

2017 Community Needs Assessment (CNA)

I. Welcome and Introductions

See sign-in sheet for listing of participants

II. The Purpose of the Community Needs Assessment

- The CNA is a process that reviews the needs of the community as a whole
- It is a required step ahead of applying for funding from the Department of Commerce (see Grant Program Overview handout), and serves as the first of two required hearings on community needs as part of a future application
- The CNA affords an opportunity to discuss the activities the community may utilize to meet any identified development needs
- Areas of need include:
 - Capital improvements
 - Housing
 - Economic development
 - Urban renewal
- The outcome of this effort will be a list of potential projects or actions that will be pursued to improve our community
 - Will be presented to City and County Commissions for consideration

III. Grant Program Overview

See handout provided by Laura Erikson discussing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and the Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP).

The County is sponsoring West Mont for a planning grant, and plans to sponsor them for CDBG and HOME construction grants for the next grant cycle.

City has an open planning grant for downtown zoning and an open HOME grant for Guardian Apartments.

CDBG-ED grant → MBAC, as the region's Economic Development Agency, is able to get up to \$25k-400k for a CDBG-ED application as a loan for businesses. MBAC operates a revolving loan fund. Sponsorship does come from the City or County, and funding has to go toward projects that spur job creation. MBAC also has access to Big Sky Trust Fund options, where there is proof of job creation in the area (not with City/County sponsorship, however). Projects that improve livability and, by extension, promote workforce migration into the region are also up for consideration. Cities and counties can also access these funds.

IV. Public Comments

- 1) *Amy Hall (Montana Legal Services)* → Advocated for more housing for low-income renters. There's no particular project MLS is focusing on, but, rather, they promote all housing opportunities along with supportive services.
- 2) *Dr. Gary Mihelish (NAMI Helena)* → Advocated for more housing for those with low-incomes and/or mental illness. Gary expressed real interest in transitional housing for those being released from prison or mental health hospital. For those leaving prison, transition is compounded by a lack of housing opportunities, which leads to prisoner retention and perpetuates a vicious cycle of recidivism. For those with mental illness, recidivism rate is lower (50%), but the state mental health hospital is massively overtaxed with their current site. Discharging these individuals without an appropriate transition plan is a recipe for recidivism and failure.
- 3) *Julie DalSoglio (US EPA)* → Discussed how the EPA designated the Queen's City Crossing Area as an area to focus efforts on economic development and growth in 2015. As of now, the project continues.
- 4) *Peggy Stringer (Helena Regional Sports Assn.)* → HRSA wishes to build a sports center for Helena with an indoor pool. The city currently lacks a pool that can accommodate competitions. The city also doesn't have enough gym space for indoor winter sports; court space is limited. HRSA did procure a grant from MDOC for a feasibility study, and are currently on Phase III of their project (economic impact analysis).
- 5) *Jim Fitzgerald (Intermountain)* → Intermountain is a youth homes adolescent shelter that caters to children in need who are battling various issues simultaneously. Around 1,000 kids are enrolled in their services on a daily basis, and some are referred on to other local and state agencies.

