



# CITY OF TOPEKA

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To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development  
From: Rhiannon Friedman, City of Topeka  
Re: HB 2088 Opposition Testimony  
Date: March 5, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Alley, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the City of Topeka in opposition to HB 2088.

While we appreciate that the bill was amended in the House to allow phased-in permitting and to limit its scope to residential housing, we remain opposed due to concerns surrounding the changes to platting. The changes made do not alleviate our concerns about the reduction in opportunities for public input, which is crucial in the development process.

## **Rushed Timelines Are Counterproductive**

The City's Planning and Development Services Department already strives to provide flexibility in the permitting process. While we recognize the effort to streamline permitting through phased-in approvals, we remain concerned that the bill still imposes rigid requirements that could lead to unintended delays and increased costs for developers. The 15-day timeline for requesting re-submittals, including weekends, remains a significant issue. Applications frequently contain minor omissions or inaccuracies, and the limited timeframe for corrections, particularly for critical elements like traffic impact analyses, could result in hasty decisions and incomplete evaluations. Additionally, the provision that prohibits additional filing fees when an application is denied for incompleteness further complicates the process, as fee adjustments are necessary when project scopes change after resubmission.

## **Infrastructure Readiness Is Critical**

Ensuring adequate infrastructure remains a fundamental concern. While the bill is now limited to residential housing, the benefit district process, which funds infrastructure improvements, remains a time-intensive process. Essential materials such as water line components often have long lead times, and ensuring proper planning and KDHE approval for water and sewer extensions is crucial. Expedited permitting without adequate infrastructure planning could lead to long-term problems, such as inadequate emergency access, drainage issues, and structural failures.

## **Negative Impact on Plat Approvals and Public Input**

The most pressing concern with HB 2088 remains the changes to plat approval processes. The reduction in time for plat approvals from 60 days after the public hearing at the Planning Commission level to 60 days from the application date limits the ability of city staff to collaborate with developers on resolving key issues. Major plats, which often require extensive infrastructure planning, need thorough review to ensure public safety and sustainability. Additionally, the bill limits the ability of the Governing Body to send a plat back to the Planning Commission for further review, diminishing opportunities for public input. Public participation is fundamental to the development process, and restricting it could lead to projects that do not align with community needs.

## **Local Control Is Essential for Tailored Solutions**

While we appreciate efforts to improve the permitting process, this bill remains unnecessary. Local governments already have mechanisms in place to work with developers to address inefficiencies. Cities best understand their unique challenges and should retain the authority to conduct thorough, context-specific reviews that ensure responsible development. Removing this ability weakens the capacity of local governments to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of residents.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the amendment to allow phased-in permitting and the limitation to residential housing, the City of Topeka remains opposed to HB 2088 due to the concerns surrounding platting and the reduction of public input opportunities. Responsible growth requires careful planning, transparent governance, and community engagement. We urge you not to move forward with this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention.