I want to provide some background on the committee process and timeline. LB1024 required the Legislature contract out with outside company to conduct a study on potential uses of ARPA funds in north and south Omaha qualified census tracts. The committee selected Olsson after RFP process to conduct the study and has been working with Olsson for the past few months to develop the process and procedures for public engagement, review, and scoring-- scoring of the potential projects and more. And when I use the word projects, I mean projects, programs, they can be programs, but I use the word project just because it's what I know, having a kind of construction background. So I apologize. In order to facilitate the timely submission of these potential projects/programs or even ideas, Olsson has created a website, www.omahaeconomicrecovery.com. Again, www.omahaeconomicrecovery.com. This will serve as the official portal for submissions of ideas to be considered as part of the Olsson study.

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If you can-- you can also find additional information about LB1024 process on the website, including special project evaluation framework approved by the Special Committee, funding eligibility guidelines for federal ARPA funds, and materials from stakeholder engagement meeting process that Olsson conducted last month. Members of the Olsson team have also been available outside the room to answer questions about the process and to provide assistance for application timing for applicants. So out those doors to the left, there is an engineer, architect, and somebody from the city who could help you walk through any project or program what may be needed for space, what may be needed for requirements for you to submit a budget. If there's an issue with the online portal, you have to email me. Or if you can't submit it for whatever reason, you don't have Internet access, please contact me and we'll figure out an alternative. But we do want everything to go through the portal so we can have consistency. So even if that means me showing up to your house or apartment or library and we'll submit it together, that's what we'll figure out how to do. We want to make sure that access to the Internet is not an issue here. On the tables in the back of the room, you'll find a pink testifier sheet. If you are willing-- if you are planning to testify today, please fill out one of those sheets and hand it to Angenita up front for the hearing. If you do not wish to testify but would like to record your presence here at this hearing, please fill out the green sheet in the back of the room. Also, I should note that the Legislature's policy is that any letters submitted for the record must be received 5:00 p.m. prior to the day of the hearing. This is a Monday, so we'll let today's hearing go into tomorrow's hearing, so 5:00 p.m. by the end of today, letters still can be submitted for this hearing and tomorrow's hearing. We would ask that if you have any handouts, please bring copies to Angenita. We would ask that you have ten copies. If not, we'll scan them and get them there. But it's easier for the committee members to take them home today if you have them. We'll start this hearing with having Olsson give some brief remarks about the overview of the process, and then opening statements from the public may come up and testify here. This is not a legislative bill. It's an interim study hearing. So there's no proponents or opponents. We're just here to get ideas. So please be respectful and we will be using the three-minute light system. So when the light is yellow, that gives you about one minute to wrap it up. And the reason we do that is to make sure everybody has a fair opportunity to be heard. If you have questions you want to email or ideas you want to email that maybe you couldn't talk about today,

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again, all of our emails are public. Please email us and we'll keep this going.

TREVOR FITZGERALD: There is also a "contact us" on the website.

WAYNE: There is also a "contact us" on the website that will also be available if you need to. Before I also start, there's been some questions about why did we start with stakeholders and not the community engagement process in the beginning. It wasn't that we put community leaders or community foundations or business leaders above the community. It was a timing issue. The timing issue was school just started. And when school just starts, one, parents and the communities are dealing with that. But two, you can't find a space like this to hold these. So typically we have things at Metro or Omaha Public Schools because their buildings are big enough. But that first couple of weeks of school, we could not get access to those. So that's instead of waiting and delaying the process, we started with stakeholders. It was not to put them in front of the community or the public, but it was just we didn't have room available. Because when you have public hearings, there is all these things we have to set up and make sure it's handicapped accessible, etcetera. And that's very limited when it comes to holding these kind of hearings. I just wanted to make sure people understood that's how the process was started. It wasn't anything else besides that. So with that, I'll remind everyone, including senators, to turn off or silence their cell phones or put them on vibrate. And we will begin this today's hearings with Mike Piernicky from Olsson to give us a quick overview.

MICHAEL PIERNICKY: Good morning. My name is Mike Piernicky. I'm the project manager for Olsson. We were contracted by the Nebraska Legislature to do the coordination plan and process for the LB1024 process.

WAYNE: Excuse me, can you spell your name for the record?

MICHAEL PIERNICKY: Yes, I can.

WAYNE: Good reminder. Please state your name and spell your name when you come up to testify. Just so you know-- sorry, Mike-- there are some senators aren't here, but we are transcribing this and all the senators will be able to read and see everything here. That's why it's important to spell and say your name. Thank you.

