

Staff Responses to Elevated Issues

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Overview/Summary:

This document provides responses to questions and issues elevated by Planning Commission members about the draft Unified Development Code and Zoning Map at the November 18th and November 20th Planning Commission meetings. The staff responses include background information that provides more context about staff recommendations for the Planning Commission members to consider.

Staff Responses to Elevated Issues

Issue #1: Civic Districts

Concern:

Planning Commission members expressed concern regarding the Civic zoning districts, primarily focused on the approach to base zoning of the Fort Missoula area and consideration of whether residential should be permitted or not in that area. By association, questions and comments have also been shared related to whether residential use should be permitted in all Civic district zoning and whether the CD-1 zoning district should be eliminated so that CD-2 zoning district would represent all aspects of the Civic District Place Type (outside of the airport).

Staff Response:

Approach to Civic Districts

The foundations for the discussion related to Civic District zoning stems from our previous Growth Policy, current OP3 zoning district, and the new Civic Place Type described in the recently adopted Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan.

The Civic Place Type is an evolution of the Public & Quasi-Public land use designation in the previous Growth Policy. The current zoning that is typically used for this land use designation is OP-3: Public Lands and Institutions, and it carries the same intent as the Public & Quasi-Public land use designation, which is to accommodate public, quasi-public and institutional uses. The current OP3 zoning designation does not permit residential use. It does permit a host of civic, institutional, and limited types of commercial uses.

The Civic Place Type in the Land Use Plan designates where it is appropriate for uses that often serve the public at large, and may include, but are not limited to airport terminals, regional educational institutions, key landmarks such as museums or libraries, significant historic and cultural resources, social service agencies, government administration services, and general offices. The Civic Place Type is designated to 4,065 acres of land, which includes the airport, and the majority of which is publicly owned; just under 15% is in private ownership.

Our approach to Civic zoning builds from the existing OP3 zoning, along with the intent of the new Civic Place Type, which allows that residential and/or commercial development may be permitted, dependent on context and adjacent land use types. In addition to the general description of Civic Place Type, the Land Use Plan provides various factors to consider when assigning zoning in these areas. This includes reference to typical land uses, community and built forms, mobility patterns, and constraints. Constraints within the Civic Place Type include the potential for impacts to environmental and historically and culturally significant resources, as well as public utility considerations. Dividing the Civic Place Type between two Civic zones accommodates a range of allowed uses based on

context and consideration of constraints. Of the area that is zoned to Civic districts, 51.3% is zoned to CD-1, and 48.7% is zoned to CD-2.

Since zoning must substantially comply with the Land Use Plan, it is also important to ground the approach for Civic District zoning through the lens of the Land Use Plan policy themes that address focusing inward, housing, the environment and climate, community and quality of life, health and safety, and economic health. Notably, areas that are more supportive of City goals to focus growth inwards considering existing amenities and infrastructure, and that support the land use strategy for projected housing capacity, are more appropriately designated as CD-2. Other areas, including the Fort Missoula area, are simply not needed to support new housing development at this time.

Additionally, the Community and Quality of Life policy theme has a stated objective to "identify and preserve historically and culturally significant places and landscapes..." This is being done through clarifications within the extent of the existing OP3 district in a way that is careful to align place types with zoning that is supportive of significant historic resources while also encouraging economic revitalization and reuse in those areas.

The process of evaluating and assigning the Civic zoning districts was described in the staff presentation at Planning Commission on November 20, 2025. To summarize, outside of the airport, all properties within the Civic Place type were initially assigned CD-1. Staff then evaluated each property separately for (1) the presence of environmental and/or historic or cultural resources; (2) the properties' proximity to amenity services, including the availability of transit service, access to commercial services, and proximity to other key amenities; (3) whether the surrounding land uses support a walkable and healthy environment for nearby residential areas.

A summary of the areas zoned CD-1:

- There are 467.5 acres of land within this zone among 17 property owners. The CD-1 zone includes current uses such as Offices, Museums, Golf Course Storage, Cemetery, Municipal Wastewater Treatment and Community Halls. 91.1 percent of the land use is owned by government entities and 8.9 percent is privately owned.
- These areas may contain environmental and/or historic or cultural resources, and, for the most part, are located further from amenities and services, transit services, walkability. The context tends to fit with the characteristics of an open landscape or an existing structure that fills a block. Residential uses can conflict with existing uses in this zone.

