

August 10, 2021

Julie Merritt, Ward 6 Council Member

Sandra Vasecka, Ward 6 Council Member

Laval Means, Community Planning Manager

Jordan Hess, Chairman of Land use Committee/Ward 2 Council Member

Eran Fowler Pehan, Director of Office of Housing and Development

Colin Woodrow, Neighborhoods Coordinator

Re: Development in Missoula's Franklin to the Fort Neighborhood

Dear City Council Members and Leaders:

The purpose of this letter is to collectively address the need for greater representation of Franklin to the Fort in City-wide planning processes and increased transparency about upcoming developments in the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood. The neighborhood is changing at a rapid and noticeable rate, and residents wish to be included in the greater community voice within the zoning, land use, and development conversation. We are requesting to move forward with the process of creating a comprehensive neighborhood plan.

The community of Franklin to Fort is a vibrant, diverse, and historic community of hard-working people and families, many of whom are lower income with two household income earners needed to make ends meet (see included demographic data). The neighborhood is full of life and character, and is a foundational weave in the fabric of communities across the valley that defines Missoula.

The mission of this Franklin to the Fort neighborhood group is to provide more opportunity and access for historically underrepresented voices to address the long-standing equity gap in our neighborhood, and ensure that gap does not continue to grow into the future. As a community of lower-income and hard-working middle-class families, often with two income earners per household, traditional methods for civic engagement don't seem to provide adequate access for our voices to be heard. As long as there is a greater amount of people in our neighborhood unable to civically engage due to reasons that include work schedules, lower-income earning, and childcare needs, our neighborhood will continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in the democratic decision-making process with regards to development.

There is a consensus among residents that they are contending with feelings of disenfranchisement and fears of being displaced. Often with the developments in the Franklin to

the Fort neighborhood, residents are not aware of a new development plan until ground is broken, despite their efforts to maintain engagement with the City of Missoula resources.

We are actively involved in efforts to enhance the quality of life of our community by working toward providing new opportunities for the voices in our community to be heard. As an organized coalition of residents, we request our voices be included and genuinely considered regarding the welfare trajectory of our neighborhood moving forward. We seek to ensure that development in our neighborhood will preserve the unique character, remain equitable for all (including our lower income families), and enhance the quality of life for our community and Missoula as a whole.

The City of Missoula is devoted to taking these considerations into account on a daily basis and we intend to fully contribute our civic duty and unique perspective of our neighborhood as residents to ensure the best future outcome for our Franklin to the Fort neighborhood as it exists within the Missoula Community. We need to reaffirm that these considerations are brought to your attention and addressed in a mutually beneficial process and outcome. It is essential that our voices are heard and our needs represented so that we do not lose the wonderful and distinctive character of our neighborhood.

We are aware of Missoula's overall 20-year Growth Policy that has already been established and we would like to focus on and engage with what that plan looks like for our neighborhood and the interconnectivity of our neighborhood to the rest of the city. The Franklin to the Fort neighborhood currently sits in the central part of the city and the majority of the neighborhood is listed in the amended December 14, 2020 Missoula Urban Area Future Land Use Designation Map as residential high density, permitting greater than 24 units per acre. This is the highest residential density land use designation in the City of Missoula and we feel it doesn't represent the character of our neighborhood. We are not against additional residential density but would like it to be fair and developed in a way that helps us to maintain our housing costs and neighborhood character. The Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035 does not include a comprehensive plan amendment for Franklin to the Fort, nor does a neighborhood plan exist. The Our Missoula Development Guide (OMDG 2018-2028) locates the Reserve to Russell corridor as one of the most suitable places for development in the city. It measures focus-inward through suitability. As recognized in this policy, there can be adverse consequences of unharnessed growth. Much analysis has been devoted to new growth, but how will this growth be absorbed in an equitable and sustainable way?

Urban Planning is the practice of ensuring the fair and equitable use of land for the community. If development continues at the current rate in Franklin to the Fort without consideration for the existing built environment and its residents, the existing neighbors will no longer be able to access it. The following are concerns and considerations that not only need to be considered and addressed in development execution, but emphasized due to the specific projections of higher density in our neighborhood. Why has the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood been designated as the highest density classification possible for the City of Missoula? How much Franklin to the Fort community input went into the decision-making

process of this outcome? Increasing density does not necessarily increase affordability unless there is a contingency attached. More supply is not necessarily tied to affordability.

