

Comments on the Proposed Rezoning at Schilling and Dearborn, October 2021, submitted by Jenny Mish on behalf of Franklin-to-Fort Neighbors in Action

Franklin-to-Fort Neighbors in Action (F2F NiA) is an independent volunteer organization that engages and listens to people who live in the Franklin-to-Fort neighborhood. We identify needs, build agency, and take action to improve social, economic, and ecological well-being in our neighborhood. Our activities are informed by three shared values: working together, listening and responding to neighbors, and care and stewardship of F2F, both now and for the future. Since March 2020, we have provided neighbors with mutual aid, story walks, Halloween parades, and cleanup days. In June 2021, we received a neighborhood placemaking grant from the City to install planters and murals, repair and paint the turtle sculptures in Franklin Park, and host activities, including collaborating with Missoula in Motion to host Sunday Streets.

F2F NiA members deeply appreciate Missoula's need for increased housing, especially affordable housing. We appreciate the City's efforts to promote multi-modal transportation, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and otherwise enhance community safety and well-being. We also understand that our neighborhood has been identified as one in which gaps in public infrastructure have been linked with lower public health outcomes. We are concerned that development in our neighborhood does not always protect and enhance our neighborhood health, safety, and quality of life.

In general, we are supportive of the requested rezoning, with the following caveats. We ask that these considerations be explicitly addressed in conjunction with the approval of this rezoning request:

- If we understand correctly, the number of allowable living units would increase from 8 to 21 if the rezoning is approved. Conversations with neighbors and review of the site plan submitted with the rezoning application both suggest that the developer intends to build only 12 living units on the rezoned site. We consider 12 units to represent a reasonable increase in density for the area, given our city's need for more housing. However, if rezoning is approved, it appears that the number of units could be increased to 21 without further review, which we would oppose as inappropriate crowding in our neighborhood.
- In addition to adequate off-street parking for 24 cars (i.e. 2 per living unit), we would hope that highly functional support for alternative modes of transit will be included, such as safe, well-lit, covered bike parking (rather than bike racks in dark icy corners or up/down stairs).
- Increased traffic is a significant concern, especially given the high traffic speeds that are common on Schilling Street south of South Avenue, which is a designated Greenway. Although we understand that transportation planning is done separately from zoning, we request that City Council ensure that the increased traffic will be supported with calming measures implemented concurrently with the completion of the proposed housing units, such as traffic circles along Schilling Street south of South Avenue, and a pedestrian crossing with flashing lights at Schilling and South Avenue. Even without the increased traffic from the proposed development, these improvements are critical for

establishing a Greenway environment with slower vehicle speeds, connecting the Bitterroot Bike Path with the Schilling Greenway north of South Avenue.

- We are concerned about the 50-foot height limit implied by the requested B2-2 zoning. It is unclear to us what building heights are being proposed, but we are shocked and disappointed by very tall buildings being built elsewhere in the Franklin-to-Fort Neighborhood. In addition to protecting viewsheds and existing solar energy production potential, tall buildings block passive solar heat on windows and south-facing walls, inhibit food gardening, and increase electricity and gas needed for heat. Blocked sunlight is correlated with reduced public health, including depression, and vertical buildings that dominate streetscapes undermine residential character.
- It is unclear to us what green space requirements would apply to the proposed development. We are pleased to see that, according to the site drawing, the two existing large trees on the site will be retained, and we would hope for additional outdoor contributions to neighborhood livability such as gardens and landscaped greenery, preferably with native plants that require less water and support wildlife such as bees and birds.
- Property tax increases result when developments increase property values, and this burden falls disproportionately on neighbors on low and/or fixed incomes. Although we understand that this rezoning request will not directly impact property taxes, we ask City Council to develop appropriate solutions to this problem as housing is increased.

We would like to be able to engage in respectful two-way communication with developers so that we have opportunities to understand and comment on proposed developments, including those that might otherwise bulldoze residents' memories. In these situations, we are interested in identifying creative ways to honor the history of our neighborhood, both recent and tribal, through place names, public art, and other placemaking activities. For example, one recently approved rezoning request in our neighborhood made way for 10 units on a lot where horses lived not long ago; we can envision potential installations, naming options, and/or activities that could carry the images and memories of those grazing horses into the future, retaining neighborhood connections, character, and culture. We are not yet aware of any such considerations in the proposed rezoning at Dearborn and Schilling, but if they were to arise, we would like to be able to work with the developer to seek mutually agreeable forms of cultural stewardship.

We are looking forward to the relaunch of the City's Office of Neighborhoods, with improved communications and access to City staff in support of our volunteer efforts. The City's Growth Policy references "neighborhood plans," but we either do not have one for F2F, or we do not know about it, and we would like to!

We understand that the upcoming Code Reform process is an important opportunity for us to express these and other concerns, and we plan to do so.

Thank you for your work on behalf of all Missoulians.