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MICHAEL PIERNICKY: My name, Michael Piernicky, M-i-c-h-a-e-l, Piernicky, P-i-e-r-n-i-c-k-y and I'm with Olsson, the project manager for the process that we pull together here. A brief overview of what we've done so far, and then I'll give you a brief overview of the information that we have here available today. We were contracted by the Legislature in July to look at putting together a coordination plan process by December of this year. The point being is that that coordination plan [INAUDIBLE] the Special Committee and they'll utilize that next year when the Legislature sits as another legislative bill needs to be written to actually obligate or appropriate money that was set aside in the last legislative session. So in the middle of July, we organized for the community visioning workshops, which were in August. There are summaries of that information here today as part of these stations that you see here to your left. And then also I'll remind everybody at the beginning, omahaeconomicrecovery.com. All the information is out there. I'll remind you again of that here at the end. If you're looking for it, it's on the bottom of all the boards. We have QR codes available as well for folks if you have a cell phone today. The visioning meetings brought together two meetings in north Omaha and two meetings in south Omaha to hear about the needs and the desires of the community and the leaders that we identified through a process. We pulled all of that together and then utilized that as we develop the overall selection criteria process moving forward. That obviously brings us to the meetings that we have here this week. We're meeting here today and tomorrow evening from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. here in south Omaha. We'll be in north Omaha at the TAC building on Wednesday evening from 5:00 to 7:00, and then Metro Community College's north campus on Thursday from 11:00 to 1:00. We're here to go through the public hearing process, but then also in an open-- open house format, be able to provide information to the community on information of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and needs that were identified. The visioning workshops explain the overall submission process for projects and ideas. And then one of the unique things that we've done in this one, as the senator said, out the hallway to your right down in room 121, we have three groups of folks set up with an engineer and an architect, city staff milling around. In about 15- or 20-minute segments, we'd be willing to sit down with anybody to discuss their project, where they're at in the process, provide as much technical assistance as we can to make sure that we're getting the best applications coming forward from the community. And then when we go through the process to evaluate those, then we get the best ideas to come forward. And so overall, we'll run through the entire process

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here this week. The submission portal, which is at omahaeconomicrecovery.com, the submission portal, as the senator said, is where we're pushing everybody to submit online. It is open until Sunday night, October 9, till 11:59 p.m. Once again, Sunday night, October 9, 11:59 p.m. Short of that, I want to thank you already for your attendance here today and investing and having ideas for our community, north and south Omaha. This is a transformational opportunity. We're looking for those ideas that are going to be transformational, drive economic development, and the creation of meaningful wage jobs over the long term. And so with that, I'll give it back to the senator. If you have any questions, myself, as well as staff from Olsson, I do also want to recognize the rest of our team: Iconic Group [PHONETIC], E2 Buyout [PHONETIC], HMA [PHONETIC] and LAMP [PHONETIC] and career center are all consultants here in town that are part of our team. They've been doing a wonderful amount of work, getting us prepared for this. And as this is moving forward, I do want to make sure to acknowledge them as well. So with that, that kind of wraps up my initial comments. Thank you for coming today. We look forward to engaging with you and having conversations about the future of our community. And thank you very much.

WAYNE: Thank you. Thank you. And so just to piggyback off of how it's going to work is, we'll have a chair up there. You'll come in and give us information. Again, I encourage people to go to the online portal, submit. And it's not just projects and programs, it's even ideas. We're looking for, as we explained to the committee [INAUDIBLE], we're looking for the one thing that we didn't think of that could transform east Omaha. We're looking for something that is transformational, life-changing, and that can close the economic and wealth gap. And let me just spend 2 seconds talking about that. What we've talked about as a committee is you can't earn your-- as a community, we can't earn our way out of the wealth gap. Income-- individually, we can go out and get a good job. We can recruit businesses here and we can kind of close the income gap. But the overall wealth gap that comes from entrepreneurship, small business development and transformational ideas that build wealth and creates generational wealth for the next generation. So we are looking for big ideas. We're looking for things that can fundamentally change in East Omaha. But that doesn't mean the small ideas are not important, because what we're also doing and what we're going to have conversations about is how do we take a whole bunch of those small ideas and try to turn them into a big idea? Because we recognize that there are individuals who might not talk to each other that submit an idea that are literally right down the

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street from each other. So part of our job as a committee is trying to figure out how do we build those bridges and stop allowing everybody to operate in silos. So we are looking for that. We are doing our due diligence. We are trying hard to change east Omaha and it's only going to come from your all-- you all's help. So with that, I'm going to open up to the first testifier who wants to tell us. Come on down, Mr. Fulton. You have to hand them to her. Let's-- we're going to turn these on deck. Up here, there's a couple of seats. We'll turn this into the on-deck category. So if you want to testify, just come up here in these first two chairs and then we'll, we'll kind of get that going. Well, on both sides. I'm sorry, we'll just do both sides. You're right, sorry. Thank you. Welcome to your Special Committee.

RICK FULTON: Thank you. This is indeed a great opportunity here.

_____ : Can you turn the, can you turn the, can you turn the mike on the--

WAYNE: Let me turn the mike on already.

RICK FULTON: Omaha is my hometown, and this a great opportunity.

VARGAS: Hold on. And then you'll have to say your name and spell it.

WAYNE: OK. Start all over. Hold on, Rick.

_____ : Start over, Ricky.

WAYNE: Ricky, start over. And I mean, I know you, but you have to state, state and spell your name. I don't need your address, just state and spell your name for the record.

RICK FULTON: Am I at two minutes already?

WAYNE: No, we're going to start right now.

