

1. Name & office you are seeking: \*

Jennifer Savage, Missoula City Council, Ward 3

## 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 supporting the right to buy, sell and use one's property without outside interference.

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

Yes but only if the health and safety of the public were at risk. For example, an intersection that needs to be widened because too many accidents are happening there. And if the city does not fully recognize private property then the owner should be compensated.

## Housing Affordability, Availability & Non-discrimination

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

I think accessory dwelling units should be allowed and encouraged when in compliance with zoning and HOAs. I hope our new city code will allow more to be built by making it easier (with fewer setbacks, etc.). ADUs don't fit in every neighborhood, I get that, but they could be one more option as we look to increase affordability in Missoula.

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

In the interest of full disclosure, I own and operate three Airbnbs. Two in Missoula and one in Arlee. I think they are a great way for residents to supplement their income while holding onto an asset. Visitors are coming to Missoula and need a place to stay. I understand that in some places they are dipping into the rental market. We've studied this. Missoula's STRs account for 1.5% of our rental market. In places where STRs start to become problematic (like Jackson, Wyoming or Whitefish, MT) they account for about 5% to 6% of the rental market. We have also put into place ways to measure growth over time. STRs are now required to register with the city (and can't be registered on Airbnb or VRBO without a registration number) so we are now collecting registration fees and are able to track how many we actually have in Missoula over time so we will know if we are nearing a tipping point.

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

I am supportive of market-rate housing and development.

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

The city should continue to address affordable housing on many fronts.

First, working with partners to continue to understand the causes and the different levers we can pull to make sure Missoulians are housed and can afford to live here. This is not easy.

We can also address supply and that means addressing the speed with which one can get a building permit. Code reform will help but we need to streamline our antiquated processes to make it easier to build more housing - multi-family housing as well as ADUs and infill projects.

But the affordable housing conundrum can't be solved by supply alone. It will also take working with landlords and possibly incentivizing them to keep units affordable, it will take working with developers to encourage them to include permanently affordable units in their developments, and it will take working with organizations in town that create unique environments such as community land trusts to begin to address our housing crisis.

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 one can't discriminate based on race, disability, family status, age, religion or national origin. It means everyone gets a fair shake when it comes to getting housed. An example would be evaluating rental applications blind - without evaluating any of the characteristics listed above in making a decision about who to rent to.

## 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? \*

Tough question! Midtown needs some infrastructure updates, Scott Street on the Northside is getting updated but it is a long time coming. And if the Roseburg property sells and gets developed as housing, massive infrastructure will be needed from Scott Street to Reserve Street. The Mullan Road area is getting infrastructure updates but houses are coming online almost as fast so there could be improvement there. I'd love to see sidewalks and connectivity in some of our high density neighborhoods to promote connectivity. In my current ward, I'd love to see a dedicated bike lane on Duncan Drive on the west side of the road from Lolo to Spruce and sidewalks along Rattlesnake Drive near Hellgate fields. I'd also love to see traffic calming on Phillips at Lowell School.

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

The first few that come to mind are:

1. The development of the Roseburg property that could include another I-90 highway interchange
2. The downtown SAM project,
3. The Brooks Street corridor
4. The Mullan Road area expansion

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

From an environmental perspective it seems like the right thing to do when it's possible. Also, when we add homes to city sewer and water, they are often annexed into the city and we can begin collecting taxes. Connecting houses outside of Missoula's city limits has created a checker board effect in some areas and it can be hard to manage that but I think the benefits often outweigh this.

## Economic Development

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

One challenge is that we are in a housing crisis which has put the emphasis on residential real estate for a long time. Other challenges include high interest rates, high land prices, and the changing nature of commercial industry in Missoula and Montana.

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

Missoula Economic Partnership (Grant or Julie or Nicole), Neighborworks Montana (Kaia), Missoula Community Foundation (Marcy), MoFi (Heidi), Destination Missoula (Barb), Andrea Davis, MOR

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

I'm not a professional but it seems a healthy real estate market is one in which properties move consistently. They don't sit too long but they do get listed (as opposed to selling before they hit the market).

## 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. \*

Montana's tax system is broken and property owners have assumed this burden. As industry has changed in Montana (mills closed, mines closed) our property tax system has not kept up and homeowners have seen their property tax bill increase because of this. As a city, we can continue to lobby our state legislators to pass meaningful property tax relief while continuing to be fiscally responsible with our resources. The city budget is tight so if we were to make cuts to alleviate property taxes we'd likely see a reduction in services and workforce because there is no fat left to trim.

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

As a city councilor, I review every budget memo and every spreadsheet. I ask hard questions and I trust when staff says we don't have the money for something (i.e. the Johnson Street shelter). I also question expensive projects (recent sidewalk projects for example) and encourage efficient use of funds and transparency.

## Community Engagement & Governance

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

I think realtors should be at the table when we're talking about anything housing related. I also think it would be great to collaborate when discussing infrastructure and transportation possibilities.

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

I try to get a range of perspectives. I have developer friends I go to on one end of the spectrum and I also go to those working in affordable housing.

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

To be honest, I don't have a ton of time to volunteer these days. I work fulltime at MCPS, (more than!) half time on city council and run a small business with my husband. When I did have time, I served on the Sussex School board, I volunteered for Blue Mountain Clinic and for Parks and Rec mountain bike camps.

Please answer the prompt below:

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

Barbara Berens  
barbaraberens@gmail.com

Please answer the following question below:

21. Will you accept PAC contributions?

☐ Yes

☒ No