



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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### Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board November 10, 2020

**Board Members Present:** Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Katrina Kruger, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Shane Noble, Laura Gittings-Carlson

**Board Members Excused:** Bret Rutherford, Hannah Olson, Council Member Denise Joy

**Staff Present:** Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier, Carly Collins, Wyeth Friday

**Welcome / Introductions / Announcements:** The Community Development (CD) Board met via virtual videoconference as scheduled. Board Co-Chair, Joe Stockburger, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00pm.

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

**Meeting Minutes:** Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the October meeting minutes. Board member, Shane Noble, seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### Staff Reports:

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** The Request for Proposals on the 930 Steffanich property is advertised on the City website and will remain open until a contract can be executed. No proposals have been submitted to date. Staff fielded a question from Board member, Jim Corson, regarding why there have not been any potential low-income housing developers interested in the project yet. Staff assured the Board that anyone can submit a proposal, and anyone can apply to become a Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO). A CHDO would receive additional monetary incentives if selected to develop the property. There may be several factors at play as to why no proposals have been submitted including: availability of greater state funding for developers such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), barriers related to COVID-19, and seasonal issues.

Construction at the 817 N 22<sup>nd</sup> Street property is ongoing and progressing as scheduled.

- **Housing Rehabilitation:** No new applications were received in October. Staff continues to field calls and send out brochures and applications for households that express interest in the program.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** The program has slowed down a bit, but staff is still processing applications regularly. Staff indicated that there are four pending closures for November and early December, and there will be funding available to help additional households moving forward.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** The NeighborWorks project at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) is moving forward. Contractors at the property are working on site draining and grating plans. Sanderson Stewart is still working on additional reports. No visible infrastructure updates have been completed, though steady progress is being made.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** Staff continues to work with Host Site Supervisors on ways to coach and support VISTA members during what can be a challenging period of service. Recruitment for January is moving forward, though some potential Host Sites did drop out of the process due to concerns, especially those surrounding COVID-19. In response to COVID-19 precautions, VISTA members can begin their service terms from their Home of Record, so Orientation and service may operate much different than in previous years for the time being.

**Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 (CDBG -CV) / CARES Act Fund:** 3,507 community member survey responses have been returned to date. This is roughly ten percent of the total surveys distributed. 24 out of 75 service provider surveys have been returned as well. Staff reviewed City website updates relative to the survey responses and analysis. Over 1,400 responses have been submitted by low-income community members. Significant impacts have been lost wages / employment, lack of supplies, and lack of mental health resources. A separate webpage with local mental health resources has been added.

AmeriCorps VISTA members and staff continue to analyze data and will soon compile the assessment report. They will continue to accept surveys until the assessment report is finalized. Staff plans to present a draft of the assessment report at the next CD Board meeting which will include a list of prioritized funding opportunities and recommendations based on the survey data. The Board will be able to provide additional feedback and suggestions at that time. Staff plans to release the assessment report for a 30-day public comment period in early December and have it finalized in early January. Staff will then finalize a CDBG-CV grant application process which will be released concurrently with the CD Division's annual Affordable Housing Development application process following CD Board's review and a public advertisement period. Staff ensured the CD Board that their involvement in the review process for funding prioritization / allocation is both essential and part of federal statute and regulations.

Board member, Jim Corson, asked if the CD Division is being asked to allocate money to low-barrier quarantine and isolation shelter projects that have been undertaken by other organizations in the community. Staff indicated that they have not been asked so far and reminded the Board that there will be an entire application process required in order to receive funding. Some concerns with funding shelter projects include intensive monitoring, property disposition issues, and the fact that a shelter may not be specific only to the coronavirus, making this an ineligible funding type for CDBG-CV.

Staff expressed that City Administration and City Council are well-informed about the timeline for CDBG-CV funding allocations, the specificity of funding allocations, etc. Wyeth Friday also expressed that while we have time to evaluate the current situation in the community and to determine final allocations, we are also dealing with an evolving situation regarding the spread of COVID-19 in Billings. It will be important for the Board to help identify relevant funding needs that are applicable to the needs of low-income community members now as well as in the coming months.

**Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice:** Brenda Beckett provided a historical overview of CD developments and projects related to Fair Housing Choice and how they were influenced by HUD rulings. Staff members from various state offices as well as AmeriCorps VISTA members were involved in the statewide Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice project, even during a significant rollback of previous HUD rulings. The final rule issued in August 2020 does not require substantial data analysis or verification of specific measures taken to further fair housing choice in cities. At this time, the State AI is nearly complete, and most parties involved have interpreted that jurisdictions are no longer required to complete a full AI. Despite this, Billings sections have been completed and will be incorporated in the City's Annual Action Plan as well as the Consolidated Plan.

Brenda Beckett shared several AI findings in Billings with the Board. Some of these included: data on housing choice (two thirds of renters reported feeling welcome in the community), segregation patterns (clusters of the city's population are identifiable by higher numbers of a given race and / or national origin), and significant housing cost burden issues (households citywide are paying 30% or more for rentals / mortgages). Additionally, minority groups experience both more housing problems and more severe housing problems.

Board member, Katrina Kruger, asked if staff can expect that the change in national administration might lead to additional requirements to furthering fair housing choice and if the CD Division is preparing for that. Brenda indicated that the CD Division will continue to conduct data analysis for fair housing to maintain a higher standard. It is also imperative that we be able to identify and report discrimination as well as design activities within CD

programs and help guide staff recommendations. Several Board members suggested sharing these findings in a simplified manner with them individually as well as on the City website and through social media.

**Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings:** Tam Rodier took time to thank all the Board members who contributed to the AmeriCorps VISTA winter clothing drive. Board member, Jim Corson, thanked fellow Board members, Hannah Olson and Bret Rutherford, for their involvement in the general election process in Billings / Yellowstone County earlier this month.

**Next Meeting:** Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:25pm. The next meeting will be held on December 1, 2020.