



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: Greg Strandberg

Office You Are Seeking: Ward 4

Mailing Address: 610 High Park Way, Apt. A

City & Zip Code: Missoula, MT 59803

Phone:

Email:

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number: Same

Will you accept PAC contributions? No

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?**

There's little if anything you can do about this.

There were 303 single family homes being constructed in 2007, with a value of \$31 million and 195 single family homes in 2016 with a value of \$20.3 million.

In 2007 we had 153 multi-family homes under construction, with a value of \$7.5 million and in 2016 we had 150 with a value of \$9.6 million.

We're building a lot fewer single family homes and about the same amount of multi-family homes, despite increasing our population to 71,000 from 67,000.

The mayor talks a big talk about building more housing, but I don't see that. Instead he drives up taxes, making it harder for long-time residents to stay in their homes. Rising property values don't really help when you want to live in your home and not sell it.

At this point Missoula needs to lower taxes and stop its love affair with bonding.

- 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?**

I imagine this'll be debated for some time. Jeez, even Dave Strohmair voted against keeping agricultural land recently, despite running on a county commissioner campaign that said he'd keep it. Now we're set to have more development. Who does that benefit? Probably rich out-of-towners or out-of-state companies, but not the average taxpayer, renter, or wage slave. So when you ask about regulations to preserve county land, I'm just not seeing the county do much in that department.

- 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?**

I don't know what you're talking about here. I will say that ADU's can be looked at two ways. One the one hand they benefit cash-strapped property taxpayers by giving them an extra source of rental/sale income. It also helps lower-income people find a place to live in town. And yet on the other hand it leads to urban infill problems. They look bad too, all crammed-in there like that. So I'd vote against the expansion of those things. I don't see them benefiting a whole lot of people, just a few.

- 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?**

Most property taxpayers know that taxes in Missoula are out of control, having gone up by 95% over the past 12 years. And where has that money gone? To some \$4 million 'pedestrian' bridge, \$7 million to private mall developers, \$3 million to buy a failing compost business that the city has to inject an additional \$4 million into next fiscal year?

When does it end?

It doesn't, not with the current nincompoops in charge. So I hope you'll get the word out about my candidacy so we can return some sanity to local government.

Thank you,
Greg Strandberg