

Tim Garcia via Engage Missoula 6/22/24

Missoula City Council should require developer proposing High Park Views 13 lot Major Subdivision for secondary access to the development via Simons Drive regardless of expense to developer for wildland fire egress, public and emergency response safety. I have personally experienced the consequence of single road evacuation during initial response to wildland fires in the Wildland Urban Interface across multiple western states over my 38 years as a qualified wildland firefighter. As a qualified Air Tactical Group Supervisor, I personally witnessed the loss of several hundred homes during numerous wildland fires in Colorado, South Dakota, and Utah as a result of wildland fire. I have personally witnessed the chaos of initial response to wildland fire as property owners were trying to evacuate as I and other firefighters from local, state and federal firefighting resources were responding. Catastrophic wildland fires happen under the worst weather conditions. House to house transmission of fire is more common in the urban interface and cost millions of dollars of property damage. You have the responsibility require the developer to build an alternate access via Simons regardless of the cost to the developer in order to protect residents of the area and safety of emergency responders. The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (comprised of federal, state, local, tribal, county and municipal government representatives) established National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy that has three tenants: Fire Adapted Communities, Safe and Effective Response, and Forest Resilience. City Council has the direct responsibility to positively influence two of the tenants of the Cohesive Strategy. The Missoula County Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies the project area as Wildland Urban Interface, and it's adjacent to Wildland Urban Intermix and tiers to the National Wildland Fire Management Strategy. Fire response and firefighting is the most complex and has the highest degree of risk to residents and fire responders than any other type of wildland fire. I live on lower Woodbine Place where the road is most narrow and is posted with 'no parking' signs on the north side. Commonly, the signs are ignored and people park on the north side regardless of the posting. The road in front of my house is 23' gutter to gutter. When a car is legally parked on the south side of Woodbine, the road width is necked down to 16 feet. When a car is parked illegally on the north side of Woodbine Place at the same time a car is parked legally on the south side of the road, the travel corridor is reduced to 9 feet. It is not uncommon for cars traveling up or down Woodbine Place to have to pull to the side and yield to oncoming local traffic. Fire Apparatus Manufacturers Association identify width specifications of fire apparatus similar to Missoula FD fleet range from 7.5 feet to 8.3 feet wide. Currently there are 33 homes that use Woodbine Place as their primary access to their residences on Woodbine Place and Landon's Way. 12 additional homes under the new development proposal is a nearly a 30% increase in users of this single access. Under worst case scenario of evacuating current residents from Landon's Way, Macie Way, Hunter Lane and Colter Court, there could be between 33 and 66 vehicles escaping harm at the same time fire response vehicles and other emergency vehicles are responding. If a car is legally parked anywhere on the south side of lower Woodbine Place, it would be very difficult or impossible for residents to escape. Missoula City Council: please do not allow the excuse of expense to the developer to dissuade you from redeeming your responsibility to assure public and fire fighter safety; and building a fire adapted community.