



**PLANNING DIVISION**  
“SERVING BILLINGS, BROADVIEW AND YELLOWSTONE COUNTY”  
**PLANNING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
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**MEETING NOTES**  
**Project Re:Code**  
**Urban Issues Working Group Meeting**

**Date – Thursday, May 17, 2018**

**Time – 11:30 am to 1 pm**

**Location – \*\*City Hall – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room 210 N 27<sup>th</sup> Street\*\***

All members of the WG attended except Jan Rehberg. Members of the public attending include Randy Hafer, Jacob Cote (VISTA) and Claire Yang (VISTA)

**1. Review of Meeting Notes – Previous Meeting Date: April 19, 2018**

**2. Public Comment** – *Any member of the public may be heard on any subject that is or is not on the agenda. Public comment is limited to 3 minutes or less at the discretion of the Chair. Public comment on agenda items may also be accepted at the time those agenda items are under discussion.*

**3. Access to Affordable Housing - Credit, Lending Information for Billings & Yellowstone County 2014 – 2016 data years – Presented by Claire Yang, VISTA**

**a. Group Discussion on Zoning Barriers to Affordable Housing/Fair Housing**

**b. Group Discussion on Missing (or Rare) Housing Types – The Missing Middle**

A presentation by Claire Yang and Jacob Cote was made to the WG. Key findings of the presentation were it did not appear there was active discrimination in Home Loans in Billings MT although some individual loan denials indicated there might be some happening. Loan approvals tended to be higher in new neighborhoods compared to existing neighborhoods.

Discussion of zoning barriers to development of affordable housing included the near constant rate of Billings’ families that remain “cost burdened” for housing – 40%. In addition, it was noted the lack of diverse housing choices in many Billings’ neighborhoods. The current zoning is regimented to provide only large lot developments (1 large lot, 1 large house), and requires for discretionary approval for many other housing options. Billings has also a small amount of land currently zoned to allow multi-family developments.

The group discussed the lack of housing options – especially choices between the large house on a large lot and an apartment. Some WG members asked whether a change in zoning could actually inspire a builder or developer to build these “missing middle” housing choices. WG members agreed it would be a benefit to existing and new neighborhoods to make sure at least a few housing choices are available. WG members agreed some degree of flexibility is necessary especially given the cost of services and building materials. WG members voiced a concern to preserve the existing choice but ensure the residents are paying the true cost of living in a large lot/large house development.

Randy Hafer stated most developers know the cost of the housing production is based on the cost of land, divided by the number of “lots” or “units” the developer expects to realize. A zoning code heavily weighted to large lots will exponentially increase the cost of new housing over time. Housing cost is also directly related to the amount of lot coverage allowed, the number of off-street parking spaces required (or provided), and length of infrastructure extensions for a new lot. Large lots are more expensive to extend services to than more mixed neighborhoods with a range of lot sizes and housing choices.

Planning staff pointed out the existing parking code is not in the zoning and will need to be incorporated as part of this project. In addition, staff pointed out the building code and financing options change significantly once a building has five or more dwelling units. The Engineering Division considers any lot with three or more units a “commercial” development. Commercial site plan requirements heavily cost burden new developments that offer more than just a large lot/large house choice.

The WG members expressed their discontent with the recent multi-family developments that are more like army barracks than something built to last and do not create a neighborhood. The WG member were unanimous there needs to be some design requirements for the larger multi-family developments. The WG members were also concerned the more poor designs are built the less of this housing option will be available in the future.

The WG members stated they would like to look at peer cities to see how these issues can be resolved in the zoning re-write.

#### **4. Set Next Meeting Date and Time – Consultant Kick Off Visit**

Week of June 11 set for Consultant Team – Safebuilt – to have group discussion about priorities on Project ReCode

#### **5. Adjourn**