



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board November 7, 2023

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Jim Corson, Joe Stockburger, Erica Doornek, Kathleen Candelaria, James Allen

Board Members Excused: Jenna Martin

Board Members Absent: None

City Council Representative: Denise Joy

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

Guests: Gene Leuwer, Beki Brandborg (Zoom), Andrew Chania (Zoom), Logan Anderson (Zoom) all from Mitchell Court LLLP; VISTA Leader Daniel Sidle, VISTA Abi Scherer

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the 6th Floor Conference Room of the Miller Building. Board Chair Rebecca Noell called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Board members and guests were invited to introduce themselves.

Announcements: Tam Rodier noted the address on the agenda for today's optional tour was incorrect. The tour site is Jackson Court, 510 Jackson Street, which is adjacent to the Mitchell Court project site.

Public Comment: None

Meeting Minutes: Board member Jim Corson made a motion to approve the October 3, 2023, minutes as written and distributed. Board member Erica Doornek seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Affordable Housing Development (AHD) Application: Gene Leuwer distributed Mitchell Court packets containing architectural drawings, concept site plan, income and rent charts / information, unit mix (1, 2, and 3-bedroom), floor plan drawings, proposed funding sources list, and an estimated timeline. He said this is an \$11 million affordable housing project to be located adjacent to their Jackson Court project currently being completed. On October 23, the Mitchell Court Project was one of just five Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects approved in Montana. The other projects all had 20-24 units. Potential funding from the City of Billings' HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) allowed them to design a larger, 32-unit project. They are also requesting Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding from the City of Billings. The project design includes income limits—generally 50-60% Area Median Income (AMI)—and rent limits (HOME rents). They will accept vouchers in both Jackson Court and Mitchell Court. Tenants pay their own electricity bills. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) improvements will be incorporated, specifically along the walking trail between Jackson Court and Mitchell Court and adjacent to the Kratz Drain. He anticipates presenting the TIF funding request to the City Council in January 2024. If all goes well, they anticipate Mitchell Court to be completed in the Fall of 2025. Jackson Court will be completed and ready to lease up by early December 2023. Mr. Leuwer then answered several questions. He also invited those interested to come out to Jackson Court for a tour after the meeting.

Staff Reports:

- **Affordable Housing Development Program:** Dina Harmon said the Mitchell Court application was the most thorough application she has ever received. She showed the binder containing all the materials submitted and said that if any Board member wished to review, they were welcome to come into the office to go through it.
- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Dina Harmon reported a family will be closing on their home in a few weeks. Two families closed on their homes last month.

She is getting a lot of pay-off requests; people are doing Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) loans. Because the City does not subordinate FTHB loans, the loans must be paid off. She deposited \$65,000 last week alone!

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Tam Rodier shared the following:

Steffanich Property

- Final inspection passed and the contractor has been paid.
- Currently soliciting contractor to implement Xeriscaping plan in the front and east side yards.
- Appraisal to be scheduled as soon as we have a xeriscaping contract. Sales price will be the lesser of the appraised value or the acquisition and development costs.
- Marketing flyer complete and ready to be distributed to approved FTHB applicants.

New Property – 1709 St. Johns Ave.

- Closed on the purchase November 2.
- Currently coordinating inspections prior to developing Request for Quotes.
- CD Board will be invited to tour the property following the December meeting.

- **CDBG / CDBG-CV Projects:** Tam also gave the following project updates:

Washington Elementary HVAC: October quarterly performance report shows the project is about 95% complete. All that remains is testing and balancing that will be completed when no students are in the building.

Comanche Park

- CPTED improvements: The sandstone boulders were placed along the alley on the north side of the park, the solar lights have been installed, and the contractor is currently working to install the sensory pathway and new basketball system.
- Street paving is substantially complete and it looks great!

North Park

- Site work and prep for the new restroom is nearing completion and the new structure will be craned into place this week.
- The existing shelter has been demolished. Site preparation and installation of the adult exercise equipment and new shelter should be completed in November.

Parks Accessibility Projects:

- We have signed Construction Agreements for installing accessibility improvements at Pioneer Park restroom, North Park Center, and the Zimmerman Center. Work should be completed before the end of the year.

- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins reported the following:
 - Made the first official placement for January at the Adaptive Performance Center.
 - She has been receiving some great applications recently.
 - Host site monitoring was completed a couple of weeks ago.
 - She submitted the required supplemental report to AmeriCorps recently, some highlights included:
 - VISTAs recruited 94 volunteers who served a combined total of 904 hours, and
 - VISTAs raised \$63,937.
 - The Federal Fiscal Responsibility Act has resulted in nationwide budget cutbacks. The Billings Metro VISTA Project has been cut from 10 VISTAs in July/August 2024 to just 5 VISTAs. Some other projects in our region received even more significant cuts.
- **HOME-ARP Allocation Plan:** Carly said the online application will remain open until November 17. She has not received any completed applications yet, but several organizations are working on their applications. She conducted a group technical assistance session October 18, which many organization representatives attended. After November 17, she will compile the applications and send them to Board members for review. She is hoping to have them to the Board by November 21, two weeks before the December 5 Board meeting. The Board will take action on making recommendations to the City Council at the December 5 meeting. Carly added that she is currently working to establish procedures.

AmeriCorps VISTA Grant Application: Carly reviewed the memo describing the application process. Board member Jim Corson made a motion to authorize submission of an application for AmeriCorps VISTA for FY24-25 and authorize City staff to negotiate and finalize the project when awarded. Board member Joe Stockburger seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

CDBG and HOME Application and Guidebook Review: Brenda shared a PowerPoint slide explaining the application process and timelines, the online application, and took questions from the Board. No suggested changes were put forth from the Board. Brenda will proceed to finalize the materials, make the Task Force notifications, advertise for public comments, and prepare recommendations for the City Council. This may also be discussed with the City Council during an upcoming work session prior to the City Council taking action.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings:

Council member Denise Joy said there is a new Central-Terry Task Force Chair, who formerly resided in Washington state. A new crime “hotspot” has been identified in this task force area. She added that she believes the improvements made at Comanche Park will have a positive impact in the area. She also shared that the Mobilize the MAGIC City group has engaged an indigenous artist to create a placemaking hub art structure that will be installed near North Park. Both of these projects are likely to have positive impacts in the neighborhoods. She thanked the Board for their part in moving these projects forward.

Wyeth Friday said staff is working on a new City Council orientation schedule for the incoming members, and current members. There will be an opportunity for the Board to participate.

Densie Joy said the City Council’s number one priority is public safety. Following the February 2024 leadership meeting, the City Council will be strengthening strategic plans, and developing specific action plans and performance measures. One of the things that may be discussed is coming up with monetary incentives for nonprofits to address.

Erica Doornek said an application has been submitted for a \$50,000 grant for development of a dog park at North Park. Billings is up against other communities for this grant. She will send a link to Board members so they can vote for Billings. She added that the recent Renaissance Fair at North Park raised \$15,000!

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on December 5, 2023. She also invited those interested to participate in an option tour of the Jackson Court project site following the meeting.