

2022 City of Helena & Lewis and Clark County Community Needs Assessment Hearing

MARCH 3, 2022, 5:30 PM VIA ZOOM

- Call meeting to order – 5:30PM
 - Welcome and introductions (*see attached Sign-In sheet of participants*)
 - Discussion Topics: (*see accompanying PowerPoint presentation for further details*)
 - Purpose of the Community Needs Assessment
 - Grant program overview
 - Public Comment
1. **JACOB KUNTZ (HABITAT FOR HUMANITY)**: Continuing to build housing in the Helena area, both in the city limits and outside. Expecting to work on an additional 10 units in the Helena area this year. H4H will launch a repair program in 2022. They will be looking to partner with the City’s Home Renewal Program and RD-504 funding will help cover repairs on homes outside city limits. Currently working on a new ReStore plan, and recently completed a PAR. H4H owns property in East Helena. In 2023, planning on breaking ground on a new ReStore plus administrative offices and YouthBuild space. Currently looking to acquire about 115 acres of land for mixed income development with around 250 homes. Market rate and land trust loans 80—120 AMI. ORLC – 30 units in land trust.
 2. **JOHN DRISCOLL**: Begins by quoting New York Times articles titled “The Next Affordable City is already too expensive”. Interested in helping to create limited-equity housing cooperatives on land leased by the City or converted to a community land trust. John voiced support for the City leasing land for a term of 99 years at a rate of one dollar. Outlined his issues with open spaces in town that could be used for housing. He is planning to reinstate a non-profit (The Steward) to assist with housing related projects in the City.
 3. **BETH MURPHY (HELENA RESIDENT)**: Beth is interested in utilizing ADU’s to provide affordable housing. She wants to know how the City/County could support her and others to do that? Ellie clarified that ‘ADU’ is not a definition the City uses, and that people are welcome to build another unit on their property as long as it complies with minimum lot coverage requirements. She connected her to Jacob Kuntz to talk about potential collaborations.
 4. **JEN GURSKY (YWCA OF HELENA)**: The Y received a CARES Act grant for exterior renovation of their building downtown. The granted amount falls short of covering rehabilitation activities to the basement that would provide additional needed space. The hinderance in serving more clients is the lack of a stepping-stone from their programming to independent living. The Y is currently looking for space to provide more housing options for their clients. They are also active in the Our Redeemer’s Lutheran Church project, which will serve the entire continuum of housing needs from emergency/transitional

housing to affordable home ownership. They are looking at YWCA programming as a catalyst for independence with housing being a key component of that. The YWCA will be doing a ribbon-cutting on March 22 for a trauma informed therapeutic day care center that will provide childcare options to low-income families as well as job opportunities (at least 7) for the community.