A summary of the area zoned CD-2:

- There is 403.4 acres of land within this zone among 11 property owners. The zone includes current uses such as Residence Halls, Higher Education Facilities, Group Living, and Private Residences. Almost all of this area is publicly owned.
- These areas may contain environmental and/or historic or cultural resources. They also have a high degree of connectivity to other uses and are proximal to amenities and services as well as nearby residential areas. These areas fit with, and extend, the compact, connected urban grid. Adjacent land uses are supportive of the potential for residential uses that are contemplated in this zone.

Civic Districts related to Fort Missoula area:

A variety of public comments related to the City’s approach to assigning areas CD-1 or CD-2 are primarily aimed at determining the potential future uses within Fort Missoula, both in favor of, and opposition to, expanding the zoning to permit residential uses.

In an effort to maintain the intent of the OP-3, and now the Civic Place Type, the Fort Missoula Historic District includes two base zoning districts. The CD-1 district applies to the majority of the historic district, encompassing the areas of the Fort that contain historic structures, as well as land with environmental constraints. OP-1 is used to zone the parts of Fort Missoula that are primarily recreational and contain even more open space.

Analyses shows that the CD-1 area of the Fort Missoula Historic District is not proximal to appropriate services and amenities and is isolated from compatible adjacent uses like residential areas, and therefore, it has not been envisioned as a new mixed-use neighborhood. Contemplating residential use in this area is not supportive of focusing inward. The area is a significant historic resource that, through the CD-1 zoning, balances opportunities for economic revitalization and adaptive reuse with consideration of the historic and environmental resources in the area.

Portraying Fort Missoula as originally designed to accommodate residential use is not reflective of the original intent of the Fort’s construction. While officers were stationed in barracks that were a part of the Fort, that does not mean it was designed for permanent residential use. The Fort was a military base and training ground, eventually an internment camp, and finally a place for community gathering, storytelling, exhibition, recreation, and work. In recognition of this past use of the existing buildings, the Fort Missoula Historic Resource Overlay explicitly permits lodging as a use in adaptive reuse projects. Permitted uses within this overlay were expanded to provide additional opportunities for

reinvestment while maintaining the character of the Fort Missoula Historic District as a whole.

Conclusion and staff recommendation:

The Planning Commission has heard comments in support of residential uses in all Civic zoning, essentially collapsing the two zones into one. They have also received public comments raising concerns over permitting residential in the CD-1 zone and especially in the area of Fort Missoula. The direction in the Land Use Plan indicates the need to align civic district zoning to allow residential and commercial uses dependent on context and adjacent land use types. This analysis shows how that direction was considered and yields the need for two CD districts – one that permits residential and another that doesn't.

Drastic changes to the foundation that was set with the previous OP3 zoning are not called for in the CD-1 zone. The distribution of areas that are assigned CD-1 and CD-2 have been carefully considered to balance potential constraints, existing uses, and potential new opportunities enabled through compatible uses within civic designations. Staff recommends no change to the UDC and zoning map.

Issue #2: Activity Area Requirements

Concern:

Planning Commission members expressed concern that landscaping and activity area requirements are dramatically increasing over today's standards and will make housing production impossible.

Staff Response:

In Title 20.65 Activity area is required for multi-family residential projects with 10 dwelling units or more. The activity area is in addition to general site landscaping requirements. For these projects total landscaping + activity area is 35%. Residential projects less than 10 dwelling units are required to provide 35% general site landscaping. When activity area is required, it must be 20% of the parcel area and must be "centrally located" and common recreation areas must be a minimum size of 40'x40'. Patios and Balconies can count towards the activity area requirement.

The UDC requires activity area for residential and mixed-use projects of 7 dwelling units or more at a rate of 150 sq. ft. per dwelling unit. The activity area can count entirely towards the general site landscaping requirements. In modeling various scenarios this equals between 13-15% of the site. General site landscaping varies based on zoning district, but

is 10-25%, with options for reductions based on design. All of, or a portion of, the on-site activity area can be substituted with a Cash-In-Lieu payment to help fund recreational amenities that support the residents of the project off-site in nearby parks.

