



2019 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

The Missoula Organization of REALTORS® is the voice of the Missoula real estate industry. Our more than 700 members would like to know your thoughts on important issues that affect them. We thank you for completing the survey.

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 MOR Board of Directors.

Please return the questionnaire by **Friday, July 26** to Dwight Easton at deaston@missoularealestate.com.

BACKGROUND

Name: Alan Ault

Office You Are Seeking: City Council Ward 4

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CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number:

Alan Ault PO Box 1101 406-370-4365

Will you accept PAC contributions?

YES

ISSUES

- 1) Between 2014 and 2018 the median home price in the Missoula urban area increased 28.9% from \$225,000 to \$290,000. Over that same period, the median income for a four-person household in Missoula increased 8.6%, from \$64,800 to \$70,400; however, the affordability index declined from 122 to 93. 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. The City of Missoula Office of Housing and Community Development recently presented a city housing policy. The policy outlines several private and public sector regulatory reform and development incentives. **As a member of the City Council which**

specific policy changes would you support? The application of parts of the policy will depend on the particulars of the development. The Housing Policy Steering Committee has a lot of developers and builders and as the experts, I would really listen to their recommendations of the best way to develop.

- 2) Inclusionary zoning (IZ) 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 be offered at below market price for lower income consumers. In some cases, the developer may be granted a density bonus or other regulatory incentives in return. Proponents argue that market-based incentives are not effective in creating affordable housing units and cities must mandate IZ to increase stocks. Critics say that while IZ may create affordable housing units for a few, the cost of these affordable units is transferred to consumers of market rate housing. Consequently, in the eyes of its critics, IZ may not help or may even worsen the housing affordability issue it was designed to address. **What is your opinion of inclusionary zoning and is it an appropriate policy tool for addressing Missoula's lack of housing affordability?** IZ does not work for creating affordable housing that we need in Missoula. It creates a small amount of housing which rises in price as it is offered on the market. Plus the developer has to raise the price of the other units he built to offset losses on the low income housing he had to provide. So I say NO.
- 3) Physical and regulatory constraints on developable land including flood hazards, the Airport Influence Area, slopes greater than 25%, farmland of importance, public land, land under conservation easement, managed land, and developed land, leaves approximately 6% of land in and around the city that is suitable and capable for residential development. Providing over 60,000 jobs, Missoula is an employment anchor in western Montana, but a quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. Having a large percentage of Missoula's workforce that commutes causes monetary and social costs. These costs include fuel and vehicle maintenance, road maintenance and replacement, congestion, pollution, long commute times, quality of life and community character, health and environmental concerns, and worker productivity. Further, it is estimated that the lost property tax from commuters who live outside of the county is approximately \$6.6 million per year. **As a member of the City Council, which specific policy changes, if any, would you support to increase development in Missoula?** What I want to see is lowering the development costs by revamping the permit and inspection costs, open space for developments with less open space bonds. I would look more to annexation and small developments within city limits. I agree we need builder/developer incentives, but the big problem is the hoops the developers have to go through with the city..
- 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 and recently Missoulians have expressed surprise at increases in property tax assessment values by the Department of Revenue. 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?** Not at all. We have a spending problem and the TIF program reduces taxes going toward essential services. There are items like stopping pet projects, new busses, more staff, etc. that can be cancelled, deferred or put to the voters.

- 5) City Council recently passed a resolution in support of Missoula County's federal BUILD grant application to help fund streets and infrastructure west of Reserve Street between Mullan and Broadway. Support for the resolution, at the committee level, was not unanimous and there was discussion regarding where development infrastructure should be targeted. **What is our opinion of the BUILD grant request and how much involvement do you believe the council should take in coordinating growth policy with the County?** The BUILD program would be great for the Mullan road development. The city and county must work together on growth policies for the betterment of the entire Missoula area. I believe there must be regular meetings to discuss land availability and how the city and county can work together to secure BUILD monies.