

Housing Development

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. **What changes to Subdivision law do you support to encourage needed development of housing while balancing other community values?**

A: I support making zoning decisions at the lowest level possible, preferably at the city council level for property within city limits and county commissioner level for property outside city limits. It is the people of a community who will be most affected by the result.

Regulatory reform may be one strategy for promoting housing affordability through state law. **Are there non-regulatory strategies that the legislature should pursue, so please enumerate? If strategies require funding, where should it come from?**

A: "Affordable housing" is somewhat of an oxymoron since it really means "cheap" housing. What developer would build cheap housing without being induced by a government subsidy or forced by law to provide it as part of some commercial project? If I have to choose between these two extremes, I would prefer inducements to force. These can take the form of outright subsidies or tax incentives. The bottom line is the taxpayers are going to pay the difference between the market rate and the "affordable" rate.

Tax Law

State Law provides for tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within 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. **What changes to TIF statues would you recommend responding citizen complaints and improve the program?**

A: Boards should be elected rather than appointed. Reporting should be frequent and transparent. Subsidies to commercial enterprises should be rare and justified by rigorous, quantitative analysis of the future benefits.

Property taxes are the primary revenue generator used to fund local government services. Recently increased mil levies multiplied by increasing property value assessments have left many homeowners asking for relief. **What are your thoughts on the current taxation structure for local government? What changes, if any, would you propose/support?**

A: Increases in mil rates should be approved by a 2/3 or 3/4 majority of affected voters (see my answer to the first part of Housing Development above). The process for challenging increased assessments should be transparent and accessible to all homeowners.

Economic Development

While the unemployment rate in Montana has been quite low for several years prior to the COVID pandemic, growth in wages has remained relatively stagnant compared to increases in housing costs. **As a state legislator, how would you propose to help grow and attract good paying jobs in Montana and specifically Missoula County?**

A: The study of economics teaches us that, over the long term, supply and demand will come into balance. Government cannot create any jobs (other than more government jobs). What government can do, by regulation and taxation, is discourage jobs. By making it easier for companies to do business in Missoula and Montana, government will create an atmosphere which is conducive to the creation of jobs (demand) and if pay rates are appropriate to the cost of living here, people will apply for those jobs (supply). For pay rates to be attractive, companies must be able to make a profit after paying those wages and they can only do so if the regulatory and tax regime allows them to do so.

Fair Housing

The National Association of REALTORS include sexual orientation and gender identity anti-discrimination language in their code of ethics. Montana does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity. **As a state legislator would you support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity?**

A: These two issues are not equivalent and should be addressed separately. While I support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, I do not support such legislation with regard to gender identity. Allowing a person to decide what under what gender they will be treated creates inequality for the rest of society in areas including but not limited to the use of bathrooms and participation in sports activities.