Please refer to the tables below for details.

Total General Site Landscaping + Activity Area																	
Dwelling Units	Residential							Mixed Use						Commercial		"Other"	
	< 7 DU		≥ 7 DU		≥ 10 DU		< 7 DU		≥ 7 DU		≥ 10 DU		N/A		N/A		
	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	General Site Landscaping	Activity Area	
20.65	35%	0%	35%	0%	15%	20%	15%	0%	15%	0%	15%	0%	20%	0%	15%	0%	
UDC	LU-R	0%	0%	25%	≤20%	25%	≤20%										
	U-R	0%	0%	20%	≤20%	20%	≤20%										
	U-MU							15%	0%	15%	≤20%	15%	≤20%	15%	0%	15%	0%
	D-T							10%	0%	10%	≤20%	10%	≤20%	10%	0%	10%	0%
	D-C							0%	0%	0%	≤20%	0%	≤20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	LU-MU							20%	0%	20%	≤20%	20%	≤20%	20%	0%	20%	0%
T-MU							15%	0%	15%	≤20%	15%	≤20%	15%	0%	15%	0%	

*Activity areas count towards general site landscaping in all Zoning Districts

What does 150 sq ft per dwelling unit look like in real projects?

Parcel Size (SF)	Number of units	Activity Area Required:	Activity Area Required:
		150 SF/DU (max 20% site)	100 SF/DU (max 20% site)
68600	68	15%	10%
13630	12	13%	9%
20772	21	15%	10%
8000	7	13%	9%

In keeping with this context, staff will be sharing recommendations for additional adjustments ahead of the next public meeting. .

Issue #3: Industrial & Employment Place Type and T-MU zoning

Concern:

Questions were received from Planning Commission around the intent of the Industrial & Employment (I&E) Place Type designation in the Land Use Plan, including around transition areas.

Staff Response:

Industrial & Employment Place Type:

The Industrial and Employment (I&E) Place Type description within the Land Use Plan does not include residential use in its list of attributes, nor does it indicate any intensity of housing diversity, or diversity of building types that would indicate that residential uses are allowed. When the Land Use Plan was adopted last year, there was debate on the City Council floor as to whether residential housing should be allowed in the I&E Place Type, however, it was ultimately decided that focusing housing outside of our industrial places, and rather into the Mixed-Use and Residential Place Types was a preferred land use policy.

The Land Use Plan relatable existing zoning districts to the I&E Place Type from Title 20 are M1: Limited Industrial and M2: Heavy Industrial. The proposed zoning districts that are applied to the I&E Place Type follows suit with the adopted Land Use Plan and translates the current T20 districts from M1/M2 to I-1/I-2. The policy decision that residential uses are not associated with the I&E Place Type is carried forward into the new zoning districts.

T-MU: Transitional Mixed-Use Zoning District:

The menu of new zoning districts includes a new T-MU: Transitional Mixed-Use zoning district. The T-MU district standards are located in Article 4.4: Special Purpose Districts. However, it is related and mapped to areas that are designated with Urban Mixed-Use Place Types in the Land Use Plan. This mixed-use zone was originally titled Industrial Mixed-Use, to recognize both historical and existing light industrial uses. This created confusion, leading some to believe it belonged in the I&E Place Type, so was amended to T-MU.

The description of the T-MU district in the UDC, 4.4.02-A, explains: The Transitional Mixed-Use district is intended to accommodate an extensive mix of uses including residential, commercial, and low-intensity industrial. This district is generally applied where the existing block pattern, including large lots and a disconnected street grid, are not easily converted to an urban development pattern that would be supportive of applying an urban mixed-use zoning district, but there is potential to evolve towards an urban mixed-use context in the future.”

The existing zoning district that the T-MU district is most comparable to is the existing M1R: Limited Industrial-Residential district under Title 20. The existing M1R district is currently applied most noticeably to edge areas in neighborhoods that are adjacent to the rail lines that run through the City. Most of the area within the City designated M1R has existing connectivity and urban development patterns, as well as a mix of existing industrial and

residential development. Because of this, these areas were almost entirely designated over to mixed-use or residential Place Types in the new Land Use Plan, with the new zoning following suit with residential or mixed-use zoning districts. In contrast to where M1R zoning is currently mapped, the T-MU district is designated to areas within the Urban Mixed-Use Place Type that lack critical existing urban development pattern and connectivity.

