Attendees:
Please see attached sign-in sheet.

On February 27, 2012, at 9:30 am, the City hosted a second meeting with organizations specializing in housing, including, the Federal Government (Senator Cantwell’s office), City representatives, Habitat for Humanity, Community Frameworks, Spokane Transit Authority, residents, and others, to discuss a proposed housing needs assessment for residents currently living within the FAFB Accident Potential Zones (APZs); the housing needs assessment will help the City develop alternative housing choices for residents of Airway Heights and will help achieve the goal of reducing residential density over time south of SR-2.

The meeting began with introductions. Mayor Rushing then gave a brief summary of the previous meeting concerning southside housing. His summary of the previous meeting addressed alternative housing options for residents living within the APZ 2. Mayor Rushing began with a statement of the goals from the previous meeting; reduction in residential density within the APZs without forcing residents to leave their homes and to provide alternative housing options that are at or below their current cost of living for those living within the APZs.

Mayor Rushing moved on to explain that the media showed some interest from the previous meeting; particularly in the housing assessment for those living within the APZs. The media showed interest in the scope and funding of the housing assessment.

To expand on the scope and funding of the housing assessment Mayor Rushing introduced City Manager Albert Tripp for discussion. City Manager Tripp detailed the scope of the assessment. The scope of the assessment would include what is affordable, where could be an option in terms of other housing and what are the desires and needs of the residents.

City Manager Tripp then introduced Chris Venne from Community Frameworks to discuss a draft housing needs assessment. Chris Venne discussed the outline. He mentioned that the assessment is solely focused on housing as opposed to a wider study that might include transportation and/or education. Chris Venne described that the proposed study would assess the current housing conditions and opportunities overall within the City. The assessment will provide a good inventory to determine what the City has to start with as well as the demographic characteristics of those living within the APZs. The demographic characteristics will show a representation of who lives within the APZs, their ages, income levels, etc., which will help to determine what they will be able to
afford and what types of housing they might desire. Once there is an understanding of who lives within the APZs the City may then identify a diverse menu of housing options, including existing and new. Chris Venne reiterated some housing options previously discussed including, new rental apartments, home ownership through Habitat for Humanity, a new mobile home park, and housing for people with special needs.

Chris Venne went on to state that the survey element to the housing assessment will determine what types of housing these people might be interested in. The survey element will ask these residents, of these available housing options which would you choose and how would you choose them. The menu of housing options must reflect what is actually desirable to residents within the APZs. Chris Venne went on to suggest that when it is determined what housing options are most appealing to these residents, the next step will be to develop strategies to actually provide these housing options, making them available within the City. During the presentation Chris Venne acknowledged another critical aspect of the assessment, which is to develop a plan for what will happen to the property once residents begin to move out.

Chris Venne presented the financial aspect as the last issue to develop a strategy for. The financial aspect will require a plan to identify where the money will come from. Chris Venne acknowledged that additional financial resources will need to be made available as current resources are inadequate to accomplish the task. Chris Venne recommended that the final part of the assessment be a demonstration project to implement a feasible housing project identified in the assessment on a small scale to test the results.

Ms. Patton commented that she lives in a three bedroom mobile room and wanted to know if she would be able to live in a three bedroom house or apartment as part of this project. Chris Venne responded that she should be able to obtain something that is comparable to what she already has. Mayor Rushing commented that the housing assessment questionnaire ought to address residents concerns such as this. The resident expressed concerns that the alternative housing would not be comparable. City Planner Braaten added that the plan for providing alternative housing options to relocate the residents would not follow an old paradigm of forceful relocation. Planner Braaten stated that any proposed development associated with this plan should and will reflect the desires of those being relocated. Planner Braaten added that the first task is to determine what the needs and desires of the residents are and then transition those needs into the feasibility aspect; addressing issues such as can we get there. Toni Riordan agreed and added that an array of housing choices will need to be provided due to the range of desires of the residents. Ms. Riordan acknowledged that many residents may not be able to afford a three bedroom housing unit. Chris Venne added that there may be further limitations due to funding to construct housing for people with disabilities from sources such as HUD which almost always builds one bedroom units.

