

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### City of Billings receives U.S. Green Building Council LEED Cities Grant

**Billings, Mont. – April 19, 2021** — The City of Billings has been selected by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), to participate in the organization's *LEED for Cities Local Government Leadership Program* (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) grant program. Through the program the City, will receive financial assistance, education resources and technical support to help the City achieve LEED Certification. The grants are funded through a partnership of USGBC and Bank of America. Formal acceptance of the grant requires City Council approval on April 26, 2021.

In 2021, the City is one of 15 cities to receive this grant valued at \$10,500. Globally, 120 cities and communities have been certified through LEED (113 cities in US). If the City receives LEED Certification, they will be the first city in Montana.

The City's citizen Energy & Conservation Commission (ECC) applied for the grant as a part of their efforts to assist the City with energy efficiency and sustainability efforts. The ECC believes the *LEED Cities* designation will have many benefits to the City including 1) aligning the City's sustainability efforts into a common strategy and framework, 2) benchmarking and branding the City as a leader in energy and conservation while cost efficient, 3) cost savings in energy and resource conservation, and 4) develop the City as a leader in sustainability to attract businesses that look for communities with demonstrated sustainability efforts.

*LEED for Cities* enables local governments to measure and track performance by focusing on outcomes, rather than intent and improve performance over time. *LEED for Cities* helps local leaders create cities with responsible, sustainable and specific plans for natural systems, energy, water, waste, transportation and many other factors that contribute to quality of life. *LEED for Cities* Certification is distinctly different from the *LEED for Buildings* program, as it takes a whole City approach, not specific buildings and has a wide degree of latitude for scoring metrics.

The City has a long history of leadership in energy efficiency, sustainability and cost saving efforts. *LEED Cities* will provide a framework and process to continue and build on the City's past efforts. Historically, **the City has implemented 112 energy efficiency projects, estimated to save 7.8 Million kWh/year, equal to about \$610,000/year in annual electric cost savings** based on current electric rates. These included 91 lighting, electric equipment, VFDs and special projects that received \$1,048,130 in NorthWestern Energy (NWE) E+ Program incentives. In addition, the City utilized \$648,425 in Large Customer Universal Systems Benefit (USB) credits for 21 projects.

- **In 2020 and 2021 alone, the City has implemented 28 E+ lighting and VFD projects, estimated to save 398,854 kWh/year.** Public Works also completed a \$75 million upgraded at the wastewater reclamation facility that includes an **energy efficient state-of-the-art aeration system, estimated to save 85 kW and 743,623 kWh/year, resulting in about \$57,300/year in electric cost savings.** NWE awarded \$90,000 in incentives for the aeration project.

- **LED lighting has been installed throughout the City facilities** including Fire Stations, Library, Parking Garages, City Hall, Building Operations Control Center, Water Treatment, Water Reclamation and Parks. Facilities Services has lead may LED projects including the new City Police Department Evidence building exclusively utilized LED lighting. **The airport has done 36 LED lighting projects, that saves 651,042 kWh/year, including installing nearly 2700 LED lights the past two years.** The airport is on track to have all existing airport buildings LED in 2021 and the airport expansion project will be all LEDs. All new City owned street light districts are LED.
- **In 2008, the City entered into a public/private partnership with MDU to build a biogas (methane) harvesting facility** at the landfill, the only facility of this kind in Montana. MDU invested \$10 million to construct and operate the facility to remove landfill gas, clean it and deliver the gas as a marketable 'renewable' gas product into the local pipeline network. The project captures greenhouse gas that would otherwise escape into the atmosphere. The City gets a 15 percent share of the sales and carbon credits from the natural gas; creating a new City revenue source. In addition, the City has started converting trash-hauling trucks to use CNG (compressed natural gas).
- **The new proposed west end reservoir and water treatment facility is an example of sustainability and efficiency.** The reservoir will become Billings' primary freshwater source. The current system (built in 1914) is severely lacking storage capacity and can only provide 8 to 10 hours of water, should there be a supply issue. By locating the reservoir and water treatment facility closer to the west end growth areas of Billings it is anticipated this project will save the City \$200,000-300,000/year in electric costs, currently spent on pumping water long distances and uphill from the present water treatment facility.
- **The City has implemented numerous water conservation strategies including utilizing ditch water for irrigation at a number of parks.** Parks has also implement water conserving irrigation systems and controls. Public Works implemented new water pricing structures to incent customers to use less water.
- **The City owns two LEED Platinum buildings,** 1) MET Transit Center was the first new transportation facility in the US to achieve LEED Platinum in 2010, and 2) the new library received LEED Platinum, the first in Montana in 2014. **The City installed solar photovoltaic systems** at Fire Stations 3 & 6, Parks & Recreation Community Center, downtown MET Transit Center, and the new library.

In 2019, the City Council created the Energy & Conservation Commission (ECC), composed of seven citizens with backgrounds in energy or conservation. The ECC is tasked with examining the City's energy and water usage and developing strategies for energy and water conservation, recycling, alternate fuels, alternate transportation, alternate energy sources, and buildings that are more efficient.

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