

1. Name & office you are seeking: \*

Kristen Jordan, Ward 6 City Council reelection

## Private Property Rights

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

Supporting the rights of private property owners means balancing individual ownership with community values. In cases like the Old Post Hospital, we need to work collaboratively with developers, neighbors, and historic preservation advocates to find solutions that respect private ownership and serve the public good. The developer has offered viable ideas that deserve serious consideration, but so do concerns about preservation and neighborhood impact. Council should lead with transparency and flexibility to ensure we protect our historic assets and responsibly grow our housing stock, not pit one priority against the other.

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

When a property owner is following local and state laws, the City should not selectively ignore their rights, that kind of "spot zoning" undermines public trust and consistency in our processes. If existing laws aren't working for our community, then we need to change those laws through a transparent, democratic process. That's how we ensure fairness for everyone, property owners, renters, neighbors, and future generations, not by bending the rules for or against individual cases.

## Housing Affordability, Availability & Non-discrimination

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

I fully support Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as part of Missoula's broader strategy to create more affordable and flexible housing options. I'm glad the City has moved away from restrictive design requirements and unnecessary parking mandates; those changes make it easier for people to actually build ADUs. That said, I have mixed feelings about removing the sidewalk requirement. In Ward 6, we desperately need more sidewalks for safety and accessibility. I've heard directly from constituents about this need. However, one of my constituents wanted to build an ADU for his aging mother, but the sidewalk cost made it unaffordable. That's a real equity issue. I'd support a means-tested approach: allow lower-income homeowners to build ADUs without prohibitive infrastructure costs, while still ensuring that higher-income projects contribute to needed neighborhood improvements like sidewalks. We can grow smart and fair at the same time.

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

We need fewer short-term rentals in Missoula - plain and simple. The idea that we have a "healthy mix" of STRs and long-term rentals doesn't hold up when so many Missoulians are still paying well over 30% of their income just to stay housed. We're in a housing crisis, and every unit matters. I believe the City needs to revisit its approach and seriously consider reducing the number of STRs so we can prioritize homes for residents, not tourists. And if STRs are allowed as businesses in residential zones, then we need to have a broader conversation about what kinds of businesses \*should\* be allowed in those neighborhoods, because right now, it's not a level playing field.

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

Market-rate housing is the default in a system that prioritizes wealth-building through real estate, and in a state legislative environment that prohibits inclusionary zoning, so yes, it's hard to avoid. But when housing is being built on city-owned land, I believe we have a responsibility to ensure that it's \*permanently affordable\*. Government shouldn't exist to drive profits, it should serve people. If we invest public dollars wisely, we don't need to recoup every cent; the return is in stable communities and housing security. I also think we need to look critically at the structures that drive housing costs up, including the commission-based real estate model, which incentivizes ever-higher sales prices. When I sold my home in Australia, I paid a flat fee to a realtor who still earned a more than fair wage for a defined scope of work, and my home sold. That kind of model could help shift the focus from profit to service, and it's a conversation worth having if we're serious about affordability.

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

The City has tools it can and \*must\* use to address housing affordability and availability. We can prioritize the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for infrastructure that directly supports affordable and workforce housing, not luxury development. We can also expand the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and direct more resources toward community land trusts, nonprofit builders, and permanent affordability models. Zoning reform is another critical piece: we've made progress, but we need to go further by legalizing more duplexes, fourplexes, and ADUs in every neighborhood. At the same time, we should explore creative solutions like using city-owned land for affordable housing, and push for policy changes at the state level, including the ability to implement inclusionary zoning and protect tenants from being priced out. These aren't radical ideas, they're practical, people-first steps that Missoula can take to make housing more accessible for everyone, not just those at the top.

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? \*

Fair housing means more than simply avoiding discrimination, it means actively breaking down the systemic barriers that have kept many Missoulians, especially Indigenous, Black, disabled, low-income, chronically unhoused, and LGBTQ+ residents, from accessing safe and stable housing. It means ensuring that your ZIP code doesn't determine your opportunities. An example: when a family using a housing voucher is routinely denied rentals, even when they qualify financially, that's a failure of fair housing, not because of an overt slur, but because of structural exclusion. As a city, we must go beyond checking boxes and actually enforce equity in housing practices, support accessible development, and hold space for community voices who have long been shut out of homeownership and safe rentals. Fair housing is not a passive principle, it's something we have to actively fight for.

