



February 3, 2021

**North Dakota Senate Political Subdivisions**  
**Chairman – Senator Randy Burckhard**

**Testimony By: Jonathan Rosenthal, AICP, Economic Development Administrator**

**Email: [jonathan.rosenthal@minotnd.org](mailto:jonathan.rosenthal@minotnd.org)**

**Phone: 701-420-4524**

### **Senate Bill 2139**

### **Urging a “Passage” Recommendation**

Dear Chairman Burckhard and Members of the Committee:

The City of Minot would like to express its enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 2139 sponsored by Senators Lee, Burckhard and Kreun and by Representatives Dockter and Keiser.

#### **Benefits of SB-2139**

- Creation of Neighborhood Zones to assist neighborhood commercial districts
- Will particularly benefit small and local businesses
- Will incentivize physical improvements to properties such as facades
- Will allow cities the flexibility to identify and choose neighborhoods that are ready to participate
- Expands cities financial toolboxes

The legislature might consider a bit more flexible time frame.

- It takes time to organize a community and for private owners to participate
- City will have this issue in multiple neighborhoods

Regardless, the program is welcome assistance for neighborhood revitalization.

The creation of *neighborhood zones* as a proposed addition to the North Dakota Century Code and the existing Renaissance Zone legislation will provide municipalities in North Dakota the important opportunity to incentivize façade improvements, renovations and other physical improvements for neighborhood commercial districts located throughout a city. This should especially provide a beneficial impact for local businesses.

The proposed program changes allow the necessary flexibility for local governments to identify and then include the most promising neighborhoods in the program. This is often based upon

level of the commitment by the business community and organization of local merchants and property owners. While the contiguous nature of the Renaissance Zone program has allowed cities to concentrate efforts on our downtown properties, the City appreciates that the bill sponsors plan to give localities the latitude to choose the best redevelopment opportunities from amongst all our neighborhoods.

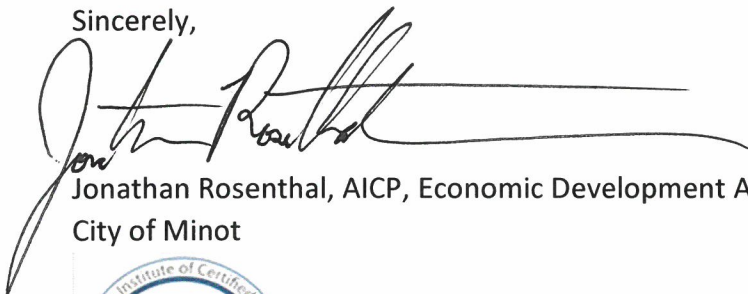
This program will add to each of our city's "financial toolboxes."

Although we understand that the provision of time limits in the legislation may enhance a sense of urgency to execute projects, we would like to suggest the consideration of a bit more flexible time schedule under Section 3.1.f which restricts the duration of the zone status to a single ten-year time period.

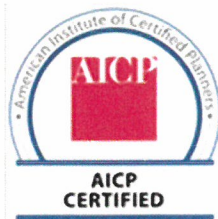
Given the time that it takes to organize program participation by private property owners, we request that the legislature consider offering the possibility of extended time to recruit participants. It is our experience that some properties who are reluctant to participate frequently change their minds about participation later, upon seeing the improvements made by their neighbors. The fuller participation by even late-comers rehabbing their properties can provide greater cohesiveness for a commercial area. This flexibility is even more important when one considers that a neighborhood business community, as well as city staff, may be negotiating with property owners over these issues in multiple areas of a city. The extended time period is really expanded for our property owners and not for city governments. Regardless of the final decision on a program time limit, it's a good opportunity.

The City of Minot thanks all of you for your consideration and commitment to improving our business zones. For all these reasons we recommend the passage of SB-2139.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Rosenthal, AICP, Economic Development Administrator  
City of Minot



Cc: Mayor Shaun Sipma  
Minot City Council  
Brian Billingsley, Community & Economic Development Director  
Shane Goettle, Special Assistant City Attorney