



## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

435 Ryman • Missoula, MT 59802 - 4297 • (406) 552-6638 • [escherrer@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:escherrer@ci.missoula.mt.us)

Superintendent Watson  
MCPS Administration Building  
215 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St. W.  
Missoula, MT 59801

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

Dear Superintendent Watson,

Greetings from the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)! We are writing today to welcome you to Missoula as the new MCPS Superintendent, and provide information on the role we play in the community. The HPC is charged with implementing our local historic preservation program, maintaining and updating City preservation law, and raising community awareness for the purpose of integrating historic preservation into local, state and federal planning and decision-making processes.

The historic preservation program is designed to promote the preservation of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, objects, buildings and historic districts. Established by the Missoula City Council in 1989, the HPC is comprised of volunteer preservation professionals including architects, engineers, masons and more. This is a quasi-judicial board which oversees preservation permit review and makes recommendations to the City Council. One of the major aspects the HPC oversees is providing consultation and advice to the community, acting as a professional resource for anyone looking for information related to historic buildings and places. Respectively, Missoula's schools comprise some of the City's most celebrated historic places and stand as honored community anchors. Although many historical schools have suffered some deferred maintenance, they were generally solidly built, often with great craftsmanship and architectural significance. With the help of creative architects and sensible school board policies, many school districts have demonstrated that historic schools can be brought up to 21st-century standards, and offer excellent opportunities for adaptive reuse.

Recently, Missoula City Council approved a new Adaptive Reuse Zoning Overlay (/AR). Adaptive reuse is defined as the process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed for, or currently used. This overlay supports the adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings not usually zoned for reuse, such as churches, corner stores and schools to be adapted to a new use which zoning or land use wouldn't normally allow under existing code. The /AR Overlay helps to incentivize reuse through a different process than the typical rezoning request which can be difficult to support and sometimes impossible to accomplish. For example, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Administration Building could benefit from this new overlay, allowing a variety of uses that it's not currently zoned for.

Ideally, school facilities should be planned with input from a representative group of people who use, value, and interact with them, those invested in both Missoula's education and the preservation of our communal identity as seen through the built environment. In looking toward the future of the remaining stock of historical school properties, we respectfully offer our assistance related to maintenance concerns, architectural design and zoning considerations. The HPC would be happy to participate in future planning involving the sale, demolition or alteration of MCPS' remaining historical school properties, and could provide a volunteer for any such committee, site visits, structural engineering and architectural advice. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions MCPS may have regarding historic buildings, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Kindest regards,

The Missoula Historic Preservation Commission, Jolene Brink – Chair, Paul Filicetti – Vice Chair, Jamie Lockman, Julia McCarthy-McLavery, Cathy Bickenheuser, Bruce Haroldson, Solomon Martin, Steve Adler and Jim McDonald