When a development is created it sets a precedence for what is tolerated for future developments. If we are not holding developers to a standard, they can reference these deficient existing developments as justification to create more subpar solutions in the future. These subpar solutions deliver maximum profit for the developer, but at a significant and long-lasting cost to the neighborhood and the City of Missoula as a whole. As an example of a concerning trend, a developer is considering demolishing a home built in 1936 on 7th and Kemp that has been immaculately maintained, has great architectural and structural integrity, and is in mint condition. Originally, the developer had planned to keep the original 1936 home and develop additional three-story units completely filling the two-lot back yard. However, now the developer is considering the option of demolishing the historic home and filling the entire property comprised of four lots into 3-4 units that are 2-3 stories high. Either way, the historic single-family home which is much adored by the neighborhood and features a beautiful backyard containing mature landscaping, could be replaced with back-to-back development with minimal greenspace, cohesiveness, and privacy for neighbors. If the removal of a livable, well maintained and historic home in the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood can happen without any development consideration, what precedence does this set for any other structure and/or lot? With so many vacant lots available in Franklin to the Fort, why should this happen? What safeguards exist to allow us to maintain our neighborhood character as is wished for all neighborhoods in the Growth Policy?

We request that the City of Missoula involve local Franklin to the Fort residents to consider the following initiatives:

- Proactively involve Franklin to the Fort neighbors in a transparent, open, and accessible process to develop a Neighborhood Plan and a Neighborhood Landscape Plan for Franklin to the Fort as a comprehensive plan amendment to the 2035 Our Missoula City Growth Policy. New density, infill, and greenspace must be planned.
- Consider conducting a Historic Survey of the neighborhood. Research and state the character the neighborhood is trying to protect. Franklin to the Fort is comprised of a mix of single-family homes with great historic quality. Style ranges from craftsman to war-box with many established street trees. Majority of historic houses were built between 1900-1940, and represent a period of early working-class growth in Missoula, from farming to the railroad. Unlike other more architecturally dominant neighborhoods such as the University District, Franklin to the Fort is highly indicative of the layered and vernacular development of Missoula over time, of varying western vernacular styles by families of diverse backgrounds and incomes. This unique character is something the neighborhood wants to preserve and respect.
- Franklin to the Fort residents want to ensure that new development aesthetically complements and enhances the character of our neighborhood. Design Standards exist for commercial development in key areas of the city and should exist for multifamily development, and especially for a neighborhood projected to absorb a majority of future

growth. Consider developing additional multifamily design standards for projects proposing three or more units which considers parking, design, greenspace, privacy, neighborhood character and scale.

- Infrastructure is subpar in the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood, as observed in the Missoula City Health initiative and the Franklin to the Fort Infrastructure Plan (2006). Consider requiring new development to pay a fee-in-lieu or provide adequate infrastructure upgrades for the neighborhood of which it is developing in.
- Consider developing a Neighborhood Zoning District specific to Franklin to the Fort which includes neighborhood specific density and classification. We wish to have a walkable neighborhood with close access to services.
- Create a plan to address how our neighborhood schools and school system will accommodate a substantial increase of students.
- If an existing single-family house with historic integrity is proposed for demolition, require developers to consider moving it before demolishing it. The OMDG states that Franklin to the Fort has many vacant lots. Require the developer to look for alternatives to demolition and alternative vacant lots before removing a contributing piece of character to the neighborhood. Offer resources to aid in this process and ensure these steps have been attempted before building permit. The demolition of existing housing units for increased density does not equate to sustainable urban growth, nor is it good practice for long range outcomes.
- Franklin to the Fort residents have identified key questions within the above considerations that we would like to collectively address moving forward.

In the absence of proactive action on the part of the city, the infill development projects within Franklin to the Fort will continue to exacerbate the conspicuous inequities and disadvantages our community currently faces, adding to the pressures that our hard-working community members and families are already struggling with, and likely will continue to push Missoulians and long-established residents out of Missoula as these individuals and families are displaced by the skyrocketing cost of new housing that, in many cases, is replacing affordable housing at a greater rate. For those residents that are able to remain, how will their quality of life be impacted?

