

Missoula City Council Land Use and Planning Committee Minutes - DRAFT

December 10, 2025

3:15 pm

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

Attend in person: City Council Chambers, 140 W Pine, Missoula MT

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Amber Sherrill

Members absent: Sierra Farmer

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

The meeting was called to order at 3:17 p.m.

1.1 Roll Call

Amanda Vermace called the roll.

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from December 3, 2025

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments on items not listed on the agenda.

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Resolution establishing Municipal Planning Commission

Laval Means, Planning Manager with the Community Planning, Development and Innovation department, outlining the need to transition from the current joint City-County Planning Board to a city-only Municipal Planning Commission, as required under Montana Senate Bill 382 / MLUPA. Staff reviewed the timeline of the Our Missoula land-use reform effort, the relationship between the new Planning Commission and the forthcoming Title 22 Unified Development Code (UDC), and the Commission's expected responsibilities, including reviewing major land-use documents and serving as the appellate body for administrative land-use decisions. The structure of the Commission was described as nine members—seven voting and two alternates—with appointments split between the Mayor and City Council and with staggered three-year terms.

Councilmembers discussed board composition, including whether to require representation from the Conservation District. After debate, the Councilmember that had proposed the amendment withdrew it, agreeing the issue could be revisited during bylaw development or future Council action. Staff also explained that the existing Board of

Adjustment (BoA) is being dissolved because the new Planning Commission will absorb appeal functions under the redesigned city code structure.

There was one public commenter seeking details on why BoA would be dissolved.

Moved by: Amber Sherrill

ADOPT a resolution establishing a Municipal Planning Commission for the City of Missoula, Montana, subject to MCA 76-25 (Montana Land Use and Planning Act).

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

3.2 Our Missoula Project – Unified Development Code

Q&A on the Unified Development Code; Landscaping and Activity Areas

Staff provided an in-depth educational presentation on proposed landscaping and activity-area requirements within the new Unified Development Code (UDC) and how these standards relate to the city's land-use plan, climate goals, stormwater protection, and neighborhood livability. Presenters explained that landscaping plays a key role in cooling urban areas, improving air quality, supporting the urban forest, and filtering stormwater before it reaches the aquifer, which serves as local drinking water supply. Staff also reviewed policy connections with Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST), the Climate Ready plan, and the Community Health Improvement Plan, emphasizing urban forest equity and green-infrastructure needs across neighborhoods. To address concerns raised by developers and design professionals, staff presented test-case site scenarios showing how the new 20% landscaping requirement and activity-area flexibility would function on real projects. They concluded that, under the proposed code, landscaping would not prevent developments from achieving maximum density or floor area ratios, and that requirements have been significantly reduced from current Title 20 thresholds while still meeting environmental and policy objectives.

During public comments, architecture professionals, neighborhood residents and community representatives expressed concerns that certain landscaping and activity-area requirements may still pose barriers to infill housing, increase development costs, or feel suburban in form, especially for mixed-use and small infill projects. Some urged removal or reduction of activity-area requirements. Some raised concerns about zoning designations, amenities, and environmental constraints in specific areas such as the Ben Hughes subdivision. Most commenters provided praise and expressed appreciation for staffs efforts and hard work throughout the entire process thus far.

Councilmembers discussed the challenge of balancing climate and environmental policy goals with housing production. They emphasized the need for flexibility and requested additional information on how current city-supported projects, such as the Ravara Housing Development, would comply with proposed standards. The chair noted that

upcoming sessions would focus on sidewalks, right-of-way improvements, build-to zones, and related UDC components before the public hearing opens in January 2026.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.