RICK FULTON: My name is Rick Fulton. I live in Omaha, over in the Westside neighborhood. This is indeed a great opportunity for my hometown to get some big investment and the transformational idea which I have and I will share it to you now. We, Omaha needs a professional baseball team playing at what we now call Charles Schwab Field. So my idea would be to purchase a franchise in the American Association league for which cost approximately \$750,000 for a franchise. And then I'm asking for \$10 million for operating expenses. We pay the players for, for ten years. So the revenue from the team

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would be in ticket sales, concessions, merchandise. So I'm a big baseball fan and my father was a big baseball fan, he loved the St. Louis Cardinals. And I would note that professional baseball almost predates the College World Series. The Omaha Cardinals, which Bob Gibson played for, started in 1948. They played at Rosenblatt for a long time. And I feel that the College World Series, as important as it is to the city, it really doesn't give you that much bang for your buck, especially in north Omaha. This stadium, our expensive downtown stadium is owned by the city, by the people of north Omaha and all the people of Omaha, but it seems like it only serves a few people there. The idea for the CWS means we bring revenue for hotels, restaurants, bars, but not a lot of them are in north Omaha except for the Hilton. And I think it's unconscionable that Omaha's baseball history does not have a baseball team to call our own. So having this baseball team in downtown, north downtown Omaha, the young people from north O can walk to work. That if professional baseball provides not only seasonal jobs with the concession workers, but is also full-time marketing. And this would create jobs. And another thing I think you might be-- want to be aware of is the NCAA, which runs the College World Series, I don't know if any of you know this, but they're in the process of losing their authority to put on these tournaments like the College World Series. And the NCAA will probably lose that ability to conduct the College World Series, but I assume that another entity will contract with MECA and the city to run the new tournament. And at that time, that's when we look at the contract, have a good look at the MECA contract with the CWS and the city--

WAYNE: Mr. Fulton, I need you to wrap up.

RICK FULTON: And that's when we may find out if we can put our team there. That's my idea.

WAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Fulton. Any question from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Yeah. And then we'll go, switch over to the other side.

VARGAS: Make sure they spell their name.

ANDREA SKOLKIN: Good morning, Chairman Wayne and members of the committee. I'm Andrea Skolkin, A-n-d-r-e-a S-k-o-l-k-i-n, and I'm the chief executive officer of OneWorld Community Health Centers here with our headquarters in south Omaha. We are a federally qualified primary care clinic with 17 locations and three additional for administration and a literacy program. We care for 50,000 people each year, primarily

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from south Omaha, with 85 percent of our patients racial and ethnic minorities live on incomes at or below 200 percent of poverty, which is \$50,000-- a little over \$50,000 for a family of four. As I said, our main location is right across the street and we have played an integral role in COVID, both speaking out publicly and providing testing for about 50,000 people from 40 zip codes, including our patients and nonpatients. And we know firsthand the impact that COVID has had. We are-- primarily our patients that are uninsured, underinsured or low income. We've also in an effort in a public health role in vaccinating people throughout the time of vaccine [INAUDIBLE]. As you know, the pandemic exacerbated underlying health and economic disparities and low-income people were more likely to work in essential public-facing jobs, have fewer resources, larger transportation hurdles, and less access to healthcare. This was especially true for COVID, and in south Omaha, where there were large outbreaks in our meatpacking plants and also impacted our construction, roofers, landscapers, hospitality and small business owners. Oh, I gotta speed. While we have grown to address absolute gaps in care, we're simply out of space here in south Omaha, and especially for behavioral health. And like others in the field, we have an acute need to recruit and retain a strong workforce. We are seeking a total of \$17 million in rescue funds to construct an \$11 million three-story 24,000 square foot building. Once built, it would serve as a workforce training, developing skills that are not necessarily available at the existing colleges and expand behavioral health services as well as child care.

WAYNE: I'm gonna need you to wrap up, please.

ANDREA SKOLKIN: Part of the funding we are seeking is \$6 million for renovation of 105 affordable housing units, repairing the livestock building that are 20 years old, and we have a history of sustaining funding both human and fiscal. Our plan is to participate in collaborative, which we have been with a group of south Omaha organizations to pro-- submit a group application and as well partner with Charles Drew Health Center in north Omaha.

WAYNE: I'm gonna-- I'm gonna have to cut you off, I'm sorry.

ANDREA SKOLKIN: Just thank you and happy to answer questions.

WAYNE: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Welcome to your Urban Affairs-- your Urban Affairs-- to your Special Committee, Special Committee.

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ITZEL LOPEZ: Buenos dias. My name is Itzel Lopez, I-t-z-e-l L-o-p-e-z, I'm the vice president of advancement at the AIM Institute, an innovative not-for-profit community in downtown Omaha with a mission to grow a strong and diverse community. But I'm also the president of the Latino Economic Development Council, a 501(c)(3) that empowers-- well, it focuses on creating outreach, development and funding opportunities for south Omaha. I sit here today as part of a multipurpose, transformational project along the south Omaha business district on 24th and 25th Streets between L and Q, which includes the Plaza de la Raza. 24th Street and Plaza de la Raza are the heart of the historic business district in south Omaha and one of the hardest-hit areas in 68107 affected by the global pandemic. With the forthcoming funding from LB1024, we have the opportunity to implement the Plaza de la Raza and potentially expanding the concept into a comprehensive approach to create an inclusive community resource center based on Latino culture while also addressing other significant district needs, such as access to public meeting spaces, equal or mixed-income housing and parking structure. The COVID pandemic challenged south Omaha's restaurants and small businesses, as it has throughout the country. But it also demonstrated a need and importance of public outdoor spaces that are accessible, attractive and walkable for all people of all ages, with all abilities. Funding through ARPA for these multifaceted projects, combined with the enterprise and resiliency of the district's people and the businesses will reinvigorate south Omaha. Not only will south Omaha be, be better for it, but it will also build for future generations of Omaha in the great state of Nebraska. [INAUDIBLE] I will be going to answer any questions specifically to the multifaceted projects. Thanks.

