

2019 Community Needs Assessment (CNA)

I. Welcome and Introductions

See sign-in sheet for listing of participants

Attendees: Habitat for Humanity, Good Samaritan's, Sleeping Giant Citizen's Council, Helena Housing Authority, Center for Mental Health, City Planning Staff, County Planning Staff, and residents.

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 staff discussing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), the Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP), Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (HRTC).

The county is sponsoring West Mont for a CDBG Housing and HOME grants to renovate the group home at the Farm & Gardens property, which is anticipated to reach completion in August 2019. The county has openings for CDBG Planning and Public Facilities grant sponsorships.

The city is currently sponsoring the Center for Mental Health with a Public & Community Facility CDBG grant (through the last quarter of 2020) and is sponsoring Guardian Apartments for a HOME grant (through the end of September). The city plans to apply for a CDBG Small-Scale Single-Family Housing Rehabilitation Grant this year, and will begin work with Helena Housing Authority to write a CDBG Planning grant application for a comprehensive capital plan for its 366 scattered housing unit sites. The City also has a TSEP grant award for the Westside infrastructure installation project that will be ongoing for the foreseeable future.

IV. Public Comments

- 1) *Sharon Haugen (City of Helena Community Development Director)* → Clarified that City or County must sponsor CDBGs, but CHDOs (RMDC) can self-sponsor for HOME funds. Sharon also explained the CDBG-ED program that MBAC typically supports out of the revolving loan fund (the city hasn't necessarily used such grant funds since working on the Great Northern Town Center).
- 2) *Jacob Kuntz (Habitat for Humanity)* → Jacob has been talking to East Helena about surplus property directly adjacent to an existing park to use for affordable housing. The infrastructure requirements to make it buildable are substantial. There may be a chance for HH to tap into some grant funding for this purpose. He was wondering about using the Large-scale Multi-family Housing Development CDBG grant. Robie Culver of Stahly Engineering clarified that it is difficult to get the funding toward infrastructure for such a project and further noted that deed restrictions may be needed. Due to the property's location, HH would need to go through the city of East Helena to apply for funding. HH may also consider establishing a Community Land Trust to make the land perpetually affordable, but the infrastructure costs might preclude this from penciling out. Robie further clarified that TSEP funding might be utilized if you're extending infrastructure that would further the tax base. HH is seeing a huge need for repair work on homes, especially for seniors who are having accessibility issues with their property and may be forced into assisted living against their desires. HH is hoping to access 504 funds through USDA-RD to assist with these efforts in the Valley. HH works extensively with RMDC and MILP on repair and weatherization programs. HH will start construction on 6 homes in the spring. HH also partners with CTI on Youth Build training and projects.
- 3) *Theresa Ortega (Good Samaritan's)* → Good Sam's was going to put in for CDBG

Public Facilities grant this year through the county, but are going to wait until next year due to a number of issues. Good Sam's occupies 4,400 sf of a 50-year old building. Good Sam's is an operation open for everyone, and are a last option for a lot of people. However, if they're roof does not stay up, they will have nowhere for people to go. Good Sam's has limited to no heat for customers and employees and the roof is over 50 years old. The facility is mostly filled by the thrift store, and is desperate need of a new roof. The assistance ministry (rental assistance for those most in need, medical care, transportation, treatment, and a range of other needs) serves those throughout the community, and Good Sam's collaborates with a huge array of other service providers. Staff are key in assisting with the area's Coordinated Entry System. Good Sam's often has walk-ins come into the store seeking warmth and guidance. The roof's instability is exacerbating a range of issues, including a lack of heat in the back of the property. The roof is flat and ponds heavily, and the preliminary architectural evaluation on it was completed a number of years ago. The estimated cost is in the \$650,000 range. As soon as replacing the malfunctioning heaters is complete, the organization will be working on fundraising efforts for the 25% match component for a Community Facility CDBG grant.

- 4) *Robie Culver (Stahly Engineering)* → Robie came in to support Theresa and Good Sam's efforts.
- 5) *Bruce Day (Helena Food Share)* → The need for food assistance in the community is very high, with a level of 14% food insecurity in the county (per the county's community health survey). In 2018, Food Share provided food assistance to almost 8,800 individuals. Ninety percent of those served are below 50% of AMI (below \$38,000 income). About 51% of those individuals reside in the city limits. Food Share is now in a position, with their continuing need, where they are over capacity at the 1616 Lewis Street property. The organization is serving over 2.5 times the individuals than in 2,000, touching over 77,000 people a year (which is a 7.5% increase since starting to use the building in 2000). HFS tends to have 115 people shop in the pantry in the 3 hours it is open on weekdays. HFS hopes to have an expanded facility to operate out of by the spring of 2021 (no firm timelines). HFS is proposing to build a new community food resource center, inclusive of a food bank but also with other resources like a community kitchen and resource center to process the food that is available to the organization (which would also help with food waste). The education center would help provide cooking demonstrations and lessons that are otherwise difficult to provide in the current space. HFS is looking for retail, office, and warehouse space in one facility that would be somewhere around 14,000-16,000 sf.
- 6) *Jennifer Preble (Center for Mental Health)* → CMH is a city-sponsored CDBG awardee on the transitional living facility for young men in the community. Jennifer wants to lend her voice to the issues that have been stated in the hearing as CMH's work

