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Missoula City Council and Planning Board  
City of Missoula  
435 Ryman Street  
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Members of the Missoula City Council and Planning Board,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the High Park Views Subdivision as currently proposed due to significant concerns related to the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) regulations. The variance requests submitted by IMEG, on behalf of Rebecca Donnelly, fail to adequately address the critical safety standards at the heart of these regulations, posing a serious risk to public safety.

The proposed subdivision is situated within a designated Wildland-Urban Interface zone, an area particularly vulnerable to wildfires. We all remember the recent wildfire tragedies that occurred in Lahaina, HI, and Paradise, CA. These communities, both located within WUI zones, suffered catastrophic losses, in part due to poor road planning and insufficient egress. The WUI regulations are specifically designed to mitigate such risks by enforcing stringent building standards, vegetation management practices, and emergency access requirements. The variances requested by the developer undermine these essential safeguards. Notably, the variance request includes approval for a single access route, despite the WUI regulation stipulating that all major subdivisions within WUI areas must have more than one improved access route unless it is not feasible due to topographic constraints. In the current reality of increasing wildfire risks, the bar for granting this variance must be held high. This single access route significantly compromises the ability of residents and emergency services to respond swiftly and evacuate safely in the event of a wildfire, thereby elevating the risk to life and property.

While topographical constraints are a consideration in subdivision planning, they should not justify compromising safety standards. Ensuring multiple access routes is a fundamental requirement for mitigating wildfire risks and ensuring timely evacuations. The safety of residents and emergency responders must take precedence over the convenience of the developer. Accepting topographical challenges as a reason to relax safety measures sets a dangerous precedent, potentially endangering lives and property in future developments as well.

Additionally, the proposed development estimates a daily vehicle trip increase of over 40% on Landon's Way and Woodbine Place, further exacerbating safety concerns. Woodbine Place is a narrow street that can accommodate parked cars on only one side, and snow berms during

winter months further restrict the road. Combined with the excessive speeds reached by vehicles traveling downhill from Landon's Way to Hillview, I've witnessed multiple close calls with pedestrians, pets, and wildlife. The increased traffic volume on roads that are not designed to accommodate such levels can lead to higher risks of traffic accidents and congestion. This congestion could severely hinder the evacuation process during emergencies, putting residents at even greater risk.

The subdivision regulations clearly state that variances should only be granted under unique conditions specific to the property and not generally applicable to other properties. The conditions cited by the developer, such as topographical challenges, are not unique and are commonly encountered in similar developments. Granting these variances would set a dangerous precedent, encouraging other developers to seek similar exemptions, thereby undermining the integrity of the WUI regulations.

In conclusion, the proposed subdivision development poses unacceptable risks to public safety due to its non-compliance with the WUI regulations. The requested variances undermine critical safety measures designed to protect our community from wildfire hazards. I urge the City Council and Planning Board to reject these variance requests and the proposed subdivision plan in its current form to uphold the standards that safeguard our community.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I trust that the City Council and Planning Board will act in the best interest of public safety by enforcing the WUI regulations without exception.

Sincerely,

Eric Schoenecker