

1. Name & office you are seeking: \*

Betsy Craske, Missoula City Council, Ward 1

## Private Property Rights

2. What does "support for the rights of private property owners" mean to you? \*

As a homeowner, I recognize that owning a home is planting a stake in your community and is the American dream. Beyond that, people who own property and use it in a way that conforms to community standards is something that I support.

3. Can you think of an example when the city government should NOT fully recognize private property rights? \*

I believe that private property owners rights are important with reasonable restrictions. I don't support things that are in conflict with the surrounding environment or community as a whole, such as dumping waste into the river from your private property, but generally I think that zoning and reasonable regulations for use support property rights of owners.

## Housing Affordability, Availability & Non-discrimination

4. What are your thoughts about Accessory Dwelling Units? \*

I am supportive of ADU's as a tool to support more density and affordable housing in a reasonable way. ADU's support multi-generational housing, and are supported by the City of Missoula, and I think they can be a really important tool for supporting the growth of our city.

5. What are your thoughts about Short-Term Rentals? \*

From what I understand on the research done in Missoula specifically, STRs have not had a great impact on rental availability. While we have a crunch on home rentals in Missoula, we are continuously developing and building more, which provides more housing options. I support the modest regulation to register STRs with the city, and I think it is important to find balance between local homeowners who use STR units to help afford their life here in our community while also meeting the housing needs of our community as a whole.

6. What are your thoughts on market-rate housing and development? \*

We need more housing! One of the way to address housing problems is to allow housing to be built. I believe there is a way to balance market-rate housing with the needs of the community. Builders and realtors can all be part of the team and solution to our multi-faceted housing issues. We need housing at all points along the continuum.

Ward 1 is experiencing growth and development in different ways in different neighborhoods. Development is happening much more on the Northside than in the Rattlesnake, and I believe that there needs to be shared development and responsibility across all neighborhoods in Missoula.

7. What action can the City take to help with housing affordability and availability? \*

I think that the City can partner with organizations who are working on housing affordability and availability as well as develop zoning and code to help guide development in our community. The City could have clear and concise code reform and building permit expectations so that the private market knows what the regulations are and are able to meet them in a timely manner. The City can also provide direction through neighborhood planning, master plans, and land use plans, all of which will help guide these efforts.

8. REALTORS® believe in fair housing policies, anti-discrimination and opportunity for all. What does "fair housing" mean to you, and can you give an example of it? \*

I support fair housing policies, anti-discrimination, and opportunity for all.

## Infrastructure & Transportation

9. There are many planned infrastructure projects in Missoula. What is one that hasn't been addressed that you'd like to see and why? \*

I was disappointed to hear that the East Missoula Railroad Bridge project will not be moving forward at this time. By not addressing this problem, our community will see the possibility of accidents and injury continue to rise, and this area is growing and is vital for all modes of transportation.

10. What are the biggest opportunities Missoula has in infrastructure and transportation when it comes to housing and growth demands? \*

Missoula housing and growth demands will continue to rise, and I think that recognizing the high cost of development from the City's perspective means that we need to be partnered with and collaborate with those who can help develop our public infrastructure and transportation in alignment with our City priorities and values.

11. What is your position on connecting the City sewer and water to communities outside the current City limits? \*

I know that this is a complicated issue, and in general I am in favor of infrastructure and services to surrounding areas, provided that the neighborhood is supportive and funding is available. I understand the fiscal constraints and I'm happy to be a part of the solution to viable growth. The collaboration between the City and the County is so important in these discussions, and it can be complicated. While I want to see great services to all of these areas, there needs to be collaboration so that urban growth is balanced with our rural areas and the County.

## Economic Development

12. What do you see as the primary challenges in Missoula's Commercial Real Estate development? \*

I come from an education background (as a long time teacher) and I admit that my expertise is not in this area. I do know that the commercial tax base supports our town immensely. The Heart of Missoula is in my ward, and I will do anything I can to interface with commercial entities to support the healthy businesses of Missoula.

13. Which stakeholders would you contact as trusted sources on topics of economic development? \*

There are probably too many to name! A few that are at the top of the list are: Grant Kier with the Missoula Economic Partnership, realtors in the community, experts at the University who are able to lend their expertise to this issue, the Midtown Association, the Downtown Association, and using the Housing Report as a document that can help me better understand our demographics and needs in the community.

14. What is your definition of a "healthy real estate market" from both a commercial and residential point of view? \*

Again, as a non-expert in this area with my education background, I'd lean on the expertise of others mentioned previously to guide decision making in this realm. I feel that balance between supply and demand is essential. We've recently been unbalanced in favor of demand, and it seems that we're coming into a more balanced market which is overall more healthy for our community. My goal as a City Councilor is to see a more balanced market so that there are more opportunities for residents to be included. The more balance and the more representation of all Missoulians, the healthier our community is, and we'll be better off no matter where a resident is on the continuum.

## Taxation & Fiscal Responsibility

15. Share your thoughts on real estate property taxes and some options the city could explore to demonstrate fiscal responsibility that might alleviate property taxes. \*

Property taxes are a complicated and nuanced issue that our city and state continues to navigate. With limited control and my limited role, I can say that fiscal responsibility is a value that I would hold while maintaining services for the city, but it is a tricky and delicate balance. I know that the state is working on the issues related to property taxes, and I look forward to seeing how things like the housing rebates and graduated tax rate play out for our community.

16. What would you do as an elected official to demonstrate fiscal discipline? \*

My background is not in budgeting, but I am trying to learn and understand the city budget, which is complicated! I think that my role as a city councilor is to look at the budget the Mayor proposes and identify areas of frivolous spending. I recognize that bringing in more housing and development does increase the tax base, and I'm generally supportive of growth in this area. I am happy to see that the City is finally going to have the Riverfront Triangle developed which will add to the tax base.

## Community Engagement & Governance

17. Share a few current community issues where you think collaboration with REALTORS® would benefit the greater community. \*

I think that we all benefit when we collaborate. I know that realtors are often at the table when talking about city owned land, which is helpful to have all perspectives. I also think the Housing Report is useful to bring data to the table given that housing and affordability is one of the number one concerns.

18. What organizations in the community are your "go to" for building strategies in commercial development and housing? \*

I see a lot of overlap in this question and question 13!

19. Do you volunteer in the community, and if so, where? \*

Yes! I volunteer as often as I can. In addition to a deep history of volunteering in Missoula and serving on boards, most recently I have volunteered in the following ways/with the following organizations:

- Families for a Livable Climate
- Clark Fork School
- Sussex School
- Coach for Ice Badgers Nordic Ski Team
- Maintenance and building of the Pineview Ice Rink
- Canvassing in the 2024 national election cycle

Please answer the prompt below:

20. Treasurer's Name, Address, Email Address & Phone Number \*

Barbara Berens  
barbaraberens@gmail.com  
406-273-1243

21. Will you accept PAC contributions?

☐ Yes

☐ No