We are requesting a comprehensive neighborhood plan that includes an updated infrastructure plan, updated zoning, design guidelines, historic surveys, traffic studies, and a neighborhood landscaping plan to provide proportionate greenspace. We would like a commitment from the City of Missoula to collaborate with the Franklin to the Fort community group to ensure that development in our neighborhood will preserve and enhance the quality of life for our neighborhood and Missoula as a whole.

Sincerely,

Franklin to the Fort Neighbors in Action

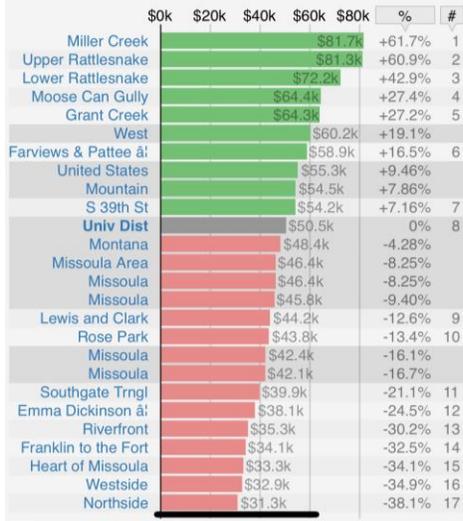
Graphs of Demographic Data:

Household Income by Neighborhood in Missoula

There are 17 neighborhoods in Missoula. This section compares University District to all of the neighborhoods in Missoula and to those entities that contain or substantially overlap with University District.

Median Household Income by Neighborhood #16

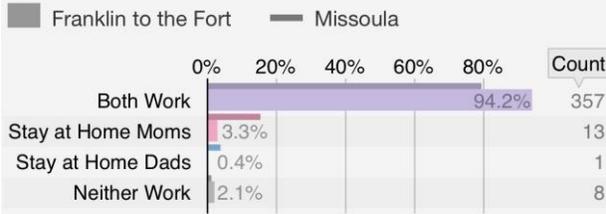
Scope: households in University District, selected other neighborhoods in Missoula, and entities that contain University District



Employment among the Married With Children #9

Selected employment arrangements as a percentage of married couples with children under 18 present in the house.

Scope: households in Missoula and Franklin to the Fort

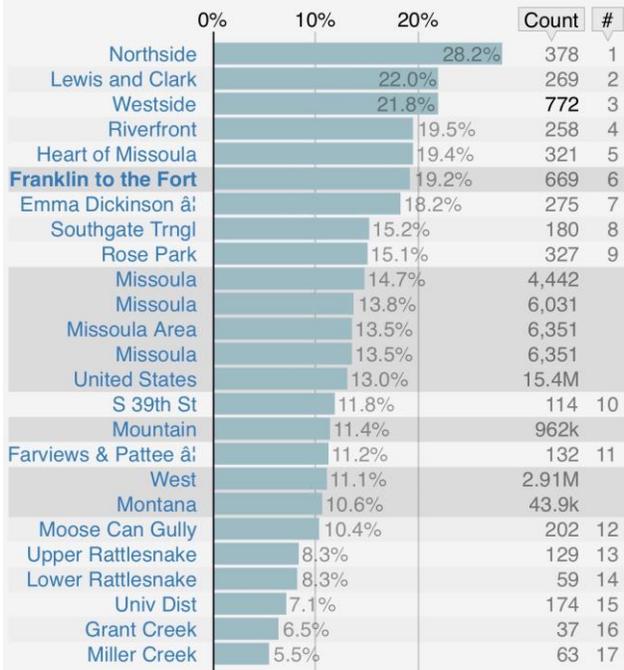


Most Food Stamps by Neighborhood

#6

Food Stamp recipients as a percentage of all households.

Scope: population of Franklin to the Fort, selected other neighborhoods in Missoula, and entities that contain Franklin to the Fort



Count number of households on food stamps

rank of neighborhood out of 17 by percentage on food stamps

Recent Photos of Upcoming Neighborhood Development Site:



Children of the Franklin to the Fort Neighborhood



Resting Wildlife



COMMUNITY PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

Community Development Division

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October 13, 2021

Greetings Franklin to the Fort Neighbors in Action,

Thank you for reaching out to us and sharing your concerns as well as understandings of the challenges we are facing within the city as a whole and, uniquely, within the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood.

