



MEMORANDUM

TO: MRA Board of Commissioners

FROM: Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*

DATE: April 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Director's Report

Downtown Street Projects

- City staff and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) have been working on formalizing how we work through transportation projects in a collaborative way that addresses both the City's and MDT's goals. Those discussions have been very productive and will likely result in a Memorandum of Understanding outlining a process for design development and collaboration. Missoula currently has three projects in the planning stages in the downtown – Front/Main conversion to two-way traffic, a public process around redesign of Higgins from Broadway to Brooks and the impacts of development of the Riverfront Triangle on the Broadway, Orange and Front/Main Street intersections. Each of these is in a different stage of development; however, there are intersections between all of them which has led to consideration of jointly looking at them comprehensively as we work through gaining MDT approval. MRA has asked HDR to give us a proposal to expand their scope on the west end of the Front/Main project to include the Broadway, Orange, Front/Main impacts of both the proposed development at Riverfront Triangle and the reconfiguration of Front & Main to the east of Orange. One of the City's goals is to avoid any widening of Orange Street and we believe that by looking at these projects holistically we can achieve that goal. That contract amendment will likely come before the Board next month.

Front/Main Conversion

- HDR is working toward finalizing 90% design. There are still details to be worked out around the east and west ends of the project. HDR is developing some creative solutions to the section of East Front Street where the right of way is too narrow to support the existing wide boulevard, separated bicycle facilities and on-street parking. This will involve some compromises making it impossible to meet ideal standards while still providing workable solutions.

Scott Street Area Redevelopment

Ravara Development:

- Design of the streets and utilities is ongoing with the goal of completion in the fall. Construction prices continue to be a challenge for the permanently affordable housing. The City Council will take action on Monday night on a staff recommendation that the City loan Ravara \$479,432 for soft costs associated with the design of the permanently affordable for sale units. This will allow the architectural and engineering team to begin detailed design and continue exploration of ways to contain costs so that the units can be sold to individuals and families earning 120% AMI or less. There is an excellent explanation of how the loan will be structured attached to that item on the Council Agenda entitled Scott Street Soft Cost Loan Presentation and can be found at the following link:
<https://pub-missoula.escrimemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=e611c820-0b47-4697-b36f-9baf82868adf&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=33&Tab=attachments>

Other Scott Street Properties:

- The Missoula Urban Transportation District (MUTD) has been searching for a suitable location for a new, expanded transit facility for some time. They are currently focused on some property that the City owns combined with property that is in private ownership on the north side of Rogers Street, northwest of the Ravara development. There will be an informational presentation on this concept at the Board meeting. If this proposal moves forward, MRA will likely be asked to make further investments in the infrastructure identified in the North Reserve/Scott Street Master Plan.

Midtown Master Plan

- The Missoula Midtown Association received a number of good responses to the Request for Proposals issued last month. I have been part of the screening committee and Annette and I are both on the selection committee. We will be conducting initial interviews in early May.

Communications Plan

- The “What Is Tax Increment Financing” graphic continues to generate a lot of interest. Staff has had inquiries from other communities wanting to create a similar piece for their TIF programs and asking who we worked with. We are starting to wonder if a commission from Six Pony Hitch for referrals could become a new revenue source for the Agency!
- The Communications Specialist recruitment will be discussed under Non-Action Items on this at this meeting.

As always, if you have questions or want information on any other projects not covered here, please contact me at buchanane@ci.missoula.mt.us or 552-6156.