

From: [Mark McClements](#)
To: [Michelle Cares](#); [Julie Merritt](#)
Cc: [Jenny Baker](#)
Subject: 9th St. Re-zone
Date: Wednesday, September 11, 2019 3:14:02 PM

Dear Council Members Cares and Merritt,

My name is Mark McClements, and I am a resident of your ward (2410 Mount Ave.) as well as a member of the Franklin to the Fort Neighborhood Leadership Team. I am writing today, as a private citizen, in support of the re-zone for the vacant lot on 9th st. I firmly believe that the need for increased housing, especially affordable housing, is the biggest issue facing Missoula at this moment. Building a 30+ unit dwelling only helps alleviate this issue, and if the builder is approved for the grant to make these units affordable, senior housing, that also helps care for one of the most vulnerable demographics in our community. Ours is one of the lowest income wards in the city, and new construction beautifies the area, decreases crime, provides local jobs, and due to the sidewalks this project would be mandated to install, would increase the mobility, walk-ability, and overall health of our neighborhood.

I have spoken with two of the more outspoken opponents of this project, John German at 2402 S 9th and Malcolm Lowe at 1114 Margaret St., and I have yet to hear what I find to be a valid reason for not wanting this project. They do not want this project next door, and I empathize with that. However, this is not about what is best for the people within a 150 ft radius of that lot, it is about what is best for Missoula.

In my conversations with these folks, they have listed increased traffic, parking concerns, and decreased property value as their main anxieties about this project. I had the pleasure of visiting this lot last night and speaking with Mr. German and another neighbor about the project for upwards of an hour (~7-8:00pm) during that time one single car drove past. While 7-8 isn't rush hour, one car an hour is hardly a high traffic area, and an additional 30 vehicles coming and going over the course of a day isn't going to be an insurmountable change. Parking spaces are included in the mock ups I have seen for the development, and I believe it is mandated that they provide one parking space per unit(?) so parking seems to be a non issue, there is also street parking currently that would not be infringed upon by this development which could accommodate 20+ additional vehicles should there be spillover from the parking lot. That may be a concern for these folks, but the simple fact of the matter is that street parking is for everyone and you cannot reasonably be upset about people using this space. As far as housing prices are concerned, These two studies: one [published 2014 from the University of Georgia, about how property value increases when vacant lots are developed or improved](#), and [this study from The National Vacant Properties Campaign published 2005](#) about how vacant lots decrease home values, increase crime, and have a negative cumulative affect on the neighborhood clearly dispute that stance. (the later study refers more so to vacant homes rather than lots, but one could extrapolate the data to support the same theory for vacant lots). Mr German also mentioned the inability of fire trucks or other emergency vehicles to turn around where 9th dead ends, which this new development would not change at all.

I personally live ~100 yards from the Burlington Square apartment complex (2420 Burlington), which is a 51 unit, low income, senior community. It is ~30% larger than the proposed development in terms of residents, and follows the same guidelines of income restrictions as far as low income/affordable senior housing goes. It was admittedly already in place when I purchased my home two years ago, so I did not see any change, and it is just off

of Mount Ave. which is an already busy street; However, I can watch out of my front window as people drive in and out, and anecdotally I would estimate the number of vehicles coming and going to be around 20-25 daily. The complex is well maintained and fits into the neighborhood despite being 3 stories surrounded by single level family homes. It is shielded by trees which I think adds to its fit into the neighborhood -and if possible I think there should be mandated some sort of privacy landscaping surrounding the 9th street construction to make it more agreeable to the people next door. I submit the Burlington Square complex as a case study of how great a development like this can be. I for one will gladly take 50 senior citizens in my neighborhood. They aren't causing problems, they aren't driving crazy, they aren't up all hours of the night blaring their music, they are about as ideal neighbors as you can ask for, and for anyone to make a stand against increased formidable housing options in general, but especially a complex like this perplexes me to say the least.

I do commiserate with Mr German, Mr. Lowe, as well as their direct neighbors. They have lived in their homes in an unchanged neighborhood for many years, and change is difficult for anyone, especially those who have come to expect a certain level of comfort, and to whom this development poses a threat -real or perceived- to their way of life. But change is necessary for growth and progress. We cannot abide by the fears and misplaced anger of the old guard in planning for our future as a neighborhood, as a city, or as individuals. For this reason I must voice my full support regarding the re-zoning for the lot on 9th St. I think its good for our neighborhood, good for our ward, and good for our city, and I hope I can count on your vote to support this and future improvement projects.

Yours in service,

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The views and opinions expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect those of my colleagues.