



CITY OF BIGGS Staff Report

TO: City of Biggs City Council

FROM: Mark Sorensen, City Administrator
Scott Friend, AICP, City Planner

MEETING DATE: October 14, 2014; 6:30 p.m.
Biggs City Hall, 3016 Sixth Street, Biggs, CA 95917

SUBJECT: Downtown-Area Building Safety and Code Enforcement Project - *update*

Summary:

Working under the direction provided by the City Council at its regular September meeting, staff continues to undertake work to assess the physical conditions of the structures in the City's Downtown area (B Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets); to prepare materials, documentation and information to support an effort to pursue code enforcement actions; and, to prepare a Plan of Action to present to the City Council presenting an overall recommended approach to Code Enforcement for the project. At this time, staff continues to gather information and explore code enforcement options for this effort but has prepared and will present a conceptual approach for review by the Council.

Discussion:

As noted above, staff has initiated work to prepare a Plan of Action and Project Approach for review by the City Council which outlined the steps staff recommends taking to move forward on this project. One of the first elements of this effort was to schedule and undertake a detailed survey of the various structures in the project area. On Thursday October 2nd, the City Administrator and City Planner, accompanied by the 2 representatives from the Building Division of the Butte County Development Services Department (Building Inspection Supervisor and Engineering Plans Examiner) conducted a site walk in the Downtown area to evaluate the exterior physical conditions of all of the buildings located adjacent to B Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. All observations were taken from a publicly accessible vantage point or directly from the public right-of-way and all observations were of the exterior the buildings only. The observation effort consisted of walking the full length of B Street and the adjacent alleyways from Sixth Street to Seventh Street observing both the front and rear walls and facades of all of the buildings. As a result of this effort, and drawing on the expertise and experience of the four persons present, the group observed numerous significant issues with the existing physical conditions of the structures in the Downtown area and observed a number of existing physical conditions that required immediate action by either the property owner and/or the City to ensure public safety.

Immediate Hazards:

One of the items noted during the survey observations was the presence of un-supported and un-secured broken glass hanging in a manner that could fall onto the public sidewalk. That issue was addressed immediately upon observation by the City and with the permission of the property owner (Mathauser).

The second issue was related to the presence of what appears to be un-secured debris/building materials hanging out of a second story window and having the potential to fall. The City has contacted the owner of the property (Manwill) to address the issue and has cordoned-off a portion of the alley on the south-side of B Street to mitigate potential safety risks to those passing below. As of the writing of this staff report, the property owner had been contact but no action had yet been taken to address the issue.

Observation Summary:

The following summary was prepared by Mr. Curtis Johnson, Butte County Building Inspection Supervisor following the field observation walk:

“Based on our observation from the exterior of several buildings located on B Street in the City of Biggs on Thursday October 2, 2014, we conclude that several structures have become unsafe to occupy and pose a risk to public safety. Of particular concern are the lack of or severe damage to key structural components as well as loose or damaged architectural features and items that may fall onto the public way including: Roof and floor diaphragms, wall anchorage to structural diaphragms, insufficient load path from roof to foundation, damaged parapet walls, damaged awnings, loose bricks, loose fascia, loose window frames, broken glass, insufficient weather protection, and possible undermining of foundations. Further evaluation is necessary and should be performed immediately by a CA licensed Civil or Structural Engineer.”

City staff concurs with the assessment provided by the County Building Division staff members (Building Inspection Supervisor and Engineering Plans Examiner) relative to the observations of the day.

In addition to the site survey walk of the 2nd, the City Administrator and City Planner met with the City Attorney to begin discussion related to obtaining access to buildings; procedures for the processing of code violations; requested and likely outcome of City actions as well as to discuss issues associated with timelines, costs and level of work effort.

Next Steps:

At this time, staff is continuing to move forward with the following actions on this project:

1. Continue to immediately address all urgent threats to public safety in the area.
2. Prepare building specific letters to each owner of property outlining and presenting the preliminary observations that have be observed and the primary issues observed with each building or structure.
3. Continue to work with the City Attorney to formulate a cost-effective and time-efficient approach to the pursuit of the various code enforcement violations observed to date.
4. Continue to work with the County Building Department to identify information to provide to property owners including information on the appropriate versions of the building code to be applied to structures in the Downtown; identification of the types of engineering information that will be required to support potential retrofit or renovation work; and classification of the severity and degree of risk of each of the identified categories of code violation or structural deficiency.
5. Prepare a list of resources, contacts and available data and information sources for distribution to all Downtown property owners. And,
6. Personally contact each property owner to discuss with them the City's project.

As presented to the Council in September, staff still intends to mail an initial general information / general notice letter to all property owners between Sixth and Seventh Streets on both sides of B Street informing them of the City's intent to pursue building enforcement, code enforcement and nuisance code enforcement in the downtown-area. As previously discussed, the letter will briefly outline the issues that will be included in this effort and provide a general overview of the City's Code Enforcement process. Staff has been holding-off on the distribution of the letter until such time as the site evaluation effort was complete. Now that this is complete, staff anticipates that letter being distributed the week of October 13th.

Environmental determination:

Not applicable at this time.

Fiscal Impact:

As previously discussed, staff does not have information that would support the presentation of a specified dollar amount for this effort. To date, the City has expended resources only to cover costs associated with the engagement of professional staff and the staff time utilized to this point has been handled using standard contract services time.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Council review the attached Conceptual Process Flow Diagram and provide input and direction as necessary. Based upon the direction provided by the Council at the September City Council meeting, staff intends to continue to pursue this project as previously directed.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Conceptual Process Flow Diagram

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