



January 30, 2023

Representative Emil Bergquist  
House Committee on Local Government  
Kansas State Capitol - 300 SW 10th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: House Bill 2083 Opponent Written Testimony

Chairman Rep. Bergquist and Committee Members,

I am writing in opposition of HB 2083 that would prohibit local municipalities from enacting a local vacant property registration.

We are currently at a stage in time when most downtowns in Kansas communities are suffering from chronic vacancies. In Winfield we have been tracking and studying these vacancies for many years. I can say with certainty that most all the chronically vacant commercial properties in our downtown can be traced back to one major issue: absentee property owners who are uninterested in caring for or filling their commercial space. The commercial spaces owned by Winfielders are most always in good repair, with responsive landlords or sellers, who work to actively market the properties to ensure they are filled.

We have explored many options for ways to address this issue in our community, and the best solution is to require all property owners with a vacant downtown commercial property to register that building with the City of Winfield. There is a registration fee that will be waived if the property owner shows due diligence that they are actively trying to find a tenant or buyer for their property. The registration ordinance is written as to allow ample time for property owners to improve their property and list it on the registration.

Currently, the city has no recourse for individuals who own commercial property in downtown Winfield and choose not to fill it for its intended purpose. As a result, other businesses and property owners in our downtown are suffering as a result of these chronically vacant properties, all of which are experiencing neglect and disrepair.

Our goal with the vacant property registration ordinance in Winfield is to protect the Kansas businesses and properties in our downtown from the negligence of absentee property owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Sarah Werner  
CEO, Winfield Area Chamber of Commerce