

Missoula County

Media Release

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Buena Vista Mobile Home Park to Receive New Sewer System

The Montana Department of Commerce has announced a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of \$373,770 to Missoula County to support the development of a replacement sewer system at Buena Vista Mobile Home Park, located one mile west of the Missoula International Airport. This U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) award will be combined with Montana Department of Natural Resources and additional Missoula County funds to support the \$469,885 project budget. The new sewer system will replace an outdated wastewater system that was initially installed in the 1950s.

“The County applied for a State CDBG grant twice and the applications were rejected – not because the project was not worthy or the proposals were not good, but because there were other more pressing and urgent needs in other parts of the state,” Sindie Kennedy, Missoula County Grant Administrator said. “After the 2016 application was rejected, the State offered a ‘second opportunity’ to Missoula County to re-apply. The second opportunity resulted in an award. This successful application was due to the cooperation and assistance from two County government agencies—the Grants and Public Works Departments—as well as the nonprofit NeighborWorks Montana and, of course, the residents themselves.”

Originating as an RV park, Buena Vista gradually became permanent housing with 36 units of fulltime residents. In November 2013, with the assistance of NeighborWorks Montana, the residents organized themselves into the Buena Vista Community, Inc., purchased the property on which their homes sit and became a Resident-Owned Community (ROC). Since, Buena Vista community members have enjoyed the pride of ownership and have worked tirelessly to improve their community.

“Through resident ownership the residents at Buena Vista gained stability in the ownership of their land and have made many improvements to their property using their own resources.” Kaia Peterson of NeighborWorks said. “The sewer will be a major and much needed improvement that would not have been possible without the support of the County and CDBG. We are thrilled that this funding is being awarded, water quality is being protected, and the community will continue to be affordable to low-income people.”

The antiquated wastewater system at Buena Vista Mobile Home Park flows to an unlined lagoon system at the bottom of a draw that once served as a tributary to La Valle Creek. The mobile homes within the park are each connected to an 8-inch main that sends the sewage into the lagoons. The lagoon system is likely leaking and discharging wastewater to groundwater. It is suspected that leakage of untreated, or inadequately treated, sewage is occurring directly into the natural drainage with eventual discharge to the Clark Fork River. Updating and improving the sewer system will mitigate the natural resource and public health and safety problems associated with the continued operation of the lagoon system. As proposed, a lift station would send the flows to an existing sewer line along nearby Training Drive. The line would then carry effluent to the main sewer line on Airport Road.

“This is a common situation where the cost of improvements is beyond the means of the affected community, but the dedicated support from Buena Vista residents to address the problem was instrumental to the pursuit of funding.” Amy Rose with Missoula County Public Works said.

Seeing a modern sanitation project come to fruition has been a high priority for the community members and Missoula County.

“Since we have taken ownership of this community, we have made many improvements,” said Terry Hauter, Buena Vista Board President. “The pride in ownership is evident. Updating our wastewater system will increase that pride because we will know our water is safer and we are not contaminating our community.”

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