WAYNE: Thank you for being here today. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Next testifier. Welcome to the Special Committee.

MARTA SONIA LONDONO MEJIA: Thank you so much, Senator. My name, Marta Sonia Londono Mejia [INAUDIBLE]. Marta, Marta Sonia.

WAYNE: Can you spell that for the record?

MARTA SONIA LONDONO MEJIA: OK, of course. M-a-r-t-a, my middle, S-o-n-i-a, Marta Sonia. I am the owner of a property organization, [INAUDIBLE] Midwest Businesses Projects-- and Projects LLC. [INAUDIBLE] work with the Latino business community. First, we are starting [INAUDIBLE] Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and then we, the nonprofit organization, the name is Midlands Latino Community

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Development Corporation, MLC-- MLCDC. I worked there for 14 years, I was the former-- I, with this organization. And right now I am working as a contractor of the Nebraska Department for Economic Development, helping to develop businesses to the state, specifically in Omaha. We are still working a project with the community because the idea was to create a cooperative with Latino businesses, and this was five years ago. We create a property organization, the name is Community Investment Opportunities LLC, with the idea to develop a mixed use project. A we wanted to create a mercado. Senator Tony Vargas knows that is a mercado, public market, that where many businesses are there, it's a multicultural place, public place where people from different parts of the world can go and enjoy food and entertainment. In addition, we want the manufacturing, line manufacturing because many of the businesses with a commercial teaching. [INAUDIBLE] for example, tortilla factories or tamales, [INAUDIBLE] for, for different countries too, but more to sell to companies. This is why they, they are giving us an idea and they, they grow purchase a property. It's very close up here, it's next to the Metropolitan College in 5523 South, it's between 33th Street and [INAUDIBLE] Street. [INAUDIBLE] with the pandemic, Latino people is very scared. They needed the money for their businesses. I mean, for the reason they were motivated to sell the property. I mean, a packing company was interested in this big property, what we-- was 250,000 square feet.

WAYNE: I need you to wrap up, please?

MARTA SONIA LONDONO MEJIA: Huh?

WAYNE: Wrap up, please. Your time is--

MARTA SONIA LONDONO MEJIA: OK. This business, we have a [INAUDIBLE] right now with a development organization, and [INAUDIBLE] Collective Development, and we are the plan to purchase again another property to develop the same [INAUDIBLE]. It the same because, because it will be a [INAUDIBLE] market, but we have housing too, because the developer has a lot of experience in housing. And yeah, we want to develop this building. We have everything in plans. We will look for the property. We love to have the property in south Omaha, but we don't know yet will be the qualified census tracts.

WAYNE: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Next testifier. Right there. If anybody else is testifying, there's another seat up here in the on-deck chair. There's two on-deck chairs to the left. Thank you. Go ahead. Go ahead, ma'am.

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CRYSTAL RUSH CARDENAS: Good morning. My name is Crystal Rush Cardenas, C-r-y-s-t-a-l Rush, R-u-s-h, Cardenas, C-a-r-d-e-n-a-s. I'm partner and director of CMW Alliance an org-- a youth service organization and family crisis intervention program that provides day and evening reporting and in-home family support services for our community, specifically in south and north Omaha. I'm also the treasurer for the Latino Economic Development Care-- Development Council and the advocacy committee chair for the South Omaha Community Care Council. So I'm here today to support LB1024 and the project aforementioned by Itzel Lopez. Projects like this are crucial and transformative in the life of our families-- thank you-- especially our youth. Many times they are overlooked. Speaking on experience with youth and being a youth once myself, spaces like this inspire and engage our youth-- sorry-- that engage our youth are important. The pandemic was especially hard on the mental health of the youth and a, a reinvigorated south Omaha plaza would have provided youth with a space to destress and would also have provided them with possible employment opportunities, keeping the area clean and working in the proposed food court. I just want to say that with this pandemic, it was difficult for all of us. And due to the pandemic, working with Youth, CMW Alliance was created to be able to better serve them and provide them with a safe space. The youth that we normally serve are youth who are on juvenile probation and youth who are struggling in school due to the lack of mental health resources in their community. So I want to thank you for your time. That's all I have. Any questions?

WAYNE: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Welcome to your Special Committee.