## 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? \*

In Ward 6, one of the most urgent and consistently overlooked infrastructure needs is basic pedestrian safety, like sidewalks, lighting, and safe crossings. Our neighborhoods are full of working families, seniors, and kids who are walking on the shoulder of the road or navigating unlit areas just to get to school, work, or the bus stop. In the winter time, my children would have to wait in the dark for the bus to come. This is not safe. And, while there are many big-ticket projects planned citywide, I'd like to see a dedicated infrastructure initiative focused on “neighborhood-scale improvements” in historically underserved areas like mine. We don't need flashy new corridors, we need safe, walkable/ridable, rollable streets that serve the people who already live here. This is about equity and dignity, and it's time that Ward 6 stops being left behind.

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

The biggest opportunity Missoula has is to align our infrastructure and transportation planning with the urgent need for equitable, sustainable housing. We need to prioritize dense, infill development along transit corridors—especially where infrastructure already exists—to reduce sprawl, preserve open space, and make it easier for people to live without relying on a car. That means investing in sidewalks, bike lanes, and frequent, reliable public transit so people can actually choose affordable housing without sacrificing mobility. We also need to look at how infrastructure dollars are spent—ensuring they support permanently affordable housing, not just market-rate growth. Done right, infrastructure isn't just about pipes and pavement—it's about building a city where working families, elders, and young people can afford to live and thrive without being pushed out to the margins.

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

In my day job, I work on addressing nonpoint source pollution, pollution that comes from diffuse, hard-to-trace sources like aging or poorly maintained septic systems. In Missoula and across Montana, we're seeing more and more development just outside city limits using septic, often without residents fully understanding how to maintain those systems or the risks they pose to our waterways. The reality is that leaking or outdated septic systems are a serious threat to water quality, especially as development spreads. That's why I strongly support the City and County working together to connect as many homes as possible to municipal sewer infrastructure. It's a public health and environmental issue, not just a growth issue. As for water, Missoula currently benefits from a robust aquifer, so access isn't yet a concern, but sewer connections are a priority if we're serious about protecting our sole-source aquifer and planning responsibly for future growth.

## Economic Development

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

One of the biggest challenges in Missoula's commercial real estate development is balancing growth with affordability and neighborhood integrity. We're seeing commercial spaces go vacant while rents remain too high for local businesses to survive, especially those run by working-class Missoulians, artists, and entrepreneurs who actually reflect the values of our community. Another challenge is how commercial development can sometimes contribute to displacement by pricing out residents or reshaping neighborhoods without their input. We need smarter, more equitable planning that supports small, local businesses, reuses existing spaces, address our food and shopping deserts, and ensures that commercial growth aligns with community needs, not just investor returns.

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

In addition to Catalyst Montana, ProHousing Missoula, and the Parking Reform Network, I believe true economic development means listening to a broader range of stakeholders, especially those often left out of the conversation. That includes groups like the Montana Budget & Policy Center for data on equity and affordability, Forward Montana for youth and low-income worker perspectives, and Home ReSource and Climate Smart Missoula for sustainable development strategies. I also value input from Missoula's small business owners, cooperative developers, union leaders, and frontline workers, because they're the ones directly impacted by our economic policies. For me, trusted sources are those rooted in community, not just capital.

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

A healthy real estate market is one where everyone can find and keep safe, stable housing, regardless of income, and where the people facilitating those transactions, like REALTORS®, earn a living wage, not one inflated by an unsustainable and exclusionary market. On the residential side, it means we stop measuring health by rising home values and start looking at how many people are rent-burdened, displaced, or priced out of their own neighborhoods. On the commercial side, it means local businesses, especially small and BIPOC-owned, can afford leases and don't get pushed out by speculation, corporate landlords, or national chains. A healthy market is steady, transparent, and responsive to community needs, not driven solely by profit margins. When we build systems that support people over speculation, everyone, including real estate professionals, benefits from long-term, stable growth.

## 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. \*

At the city level, we have limited tools to directly lower property taxes, but we do have the power to show taxpayers that their money is being spent wisely and equitably. That starts with priority-based budgeting. We need to fund programs based on performance, outcomes, and community impact, not just because "that's how we've always done it." As a scientist, I know how to read data, good and bad, and how to use it to improve systems. Right now, our budget process feels like a blank check, passed year after year with minimal changes and very little clarity on what's working. I can't in good faith vote for a budget until we change that.

We also need serious reform when it comes to the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) and its use of Tax Increment Financing. When over \$20 million in locally collected taxes is controlled by an appointed board without council oversight or public accountability, that's taxation without representation. We must bring MRA budget decisions under City Council review, and I believe their board positions should be elected, so the people footing the bill actually have a voice.