I value the volunteer work you have all done to connect with your neighbors, respond to needs, keep informed of the broader city issues, gauge the changes within your neighborhood, express concerns over changing conditions, and advocate for the continued character and quality of life that you've appreciated in your neighborhood. I've taken great care to consider your comments and provide background and avenues for insights into community planning processes that dovetail with your concerns, but I also lay out the limitations that we are pressed with as we address our city wide workplan to meet the needs of the entire community.

The City is in the process of taking a multi-faceted approach to tackling many of your concerns. As stated in our phone calls with Johanna, our division is embarking on two major projects that we feel will be helpful in many ways to answer the needs within the neighborhood. Those projects are the work on comprehensive code reform and the work on an engaging, informed program for neighborhood empowerment (referred to as 3E – education, engagement, empowerment). These projects are the primary paths for upcoming broad resident engagement, while we will also continue to explore other avenues for responding and providing assistance.

The extensive steps within the comprehensive code reform project will take a majority of our staff capacity and will provide broad opportunities for neighbor engagement. Included in the comprehensive code reform project is an analysis of land use through the lens of equity. Until we gather that information and hold a broad community conversation that audits our development practices related to policy and our vision for the community, we should not be setting up any individual neighborhoods for other land development changes (temporarily or otherwise). After recommendations are developed from the audit, we will have a better sense of next steps and solutions that take the voices of residents, protection of resources, challenges of affordability, consideration of community character, and the projections for city growth into consideration. The limitation here, is that neighborhood focused planning should wait for the outcomes of the code reform auditing process.

I would welcome your early and continued participation in the comprehensive code reform project. I'm confident that it will help to create equitable land use techniques that will likely affect all neighborhoods and it will provide a platform for discussions related to equitable development throughout the city, taking the cross sector of neighborhood services, place-making, community wellness, and fair density into consideration.

I also urge the continued brainstorming of your group and other neighborhood advocates to begin thinking about the code auditing process that will be up in running in 2022. What will it mean to the neighbors? What

aspects of neighborhood improvements would you be looking for that manifest in revised development rules or addressing gaps in neighborhood facilities and services (that city agencies can help to address)? What shape should additional multi-dwelling design standards take so that small scale projects can be responsive to the character and scale of the surroundings? I hear you and I need your input while we're working in the code auditing process.

When a neighborhood embarks on neighborhood planning, the majority of the process should be conducted, explored, and developed, by the residents themselves, but the process should also be in partnership with our office because we provide the foundation, education, and technical resources as well as a platform, through the neighborhood council system, for open meeting processes and avenue to city council via the charter. The limitation here is related to our capacity and belief that the comprehensive audit, including an analysis of land use through the lens of equity should occur first.

Additionally, we realize that neighbors act on a varied scale of projects that impact and effect their neighborhoods, which is why the 3E program is also very critical to our multi-faceted approach. Colin has been working on developing information at the neighbor scale, opening the communication channels for engagement with agencies, with the plan for helping neighbors identify actions and priorities that range from small scale projects that could be funded through neighborhood grants to longer term projects that are strategic and campaign-based in nature. I believe this is a building block toward addressing neighborhood needs but it is done in a way that can address particular ideas and projects quickly. The limitation here is that we are currently working through staffing changes and will need to gear up for the 3E program by first completing the round of education material we've been developing and coordinating with city agencies for their assistance.

Your letter makes excellent points about the concerns over changing character and the need to identify historic resources before they are lost for good. The process of inventorying neighborhood historic resources for a possible historic district nomination is a technical one that requires some training and also requires a layered process of gathering information at a general level and then at a property-by-property level. The same way that several city agencies have begun to put a spotlight and added weight in evaluating future projects on the areas that are considered low to moderate income (based on census), Community Planning should also consider that added weight. I've asked the Historic Preservation Officer to research the steps for conducting an inventory to determine whether the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood could qualify as a national register historic district. This is something that would take some time to determine the work plan capacity and would require support of the historic preservation commission as well as CPDI leadership before going deeply into the process. It is also a process that relies heavily on volunteer support, so if we are able to incorporate a review into the Historic Preservation Office workplan, it would be great to know if we could rely on some of your teams' help with the surveying.

Finally, as I mentioned in our phone call, I would love to meet with your group to hear more about your ideas and talk about the projects and processes I'm describing in more detail.

Respectfully,

Laval Means | She/Her | Community Planning Manager