DENISE GEHRINGER: Good morning. My name is Denise Gehringer, I'm the executive director at Sheltering Tree. D-e-n-i-s-e G-e-h-r-i-n-g-e-r. Sheltering Tree is a nonprofit organization that tackles a very big issue, the growing health crisis for adults with developmental disabilities. We believe we've got an innovative solution and we are, have been successfully operating in the community for seven years. We do provide persons in the Omaha metro area with developmental disabilities affordable, consumer-controlled, safe and community-centered apartment communities. The housing model that we offer empowers adults with developmental disabilities to live self-determined lives and be engaged in their community. Our tenants who have developmental disabilities typically receive Supplemental Security Income of \$740 a month. Many are employed in competitive employment, typically part-time, almost all qualify for Medicaid. Each tenant does have their own rent-subsidized apartment, that includes

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living room, full kitchen, bedroom, baths and storage closets. Apartments are built with durable materials and with the ideal to [INAUDIBLE] in place. Sheltering Tree is unique as far as affordable apartments go because we have amenities that are particular to adults with developmental disabilities. Amenities such as controlled access entry, [INAUDIBLE] community rooms, onsite laundry, meal plan, activities director that helps to formulate and improve belonging and a sense of connectedness, accessible design, pedestrian-oriented location, security cameras, health and wellness space and activities centers, therapeutic gardens, tenant assistance that live onsite, and we use [INAUDIBLE] communication system. We have two locations that are successfully operating in the Omaha metro area, one in Bellevue that opened in 2014. That was funded through 811 HUD dollars; and one in the Benson location that opened in 2018, that was funded primarily through [INAUDIBLE] tax credits and contributions from area foundations and individuals. Under construction right now in Sarpy County near Shadow Lake in Papillion, we have a \$13.2 million project that is, will offer 44 affordable housing units for adults with developmental disabilities. And we are currently in the initial stages of the process to build our fourth location in Elkhorn due to 20 acres of land that was donated to us by the Roy Johnson Trust organization. Our strat-- strategic plan does include offering affordable housing opportunities to the underserved areas, south Omaha is one of those areas. We do maintain a waiting list of over 200 individuals waiting for this opportunity. We are ready to build. We have-- we anticipate the cost to be \$7.5 million. We think that even with some of the ARPA funding, we could leverage that and use additional microcredit tax credits to build [INAUDIBLE] to use to fund the remaining piece of the money. I've provided you with some staggering statistics about adults with developmental disabilities and their living opportunities for you to look at at a later time. And I welcome any questions that you might have.

WAYNE: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. I do want to remind everybody that just because you testified, the official way to submit ideas is through the portal, omahaeconomicrecovery.com. We're hearing testimony, [INAUDIBLE] is a good way for us to hear information. But the official way is omahaeconomicrecovery.com. Next testifier. Welcome to your Economic Recovery Committee. Special Committee just sounds so boring, so I'm trying to figure out a-- Urban Affairs just has a good ring to it. Sorry. Go ahead.

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ALEJANDRA JIMENEZ: Good morning. My name is Alejandra Jimenez, and that's spelled A-l-e-j-a-n-d-r-a, last name is J-i-m as in mom-e-n-e-z. I am a program manager of DEI Training and Development for the Greater Omaha Chamber. I am here on behalf of Latino Economic Development Council, LEDC, and also on behalf of KKAD 25. I'm here to support the transformational projects that Itzel Lopez had previously mentioned in her testimony with the forthcoming funding from LB1024. These multifaceted projects are extremely important to promote an equitable and inclusive economy in our south Omaha community. It is important to help support the businesses here in south Omaha, as they do help contribute to the overall American economy annually. And according to the Joint Economic Committee of Hispanic business and entrepreneurship, they contributed \$800 billion this past year. They also employ more than twice as fast as the national average. Not only will business owners benefit from the projects, but also south Omaha will benefit in the overall or the upcoming futures to come-- future generations to come. I also was a micro-business director, and I support-- I help a lot of business owners create their businesses here in south Omaha. So I'm very passionate about the, you know, supporting BIPOC businesses, and I think that this overall project will contribute to that. Thank you. Do you have any questions?

WAYNE: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here.

ALEJANDRA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

WAYNE: Next testifier. And there's three seats available in the on deck, if you want to come up. Welcome to your Economic Special Committee-- economic, that doesn't work either.

RICK KUBAT: Senators, my name is Rick Kubat, R-i-c-k K-u-b-a-t, here today on behalf of the Metropolitan Utilities District. We are requesting \$30 million in ARPA funds to be used to replace lead service lines. This has been a frustrating issue. When the federal government allocated American Rescue Plan dollars to states, cities, counties and tribal government, they advocated specifically that ARPA dollars be used to solve public health hazard known as lead service line replacement. It was even mentioned the President's State of the Union address. These lead service lines exist primarily in disproportionately impacted parts of our community where homeowners are on fixed and marginalized incomes. You have been provided a map with your handout showing where what service lines are located. I want to cover three things briefly with you: what are lead service lines,

