

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Roger Millar, Clare Healy  
FROM: Elizabeth Schilling  
DATE: October 16, 2014  
RE: First Technical Assistance Progress Report, Fort Peck Tribes

Maureen Dionne gave me the Tribes' first progress report verbally. Capacity issues noted during our visit have continued to place a heavy burden on the remaining two staff of the Economic Development department, and they have had to prioritize requests from their elected leadership, as well as reporting and planning for projects with significant financial and legal consequences for the Tribes.

These notes are organized according to the three opportunity areas identified in the next steps memo: Regional Coordination, the Sustainable Village (old airport site), and the Make It Right Foundation's Master Planning work. An additional section describes other developments related to our discussions during the workshop.

### **Regional Coordination**

Bill Whitehead, the Economic Development Director, has pursued formal and informal opportunities to coordinate with regional partners. He attends meetings of the Greater Northern Development Corporation, which serves all of the communities and counties influencing tribal lands. He works closely with Gene Halvorsen, the City of Poplar's Public Works Director, particularly around questions related to infrastructure serving the new developments on the Old Airport site.

### **Sustainable Village**

Our memo referred to opportunities at the Sustainable Village site, which includes a Wellness Center and the Make It Right Foundation's affordable, sustainable housing "village." The site continues to offer significant opportunities to take steps to improve economic, environmental and equity outcomes for tribal members, though current staffing has made it difficult for the Tribe to coordinate among departments.

- Since our visit, the tribes have received a TIGER grant to improve existing roads and plan for new multimodal transportation facilities that support the airport redevelopment and connect it to other economic centers. Maureen Dionne with the Economic Development Department is overseeing this grant.
- Some funding for the Wellness center has been diverted to other economic development projects, and the Wellness center project manager has moved to Billings to work at the Native American Development Corporation, though he continues to oversee the project in his new position.

### **Make it Right Foundation's Master Planning**

A local consultant, Felix McGowan of Nishnaabe Consulting LLC, is promoting the development of the Make It Right Foundation's housing projects on the Sustainable Village site, and he managed a Master Planning process over the summer that traveled to seven communities across the reservation. The planning process was designed to engage people to think about their future needs and aspirations, and while the particular focus of the Foundation is housing, many people wanted to talk about economic opportunities. As McGowan reported, the Master Planning process "can create value for everyone," not just Tribal members. The short-term results of this process are likely to be smaller, implementation-focused master plans for the other Tribal communities along the Missouri River.

### **Other Developments**

- A rail spur and facilities to load and unload heavy equipment have opened to the south and east of Poplar, between Highway 2 and the Missouri River. The major customer for this service is expected to be the oil industry. These facilities are currently staffed by employees of West Electronics, with one specially trained full-time logistics manager. Five more employees will be hired and trained to work these facilities.
- The Tribal Council has approved development of a highway travel plaza and small casino on Highway 2 about 23 miles east of Poplar. It is intended to attract oil field workers.