



MEMORANDUM

TO: MRA Board of Commissioners
FROM: Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*
DATE: May 7, 2023
SUBJECT: Director's Report

Budget & CIP

- Yes, it is that time of year again and staff is working on the FY24 Budget. MRA is working with other City departments to identify CIP items that may require TIF funding. Tod and Annie are coordinating that effort as well as looking at CIP projects that will be strictly MRA projects, such as our annual water and sidewalk projects. We will bring the CIP to the Board for approval in June.

Downtown Safety, Accessibility, Mobility RAISE Grant – DowntownSAM

- In response to concerns from downtown businesses about the scope of the RAISE Grant application, the City has held a series of small group meetings that have been geographically focused to discuss the concepts and details of the Front/Main conversion, modifications to Higgins from Broadway to Brooks and accessibility improvements to Caras and Kiwanis Parks. These meetings culminated with a town hall meeting facilitated by Ginny Tribe at the Wilma on 5/9. The small group meetings have been productive and a lot of good listening and information exchange has taken place. The town hall meeting on the 9th was extremely well attended with almost 200 people there. Jeremy Keene presented an overview of the project and the floor was opened up for comments and questions, resulting in roughly 50 comments either written or verbal. Maci has been key in helping set up and document the meetings and can brief you further on her observations at the Board meeting.

Scott Street Area Redevelopment

- Ravara expects to have architectural plans for the income qualified condominiums that are far enough along to get reliable pricing in mid-June. At that point, we will be able to work through how to finance this project in a way that meets the City's expectations and goals. Work on the infrastructure has been delayed while we are working through financing for the entire project, both the market rate and income qualified components.

Midtown Planning Efforts

- Midtown Master Plan – The EcoNorthwest team has incorporated the feedback, responses and opinions around the options presented by the design team at the workshop in January. They have completed a draft plan which is being reviewed by the Project Management Team and will be presented to the Steering Committee for review and comment this week. We will have Mel give us a brief update on the review and approval schedule at the Board meeting. It is our intention to take this plan through the same approval process as the Downtown Master Plan, the North Reserve/Scott Street Master Plan and the Envision West Broadway Community Master Plan, resulting in incorporation into the City Growth Policy.
- Brooks BRT/TOD Corridor – The Project Management Team has been established and is meeting bi-weekly. Annette can provide a brief update on the project scope and timing at the Board meeting.

URD II Exit Strategy Project Updates

- MRL Trestle Project – HDR completed the Bitterroot Trail Structural Feasibility Evaluation. Based on their analysis, both centered and cantilever alternatives are structurally feasible. Of course, additional structural evaluation, design and cost/benefit review is needed as part of any final project development. Much of the discussion currently revolves around how to continue the trail to the north and south of the river. The City and MRA would like to retain the railroad structures across Broadway to alert the public that there is a trail crossing and incorporate manually activated flashing signals into that structure.
- Bitterroot Trail Lighting – MRA will manage this project in close coordination with Parks staff. Since this is already in the CIP budget and was approved by the Board upon adoption of the URD II Exit Strategy, Tod intends to issue a Request for Proposals for design of the lighting in early June.
- Sleepy Inn Property – Deconstruction is well underway and a lot of the material has been removed from the site. We believe that there will be an increase in interest in redeveloping the property once the site is cleared and presentable.
- Flynn-Lowney Ditch Restoration Project – The Request for Qualifications for design services was issued and responses have been received and will be reviewed during the coming weeks. Once a selection is made by the review team, we will report back to the MRA Board.

2023 State Legislative Session

- The session is over and neither of the TIF bills that were of concern were passed. We are in the process of evaluating some other bills around housing and zoning that may influence some of our current and future programs.

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 (406) 552-6156.