

**MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**CONDENSED BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**July 20, 2023**

**FINAL**

A Regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was held on Thursday, July 20, 2023 in the Hal Fraser Conference Room, 140 W. Pine St., and via Microsoft Teams at 12:00 p.m. Those in attendance were as follows:

**Board:** Karl Englund, Ruth Reineking, Melanie Brock, Tasha Jones, Jack Lawson

**Staff:** Ellen Buchanan, Annie Gorski, Annette Marchesseault, Tod Gass, Jilayne Dunn, Lesley Pugh

**Public:** Chris Kennedy, Resident; Lauren Hutchison, Missoula Midtown Association; MCAT

**CALL TO ORDER**

12:00 pm.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

[June 22, 2023 Regular Board Meeting Minutes](#) were approved as submitted.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ACTION ITEMS**

[Midtown Master Plan \(URD III\) – Presentation and Request for Adoption \(Buchanan & Brock\)](#) [2023 Midtown Master Plan](#) | [Power Point Presentation](#)

Buchanan said the Missoula Midtown Association (MMA) came to the Board in November 2021 with a request that the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) assist in funding the development of a master plan for Midtown in Urban Renewal District (URD) III. The study area is larger than the District itself, and the District is the core of the Master Plan. It is the center of where the most significant recommendations have been made. The estimated cost for the study was \$570,000 and MRA Board approved \$370,000 in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) towards it. MMA raised \$200,000 and contributed to the balance to complete the funding. Buchanan said the Midtown Master Plan (MMP) is different from the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) in that the most recent DMP was reviewed by the MRA Board and the Board made a

recommendation that it be approved by the Planning Board and subsequently adopted by City Council as part of the Growth Policy. Because of some timing challenges, the DMP has already been to Planning Board who approved it enthusiastically and after a public hearing it was unanimously adopted by City Council on July 10<sup>th</sup> as part of the City's Growth Policy. Buchanan said staff feels it is important for the MRA Board to also adopt the MMP to guide investments in URD III as it moves forward towards termination in 2040. Melanie Brock, MRA Board and Director of MMA, was there to present the Plan.

Brock said a Steering Committee made up of business, private and public sector leaders has been working on this for the last two years. Buchanan and Marchesseault, MRA Staff, have also been part of that Committee. MMA raised \$200,000 from entities outside of URD III TIF funds. Approximately 32 businesses and non-profits donated and MMA were very happy to have county-wide support for the Plan. The first thing the Steering Committee had to grapple with was what the scope and study area for the plan would be. EcoNorthwest was the lead and Tyler Bump was the Project Manager. Toole Design worked on the transit portion, SERA Architects did design work, WGM Group did engineering, Big Sky PR helped do outreach with area businesses, and Rachel Huff-Doria was the grass roots organizer.

Brock said the project kicked off in June 2022 with a very robust portion of the process going deep into the existing conditions. Then they moved into engaging with the community, meeting with businesses and residents county-wide, and specifically the multiple neighborhoods in the area. They hope to have the MMP adopted by all of the governing bodies by August 3, 2023. There were over 1,000 community members actively participating. There was an online component, a visioning workshop and plan concepts review workshop, kids' charette, meetings with breakfast and lunch civic groups, and many more. They had 15 Midtown residents serve as "Midtown Guides" where they went into their neighborhoods, churches, and other gathering places to make sure everyone was part of the MMP. Brock said the community engagement report was put together by Huff-Doria and is on [midtownmasterplan.com](https://midtownmasterplan.com).

Brock said MMA is very proud they had a compass and put equity as the forefront goal of the project. Brock said she has been a part of master plan processes before, but this one felt different because when they first started they had residents and business owners coming to them and asking not to have new things put in because they didn't want their property taxes/rent to increase. Brock said this was a different kind of visioning, so to assure the community that they were looking at equity and everything with a lens of asking if it would increase the risk of displacement, there is a hefty socioeconomic vulnerability report on the website where every one of the recommendations were taken into consideration of where there are vulnerable populations in Midtown and what sort of ways they can be protected.

Brock said Buchanan was on the Steering Committee and Project Management Team. She made sure urban renewal dollars invested were well spent. Brock said they literally spent every penny towards making sure there was a cohesive plan for Midtown.