Ms. Patton then presented a question; what would happen if only half of those offered an alternative housing option agreed to move? City Planner Braaten responded that this would achieve one of the goals of reducing density. Mayor Rushing acknowledged that not everyone will be willing to relocate due to the fact that they have been living in their current location for so long. Mayor Rushing reiterated that the main goal is to reduce the density within the APZs while the ultimate goal would be to move everyone out. A comment was made that landowners of the MHPs will be losing money as people start to move out. Mayor Rushing agreed that a funding source would need to compensate the landowners for their property as residents began to move.

City Manager Tripp asked Chris Venne whether the product of the housing assessment and demonstration project would include not only housing but elements such as basic infrastructure, access to transit, parks, etc. Mr. Venne remarked that the assessment should be looked at holistically to include other elements. Mr. Venne commented that funders are very aware of the important aspects of citing houses such as location to parks, access to amenities, and proximity to employment.

A resident then asked; are there any ideas of buying Solar World to rent or sell them as apartments? Planner Braaten responded that Solar World would be used only for commercial purposes. Mayor Rushing mentioned
that the goal for Solar World is to convert the complex to a business park with several small office spaces. Additionally, Mayor Rushing stated that one idea for the south side area is to encourage small specialty shops and offices to locate there.

Ms. Riordan posed the question whether the City should distribute a pre-survey that would ask the residents what types of housing and services they would desire prior to distributing the housing survey in which the residents would choose what types of housing and services they desire from the housing menu. Planner Braaten responded that the demographic analysis should be thorough enough to determine desirable types of services. Mr. Venne remarked that in addition to a demographic analysis, a Steering Committee could be formed to identify the transitional needs and desirable services for residents within the APZ and the City as a whole. Mr. Hatley noted that the housing needs assessment should be considered the initial basic preliminary research prior to more robust research at a later date. An additional comment was made that the total number of housing options available all together is actually very limited so it would be easy to address all the available options within the housing needs assessment itself.

Ms. Patton raised a concern that with her condition she may need ADA accessible options in the near future. Her question regarded whether her needs would be considered on the housing menu. Chris Venne responded that it would absolutely be considered. Mayor Rushing added that grant funding qualifications and ADA laws require ADA accessibility to be part of any proposal. Comment was added that new construction for apartments or single family homes can consider ADA accessibility more easily than retrofitting existing units. Rushing commented that the housing needs assessment will allow for residents to express their desire for ADA accessible housing units as opposed to their current living condition.

Chris Venne and Michelle were then presented with the question; have you found that when you start to build as a result of projects such as these does resistance from the community start to soften a bit? Michelle responded absolutely and added that all of the new homes that they build are ADA compliant nowadays. Michelle acknowledged that people are sometimes very skeptical of what affordable housing may look like and that nationally there is kind of a bad reputation, but that Community Frameworks and Habitat for Humanity homes are both higher end in terms of quality. Planner Braaten commented that the energy star homes that these organizations build have a higher upfront cost, but a savings over the life of the structure. Chris Venne commented that the idea is to build something that is sustainable over time with good energy efficient features and that most are be built to allow for residents to age in place within the residence without the need to move with age. Ms. Patton remarked that she has seen beautiful homes built by Habitat for Humanity. Chris Venne recognized that one of the challenges is raising the money to do these projects right. Planner Braaten noted that when not done right, a lot of money is spent on the maintenance of these structures later on, so they need to be built right the first time.

