

Planning Board Hearing Summary Memo

Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan

To: Missoula City Council

From: Emily Gluckin, Senior Planner;
Ben Brewer, Community Planning Supervisor;

Date: December 05, 2024

Subject: Summary of November 19th, 2024 Missoula Consolidated Planning Board Hearing

Planning Board Recommendation:

At its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, November 19th, 2024, with 9 voting members present, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend that Missoula City Council adopt the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan. The meeting recording, minutes, and materials can be found [here](#).

Planning Board Recommended Motion:

Recommend that the City Council adopt the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan and Place Type Map (Attachment 2 and Exhibit A) as Missoula's new governing land use plan, based on the information and considerations in the staff report. Through this action, the City of Missoula is repealing the Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035, the associated Future Land Use Map, and repealing all existing neighborhood plans developed prior to the adoption of the 2045 Land Use Plan, except the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan, the 2020 Sxwtpqyen Master Plan, and the 2019 Missoula Downtown Master Plan, which shall remain effective and controlling and adopted as Area Plans under the 2045 Land Use Plan, and take public comment into consideration.

Public Comment

General support for the Land Use Plan: Several public comments encouraged the Planning Board to vote in favor of recommending approval of the Land Use Plan and included the following reasons:

- Many of the comments referenced the community engagement for the project and expressed that public input was appropriately incorporated into the plan. One comment spoke to the need for continued investment in community engagement to continue and expand on robust community involvement.
- Several comments were in support of the level of housing diversity proposed in the plan as a baseline, and some expressed the desire for the plan to go further.
- One commenter spoke in support of the Land Use Plan's consideration of transportation beyond single-occupancy vehicles.

Comments about specific areas: Several public comments were made about specific areas of the Land Use Plan area and the implications of the plan on them. These include:

- Fort Missoula: One member of the public requested that the place type designation for private property within Fort Missoula to be changed from Civic to Urban Mixed-Use Low to allow for more development options.
- East Missoula: Several members of the public questioned the place type designation in East Missoula, stated concerns about the ability of existing infrastructure to support higher densities, and expressed that residents of East Missoula were not adequately involved in the planning process.
- Northside Neighborhood: Several comments referenced the historic Northside neighborhood, citing concerns for limited infrastructure – including street width and parking) to support taller, high-density development. The commenters requested an overlay to be created for that area to preserve the historic character.
- Desmet School: Two comments requested that the land surrounding Desmet School between Butler Creek and Canyon Creek allow for mixed-use zoning to balance taxation from the TIF district in that area, and that it be set aside from the Land Use Plan to have a more in-depth planning process.

Comments about specific topics:

- Accessibility and Visitability: Some comments expressed the need for universal design to ensure accessibility, visitability, and infrastructure for aging in place.

- Housing Diversity: Many members of the public highlighted the pressing need for more housing in Missoula and stressed the importance of offering a diversity of housing options across the community to lessen the pressure on neighborhoods that are currently bearing the brunt of development.
- Compatibility and Preservation: Several concerns were raised about preserving the character of historic areas from the impacts of development. Other comments expressed concern about how striving for compatibility could constrain the ability to have the housing supply that the community needs.
- Limitations of Restrictive Covenants: One member of the public raised concerns about restrictive covenants that would supersede zoning to encourage accessory dwelling units.
- Transportation: One comment stated that parking should be included on every street, and another brought up concerns with how “greenway” is defined in the plan.

Planning Board Questions

Planning Board members had questions about the following topics, some of which were in response to questions raised in public comments:

- Zoning overlays and covenants: Planning Board asked about the role of zoning overlays and covenants in relation to the Land Use Plan. Staff responded that zoning overlays will primarily be addressed during the subsequent code reform effort, and that in general, the approach to overlays will be remove and incorporate existing overlays into the base zoning as appropriate.
- Place type designations in the Rattlesnake: Planning Board asked about the discrepancy between the tier of suitability given to the Upper Rattlesnake in the Residential Suitability Index (Tier 4) and the place type designation (Limited Urban Residential). They observed that other areas of the Land Use Plan area with that suitability designation were prescribed a higher density place type and asked why. Staff responded that in addition to residential suitability, the place type designations consider the built development patterns and the presence of constraints. They noted that a change to the place type designation for that area was made between the public review draft and the adoption draft based on an agency comment received from the Office of Emergency Management that considered evacuation difficulties from wildfire in the Rattlesnake.
- Small-scale commercial: Planning Board asked about the difference between small-scale commercial in residential areas and areas designated for mixed-use. Staff

responded that the difference is intended to facilitate different levels of commercial intensity.

- Housing Capacity Analysis: Planning Board asked about the correlation between existing capacity and expected capacity, and how the breakdown of housing types was determined. Staff responded that this methodology included using the existing mix of building types within the City Boundary to predict what needs to be built in the future. Planning Board also asked if the estimated housing capacity (2.8 times the projected housing need) was adequate and what changes City Council could make to increase the capacity to be between 3-5 times the projected housing need. Staff responded that the model used to estimate housing capacity used conservative estimations and that the plan is on course to allow for an appropriate housing capacity.
- City versus County land use: Planning Board raised questions about the interplay between existing County zoning and the new Land Use Plan, and how the City considers growth in the County. Staff responded that in the parts of the Land Use Plan area that are in the County, the place types largely mirror the County's existing land use designations and zoning, therefore there will be minimal changes from what is allowed today. Staff also explained that unless a property owner chooses to be annexed into the City, property in the County would develop under the County growth plan and zoning regulations. In regard to collaborating with the County, staff responded that the City and County have an Urban Growth Committee that serves as a forum to coordinate on growth and infrastructure solutions.
- Desmet School: Planning Board asked staff to respond to the public comments about the Desmet School. Staff responded that more planning is needed for that area to determine what is appropriate, given that area is one of few parts of the city that allows heavy industrial uses, and the interaction between heavy industrial, commercial, and residential uses needs to be considered further. Staff noted that we have the ability to develop area plans to supplement the Land Use Plan, which could be a possible option for the area around Desmet School.
- Communication: Planning Board asked how changes to zoning will be communicated to homeowners. Staff responded that similar to the Land Use Plan process, the zoning map update and code reform process will also include robust outreach and engagement that will include a wide variety of methods to educate residents about changes.
- Typical Parcel Size: Planning Board asked why typical parcel sizes were included for each place type and suggested removing them from the document. Staff responded that including typical parcel sizes for place types relate to the development patterns and characteristics of place types and are a tool to help calculate capacity.

Additionally, staff made the point that the components of the Place Type descriptions are illustrative and should not be taken as specific requirements or standards.

Planning Board Discussion:

Each Planning Board member expressed their support for the Land Use Plan, and some added additional considerations, including:

- Acknowledgement of the community engagement process and the consideration of public comment that bolstered their trust in the plan and process.
- Acknowledgement that the Land Use Plan is a step in the right direction while being an iterative and evolving effort in the future. Some members encouraged pushing further and being bolder if possible.
- Support for the Focus Inward concept and the distribution of more diverse housing types across the community.
- The importance of the development of zoning districts and codes to implement the Land Use Plan.
- Support for upholding the historic nature and the community-feel of Missoula.