

Minutes: December 17, 2020

Minutes
Railroad TIF Advisory Board Meeting
December 17, 2020, 10:00 a.m.
Held via Zoom Virtual Platform

Board Members Present:

(Vice Chair) Rose Casey, 6th Ward Neighbor
Barbara Wetherill, URD Property Owner
Bruce Day, Helena Food Share
Terri Hamilton, URD Resident
Anne Pichette, MBAC

City Staff Present:

Sharon Haugen, Community Development Director
Stefani Reinhardt, Administrative Assistant III
David Knoepke, City Transportation Director
Mark Young, Civil/Transportation Engineer
Sheila Danielson, City Finance Director

Others Present:

Helena Civic TV (HCTV)

Members of the Board Absent:

(Chair) Max Pigman, L&C Brewery
Janelle Mickelson, School District
Donna Breitbart, Helena College

Call to Order & Staff Introduction:

Vice Chair Casey opened the meeting at 10:05 am and a quorum of five (5) was established.

Minutes from Last Meeting: November 19, 2020

Vice Chair Casey welcomed a motion for the minutes from the November 19, 2020 meeting. Terri Hamilton made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Vice Chair Casey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a 5:0 vote.

Budget Report:

Staff informed the board of the current balance in TIF funds as \$421,274. Staff also reminded the board that the two (2) previously approved projects for Pat McCutcheon's property located at 1200 N. Montana Ave (\$25,000) and the City of Helena's side walk improvements in the 6th ward (\$100,000) are still pending approval by the City Commission and have yet to be applied to the TIF account. Once these two projects have been finalized, it will bring the TIF balance down to approximately \$296,274.

Discussion Topic: Review Existing Work Plan

Staff presented the current version of the Railroad Urban Renewal District (URD) Work Plan (Attachment A) as well as the goals and objectives established in 2017. Board members were directed to go back over the 2017 document and re-prioritize each objective with consideration for projects completed over the past couple years.

Vice Chair Casey expressed support to hold an in-person discussion in the spring to go over current or planned projects in the area from private developers in an effort to stay ahead of the development. The Vice Chairwoman stated the area was on the verge of some really great business opportunities that would also address the blight in the area. In conclusion, Ms. Casey expressed hesitation to address the priorities now, specifically putting affordable housing at the forefront citing the pending improvements to the area will also support affordable housing as a result.

City Planner II, Ellie Ray clarified for the board that the work plan can be reviewed or updated at any time so long as that is the will of the board. Staff also informed the board that one of the reasons for having this discussion now is due to a directive given by the City Commission in accordance to the recent passage

of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Within this program, there is a requirement that 10% of the funds from each URD must be allocated for affordable housing projects. This does not necessarily mean they must be directed to create new housing, but to maintain the current housing stock. For this reason, staff has requested the board update the existing work plan to accommodate this new requirement.

Anne Pichette suggested the group come to an agreement about what terms will be used when describing affordable housing. Specifically, Ms. Pichette requested the terms of affordable housing, low-income housing, workforce housing, and subsidized housing be defined.

Terri Hamilton concurred with Ms. Pichette's statements, citing housing may be the lowest within their URD but not necessarily low income. Ms. Hamilton asked if the types of housing to be addressed were defined in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund resolution. Staff confirmed the document did not specifically define the types of housing, rather it stated, "residential housing primarily for persons or households for low to moderate incomes as defined by administrative policies and procedures." Staff informed the board they would provide a copy of the resolution as a point of reference.

Terri Hamilton asked staff if they could assume the types of housing would be defined in the future and staff explained that a committee will eventually be formed to help expand on and develop the process itself.

Vice Chair Casey suggested the board consider the goals and objectives at each of the meetings moving forward citing that no one really knew what projects were coming to the area when they were originally drafted. The Vice Chairwomen stated the priorities have changed now that private enterprises are going to need the board's support, such as Ray Kuntz and Max Pigman to ensure the Railroad TIF District does become a destination within the City of Helena.

In regard to housing, Terri Hamilton stated it may be too early to change the work plan due to more information coming in the following months. In addition, Ms. Hamilton expressed hesitation to grant funding for one of the board's own members citing a conflict of interest.

City Planner II, Ellie Ray informed the board that an in-person meeting was unlikely in the spring given the current state of Covid-19. However, a socially distanced walkthrough of the district was a possibility.