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how problematic this is financially for homeowners in our community, and why ARPA dollars should be used to address this issue. And page 3 of your handout, there's an illustration that shows is service lines feeding water from the main into the home. MUD, like most utilities in our country and in our state, own and are responsible for the water. We do not have any detectable level of lead in, in the water in the main itself. The problem occurs when the water leaves the main and enters the homeowner's owned service lines, where leaching can occur in old lead service lines. As you know, lead in water can cause significant health issues, especially among children and young adults. It can lead to a reduction in cognitive ability and other long-term health consequences. One of the main reasons ARPA dollars were allocated to states to begin with was the federal government wanted to specifically pay for the removal of lead service lines. How big of a problem is this for us? MUD serves over 700,000 Nebraskans with water, and we estimate that we have roughly 16,000 homeowners with lead service lines. With an average cost to replace one, each one at \$7,000, we face over \$110 million of homeowner liability. The reason why we're advocating for \$30 million for this problem that will cost over \$110 million is because that's the most we can spend through 2026. Lead service lines exist almost exclusively in the older parts of town because home, home builders stopped using lead right around 1940. Lead service lines exist where folks are on fixed and marginalized income and among those who can ill afford the cost of replacement. On page 10 and 11 of your handout, you'll notice the problem exists in disproportionately areas-- disproportionately impacted areas east of 72nd, specifically in north and south Omaha in Senator Wayne, McKinney, Vargas, McDonnell and John Cavanaugh's district. I want to conclude with, with this. The reason why-- this is the reason why ARPA dollars were provided to begin with, it clearly qualifies, it addresses a public health hazard, it exists in disproportionately impact areas, it's a one-time program, and lastly, it will spur economic development as we'd be hiring others to help fix the lead service lines. Thank you.

WAYNE: Any questions from the committee? I have one. You, you mentioned homeowners, but these lead-base pipes, they also serve apartments, child care facilities, I mean, this is your handout. I just wanted to make sure for the record, it isn't just homeowners, it's any property.

RICK KUBAT: That's correct.

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WAYNE: So this \$30 million, you would prioritize-- how would you prioritize the the breakdown on where you would spend?

RICK KUBAT: We would certainly go to child care facilities, which we've done most of those, but not all of them. And I would say those specific areas that serve the most people. But primarily most of these exist amongst your general homeowners.

WAYNE: Thank you. Any questions from anybody else? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Next testifier. Again, just a reminder, the official submission portal is omahaeconomicrecovery.com, omahaeconomicrecovery.com. I'm going to get good at this, I'll be like the person in the airport when you're walking. Welcome to your Special Economic Committee--

_____ : Recovery committee.

WAYNE: I'll get there. Go ahead.

CESAR GARCIA: Good morning. Cesar Garcia, executive director of Canopy South. C-e-s-a-r, 2411 O Street, Omaha, Nebraska, 68107.

WAYNE: Spell your last name. Spell your last name.

CESAR GARCIA: G-a-r-c-i-a. So when I'm here in front of you and I hear transformational plans, I can only come with the time frame that we'll be giving to the answer to, to the RFP and also the time frame that we have to spend the money. I can only think of collaboration as a key component of being successful, and that's what Canopy South brings to the table. As we've been doing for the last three years, we've been talking to this community about the what is needed in terms of education, transportation, economic development, housing, healthcare. As a member of this community, I'm very proud to be working with all these partners that we've partnered in the last three-plus years. We see our biggest role as [INAUDIBLE], to bringing all the partners together. Knowing to look into individual silos, to break those silos, to open the boundaries, and to make sure that all the voices from all of our partners are heard. So Canopy South on its own has several projects in mind, mostly focused on affordable housing. We own right now approximately 6.5 acres of land that we're planning to develop potentially with these funds between 20 single family home and probably about 120 multifamily units. But as a group, we've been working with our partners for what is potentially a very, very great group of individuals and organizations to bring about \$105 million

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requests that would include from early childhood education, sport complexes and facilities, opportunities to bring a new infrastructure to some of the very abandoned, what I'll call, streets in south Omaha and also affordable housing. This is a great opportunity for all of us, and we look forward to working with you. Any questions?

WAYNE: Any, any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. And congratulations on your recent press award for the housing complex.

CESAR GARCIA: Thank you. And that's one thing, you know, public-private partnership. That is key for us, and that's also where we bring opportunity to have some great foundations to the table and be able to fill those gaps.

WAYNE: Thank you. Next testifier. Welcome.

DIANA ROGEL: Hello. I'm a little shorter. My name is Diana Rogel. I am a daughter of immigrants and I'm a second generation Latina of proud Mexican and Salvadorian heritage. I have dedicated my work in public health within the last ten years.

VARGAS: Can you please spell your name?

DIANA ROGEL: Oh, sorry.

VARGAS: Thank you.

DIANA ROGEL: D-i-a-n-a R-o-g-e-l. Thank you. I am a member of the New Leaders Council, the Latino Economic Development Council, and I'm employed by Live On Nebraska as a diversity outreach and engagement coordinator. We are a nonprofit, federally designated organ procurement organization for Nebraska and Pottawattamie County. While the following statements are my own, the associations I've listed, including my employer, believe that Latinos need more support to thrive and unfold their full potential. My grandmother died from kidney failure. Kidney disease does not necessarily run in my family. My grandmother was a seamstress, seamstress who was paid based on what she could produce. She would drink little to no water while she worked, so she didn't need to go to the restroom and maximize her time, making as many lawn chair inserts she could day in and day out. In the short term, it was a sacrifice my grandmother deemed worth making to ensure enough income came to the family. In the long run, my grandmother did not foresee the health impacts she would suffer not only due to the lack of education, but also the poor work practices.

