



2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

The Missoula Organization of REALTORS® is the voice of the Missoula real estate industry. Our more than 600 members would like to know your thoughts on important issues that affect them. We thank you for being specific in your responses.

MOR has endorsed candidates in past elections, and may do so in these elections. If we consider an endorsement in your race, we may ask you and your opponent(s) to each meet with us for candidate interviews. Endorsement decisions are made by the Board of Directors.

Please return the questionnaire by **Friday, July 28** to Sam Sill at ssill@missoularealestate.com.

BACKGROUND

Name: Cathy Deschamps

Office You Are Seeking: City Council Ward 5

Mailing Address: PO Box 5903

City & Zip Code: Missoula, MT 59806

Phone: 406-544-8866

Email: Deschamps406@ProtonMail.com

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number: Cindy Stern 406-544-6725

Will you accept PAC contributions? I haven't made a decision on that yet but my contributions to this point are all from private citizens. I would consider local PACS that work to improve the community and it's citizens.

ISSUES

- 1) The median home price in the Missoula urban area increased from \$209,700 in 2012 to \$255,000 in 2016. Over that same period, the median income for a four-person family in Missoula decreased from \$62,800 to \$61,600. As a result, homeownership is increasingly out of reach for many Missoula families. This rapid increase in home prices is primarily because of a shortage of homes in affordable price ranges. This shortage is due in part to increasing costs of land, lot development, infrastructure, and building costs. To address this lack of affordability, the City of Missoula formed the Office of Housing and Community Development and intends to formulate a city housing policy.

For this policy to be successful, it must be arrived at through private and public sector collaboration, and focus on both regulatory reform and development incentives. **As a member of the City Council, which specific policy changes, if any, would you support to help increase the affordability of housing?** I believe we need to revisit the cost of building permits and some of the impact fees/restrictions. I am in favor of lowering the permit fees on single family homes 1200 sq ft or less. Affordable home subdivisions may have to continue being creative to keep costs down such as having the land in a trust. Millennials desire to own a home. They are not going to be satisfied living in an apartment complex. Those usually lack a pride of ownership because it is a temporary housing solution.

- 2) How to best preserve agricultural land continues to be a subject of debate. In 2016, Missoula County Commissioners unanimously rejected a proposal to require developers of lands with soils designated as important to agriculture to pay a per-acre mitigation fee or set aside one acre of similar land for each acre developed. A coalition of the development community, business community, farm families, and a conservation group opposed the proposal because it would create an undesirable development pattern, hurt farm families, worsen housing affordability, and jeopardize voluntary conservation of agricultural land. Consider how such a policy would fit the urban fringe area where we have already invested in schools, parks, trails, roads, sewer, and other infrastructure. **Should the City of Missoula adopt regulations similar to what was proposed for the county in order to preserve agricultural land? Or should the city focus on supporting voluntary conservation efforts?** Personally I support subdivisions that are able to set aside land for parks within the subdivision and incorporate at least one commercial lot such as a coffee shop or small general store. This promotes job growth and community involvement in the subdivision. I do believe park land in a subdivision should continue to be required. Another plus to the subdivision would be to set aside 1-2 acres of agricultural land for a community garden to be determined by the size of the development.
- 3) Inclusionary zoning is a controversial policy tool some local governments have used to try to increase the supply of affordable housing. Essentially, a jurisdiction changes its zoning to require that a certain percentage of housing units within a proposed development are affordable for lower income consumers. In some cases, the developer may be granted a density bonus or other regulatory incentives in return. Critics say that while inclusionary zoning may create affordable housing units for a few, the cost of these affordable units is passed on to consumers of market rate housing. Consequently, in the eyes of its critics, inclusionary zoning may not help or may even worsen the housing affordability issue it was designed to address. **Is inclusionary zoning an appropriate policy tool for addressing Missoula's lack of housing affordability?** Typically when a comp is pulled for a house that is going to be listed, the area sales of like homes are included. I would want to see evidence that less expensive homes in the

inclusionary zone aren't having a negative impact on the value of the more expensive homes, thus creating a loss for those homeowners investments.

- 4) Property taxes are the primary source of funding for Montana cities. The City of Missoula's property tax rate has steadily increased since the end of the recession. Consider the balance between providing services and infrastructure and city taxpayers' ability to pay. **In your opinion, has the City of Missoula struck the right balance?** If I'm elected to City Council, I would be a proponent of finding other ways to create revenue for the city. This may require the assistance of the state legislators but we have to explore every opportunity to give property owners some relief. Many are retired and on a fixed income. I do not wish to tax our citizens out of their homes. I support raising the gambling tax and that percentage of the raise should be designated for school improvements and technology only. We have more than enough funds going to tourism programs. The city receives quite a bit of free advertising from the media. Top cities to visit, is a common article we see for Missoula. I would be honored to be endorsed by the MOR. It's a valuable organization in providing critical information regarding the housing market to the city and city officials.