Bruce Day asked staff if the study for "malfunction junction" had been completed and if so, could the board be updated with those results. Staff confirmed the draft report should be available and could coordinate with the City Street Department to have a representative come present it to the board at January's meeting.

As a group, staff and board members went through each Goal and Objective. The following objectives changed in priority level according to the four (4) member responses received to date.

Goal 1

- **G1.7 – From HIGH priority to MEDIUM priority** – Develop an image "brand" for the District, based on its distinctive character and history.

Goal 2

- **G2.1 – From LOW priority to MEDIUM priority** – Provide technical assistance and planning to identify vacant and underutilized properties for redevelopment.

- **G2.3 – From MEDIUM priority to HIGH priority** – Strive for neighborhood commercial options—places to shop and eat within walking distance of work, schools, and homes.
- **G2.4 – From LOW priority to MEDIUM priority** – Provide for a variety of residential housing, including affordable workforce housing and special needs housing.
- **G2.5 – From LOW priority to MEDIUM priority** – Prepare properties for redevelopment by facilitating land assemblage and property transfer.

Goal 3

- **G3.3 – From LOW priority to MEDIUM priority** – Develop the District’s historic and proposed mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses as a unique, identifying feature for businesses.

Goal 4

- **G4.1 – From MEDIUM priority to HIGH priority** – Develop planning tools to address eight key urban design elements identified by the Urban Land Institute: imageability, enclosure, human scale, transparency, complexity, coherence, legibility and linkage.

Goal 5

- *No changes in priority.*

Goal 6

- *No changes in priority.*

Vice Chair Casey requested staff provide a map of public housing units, but staff informed the group the City does not have a map that depicts that specific demographic. However, a request could be made to Michael O’Neil with the Helena Housing Authority for a map of his section eight housing within the City. City staff also informed the group that similar information could be located in the [Tri-County Needs Assessment document](#).

Vice Chair Casey asked staff if there would be guidelines for landlords or landowners on how to utilize the 10% of TIF funds allocated for affordable housing projects. Ellie Ray confirmed there were, and it was an initiative that would be pursued by the established committee.

New Business:

There was no new business.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Next Steps:

City staff will present an update with the 5 point intersection traffic study at the January meeting. A request will also be made to Michael O’Neil for a map of his housing units within the City of Helena.

Next Meeting:

The next regularly scheduled meeting is January 21, 2021.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 11:21 AM.

Railroad Urban Renewal District Work Plan

Funding Accruals

- \$68,807 is now available for projects in the Railroad Urban Renewal TIF District, although the exact amount available for FY2019 will not be known until July 1, 2018
 - The City estimates that approximately \$130,000 in TIF accruals for the District will be available for all projects in the remainder of FY2018 and \$65,000 for the first half of FY2019

Prioritized Projects

The Railroad Urban Renewal District TIF Advisory Board recommends the following development program prioritizations for FY2019 and the remainder of FY2018, and seeks to solicit applications based on these priorities:

- Water and Stormwater Infrastructure Improvement Program → Grants will be given for projects that identify and prioritize upgrades to water, sewer, and stormwater drainage infrastructure in the RURD. Approved applications would receive up to 50 percent match (50%) toward the cost of the project.
- RURD Sidewalk Program → Approved applications would receive up to 50 percent match (50%) funding toward the cost of the sidewalk infrastructure construction and/or rehabilitation project.
- Transportation Planning Study Program → Provide grant funding for transportation planning studies within the Railroad Urban Renewal District to address vehicular and pedestrian/bike transportation planning needs. Grant awards may be made for up to 50 percent match (50%) funding.
- Demolition Program → Grant awards may be made for up to 50 percent match (50%) funding for the demolition and removal of structures.
- Marketing/Branding Project → Grant awards may be made for up to 50 percent match (50%) funding to establish marketing and/or branding plan and implementation for the Railroad Urban Renewal District brand.

Additionally, Recognized Eligible Project Priorities

The RURD TIF Advisory Board, having ranked all Railroad Urban Renewal Plan projects and programs, recommends additional project and program activities as being eligible urban renewal projects for tax increment financing (“Additional Projects”). Although Additional Projects are eligible as urban renewal projects, such Additional Projects expressly are not recommended at this time for funding amounts and prioritization. The Additional Projects and Programs that may be eligible for funding in the event additional tax increment funds become available are listed within the Project and Program Prioritization Table once the Work Plan is formally amended and solicitations are made for projects of that type and recommended for funding.