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Respondent

13

Anonymous

128:25

Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Gwen Nicholson, City Council (Ward 1)

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? *

My approach would focus on increasing the amount of truly affordable housing, and empowering renters by giving them greater resources in their efforts to find and keep housing.

This would include:

- creating a guaranteed right to counsel for tenants in disputes with landlords in eviction court.
- establishing funds for land partnerships and co-operatives.
- establishing funds for rental fee reimbursement.
- eliminating minimum parking requirements, except for those with disabilities, to allow for greater ease in creating new housing.
- Calling on the Missoula Redevelopment Agency to set affordability parameters and renter's protection in their policies.

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

- Limiting the number of tourist home units per parcel and building for all residential areas.
- Eliminating parking requirements in areas with access to transit.
- Expanding areas where two-unit and multi-dwelling houses/buildings are permitted.

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? *

We need to increase density, increase the number of affordable housing units, reduce street traffic, and overall make it less legally and financially onerous to be a renter in Missoula.

We can aid this partially by eliminating minimum parking requirements near transit, making greater investments in public transit, expanding bike lanes, and encouraging the development of denser housing units (such as duplexes, triplexes, and other forms of multi-family housing).

We also need to give more aid and resources to renters and tenants, especially those with low incomes. This would include setting more affordability requirements, expanding access to legal representation in evictions, allocating funds for rental assistance, protecting mobile home parks, and encouraging the development of land partnerships and co-operatives.

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? *

There needs to be greater transparency and accountability in the TIF process, with more opportunity for residents to offer input and participate in the decision-making process around which projects are prioritized and where Urban Renewal District lines are drawn. There need to be more mechanisms in place to allow opportunities to review the progress of projects, and evaluate whether or not they are worthy investments.

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

I strongly support Missoula's anti-discrimination ordinance. The best way to further support fair housing in Missoula is to establish further protections and resources for historically underrepresented communities.

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 would deprioritize funding for some Missoula Redevelopment Agency contracts on a case-by-case basis, as well as cut back on superfluous funds for law enforcement.

I would prioritize more immediately necessary services, such as the climate action program and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I would also place a greater focus on infrastructure, particularly Public Works and their plow services, and subsidizing bike paths and sidewalks.

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

I would support local option taxes on tourism and short-term rentals. However, it's important to note that efforts to create local option taxes have been stymied in the past by the Legislature. So, establishing a local option tax would require some lobbying efforts in Helena.

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

- Making housing more affordable and accessible.
- Serving and aiding vulnerable communities, including the LBGTQ+ community, Indigenous communities, low-income communities, and those experiencing homelessness.
- Expanding city services, especially our transit systems.

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

- North-Missoula Community Development Corps, Missoula Tenants Union, and feedback from residents in my ward.

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

Max Cumming, 240 Mount Street, (203) 482-1523

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.