Guidance for related mapping amendments:

In order to accommodate an amendment to have the T-MU zoning district be applied to the Industrial and Employment (IE) Place Type, City policy on whether residential use belongs in industrial places would need to be established through an amendment to the Land Use Plan and then reflected in updates to the zoning map. This could involve either re-designating the bounds of I&E Place Type in order to amend to a Place Type that incorporates residential use and then following suit with the zoning map. Or amending the description of the I&E Place Type to include residential uses in some cases and then amend the zoning map accordingly.

Staff is not recommending either of these changes at this time.

Issue #4: Aspire Subdivision and Zoning in East Missoula

Concern:

Planning Commission members expressed concerns that zoning the area recently approved for the Aspire subdivision in East Missoula to U-R3 feels like an excessive upzone given perceived gaps in existing infrastructure and fears that, if the current subdivision plan does not build out as intended, a future owner could develop at maximum density without adequate safeguards.

Staff Response:

The Land Use Plan designated three distinct Place Types within East Missoula. Urban Mixed-Use Low is mapped along the Highway 200 corridor; Urban Residential High is mapped within the gridded street pattern of the core of East Missoula; Limited Urban Residential is mapped north of properties accessed from Toliver Lane, Placer Ln, and Gold Nugget Rd along the topographical change which drops down to the Clark Fork River. The Land Use Plan, including the Place Type Map, received a unanimous recommendation for adoption by Planning Commission ahead of being ultimately adopted by City Council in December of 2024.

In order to create an un-biased and uniform mapping approach to re-zone the entire City to align with the recently adopted Place Type Map, City staff created a methodology that maps comparable zoning districts using proximity to amenity/services and presence of environmental constraints. To map the Urban Residential High (URH) Place Type the following steps took place:

1. Assign all parcels to the U-R3 zoning district
2. Spatially join parcels to the amenity mapping dataset.
 - a. If parcels are walkable to frequent transit (15 min service) assign to U-R4
 - b. If parcels are within walking distance to at least 3 other amenities assign to U-R4
 - i. Transit Service (15-20minute turn-arounds)
 - ii. Developed Park
 - iii. Grocery Store
 - iv. Public School
 - v. Commuter Trail
 - vi. Local Food Options
3. If areas are within the 100-year floodplain or in an area designated by the Land Use in Equity report assign parcel one-step lower in intensity
 - a. If parcel meets proximity assessment criteria to map to U-R4 assign to U-R3
 - b. If parcel does not meet proximity assessment criteria (is automatically assigned to U-R3) assign to U-R2.

In addition to concerns about the existing approved development rights, a core policy question that we heard related to the zoning designation was “what happens if Aspire does not develop as planned and is instead sold?”. In that scenario, article 4.12.03 on “Evaluation for Street Connectivity and Subdivision” provides criteria for requiring a new subdivision, including adequate access, water and sewer mains within easements, and, depending on unit count, a traffic study—meaning we would not simply issue building permits for maximum U-R3 buildout/densities without ensuring the corresponding infrastructure was in place. The area cannot develop at full U-R3 intensity without the necessary infrastructure due to these safeguards.

Regarding concerns of existing development rights, it’s also important to note that as planned, Aspire will develop incrementally over the next 20 years, allowing surrounding infrastructure (including Highway 200) to improve along this extended timeline.

Staff suggests keeping the integrity of the Place Type to zoning districts at front of mind when suggesting Zoning Amendments to this area. This enables the community to have

more input when areas are re-zoned to a much lower or higher intensity than their original Place Type adopted. If Planning Commission sees this as a valuable amendment to the proposed zoning map, staff's suggestion would be to update the Place Type map as well to the Place Type that corresponds to the proposed zoning district.

Issue #5: Design Community Concerns Regarding Form Standards in Urban Mixed-Use Districts

Concern:

Planning Commission members requested a response from staff to the design community's concerns that form standards in the Urban Mixed-Use districts could make it harder to deliver viable projects on the ground. Commission members echoed some of these concerns.

