A virtual meeting of the City of Black River Falls Ad Hoc Housing Study Steering Committee was held on November 5, 2026. Committee members Marc McDowell, Bobby Long, Sherri Larsen, Bob Becker, Shelly Severson, Jordan Nortman, Mayor Jay Eddy and City Administrator A. Brad Chown were in attendance. Committee members Jane Tande and Tim Tranberg were excused. Vierbicher Associates representatives Andy Kurtz, Jeff Even, and Isaac Alvarez were also in attendance.

Andy Kurtz led the meeting, introduced the Vierbicher project team and reviewed the housing market study process, including community and stakeholder surveys, demographic and market analysis, a public engagement event, and a final report to the Common Council. Committee members introduced themselves and discussed their perspectives on local housing needs.

Kurtz demonstrated the online community housing survey, including separate paths for residents, nonresidents who work in the community, and others with an interest in Black River Falls. Survey topics include housing experiences, affordability, barriers to housing, short-term rentals, accessory dwelling units, and preferred locations for development, rehabilitation, and redevelopment. The platform offers English, Spanish, and French language options. Electronic responses are preferred, but paper surveys will be accepted and entered by Vierbicher.

The committee discussed survey length, mapping features, privacy, and the display of aggregate polling results. Participants may leave and return to the survey, and partial responses are captured. Promotional materials will include the estimated completion time, closing date, and information about completing the survey over multiple sittings.

Larsen requested questions addressing unhoused residents, individuals staying temporarily with others, and doubled-up households. By consensus, the committee agreed to include a dedicated survey path for unhoused or housing-insecure respondents. Larsen will send proposed questions to Kurtz, and Chown will provide his contact information. Severson discussed school district data concerning unhoused students and families. Vierbicher will incorporate available school district information into the analysis.

Nortman raised concerns about older residents leaving the community because of limited senior housing options. Kurtz will evaluate questions concerning former residents and noted that they may participate through the nonresident survey path. The committee agreed that the study should address the full range of housing needs, including workforce, rental, low- to moderate-income, senior, assisted living, nursing home, and memory care housing.

Chown explained that the study will guide City decisions, inform prospective developers, and support funding applications. Vierbicher will analyze demographics, market conditions, affordability, and development capacity using the comprehensive plan and future land use maps. Recommendations may include changes to future land use designations where necessary to meet identified housing needs.

By consensus, the committee agreed to launch the survey early the following week after incorporating the additional questions. Kurtz will provide the revised survey link and a printable PDF to committee members for review, finalize the promotional flyer, and prepare social media content. Chown and committee members will distribute materials through City Hall, the library, community locations, social media, and professional networks. Vierbicher will monitor responses daily and provide reminders as needed.

The revised schedule calls for the survey to close during the first week of December, followed by data compilation, a public open house, and presentation of the finalized draft study in early March.

A. Brad Chown
City Administrator