

Brooks Champion's Centre gets \$425,250 provincial housing grant

Sandra Stanway
Brooks Bulletin

The Brooks Champion's Centre was given \$425,250 by the provincial government for affordable housing even though city council has still not given its final approval for the men's home.

"We're ready to go, once we hire a manager and get approval from the city," said Klaas Klooster, executive director of the Champion's Centre.

The funds will be used to purchase and renovate the existing property and will feature 14 units consisting of two transitional units and 12 bachelor units, of which two will be barrier free and wheelchair accessible.

The Champion's Centre organization is looking at purchasing the Wellness Centre that is for sale at 416-3rd Street West. On Feb. 2 council amended the Land Use Bylaw to allow a commercial building in the location.

Following a visit to the Medicine Hat Champion's Centre, council will discuss what conditions, if any, will be placed on the development permit.

City councillor Rolf Bander who has been leery of the project said he applauds the government for the initiative to fund such projects, however the funding will not guarantee the local Champion's Centre will go ahead.

"The availability of the funds has no effect on whether or not the location is the right location," he said.

He said the issue has never been funding, it is location though "it is gratifying to see the province step up to the plate in this format."

In addition to the provincial grant, the Champion's Centre received \$200,000 in donations towards the Brooks project.

Local chairman Darcy Driedger who has known about the approval for some time said while they are happy with the money, there is no idea if they will be granted permission to go ahead by the city. "We're happy. If the development permit goes ahead, we got the capability to take this to the next step," said Driedger.

The city will not make any decisions until they return from a visit to the Medicine Hat Champion's Centre on March 13.