Staff Response:

The form standards in the Urban Mixed Use (U-MU) districts are designed to ensure that new development actively delivers on the goals the community set in the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan. The Plan, and the engagement that informed it, call for our mixed-use corridors to evolve into more walkable, transit-supportive places—with active ground floors, buildings that frame and enliven sidewalks, and site design that supports our housing, climate, and safety goals. The U-MU form tools—such as build-to expectations, transparency (windows and doors at the street level), building width and frontage, landscaping, and multifamily activity areas—are the practical mechanisms that help us get there over time, so that each project contributes to a more connected, people-oriented public realm.

These standards have been shaped with direct input from the design community. After we released the initial draft, architects, engineers, and developers shared detailed feedback through calls, emails, and a dedicated work session. We sat down together and walked through real-world projects to see where the first version of the code would be difficult to apply, especially on small or irregular lots and for existing buildings. In response, we made targeted but meaningful changes: raising the threshold for multifamily activity areas, clarifying that those areas count toward required landscaping, introducing more flexibility around build-to and frontage on constrained sites, and emphasizing a “legal existing” framework so that current lawful buildings can continue and reinvest. These refinements keep the standards aligned with our shared design goals while making them more

workable on the ground. The entirety of the updates that were made to the 4.3 Mixed-Use Districts Article will be provided in a staff amendment memo to the Commission.

Our authority to use form standards is grounded in the Montana Land Use and Planning Act, which explicitly recognizes that local land use regulations can address not only uses and densities, but also the physical form and design of development to implement an adopted land use plan. Within that framework, Missoula has clear latitude to adopt standards related to building placement, massing, frontage, transparency, and site design to support the pattern of development, transportation choices, and public realm envisioned in Our Missoula 2045. In other words, these U-MU form standards are not an extra layer on top of state law—they are one of the primary tools the Legislature has given local governments to translate a community’s long-range land use vision into the day-to-day decisions that shape how projects are built.

In keeping with this context, staff will be sharing recommendations for additional adjustments ahead of the next public meeting.

Issue #6: Neighborhood Commercial Uses versus Urban Mixed-Use Nodes in Every Neighborhood

Concern:

Planning Commission members expressed concern that the concept of neighborhood commercial as written in the UDC may be limiting, in terms of use and size cap, and questions arose about the ability to designation Urban Mixed Use “hubs” as an alternative.

Staff Response:

The draft UDC does not map Urban Mixed-Use (U-MU) “nodes” into every neighborhood because the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan draws a clear line between primarily residential place types which are meant to remain housing-focused with small-scale services, and mixed-use centers and corridors which are intended to carry higher-intensity residential and commercial activity. The zoning framework in Chapter 4 mirrors that distinction: residential districts prioritize housing but allow small-scale commercial and civic uses, while U-MU districts are reserved for places already functioning as, or planned to become, centers and corridors, supported by larger streets, transit, and infrastructure.

Through engagement, we heard a consistent mix of themes: strong support for more neighborhood-serving uses that people can walk to (corner groceries, cafés, childcare, small offices), coupled with strong concerns about “over-commercializing” residential interiors with larger buildings, traffic, and late-night or regional-scale uses. We also heard clearly, especially from some community members and practitioners, that while they support neighborhood commercial in residential zones, they worry the size cap may be too small for some uses—particularly groceries and restaurants—to pencil. The UDC’s solution is to make neighborhood commercial possible in every residential district by allowing a defined set of uses (groceries, cafés, personal services, childcare, clinics, etc.) subject to size caps and form standards, while mapping full U-MU intensity only in identified centers and corridors rather than deep into established residential areas.

This approach is intentional: it aligns with the Land Use Plan, creates more overall opportunity for neighborhood commercial than a few mapped U-MU nodes would, and protects the form and scale of residential areas by keeping the highest-intensity mixed-use activity in the places best suited to handle it. The size caps in residential districts are calibrated to be large enough to support typical neighborhood businesses but small enough to avoid mini-centers with regional draw and to work with reduced parking requirements and local street networks. At the same time, the code is structured as a living document: staff expect to monitor where neighborhood commercial is proposed, whether key uses are constrained by the caps, and to bring forward targeted amendments where modest increases in footprint or flexibility could expand neighborhood commercial opportunities without undermining the surrounding residential fabric.

