



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

March 4, 2025

Board Members Present: Joe Stockburger, Kathleen Candelaria, Erica Doornek, Adam Toland, Hans Abbey, Jim Corson

Board Members Excused: Donny White, Ali Pistora

Board Members Absent: None

City Council Representative Absent: Kendra Shaw

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Carly Collins, Tam Rodier, Jordan Langton, Matt Benowitz, Wyeth Friday

Guests: Patti Webster from HomeFront, Amber Uzelac from HomeFront, Heather McMilin from Homeword via Zoom, Eric Schmidt from High Plains Architects

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the 5th floor Beartooth Conference Room of City Hall, 316 N 26th Street. Board Chair Joe Stockburger called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Announcements:

No announcements were heard.

Public Comment:

No public comments were heard.

Meeting Minutes: Board member Kathleen Candelaria made a motion to approve the February 4, 2025, 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.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Tam said a family closed on their home in early February. FTHB funding has been fully expended for this fiscal year. Tam confirmed the website has been updated to indicate that funding has been fully committed.
- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):** Jordan shared that GL Development submitted their first reimbursement request for the Mitchell Court project. Staff is working through ensuring all the required permits were pulled and inspections passed before processing the payment. Board member Jim Corson asked the amount of the reimbursement request. Jordan confirmed the first reimbursement request is for approximately \$413,000. Jordan also shared that the Environmental Review for the LB Lofts project is nearing completion.

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Tam shared the following:
 - **1709 St. Johns Avenue:** A marketing flyer was distributed to the Billings Association of Realtors, who forwarded them to their entire membership. Copies of the flyers were distributed.
 - **1302 Parkhill Drive:** The Invitation for Bids closed at 2:00 p.m. today; one bid was received from Van Arsdale Construction. A “bid review committee” will convene soon to review the bid prior to a contract being negotiated with the winning bidder. Each line item of the bid will be reviewed carefully.
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Parks Projects:** Tam shared the following:
 - **Spring Creek Park:** A draft proposed plan was created and forwarded to the Park, Recreation & Public Lands staff for review and comments. Upon receipt, staff will start work on the required environmental review. Once completed, park improvement plans will be finalized and routed for review and approvals by the CD Board, the Parks Board, and the City Council. Tam encouraged CD Board members to share any other ideas they may have for the project.
- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly shared that new VISTA orientation has occurred. We have three new VISTAs and one VISTA leader. Carly invited CD Board members to VISTA introductions at the City Council meeting on Monday. Carly and the VISTAs will attend the ServeMontana Symposium next week in Helena. Carly and Matt are working on finalizing the VISTA grant application.
- **HOME-ARP Projects Status:** Carly shared that all qualified populations have been served by subrecipients. HRDC has requested another \$100,000. Carly is visiting HRDC to complete monitoring before allocating additional funds. Carly continues to train subrecipients on program reporting requirements.

Affordable Housing Development – LB Lofts Presentation: Patti, Amber, Heather and Eric attended the meeting to discuss the LB Lofts project and answer questions from CD Board members. Patti shared background of the project, including how the POD units were purchased, transported and stored at the project site. Patti confirmed that 101 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom units will be built. Of these 101 units, seven units will be accessible, as well as 25 ground level units that are adaptable. Heather discussed the State HOME funding and low-income tax credits that have been awarded to the project. Eric discussed the architectural plans for the project, including affordable utilities, preparations for solar panels, CPTED features and upcycling of POD materials. The CPTED features for the project include outdoor lighting, as well as patios and balconies for visibility. Eric shared that POD materials will be upcycled for the project and any unused, undamaged materials will be donated to local organizations. Eric fielded questions regarding what POD materials are usable and what new materials are required. He outlined how the PODs will be stacked, as well as framing and siding materials to be used. Construction is expected to begin this Fall and requires approximately 15 months to complete. Board member Erica Doornek asked if a housing project stacking and combining modular units has been completed before. Patti and Heather confirmed they are aware of similar housing projects around the country and around the world. Patti shared that the Pleasantview Apartments project completed by the Housing Authority of Billings in the 1970s is a similar concept. Board member Erica Doornek questioned how the neighborhood has been involved so far and how the organization intends to continue neighborhood engagement. Patti and Amber shared their involvement in the Heights Task Force meetings, newsletters to the community and radio interviews.

Consolidated Plan – Draft Structure and Findings: Brenda shared that she has completed approximately a third of the Consolidated Plan draft. The draft is due online by March 15, 2025. Brenda has a working session with City Council on March 17, 2025. She is working on adjusting language to align with current administration and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements. Brenda shared that her most prominent

finding is that minorities, elderly and small households are experiencing a higher cost burden in Billings. Additional notable findings include a lack of housing availability and variety, high suicide rates and high domestic violence rates.

Tam shared the results of the Consolidated Plan public survey, which will run until the end of April. We have received 184 responses to date. The top priorities identified so far are improved access to healthcare, home repairs and natural disaster mitigation and K to 12 education and school readiness.

Based on Brenda's findings, and the Consolidated Plan public survey results to date, Brenda suggested prioritizing HOME-ARP funding for subrecipients that assist with supportive services and mental health services, as well as prioritizing VISTAs to assist with education, healthcare and food security. The past Housing Rehabilitation program was discussed and Brenda feels the program is a challenge due to lack of staffing resources and risk to the City. Tam stated that she contacted HRDC to discuss a home repair program with them.

Staff Recommendations for Funding Allocation and Annual Action Plan: Brenda reviewed the FY2025-2026 Proposed Activities with the Board. Brenda will share monetary figures during our April Board meeting. Board member Jim Corson asked if funding LB Lofts will deplete available funding for this year's allocation. Brenda confirmed that funding will be depleted if LB Lofts is approved for funding. Wyeth and Brenda discussed the difference between the Consolidated Plan goals and the FY2025-2026 Proposed Activities. Brenda clarified that we do not have any applicants from vulnerable populations or public facilities currently and the Consolidated Plan is a five-year plan.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings: Patti shared information on a project HomeFront is working on that Community Development may be interested in. HomeFront received state funding for 44 single-family homes that will be ready for occupancy this summer. The homes are 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom with a 2-car garage and no down payment will be required. Patti requested that Tam follow up with her about HUD's current purchase price limits.

Jordan asked about the Neighborhood Task Force meetings that were discussed during February's meeting. Board Chair Joe Stockburger will disseminate the QR code for the Consolidated Plan public survey at the Northside Task Force meeting this week. Board member Erica Doornek said she will be attending the Heights Task Force meeting on March 25, 2025 at 7 p.m. CD staff will accompany her to give a presentation. Wyeth said the Combined Task Force meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2025.

Tam shared that the public meeting regarding the property located at 802 Yellowstone occurred last week. Wyeth attended the meeting and said the meeting went well. He said the ideas shared at the public meeting included housing, park space, or community garden space. Public comments will be collected until the end of March.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Joe Stockburger adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:30 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on April 1, 2025, in the 5th floor Beartooth Conference Room in City Hall, 316 N 26th Street.

Optional Post Meeting Site Visit: CD Staff invited CD Board members to visit the site of the LB Lofts project on Sioux Lane in Billings Heights. Tam shared current photos of the project site with Board members.