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URBAN CENTENNIAL HOMESTEADS

House Bill 5248 as introduced First Analysis (6-2-98)

Sponsor: Rep. Kirk Profit
**Committee: Urban Policy and Economic
Development**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The State Historic Preservation Office of the Michigan Historical Center currently issues certificates to designate centennial farms -- working farms that have been in the same family for 100 years or more. These farms receive a certificate indicating the farm's status as a centennial farm. The designation does not entitle the farm or its owners to tax credits or any other special treatment, it merely identifies those farms that have a history of having been owned by the same family for 100 years or more. It has been noted that no similar designation exists for urban family homes that are not farms. Legislation has been offered to provide for urban homes that have been in the same family for 100 years or more to be given the opportunity to apply for and receive designation as urban centennial homesteads.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend Public Act 271 of 1913, the act that creates and sets the powers and duties of the Michigan Historical Commission, to allow for the commission to designate urban centennial homesteads.

In order for a property to be designated as an urban centennial homestead, an application would have to be submitted to the commission. The parcel of property would have to contain a residence that was occupied by the person who had made the application and the property would have to have been in the same family for over 100 consecutive years.

If the commission was satisfied that these criteria had been met, it could designate the parcel as an urban centennial homestead. The commission could then list the parcel in a register kept for that purpose and would be required to authorize the display of a suitable marker. The marker would indicate that the site was an urban centennial homestead. The text and construction of the marker would be subject to the

approval of the commission. However, the marker could not bear the name of any commissioner or state official.

MCL 399.4b

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to the Michigan history website maintained by the Department of State, the Centennial Farm Program was begun by the Michigan Historical Commission in 1948. At that time, or shortly thereafter, Detroit Edison Company, Consumers Power Company, local electrical cooperatives, and farm groups began contributing funds for the purchase of centennial farm markers.

In 1968, House Concurrent Resolution 245 was adopted to require the Michigan Historical Commission, as part of its duty to assist local historical societies within the state, to assist the Michigan Centennial Farm Association to maintain the association's lists and files keeping track of centennial farms and to conduct the administrative work needed to assure the proper functioning of the association. The commission was already involved in promoting the idea of recognizing centennial farms, determining eligibility for recognition of these farms, and awarding certificates designating these farms as centennial farms. At that time, the resolution indicated that the expenses incurred by the commission would be reimbursed by the association. However, the association, although it still exists, is not involved with the certification or designation of centennial farms, nor does it pay any money to the commission.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not available.

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ARGUMENTS:

For:

People who have owned and lived in the same house from one generation to the next show the same degree of pride in the continuity of ownership as farm owners; it is fitting to extend the idea of centennial property ownership to urban homesites. It is, in fact, probably more difficult for an urban home to remain in the same family for 100 years or more than it is for a farm. With society's increasing mobility, fewer and fewer families grow up and then raise their own children in the same house and, as a result, the number of homes that would be eligible for this designation is likely to be small. In those rare cases where a family has lived in the same home for at least a century, they should be acknowledged even if only with a suitable marker.

Against:

There appears to be no statutory authority providing for the designation of centennial farms; therefore it seems unlikely that a law needs to be made to allow for designation of urban centennial homesteads. If a law is necessary, the law should provide for both centennial farms and homes, and should provide appropriate funding for the Michigan Historical Commission to deal with the applications, determine eligibility, and maintain records. Further, if the provisions are to be set in law, the law should specify that the designation provides no special status on the property beyond identifying that it has been owned by the same family for 100 years or more.

POSITIONS:

There are no positions on the bill.

Analyst: W. Flory

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.