



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: Sandra Vasecka

Office You Are Seeking: City Council Ward 6

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3953

City & Zip Code: Missoula, MT 59806

Phone: 406-529-3851

Email: vaseckaforcitycouncil@gmail.com

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number: Sandra Vasecka, PO Box 3953, Missoula, MT 59806, 406-529-3851

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?**

I do support the reduction of regulations, such as reducing the amount of parking requirements and elimination or at least reducing the minimum square lot footage requirement in homeownership projects. I also support reducing the setback requirement.

- 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?**

I don't believe inclusionary zoning is the answer to our affordable housing problem. One of the reasons why I am against IZ is because I am generally against increasing regulations, and know that the more red tape a developer has the more the cost of the home will be. We can't solve our affordable housing problem with regulation on top of regulation.

Another reason I am against it is due to the thinking of a member of the Missoula Housing Steering Committee, Hermina Jean Harold, "According to Harold, if a developer had to make nine market rate houses cost \$350,000 instead of \$300,000 in order to build one affordable unit at \$150,000, that's still a win for the non-wealthy who wouldn't have been able to afford the \$300,000 unit anyway."

(https://missoulian.com/news/local/mandatory-vs-voluntary-affordable-housing-missoula-grapples-with-policy-choices/article_30eba215-7dd2-5926-820e-854420639ef3.html)

I know this is just one example, but with lower- and middle-class families, \$50,000 is a lot of money, and is often the deciding factor of whether or not to put an offer in for a home. With her thinking, 9/10 would "lose", and I don't agree with that.

- 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?**

I do not agree with regulations such as the prohibition of building on slopes greater than 25%, as well as the most recent discussion about expansion of regulations regarding townhomes. From my understanding, these regulations prohibit the amount of units TEDs can have and will lengthen the review process, which in turn adds to the costs of developing, which adds to the price of the home, and will only add to the affordable housing problem. For the other policies mentioned, I'm sure it is known by now that I want to see unwarranted regulations to be discontinued; reduced if anything. Going further, there are some city codes that I would like to see amended. Some examples include 15.52.080 through 15.52.110 - Building Security Code for Private Residences and 15.66.80 through 15.66.120 - Impact Fees. When I am elected, I will gladly support policy changes that reduce regulations and allow more developer freedom within the city of Missoula.

- 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?**

No, the city of Missoula has not. The city is trying to provide all of the services that Missoula wants. That is not the city's job. We should focus on supplying what the city needs. By eliminating unnecessary spending, it allows the property tax payer relief, and in turn helps with the affordable housing problem.

- 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?**

If the grant is available at the federal level, and is going to go to a city regardless, then we should apply for it. I also believe the city council should have open and honest communication and coordination with the county on growth. Because county land is where the city will grow into, it is important to be very involved in the communication between the two entities.