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Respondent

8

Anonymous

85:49

Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Mirtha Becerra

2. New development activity has an impact on home cost, access and ultimately affordability. In 2019 the City of Missoula Office of Housing and Community Development presented a city housing policy outlining several private and public sector regulatory reform and development incentives. As a Council Member, what specific policies would you pursue to address the community's housing shortage? *

The recommendations outlined in the housing policy can be grouped into these for main aspects of growth and development:

- Track and analyze progress for continuous improvement;
- Align and leverage existing funding resources to support housing;
- Reduce barriers to new supply and promote access to affordable homes;
- Partner to create and preserve dedicated affordable homes.

I believe the city has implemented all of these in different ways. I believe the creation of the affordable housing trust fund has had a tangible effect in the community by preserving and creating housing options. I would like to continue to support and grow the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I would also support the city to continue to land bank as a means to partner with affordable housing developers on projects that will create permanent affordable housing. I firmly believe a new zoning code and a unified development ordinance will help reduce some of the barriers to new supply. I have and will continue to support a code reform process that's inclusive and will provide us with outcomes that will benefit all sectors of the community.

3. Missoula is currently undergoing zoning "*code reform*"; what three changes would you propose for the update? *

I believe a form-based code approach to development will provide the roadmap for growth that's both intentional and effective. I would support a unified development ordinance that makes it easier for both developers and staff to implement our regulations. I will continue to advocate for transit-oriented development and for development that is context sensitive. I would support short term and long-term implementable outcomes to be expected from the code reform process. Short term policies that will help us address more immediate issues and long-term regulations that will serve us well into the future. I believe a code reform update focused on a comprehensive approach to development will be the most effective change we can hope for.

4. A quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. It is estimated that the lost property tax from commuters is in excess of \$6.6 million per year. As a member of the City Council what would you do to encourage people to live within the City? *

I think there are many reasons why people live in areas outside Missoula County. I think some of those reasons are based on lack of affordable housing, lack of housing in general, but also because the housing market does not meet the needs and wants of those searching for a place. Having a diversity of housing options is, in my opinion, one way we can encourage people to reside in Missoula County.

5. 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 local governments. What changes to TIF statutes would you recommend, if any, to respond to citizen concerns? *

TIF is one of the very few tools we have to create revenue that can be reinvested in the community (parks, infrastructure-streets, sidewalks, sewer, etc.) Without the increment generated by the investments we make in the community, there would be very little funding that could perhaps be remitted back to the taxing jurisdictions. I believe now being able to include workforce housing as a qualifying TIF investment, we can seek more partnerships with affordable housing developers to generate more housing in the community. I think TIF has been an effective tool for the city, and I don't believe it should be eliminated. I think a conversation about the longevity of URDs as well as the type of projects we want to prioritize as well as the amount of investment into projects could be a valuable conversation to have.

6. Do you support the City's anti-discrimination ordinance? How would you support Fair Housing for all in Missoula? *

I absolutely do. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status. I believe our Non-Discrimination Ordinance bolsters a federally mandated act that we already enforce. Our collaborations with the entities that work on the realm of ensuring fair housing in Missoula such as the Human Resource Council, the Housing Authority, etc. are one way we follow the intent of our Non-Discrimination Ordinance.

7. Property taxes are the primary source of funding for Montana cities. The City of Missoula's property tax rate has steadily increased over the last decade, putting additional financial pressure on the cost of housing. Given limited funding opportunities how would you prioritize city services? *

I believe the City of Missoula provides good services given the very limited resources it has. Every year City departments prioritize their budgets to continue to provide necessary and essential services to the community. How and if we approve those budget requests is how we city councilors prioritize the services our community receives every year. I firmly believe we need to focus on diversifying our funding stream. Tax reform is necessary to better reflect our current economy and our current needs. That will require legislative power outside of the City Council.

8. What, if any, local option tax(es) would you support? *

We are currently not capturing any revenue from tourism in our state or in our city. I would support a well-structured tourist tax that is directly linked to providing relief to Missoula residents.

9. As a member of the City Council what do you believe should be the top three priorities for the City? *

Housing, Houselessness, climate change.

10. Given the upcoming zoning code reform project, what are the two to three resources that you will use to make informed decisions? *

Community feedback from a robust public engagement process. Continuous updates from staff and consultants. Implementability and enforceability of the recommendations that emerge from the process. Feedback and opinions from those who will have to use and execute the new code.

11. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number *

Barbara Berens

12. Will you accept REALTOR® Political Action Committee campaign contributions? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.