- 6) *Carrie Krepps (Florence Crittenton)* → Wishes to look, as a community, on how services are coordinated. Sees a need for living spaces that “make sense” for families and that enable them to be strong community members.
- 7) *Dennis McCahon (Resident)* → Walkability is needed to improve access and connectivity in town. Walkable townscapes are desirable and improve quality of life. Walkability is what ties a town together, and planning efforts are needed to address this.
- 8) *Erik Amundson (HUD)* → Wants to see the City continue to pursue sustainability and economic resiliency, looking at the combined effects of housing, transportation, etc. in improving the community at large.
- 9) *Brian Obert (Montana Business Assistance Connection)* → Wants to see more affordable housing development, but ensure that we do not lose focus on the need for “missing-middle” housing in the Helena area (i.e., workforce housing).
- 10) *David Smith (YMCA)* → The YMCA recently received BSTF Planning Grant funds to explore childcare provision feasibility. One hundred seventy-five childcare facilities closed across the state last year, and 800 babies are born in the Helena area annually, creating a gap in childcare opportunities for working families. The hope is that establishing a childcare program at the YMCA will serve as an economic development driver, as a job creator, and in supporting jobs in the higher-income range for workers who otherwise struggle getting back to work after the birth of a child due to lack of access to childcare. Creating a childcare program will also be a way to retrofit the YMCA facility (including ADA improvements).
- 11) *Eric Seidensticker (MBAC)* → Noted the range of collaborative work MBAC does with the City and County on housing and workforce needs. Wants to provide matching dollars for a technical assistance grant. Also wishes to advocate for HIA’s project.
- 12) *Lori Ladas (Rocky Mountain Development Council)* → Noted that available space and public facilities are areas of concern when it comes to providing Meals on Wheels and the local Senior Meal program. RMDC is facing the issue of how to continue providing meals as demands rise with a kitchen facility that is maxed out. RMDC staff want to learn about grants to potentially expand their space in order to serve more of the low-income population.
- 13) *Steve Garrison (Joining Community Forces)* → JCF is a coordination group to support needy veterans (housing, jobs, family and youth programs). JCF works with partner organizations in the community to try to fulfill the needs to those seeking their assistance.
- 14) *Brian Coplin (HELP Helena)* → Discussed a data warehouse that will serve as a community

system and help establish connections and collaborations.

- 15) *Claire Smillie (Good Samaritan Ministries)* → Echoed the affordable housing concerns in the community, as stated by other participants. Matching clients with housing is a challenge, and staff routinely sees long waiting lists. Capital Transit Advisory Committee is an area of interest and concern. Weekend and evening travel services are imperative for those who rely on the service. Good Samaritans also assists with trying to help find childcare for clients, but agrees this is difficult at times. The non-profit sees a need for a quality shelter, as it is becoming harder to refer clients to a place that may be hazardous.
- 16) *Liz Mogstad (RMDC)* → Emphasized the 47% growth in the local elderly population in years to come, particularly with having 200 waitlist clients for elderly housing of late. New unit demand for seniors is 215 units. RMDC is looking to apply for tax credits to build new apartments, hopefully near the River Rock community for operational continuity. If invited to apply, RMDC would also need to apply for a HOME grant, but could do so as a CHDO. CDBG money recycled off of old projects can be leveraged toward future projects as well. If RMDC is not funded, they will forge on with efforts nonetheless.
- 17) *Michael O'Neil (Helena Housing Authority)* → HHA provides over 360 housing units in the community. Michael agreed with all the comments presented regarding housing, accessibility, transit, etc. HHA has a great need to update/replace aging housing units. The Stuart Homes Master Plan has a hefty price tag, and Michael stressed the need to address SH's problems in phases because of the cost prohibitive nature of the work required. He also stressed the importance of ensuring affordability for those within lowest income levels in the community. Thirty-percent of new admissions to HHA's programs are homeless upon entry. The trick isn't replacing the housing. Rather, it is continuing to serve and be receptive to those most in need. HHA supports expansion of affordable housing in all areas, but especially modern housing that is accessible, energy efficient, and operationally sustainable. Half of Stuart Homes dates to 1939, and the site especially needs its accessibility issues addressed. The SH campus neighborhood is in the heart of Helena, and its rehabilitation will be vital to revitalization in its neighborhood. Other existing units in the community need support as well, and there generally needs to be a community response to the local bed bug remediation situation.
- 18) *Arlene Flynn (West Mont)* → The County sponsored West Mont for a CDBG planning grant to draft a PAR for housing for people with disabilities. The home that had been built is not fully ADA accessible, and the PAR will assess the feasibility to renovating or rebuilding the facility, which is located close to York Road and a culvert ditch system area.
- 19) *Tressie White (Helena Indian Alliance)* → HIA/the Leo Pocha Center are fixtures in the community. The Leo Pocha Center (the former armory building on Euclid Avenue) was

partially remodeled with a loan, but isn't fully suited for the organization's needs. HIA staff moved in there in 2013. Mental health and clinical care are greatly needed in the community, and HIA staff have outgrown the facility when it comes to addressing those needs. The community center serves mostly low-income members in the community, and not only those who are Native clientele (roughly 60% Native, 40% non-Native). With that said, HIA feels their space has incredible potential. Have been working with MBAC to complete a PAR and master plan to expand services, create jobs, and provide additional services to community members. They are seeking CDBG funding to help meet their needs.

