



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: Jesse Luke Ramos

Office You Are Seeking: City Council (Ward 4)

Mailing Address: 425 Whitaker Drive

City & Zip Code: Missoula, MT 59803

Phone: (406) 334-0785

Email: jramos4council@gmail.com

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number:

Jennifer Monger (406) 350-1898 P.O. Box 541 Missoula, MT 59806

Will you accept PAC contributions? **Yes**

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? ***If elected to the Missoula City Council, I will prioritize housing affordability and advocate for policies that will help increase the supply of affordable housing – for both renters and buyers. The city needs to strategically rezone areas of town that would benefit from higher density development without compromising neighborhood character. Subdivision and townhouse regulations need to be reviewed for regulatory burden and the city should consider waiving impact fees or other upfront costs on housing projects that meet certain affordability criteria in order to incentivize more housing supply.***

- 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?** ***Absolutely not. These kinds of conservation efforts need to be voluntary. While agriculture and food security are of high importance to all of us, having a community where housing is affordable and accessible is of the utmost importance for many social and economic reasons. We should not be giving up the very limited developable land in the city and urban fringe when agriculture preservation efforts could be more widespread and meaningful when done voluntarily and outside the urban area.***
- 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?** ***No, inclusionary zoning is poor public policy. There are better ways to address housing affordability.***
- 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? *While Missoula has many nice amenities that make this place our home, I believe the City of Missoula has gone too far in its spending and tax increases. Many of fellow Missoulians, particularly those living on fixed incomes are struggling to keep up with the city's spending habits. I believe Missoula would be best served by efforts to grow the tax base rather than further burdening existing taxpayers.*