

PLANNING BOARD SUMMARY – RIVERFRONT TRAILS
Targeted Growth Policy Amendment, Rezoning, and PUD Subdivision

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS:

Planning Board makes a recommendation on the proposed targeted growth policy amendment, rezoning, and PUD subdivision preliminary plat.

Targeted Growth Policy Amendment

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, with 7 members present, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board voted 7 ayes to recommend City Council adopt a resolution to amend the 2035 Our Missoula City Growth Policy land use designation from Residential Low to Residential Medium on portions of Tract 1 of Certificate of Survey No. 6449, as shown on Exhibit A, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report.

Rezoning

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, with 7 members present, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board voted 7 ayes to recommend City Council adopt an ordinance to rezone the subject property legally described in Exhibit E from R215 Residential to OP2 Open and Resource, to rezone the subject property legally described in Exhibit F from R215 Residential to RT5.4 Residential (two-unit/townhouse) / NC-RT Riverfront Trails Neighborhood Character Overlay, and to rezone the subject property legally described in Exhibit G from RT5.4 Residential to RT5.4 Residential / NC-RT Riverfront Trails Neighborhood Character Overlay, as shown on Exhibit D, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report.

Preliminary Plat (PUD Subdivision) Application

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, with 7 members present, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board voted 7 ayes to recommend City Council approve the Riverfront Trails PUD Subdivision preliminary plat application, subject to the recommended conditions of approval, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report.

Planning Board voted 7 ayes to recommend the PUD Subdivision conditions of approval provided in the staff report.

Planning Board Discussion:

Planning Board discussion included the following:

General

- Planning Board determined the growth policy amendment is logical. It addresses changing conditions in terms of need for housing supply and allows for clustering of density while preserving the river corridor. Additionally, Planning Board stated the Neighborhood Character Overlay makes sense in the context of a Planned Unit Development subdivision.
- Planning Board determined the proposed growth policy amendment, rezoning, and subdivision meet the vision of the 1997 Miller Creek Area Plan in terms of preserving the river corridor and allowing for more housing options.

- Planning Board stated protection of natural resources (the floodplain and river) through clustering of housing is a key component of the project.
- Planning Board supports the project because it offers a mix of residential housing types, creating the potential for multi-generational development and homes at varying price points.
- Planning Board stated the proposed development is better than what is possible under the current zoning because the current zoning does not protect the riparian vegetation area and floodplain. The rezoning to OP2 corrects the zoning to protect natural resources.
- Public commenters voiced opposition to increases in density.
- A public commenter was opposed to the maximum 45-foot height limit for 3 lots along Lower Miller Creek Road, established by the Neighborhood Character Overlay.
- Planning Board and a Public Commenter asked what the change in density is from the current City and County zoning to the new proposed zoning. Looking at the portion in the County zoned Residential, Medium the current permitted density of 5 to 11 dwelling units per acre is comparable to the proposed 8 dwelling units per acre of the RT5.4 zoning district. Currently, the floodplain is zoned R215 in the City and does allow for residential development in the floodplain. If the developer were to develop per the current City and County zoning, the site could accommodate approximately 179 units which is comparable to the proposed density, with the exception of the senior living facility. Note that this approximate number is calculated with the assumption of development in the floodplain and does not include land set aside for roads. The rough calculation was estimated using acreage pulled from the County Property Information System during the meeting.
- Planning Board stated they did not see a “meaningful” increase in density, but density is needed and proposed in a thoughtful way.
- Planning Board stated they did not see issues with making religious assembly and group living permitted as of right instead of conditional uses.
- One public commenter at the meeting expressed support for the project, specifically for the river access and public park.
- One public commenter expressed concerns over the potential for crawl spaces to flood. Note that a recommended condition of approval states basements are not permitted unless additional studies show they can be constructed safely. Staff also recommend a condition of approval requiring structures in Phase 3 to be elevated above base flood elevation.

Traffic

- Most public comments focused on traffic concerns for Lower Miller Creek Road, as well as limited egress for the area. Some stated more routes out of the area should be provided before more development is approved.

- City Engineering responded to traffic concerns on Lower Miller Creek Road. Staff stated the proposed round-about at the intersection of Lower Miller Creek Road and Old Bitterroot Road will provide increased safety. Staff stated the two-lane road provides adequate capacity for future development in the area, as shown by other similar roads in the City which handle more capacity than is proposed for Lower Miller Creek Road. A recommended condition of approval would require the developer to fund improvements to Lower Miller Creek Road if the City project were to fall through. A traffic impact study was provided with the application packet. Additionally, Engineering Staff could require additional traffic mitigation if it is shown to be necessary by the report.
- Planning Board asked staff to address public comments requesting a bridge over the Bitterroot River to connect to Highway 93. Transportation Staff explained an environmental impact study looking at three potential bridge locations showed that a bridge was not feasible. Factors in the study included geography, natural resources, existing traffic on Highway 93, and cost. A bridge would not solve traffic issues because it would route traffic back to the intersection at Lower Miller Creek Road. This intersection is the primary traffic concern. No money is set aside by the government, or as a result of previous subdivision conditions for construction of a bridge to Highway 93.
- Planning Board acknowledged that public comment addressing traffic is a real concern. Planning Board stated this is a concern for most development presented to Planning Board. Planning Board noted that development spurs road improvements, not the other way around.
- Planning Board felt that Engineering's ability to require additional traffic mitigation, in addition to the recommended conditions of approval, abates their traffic concerns.
- Planning Board noted that the development includes alternative transportation infrastructure, like bike lanes, which could alleviate vehicular traffic.

Schools

- Public comment and Planning Board voiced concerns about Jeannette Rankin Elementary School not having adequate capacity. The school has been notified of the project and was made aware early in the planning process. The developer representative stated the school did not raise concerns about capacity during discussions, and that they have indicated they will likely redraw districts.
- The developer representative stated most of their conversations with the school focused on programming between senior living development and school.

Water Rights

- Planning Board asked a question about the transfer of water rights to the City to provide adequate water quantity to the subdivision. Planning Board asked if more water will be placed back into the Bitterroot River as a result. The developer representative indicated that for water rights, ground water and water in the river are treated as one and the same. The water volume will be a "1 to 1 swap". Additional water will not be pulled from the river. The developer representative stated there are sufficient seasonal irrigation rights to transfer to development

water rights. The City has well site on Haugen Drive. There are three wells there now, but when site was built there were provisions for a 4th well. This development will fund construction of the 4th well to provide adequate sufficiency to the subdivision.

See the Planning Board Minutes for public comments and further Planning Board discussion.