- 20) *Michelle Cuddy (Center for Mental Health)* → CMH is looking to create an additional living space for the mentally ill population. Many clients come from the state hospital in Warm Springs. All told, CHM serves over 100 clients, and they recognize the need for more housing. They propose establishing an 8-bed facility on Jackson Street, and are currently completing visioning with SMA and Stahly Engineering toward this goal. The proposed property for this housing is close to the CMH facility. This home would help with recovery goals for those in need.
- 21) *Robie Culver (Stahly Engineering)* → Wished to express appreciation for all that the City and County do to serve the community's many needs.
- 22) *Val Mattfeldt (Salvation Army)* → SA operates a men's transitional living facility, 4 family units, and a women's unit. SA sees great need to address the issues presented during the hearing discussions. They now have some transportation to their facility in town, which helps enormously. In seeing the needs within SA programs, housing is the biggest area of concern. As such, they are instituting a program to help financially support those in their homes (90 program—like transitional). SA establishes goals for families to become more self-sufficient and engender stability in their lives. This program is still in development. Many don't wish to commit to the program because it does tell participants what to do/not do.
- 23) *Ashley Post (Florence Crittenton)* → FC is an independent housing program. They provide education to help keep housing, rental subsidies (for up to 24 months), and a housing stability program plan to identify family barriers, among other programs. FC operates as a housing-first program; therefore, they don't turn away those with substance abuse issues. They would like to see more transit in conjunction with other supportive services in the community to serve their clients and others.
- 24) *Curt Chisholm (Youth Homes)* → Youth Homes currently operates 3 programs in Helena. RMDC "incubated" two group homes that were going under, and they have largely turned a full corner. They then put out a request for qualifications for behavioral health

specialist groups that could keep the homes alive, and Youth Homes (Missoula-based) stepped in. The Margaret Stewart facility (owned by the County) is aging, and is not suitable to meet the needs of residents. Youth Homes now requires assistance with CDBG Planning Grant program. Remodeling may be cost-prohibitive, and rebuilding the shelter facility may be necessary. They are trying to establish a crisis support system in collaboration with St. Peter's Medical Center and others. The success of Youth Homes' programs hinges on support from other programs in the community.

- 25) *Pat Paradis (Youth Homes)* → Restated the need for a quality facility that would afford adequate supervision of youth in need.
- 26) *David Torgerson (Resident)* → Presently a client at the Center for Mental Health. David shared his personal story, detailing how he has been waiting for 6 months to gain entry to ME Anderson for housing (an HHA facility). He is also a SNAP recipient, and is currently living in Guardian Apartments. He is looking to move to get rid of bed bugs.
- 27) *Laura Erikson* requested Michael O'Neil/HHA lead a discussion on how to help remediate the bed bug situation for other housing providers in the community, which he said he would be happy to do.
- 28) *Sharon Haugen* noted that minutes of this meeting will be presented to the City Commission. Also noted that the community will embark on a housing needs assessment in the future, and requested those interested in the process provide contact information.
- 29) Discussion occurred on other project proposals that were submitted in the form of written and oral comments from: *the Center for Mental Health, Robert Rasmussen*, and *an undisclosed member of the public*.
 - a) Robert Rasmussen's letter pertained to trail connectivity and wayfinding as a means to promote healthy living. He was unable to attend the hearing.
 - b) A phone call was received to state that a member of the public does not support the programs under discussion

V. Close