

Please answer the prompt below:

1. Name & office you are seeking: \*

Chris Foster, Missoula City Council, Ward 6, 4-year seat.

## Private Property Rights

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

I support the rights of private property owners as they are codified in local, state, and federal laws.

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

Yes. Private property owners, as citizens and as members of a community, have an obligation to ensure that, on or from their property, no harm is done to their tenants, neighbors, or community members. One does not have a "right" to build a bomb factory next to an elementary school, for example.

## Housing Affordability, Availability & Non-discrimination

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

They should be allowed.

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

Not a fan, but not opposed. Owners (corporate and individual) have an obligation to ensure that their property causes no harm to the neighbors/community.

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

Missoula needs more housing at all price points. Missoula DOES NOT need to become a sprawling mess like, LA, Phoenix, Denver, Dallas, Houston, or Atlanta. Developers ought to view development as an opportunity to build a place that the developer and the citizens can be proud of as their legacy, and not simply as an opportunity to make a profit and leave. That means that value is more important than price.

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

The City can and must become the developer of last resort when the private (for-profit) market cannot or will not build affordable housing, especially affordable housing for sale. In my opinion, the best way to do this is by building clusters of multi-story mixed use buildings, where appropriate. This is a great opportunity to build the tax base by increasing tax density, and to incorporate the values, goals, and lenses of the City into its built environment, e.g., environmentally friendly technologies, walkable/bikeable neighborhood designs, child care, rooftop gardens/green roofs, underground parking, the latest water/electric/sewage technologies onsite, etc. Again, the focus should be on value and not on price. The City has many options for financing these developments; it simply needs a plan and political will. And the city does not need to make a profit, so it can use fees that would have otherwise gone to developers, investors, and lenders, and use those funds to pay for things like child care. Other cities have been doing variations of these things for decades, both in the U.S. and in Europe. Copenhagen is a great example.

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? \*

To me, "fair" means that everyone should be able to work out a way to own their own home, by whatever ethical means. Everyone should have an opportunity to build wealth by building equity. So "fair" includes cash, mortgage, coop, land trust, and other arrangements.

## 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? \*

Personal conveyance vehicles, whether powered by electric, gasoline, diesel, or otherwise, require an enormous of space. In the past 100 years, they have proven to be the bane of the modern city, simply because of their spatial requirements. There are tremendous opportunities in public transportation, above-ground and below-ground. Also: Missoula should invest in public, city-wide WiFi, latest generation available (6G). This will prove to be a boon to the local economy. An enlarged fiber optic infrastructure should also be considered.

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

Missoula could build clusters/neighborhoods of mixed use buildings around public transportation hubs: downtown, midtown, West Broadway, North Reserve, the Wye, near the airport. Rents/prices could be relative to the proximity to the transportation hubs. People want their cars, but they don't want to have to use them all the time. Whenever possible, people want to walk or bike, whether it is to work, shop, play, or whatever. People want their office, child care, the coffee hut, the grocery store, etc., to be DOWNSTAIRS, not downtown. And they want the park/playground to be UPSTAIRS, not across town.

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

I'm ok with it as long as those communities are willing to pay for it. The problem with water and sewer infrastructure lies more in the maintenance of it rather than in the building of it. Many cities struggle to maintain their sprawling water/sewer systems. This is why I favor a denser, more compact City design, rather than sprawl. And I would frown on a developer who tried to use this scenario to force the City to bring infrastructure to a planned development outside City limits, unless the City has already made plans to annex the community in its growth plan.

## Economic Development

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

Missoula's most basic challenge is to create the conditions for a robust economy that provides opportunities for as many citizens as possible. That means, at minimum, a well educated, well trained and motivated workforce. In today's world, businesses and the workplace are changing rapidly, which means that the built environment (real estate development) must be adaptable to the changing needs and wants of the workplace.

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

Members of the educational community, members of the business community, local public policy makers, members of the financial and investment communities, builders, planners, architects, labor unions, interested nonprofits, engaged citizens, anyone with a legitimate interest who will not try to hijack consensus by politicizing the process for their own gain. This is important, because economic development is a heavy lift for a community, and it requires some compromise as well as substantial agreement amongst the stakeholders in order to generate the political will to move economic development forward. Other cities have depoliticized the process by deciding on the larger mandate (i.e., "given two choices, the City must choose the choice that represents the best return on investment for the City," or "all profits from this project must be reinvested in the aforementioned public transportation project," etc.) as a way to guide more detailed decisions.

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

To me, a healthy real estate market is one where area median incomes are in balance with area median prices. Citizens and businesses should reserve their right to decommodify and definance certain properties in order to give everyone an opportunity to build equity in their community.

## 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. \*

Missoula and Montana have an urgent need to find viable alternatives to the unfair and antiquated system of taxation that currently exists. I view this as a tremendous opportunity to explore other sources of revenue for the City, the county, the schools, and the State to implement--WITHOUT RAISING TAXES! Given the current political climate, the need for alternative funding sources is more critical than ever. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. We can learn from the many, many success and failure stories of other cities that have tried alternate funding sources over the past few decades. Right-wing and left-wing attempts to find money by cutting items from the Missoula City budget or by reallocating items in the budget have been spectacular failures. The City of Missoula is doing a good job with the people's taxes. Other cities have leveraged city-owned assets to seed long-term revenue streams from development fees, leases, and profits from public projects, while dramatically increasing their tax base and tax density (tax dollars per acre), which has allowed them to invest in local education, child care, and the like. In my opinion, the two best examples are the Copenhagen public asset corporations and the Montgomery County (MD) Housing Opportunities Commission. Democratic Socialists like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez like to point to Co-Op City in the Bronx, but if one looks closely one finds lingering debt issues with that model. As general rule, and given the way that taxes are collected in Montana, I would favor any development that increases Missoula's tax density. But, in my opinion, property taxes MUST be supplemented somehow, preferably without imposing another type of tax.

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

I'll ask the Mayor to send me a proposed budget that is lean but not anorexic. To the largest extent possible, I'll stay in regular contact with department heads about their budgets. Most of the budget is Police and Fire, and most of that is labor costs. Any cuts to the budget must come first from discretionary items. Public safety is not discretionary. I'll work to develop alternate funding sources that produce revenue streams without raising taxes, and that provide some resilience against the swings in the economic, business, and interest rate cycles. I'll work to make Missoula's economy as robust as possible, since "a rising tide lifts all boats."

## Community Engagement & Governance

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

MOR data collection is invaluable for informing the public conversation about housing and housing affordability.

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

MEP, MRA, MOR, et al.

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

River Road Leadership Team

Please answer the prompt below:

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

Chris Foster  
PO Box 402 Missoula MT 59805  
chrisfosterformissoula@gmail.com  
(406)217-0750

Please answer the following question below:

21. Will you accept PAC contributions?

☐ Yes

☒ No