Issue #7: Bike Parking Requirements

Concern:

Planning Commission expressed questions and concerns regarding continued bicycle storage requirements, given we are eliminating or reducing required vehicle parking.

Staff Response:

Requirements for continued Bicycle Storage requirements are supported by City plans, policies, and unique circumstances in how bicycles differ from other modes of transportation. Bicycles are an affordable, and in many instances sole mode of transportation for people throughout the City.

When public infrastructure is designed for our streets, we typically provide significant amounts of right-of-way for motor vehicle parking. In fact, on-street vehicle parking is a required element for all street types in the Manual. There is no similar requirement for improvements to the ROW to allow for bicycle storage. People cannot typically just store their bicycles in the street, on the boulevard, or on the sidewalk. In fact, we have seen the impacts of this type of bicycle or micromobility use in cities through shared mobility programs like Lime or Bird. The ways in which these e-bikes and scooters are stored in the ROW without adequate infrastructure leads to significant complaints, issues with blocking pedestrian pathways, and a desire to remove them from the streets.

Bicycles also do not typically have a way to “self-secure” against theft without some form of infrastructure for storage. They do not have the ability to “park” in the way that motor vehicles do with alarms, locked doors, and other measures designed to prevent theft or unauthorized use. Theft of bicycles is very common throughout the City when there is inadequate infrastructure available for storage.

Motor vehicles are designed and built to be fully protected from inclement weather, whereas most bicycles are not. Bicycle storage reduces wear and tear due to the elements and prolongs the lifecycle of a more affordable means of transportation.

Bicycle storage is also considerably less costly in terms of required area and infrastructure compared to parking of motor vehicles. There is flexibility in code and standards for types of storage options (racks, dedicated rooms, etc.) and locations within a site development plan.

Issue #8: Housing Capacity Analysis

Concern:

Planning Commission members asked if updates or amendments to Place Type designations or zoning districts could reduce our ability to meet long-term housing needs in relation to the housing needs analysis conducted for the Land Use Plan.

Staff Response:

The housing capacity analysis for the Our Missoula Land Use Plan evaluated how many new homes could realistically be built under the adopted Place Types, using parcel-level data, development prototypes, and assumptions about market behavior. The Community Profile estimates that Missoula needs about 27,450 new units by 2045 to support a healthy housing market. Under current Title 20 zoning, capacity was estimated at roughly 42,000

units (a capacity-to-need ratio of 1.5). Under the adopted Place Types, realistic capacity rises to about 78,000 units, or a 2.8 capacity-to-need ratio—an 85% increase over Title 20. This is lower than earlier scenario modeling that showed that if development patterns shift toward more Missing Middle and Multi-Dwelling housing (duplexes, triplexes, and small apartments) the system could theoretically reach up to 5.7 times projected need.

When right-sizing zoning, communities aim for between 3 to 4 times the projected housing need because not every “theoretical” unit allowed by zoning will be built, and we need a generous buffer so that even with site or financial constraints, and market preferences, we still have enough homes to meet demand. Extra capacity also helps keep prices more stable by giving households, builders, and affordable housing developers more options, so no single property has outsized leverage. The analysis is simply tracking how many homes *could* fit under the new rules—it is a measure of theoretical capacity, not a prediction of what the market will build or what individual property owners will choose to do.

Overall, the Land Use Plan area has a realistic development capacity-to-need ratio of 2.84 and a maximum potential capacity of about 5.7 if market behavior shifts toward more diverse home types. This represents a significant increase over existing zoning but cannot be decreased without impacting our ability to meet the projected need. The analysis underscores that any significant changes to Place Type attributes or mapping that decrease housing opportunity—especially on large, developable parcels with high potential for new homes—will directly affect that capacity, reinforcing the importance of careful, housing-focused decisions as the UDC and zoning map are finalized.