Brock reviewed the overall final Plan framework and noted there are multiple neighborhoods in the study area. They are different neighborhoods with different needs and issues and the Plan has a vision for each one of them. The Brooks/South/Russell intersection has been rebranded to "Midtown Junction" because there is no longer malfunction in Midtown. Brock said they are already hearing people use the term. Another big piece of the planning effort is placemaking and having neighborhoods everyone is proud of. Brock spoke to the difficulty of moving east-west across the area and the need for work on permeability and having it more walkable. Other

items in the plan include culture, land use recommendations, blight elimination, maintaining current housing and increasing housing density at all levels, code reform, adding hotels, bike/ped safety, complete streets, parking, and parks and open space, among others.

Brock showed a [video](#).

Brock noted there were many positive public comments when City Council voted on this and they were referenced when the City Council voted unanimously for it. Chris Kennedy, Resident, said it is nice to see so many comments reflected in the final Plan. He asked about the equity discussion Brock referenced and said in the Lewis & Clark Neighborhood there is a lot of affordable and low-income housing. Kennedy said he'd like to see how they hope to ameliorate the price hikes they face. Brock said the Socioeconomic Risk Analysis is on the website and includes everything.

Brock said the next step is to start an Implementation Committee in September. They will work through the low hanging fruit. Reineking said it may not prevent some redevelopment that displaces people because private property can still be transferred. She said the awareness of it and how they can help the existing residents to become private property owners is a possibility. Buchanan said part of it comes down to supply and demand. If new housing is infused into areas that are starting to transition, maybe they can offer opportunities for those folks to remain there without being in the same physical location, but still in the same neighborhood.

Jones expressed her gratitude to the team for doing such an awesome job on the MMP. She asked if there was any funding available for implementation. Buchanan said it will be on a project by project basis, much like the Downtown Master Plan has been implemented. The biggest investment right now is the Brooks corridor. If they are successful in the design and implementation of that it will be truly transformational. As being adopted as part of the City's Growth Policy, the MMP gives developers in the private sector predictability as they are looking at investing in an area. She said that made all the difference in the world in the downtown and you can see what has happened as a result.

Buchanan said after the City-wide wayfinding design was completed, MRA carried funds in URDs II and III to implement the wayfinding signing. MRA also helped fund the pedestrian-scale wayfinding signing for downtown. She said there are designs for entry way and gateway signage that are part of the wayfinding system. Until the City has the wherewithal to implement the vehicular system comprehensively, it makes no sense to implement on Broadway and then just have it fall off in other areas of town. However, Buchanan said the gateway and entry point signage could very well be a part of something TIF funding could be used for.

Reineking echoed Jones' comments and said she appreciates the work that went into the MMP and the perspective that was taken on equity. She said she also appreciates all of the input they were able to get from the public, and doing examples of development was brilliant and hopes they get a lot of response out of it. Reineking thanked the team for the care they are taking with the residents there to not displace them. She said the MMP was brilliantly conceived and conducted and has high hopes for the implementation.

**REINEKING: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD ADOPT THE MIDTOWN MISSOULA, MASTER PLAN AS A GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKING AND INVESTMENTS IN URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT III.**

**Jones seconded the motion.**

Brock said she would recuse herself from voting because she worked on the Plan.

**No further discussion. No public comment.**

**Motion passed unanimously (4 ayes, 0 nays with Brock recusing herself).**

## **NON-ACTION ITEMS**

### **STAFF REPORTS**

#### **[Director's Report](#)**

Buchanan said she was happy to answer any questions.

#### **[FY23 Budget Status Reports](#)**

#### **[FY23 Staff Activities Reports](#) (5/6/23 – 7/1/23)**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **OTHER ITEMS**

Reineking congratulated the City on getting the RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grant for the Downtown SAM (Safety-Access-Mobility). She said a lot of work went into it and appreciates the outreach done to get support for the project. Englund asked when they will know the feasibility of the Bitterroot Trail Montana Rail Link (MRL) Bridge. Gass said he spoke with HDR yesterday and they hope to have the report done soon. Buchanan said HDR is working closely with MRL, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Parks & Rec and MRA. The report will say what is and is not feasible.

Buchanan said staff is working to move the URD II projects ahead as fast as possible. The West Broadway Riverfront Project is moving along and a consultant team is engaged. Buchanan said she thinks it will position them to go after a lot of external funding to invest in that stretch of river and riverbank. She said there is a group of folks in the Public Works & Mobility (PWM) Dept. deemed "Grants Central" and they are cranking out the grant applications.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley Pugh