



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

November 12, 2024

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Erica Doornek, Ali Pistora, James Allen, Donald White, Hans Abbey

Board Members Excused: Kathleen Candelaria

Board Members Absent: None

City Council Representative: None

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

Guests: Gene Leuwer, GL Development

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the Large Conference Room of the Billings Public Library, 510 N Broadway. Board Chair Rebecca Noell called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Announcements:

Brenda Beckett said there were two internal applications for the vacant CD program coordinator position. Staff interviewed both candidates and made an offer to one. Unfortunately, the individual declined the position. An external position posting will be advertised until the position has been filled. So far, about 10 applications have been received. Staff will review and schedule 3-5 interviews as soon as possible. One or more CD Board members are encouraged to participate in the interviews. Let her know if you are interested.

Brenda said Rebecca Noell will retire from the CD Board next month, so there will be another Board opening. The Mayor reached out to former CD Board member, Jim Corson, and he is planning to submit his application for appointment to the CD Board soon.

Public Comment: None

Meeting Minutes: Board member James Allen made a motion to approve the October 1, 2024, minutes as written and distributed. Board member Ali Pistora seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Skyview Residences – Low-Income Housing Tax Credits Update:

Gene Leuwer from GL Development provided an update following the October 22, 2024, Montana Board of Housing (MBOH) meeting at which time decisions were made on the six Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) applications received this cycle. MBOH had enough funds to fully fund five projects and five projects received full awards. MBOH invited Skyview Residences to update their LIHTC application and apply for a lower amount. Approval would be subject to underwriting.

Prior to the next round, MBOH can commit any future credits the Board receives to the Skyview Residences Project. MBOH may receive unused nationwide credits to make up the \$4.9 million total originally requested. He noted that the

Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) staff scored the Skyview Residences' State HOME proposal high. The final decision will be made by the MDOC Director and the Governor within the next month or so.

Gene said they had originally hoped to construct 30 units; however, they can still do 26 units with the lower LIHTC amount. They will double the number of 3-bedroom units and rents will be a little higher than previously contemplated. The market study shows sufficient demand for 3-bedroom units. They realize, however, that more 3-bedroom units will likely mean more children, so they are preparing to add child-focused features.

The CD Board had no concerns about these changes and directed staff to proceed with the process to move the recommendation forward to the City Council as soon as the environmental assessment has been completed.

Brenda reviewed the City's HOME funding situation. Based on anticipated construction dates, estimated annual awards, and projected program income, she said it is possible to fund BOTH the Skyview Residences and LB Lofts affordable housing projects.

Wyeth Friday noted the City's lobbyist, Thorne Run, speculated during a conference call this morning about the new administration. Ben Carson may be the new Secretary of HUD. He is unsure of what this would mean for future allocations to entitlement communities.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Tam Rodier reported the anticipated October closing did not happen; the applicant purchased the property without the City's assistance. Three applications have been received since Dina left. There may be enough funding for one more loan this fiscal year. However, because we are short staffed, we are considering putting the program on hold until a new program coordinator is on board.
- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):**

Skyview Residences: Tam said she is currently working on the required Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project; it will probably take four to six weeks to complete. Once the EA has been approved, CD staff will schedule a presentation before the City Council, at which time they will be asked to approve the CD Board's recommendation of approval.

LB Lofts: Tam stated an application from HomeFront and Homeword for their "LB Lofts Project" was received October 21. The application describes a "unique project that includes both a new construction project that recycles bed and bath P.O.D.S. (Premanufactured Overhauled Dwelling Solutions), creating new homes in the Billings Heights on HomeFront's campus on Sioux Lane..." Staff will review the application materials and will bring it forward to the CD Board in the coming months.

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

1709 St. Johns Avenue: Construction is substantially complete. An Open House has been scheduled for Thursday, November 14, 2024, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. City Administration, City Council members, CD Board members, and neighbors have been invited. A neighborhood survey will be conducted to learn about the impacts to the neighborhood. Staff will report survey results to the CD Board at the next meeting.

1302 Parkhill Drive: Asbestos abatement quotes were received by the November 8 deadline. Two firms submitted quotes. Staff will evaluate and facilitate an Abatement Agreement with one of the firms soon. The next step will be to finalize the Invitation for Bids document, advertise it, and distribute copies to contractors.

Tam invited those interested in touring the property after today's meeting.

- **CDBG / CDBG-CV Projects:**

North Park: Tam said the contractor is still working to complete final punch list items.

- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins reported the following:

- She has started interviewing for February start dates. There are four new positions:
 - City Parks Recreation & Public Lands – *Increasing Volunteer Opportunities for Youth*
 - Police Department Domestic Violence Investigation Program – *Accessing Community Interventions to Eliminate Family Violence*
 - Alternatives, Inc. – *Housing for Everyone to Support Crime Reduction*
 - Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains – *Coordinating Housing Support for Refugee Resettlement*
- A Request for Proposal advertisement for July / August VISTA Host Site opportunities will run soon.
- Carly will be seeking City Council approval to authorize the submission of an AmeriCorps Support Grant to continue the VISTA Program for FY25-26.
- John Lira, a presidential appointee, visited the Billings Adaptive Performance Center (APC), a VISTA host site, in August. He was very impressed. AmeriCorps has offered support to BMVP in order for APC to start expanding their programming nationwide.
- VISTA Matthew Benowitz, who is serving with APC, was asked to write an AmeriCorps blog post for Veterans Day and it was published on the national stage.
- VISTA Matthew Benowitz will also be interviewing for the VISTA leader position.

HOME-ARP Projects Status: Carly stated United Way / Continuum of Care declined to sign their Agreement too. RiverStone Health has also expressed some concerns, but they have not specifically said they were not going to sign. So far, three organizations have signed agreements and they are moving forward (HRDC, Alternatives, NADC).

AmeriCorps Grant Application: Carly said the FY25-26 memo details include that the priorities remain the same, it is a “support grant,” and VISTA Host Sites are contributing approximately \$12,000 per year to support VISTA member development. The application will be developed and submitted in the Spring.

Board member Erica Doornek made a motion to authorize submission of an application for AmeriCorps VISTA for FY25-26 and authorize City staff to negotiate and finalize the project, if awarded. Board member Ali Pistora seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved.

CDBG and HOME Application and Guidebook: Brenda reviewed the timeline and discussed each waypoint:

- She is hoping to have the draft application and guidebook to CD Board by November 19. Online application and guidebook available December 6; applications accepted through January 17 for:
 - Housing Development
 - Food Security
 - Housing & Jobs Projects
 - Other items mentioned by City Council?

- Publications, surveys, outreach, task force presentations, etc. will occur between February and mid-April. CD Board members will review applications received prior to site visit assignments being scheduled.
- Draft findings, recommend strategies and priorities, and DRAFT Consolidated Plan available by March 28.
- City Council public hearing February 24, City Council Work Session March 17, final public hearing and City Council action April 28. Consolidated Plan due to HUD by May 15.

Brenda said she would review the timeline information with the City Council during their November 18 Work Session. At that time, she will also inquire if all of the City Council's strategies have been included or if they have any additional edits.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings:

Wyeth said the Westend Neighborhood Plan meeting is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. November 13 at Ben Steele Middle School.

Erica shared that the Veterans Memorial at Dehler Park was dedicated yesterday; it will include an interactive display.

Erica also noted that the North Park Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on December 4. There will be hot chocolate and snacks served.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:50 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on December 3, 2024, in the 2nd floor large conference room at the Billings Public Library.