



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: Tom Winter

Office You Are Seeking: House of Representatives District 96

Mailing Address: PO Box 8541

City & Zip Code: Missoula, MT 598807

Phone: 763.1805

Email: tawinter@me.com

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number:

Barbara Berens

3010 St. Thomas Dr

Missoula, MT 59803

273.1243

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.

The lack of affordable and market-rate housing is a major impediment to Montana's, and my district's, future growth and prosperity. We cannot have a prosperous community with equality of opportunity, upward mobility, and good quality of life if only the wealthiest can afford their own homes. The importance of sustainable affordable and market-rate housing and development is not properly reflected in the legislature. I intend to change that.

- 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.**

I am sympathetic to the diverse needs the subdivision review process and the townhome review process must meet. In Missoula County, we have a scarcity of land available to accommodate industry, institutional uses, workforce housing, and agriculture. All of these uses must compete for space in a valley with sensitive ecological concerns. At the state level the subdivision review process has become too long and too costly. In order to balance the health of our ecosystems, the preservation of prime agricultural land, and the accelerated demand for housing, the subdivision review process must become more streamlined and effective. Reforming the subdivision review process in hand with modifying the townhome exemption process is a priority of mine, as my district sits squarely in the urban/suburban fringe of the Missoula metro area and will be most affected by these policies. Please keep in mind that reform is not a coded way of saying that preservation of agriculture lands will be ignored, nor that development will run roughshod over local preferences. I believe that a more transparent, streamlined subdivision review will lead to better outcomes for all: If developers, neighbors, and the conservation community have faith in the process, and if the process has clear goals with predictable outcomes, all stakeholders can benefit through targeted investment in lands that are developed or conserved to in accordance with their highest and best use.

- 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 would argue that housing affordability is a symptom of a larger issue that all of Montana, and really the whole country, faces. Wages have failed to increase commensurate with increases in worker productivity, while the cost of goods and services have continued to rise. Housing is but one part of a wage problem that particularly afflicts Montana, with its unusually low pay. On the non-regulatory side, there is much that state and local governments can do to incentivize companies to move to, or be created in, our state. We are an educated workforce with a low cost of living and a high quality of life. Our citizens have the highest per capita start-up rates in the nation. We can leverage the human capital and the the natural capital

that are our birthright - look to Bozeman's growth in the technology sector, or, closer to home, the rehabilitation of the Bonner Mill site - to create good paying jobs that allow workers to purchase their own homes.

- 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?**

I support the use of TIF districts as one option in a municipality's toolkit, but am troubled by some of its specific applications. In Missoula, our tax rates within the city have, until recently, continued to rise as we grow in population without a concomitant growth in the tax base. Walling off some development from taxes that would presumably occur regardless of TIF robs the city of revenue. As mentioned above, the affordability of Missoula for working families is slipping away - there is much Montana cities can do to spur the development of affordable housing, including streamlining the permitting process for multi- and single- family housing as well as re-zoning certain areas to encourage residential development. TIF, in its current iteration, is one way Montana cities can spur housing development near preexisting voter-funded utilities and improvements. I am troubled, at times, by the longevity of certain TIF districts and believe that they can outlive their usefulness and eventually become a drag on taxpayer support for public schools, for example. I would support reform to TIF and urban renewal district law that forces greater scrutiny of their longevity, and also a greater emphasis on the creation of market rate and affordable housing within TIF districts specifically.