

THE CITY OF

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# BELLE PLAINE

To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Linda Stinnett, City Clerk, City of Belle Plaine

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2314

Date: Friday, February 22, 2019

Our community was featured by the Wichita Eagle newspaper following information released by the 2010 Census – not for the advances we have made, but because we had the highest percentage of abandoned homes in our area of the state. Over the past nine years, it has not improved. At present, in our zip code there are over 120 abandoned or empty homes. That is a near 13 percent rate. Other cities in our area have only about half that percentage rate.

There is no simple answer to the issue under current property laws. Unfortunately, the values in the neighborhoods tend to fall quickly when a house is in extreme disrepair or ruin. Not only does that make it more difficult for others in the neighborhood to improve their properties, but it accelerates the tax burden in better neighborhoods. That effectively makes it more difficult to attract the homeowners who can afford the better properties, too. In a small town, homes for sale are in competition with the entire community and foreclosures can pull down values across all neighborhoods.

I have included 27 photos we took of abandoned and dangerous structures. Several of the abandoned homes could be utilized as housing. In a tight real estate market that typically only has two to three homes for sale, the ability to have those homes on the market could make a significant difference for local property values.

We have put money in our budget for demolition of two to three homes a year. That does clear places and take away the infestation problems, but the taxpayer dollar is typically lost at that point. We rarely can recoup the cost and many times the property just continues to sit unused.

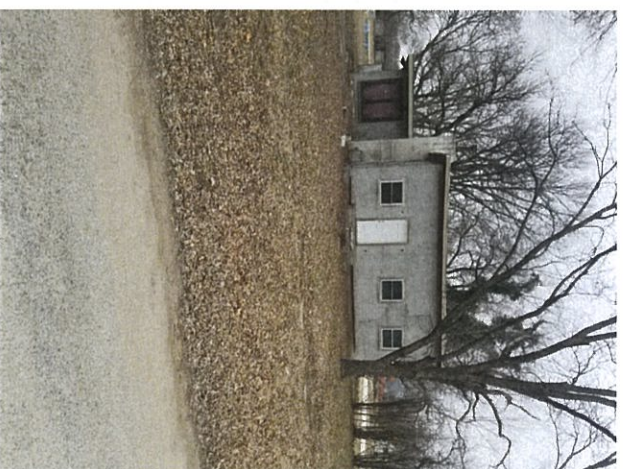
For two years in a row we have been turned down for CDBG housing grant funding, largely because our problem has been seen as beyond help. HB 2314 would give us the ability to deal with abandoned and blighted properties as we now have when dealing with dangerous structures. It would allow rehabilitation to begin before the property becomes a “dangerous structure.”

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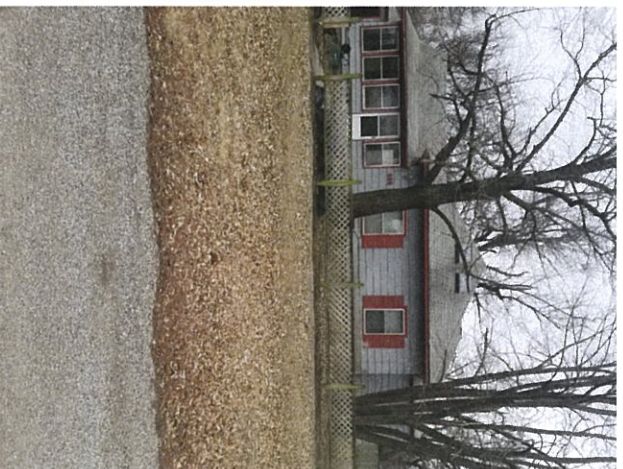
# City of Belle Plaine Photos – HB 2314



