

9 January, 2023

Montana Legislature – 68th Session
Joint Appropriations Long-Range Planning Subcommittee

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR HB12
Montana Historic Preservation Grants

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Project No. 40 – Fountain Terrace Condominiums, Inc.

Overview of Project: The original St. Joseph's hospital, constructed of hand cut, local sandstone, opened in 1908 and grew with the city over the next thirty-plus years, the largest and most prominent of the buildings that gave Lewistown the title of "City of Stone." It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The hospital was decommissioned and adapted for reuse as privately-owned condominiums in 1989.

After being re-purposed for housing, there have been additions of exterior decks and changes to fire exit routes that have proven to be detrimental to the architectural and structural integrity of the facility. **One fire escape is non-compliant to fire code and the Fire Marshall has provided the residents with a rapidly approaching deadline to comply or the building may be deemed unsafe for habitation.**

This very large facility shelters 40 privately owned and maintained, non-subsidized, residences that provide approximately \$65,000 in annual property tax revenues to the state and local governments. It is the equivalent of approximately four city blocks of housing. The non-profit, Home Owners Association (HOA) board, made up of Fountain Terrace property owners, is responsible for overseeing the management and maintenance of the public areas of the facility and has struggled to keep pace with physical needs, addressing emergency and life safety issues even though nearly doubling the homeowners fees and assessing each owner an additional \$7,500.00 in 2022. Economic impacts include a steady stream of skilled workers that provide

9 January 2023 - PUBLIC COMMENT FOR HB12 Continued

maintenance, painting, fire alarm, plumbing, electrical, elevators (3), driveway and landscaping care for the sizable public areas, deferring the stone preservation, as well as other more aesthetic issues.

The Governor's Report stated the applicant did not mention which of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards would be followed for the current project and it should be noted that the HOA plans to incorporate all applicable elements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in all work on the facility. The contractor selection will place significant weight on contractor experience with similar historic stone building projects for selection of successful bidders.

This proposed critical housing project is to help ensure the building will be made safe for the residents and a visual asset to the community. There are documented structural and public safety issues that need to be addressed to protect the residents. Unresolved, they would cause the 40 families residing there to be displaced, needing immediate housing which is currently not available in the Lewistown area, placing a financial burden on society and the local community. If the building becomes unsafe for residential living, there would be a significant impact to the available housing in the community in a time where our current housing shortage is critical.

Updated Funding Status:

Funding Source	Type of Funds	Amount	Current Status of Funds
MHPG	Grant	\$500,000	Awaiting decision
Fountain Terrace Condo., Inc	Cash	\$52,846	Committed
Fountain Terrace Condo., Inc	Cash	\$300,000	Assessed and committed.
Fountain Terrace Condo., Inc	Cash – Future Assessments Planned	\$208,153	Pending
Project Total:		\$1,061,000	