intersects with every organization present at the CAN hearing (and beyond).

- 7) *Brian Coplin (Community Advocate, Resident)* → Brian has been a recipient of a lot of the services spoken about in the community, and helps others navigate them.
- 8) *Michael O'Neil (Helena Housing Authority)* → Michael asked staff to add to the sheet the CDBG Economic Development grant for job creation, which is typically now a grant that Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) sponsors in the community. Per Michael, housing is fundamental—without it, basic needs in the community cannot be met. He noted that there is a need for a huge range of housing types and opportunities, and we must always consider accessibility needs for housing in the community which will only continue to become greater. Working toward ensuring stability in all housing is vital. Because of the price of single family housing, it has become increasingly challenging to house people in the community. It is extremely difficult to find affordable, safe housing in Helena. Forty-three percent of the people served by HHA are children or disabled. HHA provides preferences in their waiting list to target those with the greatest need in the community. Thirty percent coming in are homeless when they enter HHA housing. We need to be able to link together services with the affordable housing model and figure out how to do so better. HHA has been serving the community for over 80 years, and over 60% of the housing is over 50 years old. HHA see that single-family working households are their primary recipients, and they currently provide safe, decent housing to 1,900 people in the community. Properties are in need of major renovation and redevelopment in order to be able to serve for another 80 years and beyond. HHA would like to look at the CDBG program to create a preliminary architectural report and other opportunities. HHA wants to increase energy efficiency and accessibility within properties. Providing affordable housing allows people to remain in the community, which is fundamentally critical for vitality. Expanding housing opportunities, especially for the seniors, elderly, and the disabled, is desperately needed. We are at a crisis point in addressing those needs as we are on the verge of greying further as a community.
- 9) *Jaymie Sheldahl (Rocky Mountain Development Council Head Start)* → Head Start serves the extremely low-income residents in Helena, and Jaymie came to listen about what efforts there are currently in town, particularly around housing. There are currently 236 children in the program, aged 3 to 5 years old.
- 10) *Maria/Mike Murphy* → Mike has been a citizen of Helena his entire life, and wanted to come in and learn of activities and needs that exist in the community. Making sure our youth are able to grow and thrive and not fall into vices has always been important to Mike, be it through housing stability, food, or other services. Mike noted how difficult it is to afford housing in the community. Maria works with RMDC to help elderly people find resources in the community, and help them in applying for assistance programs or wading

through Medicare. Maria often sees low-income people struggling, but also sees middle-income people grappling with the same issues as well. At about \$18,000-19,000 a year, access to many quality government programs drops off, causing difficulty for those between the very-low to low-income brackets.

- 11) *McKenna Sellers/Joel Harris (Sleeping Giant Citizen Council)* → SGCC is a membership-based group, and it's the local arm of Northern Plains Resources Council. Their focus is on training individuals on how to be involved in the democratic process. They are here to listen and learn about what opportunities there may be. There are a few projects they are considering that may be applicable for grant funding, including addressing light pollution in the city. SG wants to be part of the process in transforming city lighting to LED through NorthWestern energy. LED lighting can affect sleep patterns more than traditional lighting, and can even affect sight. SGCC wants to ensure new lights are installed properly, ensure that we have the proper density of lighting, and consider removing lighting fixtures that are not needed to lessen light pollution. Funding for an engineering report could help in assessing the need for density in these areas, which could assess costs involved, too, with existing and proposed lighting. SGCC also works on the Helena Sun Run to raise funding for solar systems on a publicly-owned buildings in the community (the library was the first project). Michael O'Neil noted that HHA would be interested in learning more about energy saving opportunities and education for residents.

V. Close (7:15PM)

Written comments submitted by the following organizations, and available as an appendix to these CNA meeting minutes:

1. Queen City Estates → for rehabilitation of their housing facility
2. Helena Habitat for Humanity → for the relocation and expansion of the ReStore facility and introduction of new community services on-site