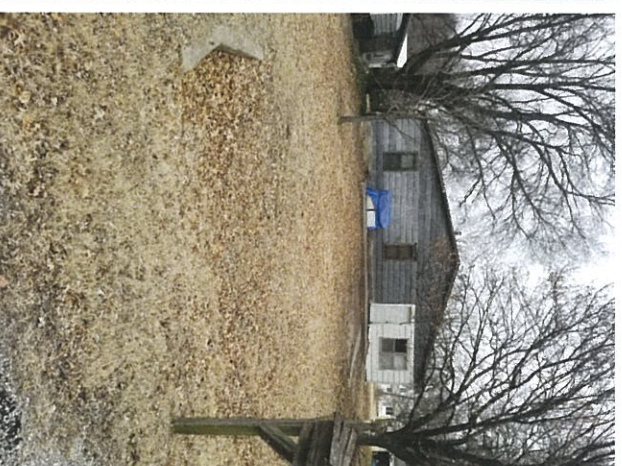
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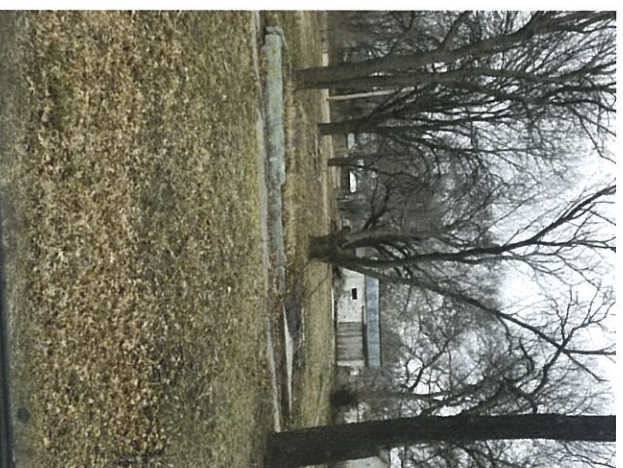
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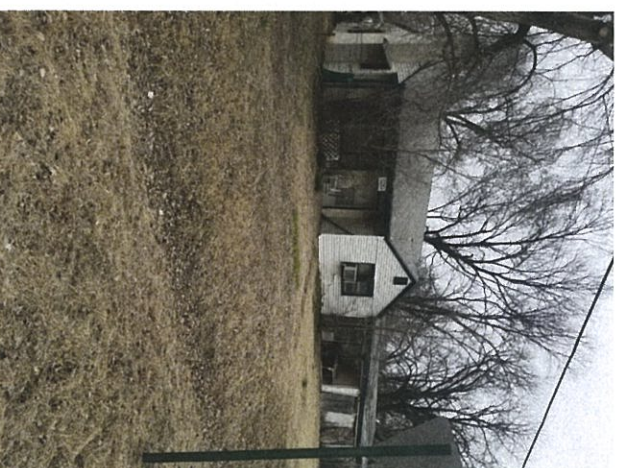
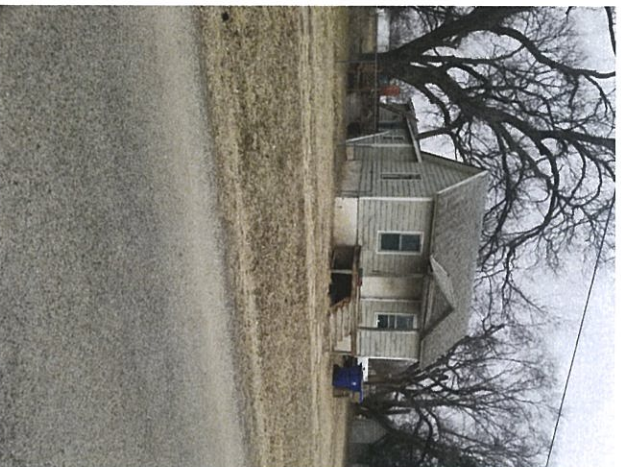
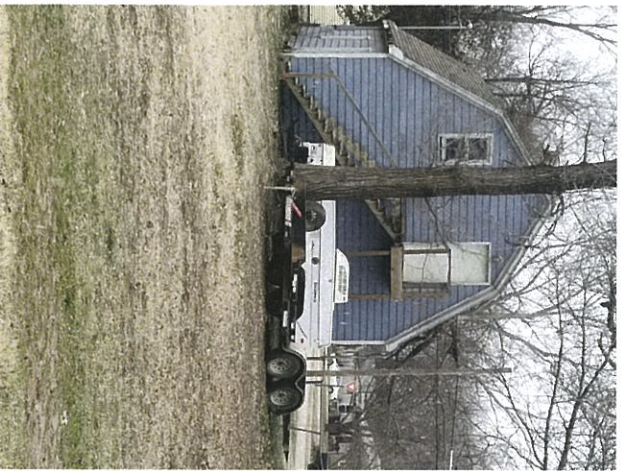
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