That said, the root of our property tax problem is structural and sits at the state level. Montana's tax system is outdated and regressive, still built around an economy that no longer exists, like taxing timber mills that are now gone. We need statewide reform that shifts the burden away from working homeowners and renters, and onto the large, out-of-state corporations profiting here. Until then, I'll keep pushing for smarter, more just local spending, because fiscal responsibility and community accountability go hand in hand.

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

Fiscal discipline means making tough, informed decisions, not just going along with the way things have always been done. As a City Councilor, I've pushed for program efficiency and effectiveness metrics to guide priority-based budgeting. Without those tools, it's nearly impossible to know if public dollars are truly serving the community, and that's not acceptable. We need a budget process where city councilors and the public alike can clearly see which programs are delivering results and which aren't, and how funds are directed to programs. If the data shows a program isn't meeting its goals, we have to be willing to shift or cut funding, even when that's uncomfortable.

I demonstrate fiscal discipline by refusing to vote for budgets that lack transparency or measurable outcomes. That's not obstruction, it's accountability. We owe it to Missoulians to ensure that every dollar goes toward essential services, community needs, and programs that actually work. Fiscal responsibility doesn't mean austerity, it means honest, transparent decision-making rooted in outcomes and equity.

## Community Engagement & Governance

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

One area where collaboration with REALTORS® could really benefit our community is around nonpoint source pollution. Many homes in and around Missoula still rely on aging or poorly maintained septic systems, and REALTORS® are in a unique position to help educate both buyers and sellers about the importance of regular maintenance. Homebuyers should know the age of their septic system, when it was last pumped, and whether it's functioning properly, because these systems directly impact the health of our aquifer and our community.

Similarly, REALTORS® could play a key role in stormwater education. Helping new homeowners and renters understand the value of green stormwater infrastructure, like rain gardens, permeable driveways, and bioswales, which can reduce toxic runoff and protect our sole-source aquifer. At the policy level, I would love to see the REALTOR® lobby advocate for stronger state regulations that require municipalities to treat stormwater, rather than letting it drain untreated into drywells and groundwater, especially in places like Missoula where our soils are highly porous over a very rare and special sole-source aquifer.

I also think REALTORS® need to take a hard look at the commission-based compensation model. If we're serious about addressing housing affordability, we have to acknowledge that earning a percentage of ever-rising sale prices creates an incentive structure that works against affordability. I believe there's a path forward that allows REALTORS® to earn a fair, living wage, based on the real work it takes to sell a home, without tying compensation to housing inflation. A flat-rate model based on average hours worked could strike that balance, and I'd welcome collaboration with REALTORS® who are willing to rethink the system in a way that aligns with community values.

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

I'd refer back to my earlier response where I emphasized the importance of working with organizations like Catalyst Montana, Home ReSource, Forward Montana, the Montana Budget and Policy Center, and ProHousing Missoula, all of which are deeply grounded in community needs and equity. I'd also add Missoula Aging Services, the Missoula Tenants Union, Unhoused Neighbors Union, and Common Good Missoula, all of which bring vital voices to the table, particularly when we're talking about housing, public health, and economic dignity. These groups approach their work with a Triple Bottom Line lens, weighing environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic resilience, not just short-term profits. That's the kind of decision-making we need more of in Missoula: one that centers people first, and brings together government, nonprofits, and impacted residents to co-create real solutions.

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

I volunteer with MT Alpha, a local organization "dedicated to getting more women, girls, and non-binary people on bikes. [They] offer clinics, group rides, and race support to build confidence, skills, and community". As someone who loves mountain biking and gravel riding, I value spaces that empower female and nonbinary riders who haven't always been centered in that world.

In my role as a Ward 6 councilor, I show up for my constituents in direct and practical ways. I helped a family living in a mobile home brace and stabilize a sagging roof by building a structural support inside the home. I've stood beside a resident at the police station to support her while reporting stalking and harassment. When community members chalked out a proposed Neighborways design on Schilling Street and were threatened with city fines for vandalism, I brought my own pressure washer and helped remove the chalk to protect them from penalties. I've used my car to haul junk for neighbors, helped families move, and sat down with residents in conflict to help them reach a resolution. This is the work that matters most to me, being present, being useful, and showing up with care and humility for the people I represent.

Please answer the prompt below:

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

Barbara Berens, barbaraberens@gmail.com, 3010 St Thomas Dr in Missoula, MT, 406.273.1243

Please answer the following question below:

21. Will you accept PAC contributions?

☐ Yes

☒ No