5. **EMILY McVEY (UNITED WAY)**: FUSE Project Update – 1st year spent collecting data from community programs and services. St. Peter’s Hospital is leading the project now and has identified people who are using emergency services to cover basic needs. Typically, FUSE people are housing insecure. So far, 100 people have been identified and looking to narrow it down to 50 people who will move forward with the case management aspect of the program. Case conferencing with FUSE clients will focus on finding or keeping secure housing alongside supportive services to address other needs. Providing housing and supportive services will save a huge amount of resources which can be spread out amongst others in the community with similar needs.
6. **EMILY McVEY (FOR GOOD SAMARITAN MINISTRIES)**: Currently working on a plan to purchase the Knight’s Rest Motel with the intent to provide transitional housing. Currently, the group is working on a Conditional Use Permit application for the City Zoning Commission. The building can house 12-13 individuals or families. The building does need some work, including ADA upgrades. Once it’s operational, the program would have an end-date for participants and the goal would be to transition clients to affordable, permanent housing. In response to Kathy Macefield’s comments on transitional housing for young people aging out foster care, Emily noted that a group is forming to discuss this issue.
7. **BRUCE DAY (HELENA FOOD SHARE)**: Helena Food Share provides a variety of food assistance programs to a large number of people in the greater Helena area. There are several locations to pick up food, including the main pantry, an East Helena location, and the mobile pantry. Other programs include Kid Packs, Senior Commodities (partner with Rocky), and Emergency Snack Packs. The facility is no longer adequate to serve the needs of the community. They are in the planning process for a new building and recently completed a PAR. Helena Food Share has acquired property and is beginning to plan for the new facility. 99% of customers are low-moderate income. Currently have approximately 50% of the funding stack needed for the new facility. Part of that stack would hopefully include a CDBG Public Facilities grant. The construction phase is planned to begin in 2023. The project is on track to be completed in a couple years.
8. **MICHAEL O’NEIL (HELENA HOUSING AUTHORITY)**: HHA helps 1,800 individuals obtain affordable housing through the use of 266 units scattered throughout the City. Other HHA programs include: Housing Choice Vouchers, Permanent Supportive Housing program, Local agent for State Vouchers. The affordable housing issue has turned into a crisis. Primary needs for the HHA are the issue of maintaining aging buildings. The average age of a unit is 64. Planning to address maintenance issues through the process of repositioning in the next 18 months. Improvements to accessibility and energy conservation will be part of the renovations. Also, looking to add housing units to existing property where possible. More housing, especially rental housing (for voucher

use) is needed. Project-based vouchers could be applied to new developments, potentially making the development of new housing more affordable. One of the future initiatives will be to provide housing options for FUSE clients. HHA is the only Authority in the State to provide preference for people who are homeless. Approximately one third of people entering HHA are homeless just prior. During COVID, that number jumped to 47%. Michael is supportive of addressing accessibility issues and also mentioned the need in the community for public transportation. Michael also commented on vouchers for foster youth.

9. **KEN BERRY (ACCESSIBLE SPACE)**: Currently in the process of completing two PARs for a wheelchair accessible apartment building and a senior living building in Helena. They will be looking to apply for HOME funds Housing Trust Funds. The wheelchair accessible building will need a new roof and the installation of an elevator. The senior space needs a new roof as well as installation of HVAC in each apartment.
 10. **BRIAN OBERT (MBAC)**: The workforce in Helena is dependent on childcare. Helena needs all housing types, including the “move-over” home (households looking to downsize, making their current home available for another family). MBAC is currently interested in supporting the YWCA and Helena Indian Alliance with their childcare programs that will provide additional jobs in the community, especially for people entering the job market either for the first time or from programs like pre-release. MBAC supports people up-skilling, re-skilling, or pursuing their first employment opportunity.
 11. **KATHY MACEFIELD (CITY RESIDENT)**: Interested in including solar when thinking of affordable housing to make things more affordable for low-income residents. Also, interested in small houses developed in “pods.” She is hoping that there could be education provided in the community specific to historic home repair. There is a need in the community for supportive or transitional housing for people aging out of foster care or for people with mental health issues. There is also a need for housing that Section 8 vouchers could be applied to.
 12. **ELLIE RAY (THE CITY OF HELENA)**: Improving and extending the City’s water infrastructure will be a critical need in the coming years, especially with continued growth. Some of the infrastructure planning will require joint efforts by the City and County. The City is currently looking at further developing several neighborhood plans, which may be the focus of a CDBG Planning grant in the future. The City has three TIF Districts that require 10% of funds to be directed towards affordable housing projects within those jurisdictions. The City recently established a Housing Trust Fund that will be a further source of funding for housing projects. Additionally, the City has a building fee waiver program for developers targeting beneficiaries at or below 60% AMI.
 13. **ANN McCAULEY (LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY)**: The community of Lincoln is undergoing a masterplan project that may affect the development of housing and economic development/revitalization in that area. County-owned facilities and public spaces are also a priority for the County as they have provided an essential service throughout the pandemic and maintaining and enhancing these facilities into the future will be crucial infrastructure needs.
- Adjournment – 7:03PM