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Low-income areas are notorious for being isolated from access to healthcare services, disconnected from reasonably priced grocery stores and far from recreational learning spaces like a park, they are also predominantly resided by communities of color. That was the case for my family. We had the corner store, which had a cost two to three times higher than the store located further west. And the closest place for us to play was a local school which was fenced off. Going to the park was an excursion we took a handful of times during the year, and healthcare was a luxury. The cost for being treated was easier to avoid if you seemed fine. So right now, not much has changed for Latinos today here in south Omaha. We've grown 6.5 times more than our white counterparts. That means we represent one out of every two people. Although our population is the biggest and fastest-growing racial ethnic group in Nebraska and around the country, we continue to suffer the impacts of socioeconomic inequities. From the community health development programs, there was socioeconomic impact data compiled looking at the U.S. Census tracts in south Omaha 68105, 68108 and then 68107. Twenty-nine percent of age 25 adults do not have a high school diploma, 27% of youth live under the poverty line-- the poverty rate, I'm sorry-- 26% of people under age 65 do not have health insurance and 21% of households are without broadband Internet compared to the 90% or higher in West Omaha. Fifty-two percent of housing units were built before 1940, which has the highest of all zip codes and can present many health and safety hazards. This data reflects a lack of investment in south Omaha that contributes to lower access to communities that are known for surviving on their own.

WAYNE: I'm gonna need you to wrap up.

DIANA ROGEL: We desire more than to just survive. I think that by using our rich culture and strong work ethic, this funding can go to the planning of the Latino Economic Development Council that we're developing in the Plaza de la Raza and community resources to a long list of needs that our Latino community is experiencing. I would ask this committee to look at some of the outcomes you saw with health, you know, with high rates of obesity and diabetes, as our plan is to create more green spaces so that we can utilize this space for better health outcomes. Investing in south Omaha--

WAYNE: I'm going to have to cut you off here.

DIANA ROGEL: Yep.

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WAYNE: Any questions from the committee? And it's no, it's no disrespect. I just-- as we keep going, I want to make sure we're consistently and we're not playing favoritism [INAUDIBLE]. So that's why we have the three-minute marker.

DIANA ROGEL: No worries. Thank you.

WAYNE: Seeing no questions, thank you for being here. Next testifier. Welcome to your committee.

a'RON BURNS: Good evening. My name is a'Ron Burns, I'm the 17-year-old entrepreneur who recently just opened--

WAYNE: Could you spell your first and last name for the record? Spell it?

a'RON BURNS: a-'-R-o-n B-u-r-n-s. I'm representing Burns Family Corporation, that is a Fortune 500 startup ready to grow and build a headquarters in north Omaha. We recognize the need of an expansion plan that will help communities economically, while establishing a corporate headquarters that will operate three profitable subsidiaries, that have negotiations with 13 states that by CEG funds we will acquire 22 rolled ice cream chains and service those chains and bring those chains back-- I mean their chain managements and bring them back to north Omaha within the headquarter subsidiary to train our national operations and efforts. Our company structure is a parent company serving Burns Realty and Burns Technology. The National Rolled Ice Cream Chain is now partnered with Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia. And then our real estate development company will work to provide affordable housing, homeownership programs and work to bring a key development project to north Omaha that will drive in national retail, fast food chains and a grocery chain such as Trader Joe's, Chick-Fil-A, Zaxby's, White Castle, White Castle and lastly, Whataburger. We'll get key retailers to come by extending the torch of a new change comes to north Omaha, and having a startup company [INAUDIBLE] the end of the block. Burns Family Realty will also work closely to one of the biggest land owners in order to buy back the land and redevelop it. Our technology firm will oversee the company e-commerce and store kiosk stands, developments in technology softwares. And lastly, this five-year scope, we will drive in a job project of 1,800 workers. Our financial projections are quarter one: \$12 million expenses, \$2.-- \$2.49 million and then our net profit being \$10,046,004. Revenue by month is \$1,000,000. Expenses by month is \$208,333. And our corporation year profit again is \$10 million--

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\$10,46,004. We-- we are requesting \$10.5 million to fund the startup, the Fortune 500 startup. We will purchase the old carnation building that sits as a dead block for our community. That building will cost \$3.5 million with Mark Sanford serving as a direct architect; \$550,000 city-- improvements from the city have already been in talks with some city leaders to kind of get that ball rolling. And then our operations sectors are 1.5, and then other development funds will come from HUD, the city of Omaha and commercial real estate investors.

WAYNE: Thank you. I owe you an email back, I got your email. So I appreciate that. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. Any other testifiers I see?

TREVOR FITZGERALD: Maybe just urge people to come to the on-deck.