Issue #9: Guidance on recommending mapping changes

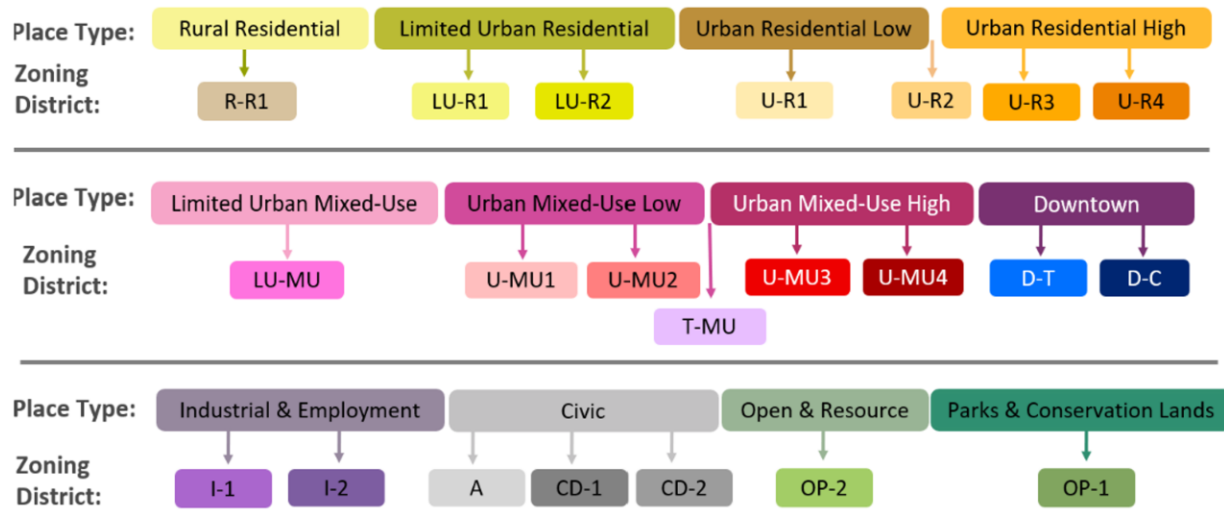
Concern:

Planning Commission has voiced interest in proposing map amendments, and wonder how motions should be structured for changes that would necessitate both Zoning Map and Place Type amendments..

Staff Response:

The Zoning Districts that have been developed with the updated UDC refer to the Place Type designations that were adopted with the Land Use Plan. Please refer to this graphic for help identifying which zoning districts relate to which Place Types:

Place Types to Zoning Districts



Zoning Map amendments that fit within the range of zones supported by the associated place type are generally considered compliant with the place type designation. However, any motions to amend should include findings of fact for why those amendments are needed.

When considering an amendment to a zoning district that would involve an amendment to the underlying Place Type, it is easiest to track if through the process if separate motions are made between recommended place type amendments and zoning map amendments. However, it is also an option to bring related place type and zoning amendments together under one motion if that would be better to facilitate discussion and establishing related findings and reasoning.

Issue #10: Concerns over Residential Intensity

Concern:

Some community members feel the proposed U-R zones take too aggressive a step toward the Land Use Plan’s density goals, allowing buildings that could feel out of scale with existing blocks. Several Planning Commission members echoed this concern.

Staff Response:

We’ve heard from neighbors and designers that some of the proposed U-R zones feel like too aggressive of a first step toward the Land Use Plan’s density goals, as determined by our housing capacity and need assessments. People are worried that FAR limits, allowed units per building, and height—especially in U-R3 and U-R4—could enable buildings that

feel out of scale with existing blocks, stress on-street parking, and change neighborhood feel too quickly.

At the same time, we share a common goal with many of these commenters: Missoula needs more housing of many types—small apartments, duplexes, triplexes, cottage courts, and neighborhood-scale mixed housing—so that more people can live close to jobs, schools, transit, and everyday services. The Land Use Plan calls for a significant increase in homes on typical urban residential lots, but it also calls for getting there through gentle infill and context-sensitive growth. Our intent is to support steady, incremental reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and to protect the public realm—street trees, light and air, and walkable, comfortable streets—even as we make room for more homes.

In response to what we've heard, we are revisiting our form and density tools to be sure they are “right-sized” for Missoula. This includes re-running the numbers on how FAR, maximum units per building, and height work together in each U-R district, and how existing conditions and street networks were considered. We'll share these results with the Planning Commission as part of their review process. As we refine the code, our aim is to stay true to the Land Use Plan's direction—more homes, in more forms, in the places that make the most sense—while pacing that change in a way that neighborhoods can absorb over time.