



2018 State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

The Missoula Organization of REALTORS® advocates for REALTORS® and consumers. Our members would like to know your thoughts on priority REALTOR® issues. We thank you for being specific in your responses.

MOR has endorsed candidates in past elections and may do so in these elections. In order to be considered for an endorsement, candidates must return a completed questionnaire to MOR by the deadline.

Please return the questionnaire by no later than 8:00 AM Monday, March 26 to Sam Sill at ssill@missoularealestate.com.

BACKGROUND

Name: Rep. Mike Hopkins

Office You Are Seeking: Re-Election, House District 92

Mailing Address: P.O Box 848

City & Zip Code: Missoula, 59806

Phone: (406) 531-1775

Email: MikeforMontana@gmail.com

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number: Mike Hopkins, P.O Box 848 Missoula MT 59806 (406) 531-1775

Will you accept PAC contributions? Yes

ISSUES

Home prices in Missoula County have increased rapidly since the end of the economic downturn and incomes haven't kept up. The median home sales price for 2017 was \$268,250, a price unaffordable for many Missoula families. These rapidly increasing prices are due primarily to a shortage of housing, particularly in more attainable price ranges. As a state legislator, you will evaluate policies that will impact housing and economic development in Missoula County.

- 1) State law broadly outlines the process by which local governments must review subdivisions of land. Subdivision is the primary vehicle for creating lots to be developed into homes for sale. Subdivision review policies attempt to balance communities' housing needs with protecting the environment, agriculture, wildlife habitat, public

safety, and other interests. **Does state law provide a framework for a balanced, efficient, and predictable review process at the local level, or are reforms needed? If reforms are needed, please specify.** Balancing housing needs with protecting the environment is important, however it seems to me like that balancing act is too often used by interest groups as an excuse to slow down or halt the approval process. This is one of the things that leads to a lack of supply when it comes to available housing in Missoula. We need more supply in Missoula and the approval process needs to be quicker and less political.

- 2) Regulatory reform may be one strategy for promoting housing affordability through state law. **What non-regulatory strategies should the legislature pursue? If strategies require funding, where should it come from?** I like the idea of a tax credit. As far as funding goes, I serve on the Long-Range-Planning committee which handles the majority of the interest distribution from the coal tax trust fund and that's a conversation that I would be willing to have. That being said I think there is a number of ways you could structure it to make it palatable to the legislature.
- 3) The upcoming legislature may consider changes to state law governing tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within the City of Missoula's urban renewal districts to combat blight and promote economic development. However, critics of TIF say that these urban renewal districts can be in place for many years, and TIF diverts property tax revenue away from schools and county governments. Supporters respond that TIF grows the property tax base and creates jobs, and that once the urban renewal districts sunset, the taxing jurisdictions have significantly more revenue than they would have otherwise had. **Does state law governing TIF and urban renewal districts need to be reformed? If so, how?** TIF is one of the only economic development tools that local governments have at their disposal. Many members of the legislature worry that local governments can designate almost anything as "blight". So first I think it is incumbent on local governments to be careful how they use TIF so as to not give state government a reason to implement reforms. As long as Blight designations are used responsibly and TIF dollars stay local, I don't see any reason to reform a tool that has delivered real, significant benefits to the local tax base.