WAYNE: If there anybody testifiers, there's three on-deck seats available in front. Welcome to your committee. [LAUGHTER]

NATE WATSON: My name is Nate Watson, N-a-t-e W-a-t-s-o-n, I am the executive director of the Omaha Data Science Foundation. Through COVID, based on the UNO 2021 report, women lost jobs at a much higher rate than men as they stayed home and take care of their families. And then as the 6.6 million jobs went back, they went predominantly to men. So what I'm proposing is a rather large scholarship foundation or scholarship rather specifically tied to women and the BIPOC population to give them access to tech training, specifically in [INAUDIBLE] schools and nonuniversity development. These individuals would have access to a much higher paying job in tech. Not only are they given a much higher salary, but also the Omaha community is dying for tech. We are going to be short somewhere close to 10,000 people. So that means every single company from the Fortune 500s, all the way down to the startups are missing tech people and in huge numbers. It's going to gravely affect our ability to compete globally. And so the one-- of the big solutions that I would like to propose is to create this, this scholarship fund to help the individuals in the north and south O get access to that knowledge and then go into the tech community. The community itself doesn't need-- or every year less and less companies need a quote unquote degree. They just need the skills. And so tech is the perfect place for these individuals to climb out of low socioeconomic ability, it's a perfect way for them to get a, a job or a role at a company with great benefits. Many of the companies are working towards this type of employment, so taking individuals who have no tech background and giving them a role as well as a pathway to further advancement and further inclusion. It helps not only the

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community development, but it also helps those individuals gain more dollars. So it's a great way to, to take this money and invest it in the community. Thank you.

WAYNE: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, good seeing you. Haven't seen you in a while. Any other testifiers? Come on up.

DON PREISTER: Now it's like a game show.

WAYNE: Welcome.

DON PREISTER: Welcome to you too. And my name is Don Preister, I am representing SONA, South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, today and also partially NONA, the North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, and the representatives from those groups.

WAYNE: State-- please state your name and spell it.

DON PREISTER: Spell it is D-o-n P-r-e-i-s-t-e-r. After many committee hearings, I should know that. The repetition here for me too. I'm up here not so much to ask for money as much to offer assistance. SONA and NONA are neighborhood groups composed of many nonprofits and neighborhood associations individually that have met together to be more collaborative. I like what Cesar Garcia said about partnerships, collaboration and working together and not being silos. And we want to partner, we want to be of assistance in the process and monitor it. Today we heard enough applications or potential applications to use up every penny that's already there, and that's only what's come forward in here today. So there's no shortage of projects, there's no shortage of needs. But we would also like to see some of the smaller projects, not the 30 and 60 big projects, all of these that I heard today are very worthy projects. But you're going to have the difficult decision of winnowing those millions, perhaps billion dollars' worth of projects down and make final selections. We want to have the grass roots, the people at the community level, have some input to helping make those decisions. We are very grateful for Senator Wayne, Senator McKinney, Senator Vargas and Senator McDonnell helping to champion. Senator Wayne, you in particular getting these funds. We appreciate having them. We appreciate all the work and the challenge of getting them there, we would just like to be a partner and help out with that. So I thank you. I offer SONA's assistance, and I just want to say my proudest contribution is being an SOB, and for those who don't know,

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that is a south Omaha boy. And we welcome you to south Omaha and to the community. Thank you very much.

WAYNE: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Any other testifiers today? Going once, any other testifiers? Just to wrap up this today before we close out, so what we're going to do after these hearings is we'll get a lot of information and a lot of projects through the, through not only the online, but the submittal-- I mean, through this public process, to through the, the submittal process too. We're going to gather all that information. They're going to-- the architects and engineers are going to crunch the numbers, are going to do follow-up calls. We'll have follow-up meetings, I know all the committee members have committed to having follow-up meetings in late October to November where some of those smaller projects individually. But if we can figure out how to put them together, maybe they're in the same one-mile area and we can have-- I'm just using projects, don't quote me to it, it could programs. Instead of having multiple construction managers, maybe we can join a joint venture and have one to save costs. So we're looking at everything to make sure we understand what's going on. What we hope to get from this is almost an index of projects and ideas and needs to build out a strategic plan for east Omaha that the state, after-- well, four of us are done fairly soon. McKinney still has a little, little more time. But that this can continue to happen and we can continue to build a vision for east Omaha to make sure that we're going in the right direction. So it is going to be a lot of input we're going to get. We're going to get a lot of feedback, but we're also going to be reaching out back to you all to make sure that we're trying to connect the dots and that there's not the silos, that we're not operating over here and not paying attention over there. We're truly trying to make this a collaborative community effort. With that, if you have ideas, we still have services being offered out the door to the left. If you just have an idea and you don't know how it looks and how it should, how it should function, there's people back there who are willing to help you write out your budget, help you at least formulate that idea. And part of what Olsson and everybody on the team is doing is we are fleshing out your ideas. So if you just only have an idea, still submit it because we have a team that we're going to help flesh out those ideas to make sure we put the best foot forward to the committee. So if you submitted and it's just, I think a park in downtown Omaha. Obviously it was built as kind of a joke, but if that's your idea, you don't know how to do it, we have architects and engineers who will help flesh that out for you to where you can still

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submit the best project you think out there or best idea out there. So don't get discouraged if you only have an idea. Please talk to the individuals in this room to make sure we can flesh it out. Again, the official way to submit is omahaeconomicrecovery.com. And if you have any questions, please contact us through that and we'll be happy-- we'll be happy to answer those questions. Any sign-offs from the committee? What am I supposed to-- this officially closes the-- I haven't done this since the Legislature. I'm rusty. This officially closes the Special Committee hearing on LB1024. Thank you.