



408 Main Street - PO Box 70 – Milnor, North Dakota 58060-0070

City Auditor: 701-427-5272 Fax: 701-427-5292

Testimony of Carol Peterson

Economic Development Coordinator, City of Milnor

701-6785415 milnorND@hotmail.com

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I am testifying as the Economic Development Coordinator and a citizen of Milnor, ND to support funding for the Department of Commerce, Community Revitalization (Rural Slum and Blight Grant).

Milnor has had a direct experience with the Community Revitalization program. We applied for the Rural Slum and Blight Removal Grant in 2024 for a property on our Main Street which encompassed six lots. This was for the removal of a 56' x 117' building that had not been used for over 20 years due to age and deterioration. This grant not only helped us remove a blighted eyesore and safety hazard, but it is paving the way for a new building that can be used for business and housing, and be a great asset to our community.

This project has created a ripple effect for our town, exciting others to move forward with projects. After a long planning process, the VFW removed a dangerous building immediately to the south of the city project mentioned above, and they are in the process of building a new 5,000 sq ft public-use facility. Another building next to the VFW project, was an ice cream shop, known as "The Keg", used by a community-wide group that was completely outdated and in very poor condition. This building was removed in the fall of 2024 and a public fundraising campaign began to raise money to replace it. This project is important to our citizens because – well, who doesn't like ice cream and sweet treats. The new building will be finished in the spring of 2025 and they hope to open on Memorial Day to serve ice cream treats that attract people from over a 20-mile radius of Milnor. In the next block, on Main Street, another entrepreneur purchased an empty, two-story brick building that the main floor had not been used since 2021, and the apartment upstairs had not been viable to rent for a very long time. The new owner completely gutted the entire building. Renovations are starting, and the main floor will soon be an insurance office and the upstairs will be a beautiful apartment.

All these 2024 improvements to our Main Street are having a great domino effect. This is an amazing feat for a small rural community. And it was all started by the idea to improve our Main Street and dispose of an old building.

Milnor asks the legislature to continue the Community Revitalization Slum and Blight Grant as our town is a great example of how one program can ignite a community and make a difference.