City Manager Tripp then asked Chris Venne what the timeline for completion would be. Chris Venne stated that a project of this scope will take about four months to complete. Mr. Venne clarified that careful consideration needs to take place when surveying the residents and articulated his hope that the residents knowledgeable of the project would give a proper introduction to the rest of the community to help lower the community’s resistance. Mayor Rushing suggested that the City may send out a letter explaining to residents the scope of the project and what they should expect from the survey. Chris Venne acknowledged that the more cooperation they have from the community, the more accurate the results will be and the faster the process will be completed.

City Manager Tripp then asked Chris Venne if he felt that the cost of the project would be reasonable considering the scope. Chris Venne responded affirmatively. Ms. Riordan asked whether any financing for the project has been identified. From this, Albert then led into his discussion concerning the status of the available funding sources for the project.
City Manager Tripp presented the projected cost of the study to be $20,000, one-fourth of which funding has been identified and secured. City Manager Tripp presented the resources available through the CDBG. These resources include funding sources for infrastructure, public facilities, and dollars to fund the demonstration project.

As City Manager Tripp concluded, the discussion turned to Mr. Hatley concerning Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI) and their involvement. Mr. Hatley stated that there may be planning money in the County available to help with the housing needs assessment, further stating his belief that the housing needs assessment cannot be fully publically funded due of a lack of public section funding and time restraints. Mr. Hatley suggested that funding be pursued through a public-private partnership. According to Mr. Hatley GSI has an interest in partnering with Avista and some other people to determine where private funding might come from. Mr. Hatley informed the attendees that GSI was working to determine where private sector funding may come from. Chris Venne then discussed the potential for private sector funding from Banner Bank. Mr. Venne stated that Banner Bank has a foundation that occasionally provides funding in the $2,000 to $5,000 range to non-profit housing projects. Mr. Hatley affirmed that additional private section funding should not be too difficult to accomplish. Other potential funding sources being considered are federal grant money and possible contributions from Fairchild. According to Mr. Hatley the Department of Defense (DOD) may be willing to contribute funding to deal with the encroachment issue. A staffer from Fairchild has currently been assigned to deal with the encroachment project. Mayor Rushing interjected with a comment that DOD showed concern that the project was being led by the private sector. Mayor Rushing stated that he is currently working on a letter to give to Fairchild which states that this effort is being led by the City. Mr. Hatley further presented the possibility that DOD and conservation groups have in other parts of the county come together to buy up the property in question and that this may be a possibility in Airway Heights.

Ms. Riordan posed the question; is there anything that can be done to engage their funding? Chris Venne responded that HUD qualifications are very technical and precise, although HUD may have pockets of money available through specific requests. Ms. Riordan responded that her office would make a request to HUD for ongoing funding assistance.

City Manager Tripp then presented his desire to meet with CDBG to discuss current and ongoing funding opportunities with that organization. Chris Venne noted that typically CDBG funding is not used for new construction above ground.

City Manager Tripp offered that the City may be able to develop a resolution to accommodate the housing needs assessment in order to help with accruing funding for implementation. Mayor Rushing commented that it needs to be stressed that this is a City led effort. City Manager Tripp offered to set-up a meeting the West Plains Chamber of Commerce to discuss any private sector funding that may be available.

Ms. Riordan asked if the tribes may be willing to provide any funding. Mr. Hatley discussed a previous proposal that had been presented to the Kalispell Tribe, to which there has yet to be an answer. The group agreed to take a wait and see attitude regarding this question.

City Manager Tripp provided a summary of the next steps, namely:
1. City Council will address the issue regarding the request for funding coming from the City.
2. Coordination with HUD to determine what funding may be available from them.
3. Coordinate with CDBG to see if there was a way to shift dollars to be able to fund planning related dollars.
4. Coordinate with West Plains Chamber to see if there are private dollars that can be brought to the table.
5. Send funding request letter to State and Federal Legislators as well.
Ms Riordan then informed the group that the Constituent Services may be able to assist in expediting things through the Federal system.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held March 19, 2012 at 9:30 am in the Public Works AWRF Conference Room.