

Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board  
October 4, 2011

**Board Members Present:** Jim Hartung, Thomas Grimm, Emily Shaffer, Patt Leikam

**Board Members Excused:** Kamber Kelly, Kathleen Candelaria, Thomas Mahlen, David Goodridge

**Staff Present:** Brenda Beckett, Casey Brown, Lynda Woods, Denise Bohlman, Candi Beaudry

**Welcome / Introduction:** The Community Development Board met at its regular monthly meeting located in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Large Conference Room, Parmly Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings, Montana. Chairperson Jim Hartung called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Announcements:** Brenda Beckett introduced and shared a book entitled, The Fair Housing Five, which will be used during presentations for 3 classroom experiences as a part of the Fair Housing Initiatives. The books were purchased with funds from the FHIP grant. This is the pilot year for this project. The targeted audiences are 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders. This book addresses discrimination issues in various scenarios. A copy has been provided to the Self-Help Law Center and one copy is available for review with the Office of Community Development. There will be an art contest and hopefully some of the artwork received from the contest can be used for April's Fair Housing Month.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Meeting Minutes:** The following correction was made by the chair:

Page 1, Paragraph four under **Review Denial of Application for Minor Home Repair as per Appeals Process:** the first line reads, "David Goodridge made a motion was made . . ." and will be corrected to read, "David Goodridge moved . . ." to make the sentence read correctly.

Approval of the Minutes was tabled until a later date due to a lack of quorum.

**Staff Reports:** Staff reports were reviewed. Lynda reported the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program is 20% committed. Four projects are currently under construction and two new applications were received. A contractors' informational meeting was held on September 28<sup>th</sup> to inform and educate contractors about the housing repair program and recruit Section 3 contractors. In the Minor Home Repair Program, 35% of the funds are committed. Three grants were awarded in September, six projects are under construction and eight homeowners are actively seeking bids. Lynda reported three individuals attended the contractors' informational meeting and there were seven responses to the ad.

All three of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program homes are completed and qualified potential home buyers are being shown the properties. The first home must be sold to a homebuyer with a qualifying income level at 50% AMI and they need to submit a mortgage approval letter. Then they will be able to choose a home that best meets their needs.

The program started with over 40 applicants. Twenty of those updated their income information and the other 20 are no longer interested. Three of those applicants meet the 50% AMI and only one of them needs to purchase one of the three NSP homes or another qualified buyer will need to be recruited. All three homes have been shown to the first potential homeowner who has decided not to purchase at this time. Now the homes will be shown to the next awaiting qualified buyer(s).

AmeriCorps\*VISTA Casey Brown gave an update on her activities. She has been working on the reporting for the 10-year plan to end homelessness. Casey gave a presentation to the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness on September 8<sup>th</sup>, which was well attended. During that presentation she gave highlights of the accomplishments over the past two years (2009-2011) which started a good discussion between the Mayor's Committee members. After the presentation the members were discussing that they want to meet again to discuss goals for the next two years. She met with two of the subcommittee members to discuss marketing strategies for the 10-year plan. The focus will be to market on the internet because it is widely used and more cost effective. Casey will be submitting a proposed newsletter that has information from various agencies around Billings. The newsletter will also contain highlights of the successes of the 10-year plan. Art, poetry and stories from homeless individuals in the area will be added to the newsletter to educate the community and attempt to dispel some of the myths about homelessness.

Casey gave an update on Project Homeless Connect, stating Joe Chalupa from the HUB is in the planning stages for their January movement as a part of the nationwide point-in-time survey. In an effort to build capacity with our community partners, staffing has been provided for five Project Homeless Connect events over the past five years. This year, staff will not be assigned due to budget limitations.

Brenda discussed the cumulative outcomes and impact the VISTA program has had in the Billings area. The total project impact, including cash grants and member volunteer time is about \$1 million/per year since the program's inception three years ago.

Brenda Beckett announced Billings will receive an additional 4 VISTAs in January. Brenda shared ideas for placement of those VISTAs. One placement would be with Housing Authority of Billings, Community Gardens, in particular, the new Whitetail Run development, Community Garden. This site will be the master prototype. The initiative would be developing a master plan; developing design plans while working with the professionals; and volunteer recruitment and turnover plans. This will be used as a demonstration site to develop and organize a system that can be duplicated. This assignment is expected to take the entire year for the VISTA who is assigned to it. The second part of this description is to do a feasibility study for the approximate 400 units at Whitetail Run. Some of the units have very limited space for gardening, while others have more space. There is a 3-year plan of growth in the community gardens for those residents which will consist of looking at the public lands, developing a nutrition and education program, including preparation and storage of fresh fruits and vegetables. Due to the size of the project it may be that two VISTAs will be assigned to this project. Placement of the other VISTAs is being considered.

Candi Beaudry reported that work is being done on the master plan for South Billings Urban Renewal District. The consultants held a meeting with service providers to identify programs needed to help community members. The needs identified at the community meetings have been in jobs-training, community gardens, community centers and multi-generational centers, and infrastructure. It is an underserved area. A goal is to partner with service providers in the area to allow for more strategic targeting of the needs of the community and to make the funding go further. This master plan is unique in that most master plans usually consist of bricks and mortar activities, and this master plan is really looking at the social needs of the community. The neighborhood is very receptive.

**Comprehensive Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) Review:** Brenda gave a slide presentation / overview of the completed CAPER, for activities July 1 through June 30, 2011, to review the financials and strategies with the Board. A public hearing was held on September 26<sup>th</sup> at the City Council Meeting.

Brenda stated that the Community Development Division had drawn \$2.6 million over the past year, which includes VISTA, neighborhood stabilization, and HUD EDI grants. The leveraging ratio is 1:6. So for every dollar of Community Block Grant or HOME funding utilized, \$6 has been leveraged in our community with other federal or private resources. Large leveraging portions came from the Whitetail Run development and the Yellowstone Health Partnership for prescription drug assistance for indigent individuals. That program brings in approximately \$3 million a year in leveraged funds.

**Reported accomplishments:** 45 units in housing repair; energy impact and accessibility aid on units – this measurement has just begun; 40 households in affordable housing and Kings Green Phase III.

**American Indian homeownership** has increased to 35%, which is the highest Billings has ever had. In the 1990's our baseline was 22%. This is compared to 62%-65% of the white population. HUD has identified that as an issue. The Billings Partners for American Indian Home Ownership give meetings and trainings on credit issues and application process to Indian Health Services, and the BIA to increase interest in home ownership and it appears they are making a difference.

**Kings Green Phase IV** has begun and it is anticipated the infrastructure will be completed for Phase IV in the Spring 2012.

Brenda spoke about how funding used to be limited to CDBG and HOME, but as time has gone by our funding has become quite diversified. Through diversification the City is able to meet a broader variety of needs while bringing in some income.

Brenda explained the current political climate is not looking positive as the Senate and Congress are looking to cut funding.

Brenda discussed how other communities only have loan programs which helped sustain funding because of the recapturing of funds to be redistributed again. The Board may want to consider only loans in the future. The staff's recommendation would be that since 15% of CDBG funding can be used for public and social services, it may be better to dedicate that money to loans that would repay the City versus grants wherein the money is granted to organizations.

**Allocation Procedures:** Brenda Beckett explained the process and procedures for allocating funding and provided a flowchart. Chairman Jim Hartung spoke to the Board about attending site visits of applicants. This gives the Board an opportunity to learn more about the applicant's organization and their plans for use of funding.

**Neighborhood Concerns:** None.

**Tentative Schedule:** Next Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.