

TESTIMONY

House Financial Institutions and Rural Development
Rachel Mondt, Centerpointe Architecture, LLC

Chairman Kelly and Committee Members, and Representative Avery Anderson of Newton, I am Rachel Mondt and I urge you to join me in supporting House Bill 2569.

House Bill 2569 is an economic development bill that will help small businesses, like mine, in Kansas downtowns.

In 2021, I purchased the H. L. Hart Building in Newton's historic downtown district. The 11,000 square foot 1880s building is located across the street from Newton's historic railroad station, just two blocks south of Anderson Book and Office Supply. I am in the early stages of redeveloping the vacant building. When completed, it will house 2 large storefront businesses and 4 smaller space micro-business storefronts, just as it did 100 years ago. It will also have 8 apartments on the upper floor.

As an architect and small business owner, I understand the positive impacts of rehabilitation on communities. I also know the expense these older buildings require to renovate due their age (and often neglect). The historic tax credit program assisted my decision to invest in this building and in the city of Newton community after living in Wichita for over twenty years. Furthering your investment in this program will help people like me maximize our efforts and unlock the potential of each upgrade project quicker than we could otherwise.

Rehabilitation of older buildings produces higher-paying jobs than new construction. Nationwide economic studies by Rutgers University show that rehabilitation yields "markedly better effects on employment, income, GSP, and state and local taxes than an equal investment in new construction or many other economic activities" *including manufacturing*.

Older buildings are critical to the incubation of small businesses that are the primary job creators in the U. S. economy. They not only provide spaces for small businesses, but also create an authentic environment that draws talent and investment to communities.

My project has the support of the City of Newton, Harvey County Historical Museum, Newton's Economic Development community, downtown business owners, and other community leaders because they understand that historic preservation is economic development. I urge you to show your support for projects like mine by voting YES on House Bill 2569. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Mondt