

Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources
 04/12/2023 Upon Adjournment
 SB23-273 Agricultural Land In Urban Renewal Areas
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Mandy Morgan For themselves	I support Senator Marchman's SB-23-273. Agricultural land should no longer be allowed to be considered urban blight. Developers are using this loophole to take tax dollars from hard working citizens to decrease their expenses. School districts and social services will suffer simply to line wealthy developers pockets. Do not let developers use this loophole at the expense of citizens. Farmland is not urban blight and slum, and they are using this loophole to personally profit. Please stand up for average tax paying citizen who do not want to subsidize already wealthy developers. Thank you.
Natalie Walsh For themselves	I support Sen. Marchman's Bill No. 23-273. In fact, I would also suggest a further clarification to provide that the original approved plan at issue must also have been approved by an Urban Renewal Authority that INCLUDED THE SAME TAXING BODIES so that the "collective interests of the county and all taxing bodies levying a mill levy" [31-25-104(1)(d)(2)(a)(1)] in the subject/new urban renewal area are represented. Otherwise, these taxing bodies (who were not part of the original plan if approved prior to the 2015 amendment) are left without leverage to negotiate a fair and relevant allocation of revenues from the new plan area because they have lost the value of what may be the only other exception available to the developer/URA -- the Consent option.
Christine Forster For themselves	<p>Dear Colorado General Assembly,</p> <p>I am writing to register MY SUPPORT to the OPPOSITION to Senate Bill 273 and its efforts to amend C.R.S. 31-25-107(c)(II)(E) which states: "no area that has been designated as an urban renewal area shall contain any agricultural land unless: (E) The agricultural land was included in an approved urban renewal plan prior to June 1, 2010."</p> <p>Constituents supporting a proposal to amend this statute argue that agricultural land should not be included in the definition of blight and claim abuse of the statute if it is used in this way. As usual, statutes are open to interpretation, however I prefer to side with an interpretation by the lawmakers of the State of Colorado rather than those who dissect the statute to feed their narrative.</p> <p>Growth in many forms is inevitable. Lack of growth can be detrimental to a community and prevent a municipality from being able to provide services, develop public infrastructure and create high-paying jobs which are the proven core of a fruitful economy.</p> <p>URAs are a proven beneficial way for municipalities to foster partnerships with developers who have the means to help a community</p>

	<p>grow and increase revenue to support costs of goods and services such as fire, police, health, and business support.</p> <p>There are 67 URAs in the State of Colorado, 150 Urban Renewal Plan Areas and at least 7 municipalities with existing and proposed Urban Renewal Plans that include assessed agricultural land. They are Dacono, Erie, Firestone, Frederick, Longmont, Timnath and Loveland.</p> <p>URAs are an economic benefit that allow a city to manage growth instead of just letting it happen and hope for the best. The Centerra South Urban Renewal Plan is a catalyst project based on community feedback that would significantly impact the economic health and vitality of Loveland that will be lost if you amend this statute.</p> <p>The Centerra South Urban Renewal Plan will bring a front door to Loveland and the road to the Rocky Mountain National Park on the west side of I25. This will bring more tourism, which is another economic driver.</p> <p>This developer has a history of awarding winning projects that benefit the local community. Their last plan created 8500 jobs and brought 200 million in roadway improvements. I am in full support of them.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration. Christine Forster, Chair Commissioner - Loveland Community Marketing Commission</p>
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April 12, 2023

Chair Roberts and Members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

Good day and thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB23-273, Concerning the Inclusion of Agricultural Land in Urban Renewal Areas. My name is John Kefalas, and I live at 604 Sycamore Street, Fort Collins, CO 80521. I offer these comments as an individual Larimer County Commissioner, having begun my second term in office, and as a former State Legislator – having served 12 years in the Legislature – six years in the House and six years in the Senate. This testimony also represents the views of former Representative Randy Fischer (HD-53) who authorized me to present from the two of us. We served together in the State House.

My goal in sharing these words and perspectives is to provide some historical background and context regarding the legislative intent of HB10-1107, Concerning Limitations of the Inclusion of Agricultural Lands Within Urban Renewal Areas, that should help inform your decisions about the bill before you – SB23-273, a bill that Rep. Fischer and I support. Rep. Fischer was the prime sponsor of HB10-1107, a bipartisan bill, that I co-sponsored along with many of my legislative colleagues back in the day. In reviewing the legislative intent our purpose was to prevent agricultural land from being inappropriately designated as “urban blight.” This bill was in direct response to the 25-year Centerra Development Urban Renewal Authority (URA) that the Loveland City Council created by designating prime farmland at the time as “urban blight.” This URA took effect in 2004 and expires in 2029. The URA law (CRS 35-21-107) states that agricultural land was not to be included in a URA unless certain circumstances existed, and the land was already part of a URA created prior to June 1, 2010.

Since 2010, the Legislature has worked to improve the URA laws with legislation in 2014 and 2015 (bipartisan bills that I also supported) to allow counties and other taxing districts a seat at the table and provide greater accountability and transparency with the taxpayers’ money. In 2023, we find ourselves in a complex situation with the proposed Centerra South Development on 150 acres of assessed agricultural land that the Loveland City Council and the Loveland URA Board have determined to be blighted land thus deserving of a tax subsidy to develop the property. These 150 acres were pulled out of the original URA, which expires in six years (2029), and it is important to note that from 2005 to 2022 \$40,891,077.00 is the amount of property tax levy that has been diverted from Larimer County property tax revenue.

SB23-273 is a narrowly focused, bipartisan bill, that seeks to address a loophole and ensure that URAs and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) are economic redevelopment tools that are used appropriately. Please support this bill and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Kefalas, Larimer County Commissioner
Randy Fischer, former State Representative