

Dear City Council Members,

I live in East Missoula. I am writing because the proposed Urban Residential High place type and U-R3 zoning for the Aspire Subdivision parcel raise serious concerns about public safety, neighborhood well-being, and quality of life in East Missoula.

This is not an abstract planning debate for us. These decisions will directly affect whether our streets are safe to walk, whether emergency vehicles can move efficiently, whether traffic becomes more dangerous, and whether development overwhelms already strained infrastructure.

### East Missoula Lacks the Infrastructure Needed to Safely Support U-R3 Density

East Missoula does not have the basic infrastructure that high-density zoning assumes. There is limited sidewalk coverage, no meaningful transit service, no street grid, no alleys, and no multimodal connections. All roads but Speedway are narrow, aging, and substandard. Highway 200 remains a dangerous corridor, with no traffic calming at Sommers Street and revoked funding for promised improvements.

Placing one of the City's highest residential density designations in this setting is not just poor planning—it creates predictable safety risks:

- Increased vehicle traffic on existing substandard roads not designed for it
- More conflict points between cars, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Longer emergency response times
- Reduced safety for children, seniors, and people walking or biking

High density without infrastructure does not create walkable neighborhoods. It forces people into cars and increases the likelihood of accidents.

### The Aspire Subdivision Already Demonstrates These Safety Problems

The Aspire Subdivision was approved with variances that reduced pedestrian safety. There are large blocks, no alleys, frequent driveways, and sidewalks intersected by vehicle access points. This is not a safe pedestrian environment, especially for families and children. Yet instead of acknowledging these shortcomings, the City is now proposing to lock in even higher density zoning for future development on this parcel.

That approach compounds existing safety issues instead of correcting them.

### High-Density Zoning Next to the Clark Fork Raises Additional Risks

East Missoula neighborhoods sit alongside the Clark Fork River. Higher-intensity development closer to the river increases risks related to flooding, erosion, and degradation of riparian buffers that protect both human safety and environmental health.

The Draft UDC's 50-foot riparian setback is inadequate to protect these functions, especially when paired with U-R3 density. Weak riparian protections combined with intense development put both residents and the river at risk.

When zoning decisions ignore context, neighbors pay the price:

- More traffic cutting through residential streets
- Reduced noise and air quality
- Less safe walking routes to schools and bus stops
- Greater strain on emergency services

East Missoula residents are not opposing growth—we are asking for growth that does not compromise basic safety and livability.

### The Planning Board Offered a Safer, More Responsible Path

After listening to extensive public comment, the Planning Board recommended changing the Aspire parcel to:

- Limited Urban Residential place type
- LU-R2 zoning

These recommendations reflect the reality on the ground. They allow growth while respecting infrastructure limits, environmental constraints, and neighborhood safety.

You have the authority to amend the Land Use Plan and Zoning Map. When staff recommendations create foreseeable safety risks, it is your responsibility to intervene.

Please adopt the Planning Board's recommendations and reject Urban Residential High and U-R3 zoning for the Aspire Subdivision parcel. East Missoula neighborhoods deserve planning decisions that prioritize safety, health, and well-being—not just density on a map.

Thank you for your time and for listening to those of us who live with the consequences of these decisions every day.

Respectfully,

Gretchen Murray  
East Missoula