

**Project: Code Reform**

**Qanda: Have a comment on the Unified Development Code or Zoning Map? Submit it here. [2026-01-08 to 2026-01-18]**

Contribution	Posted at
<p>I live at 733 S. Second West and it is zoned U-R4, but across the street it is U-R3. Could you please change our block and the two and a half blocks on our side of the street to U-R3, which would be compatible with the rest of the neighborhood? I think this designation is leftover from a mistake from the past. What would not work for the neighborhood is having someone on our strip take full advantage of the potential and build a 50 foot high apartment with "no maximum" units. It would not fit the existing conditions of our street and neighborhood. We have an historic neighborhood and have accomodated alley houses, triplexes and even a fourplex a few blocks down and they are compatible, but a 16 unit, would not. It will be a tragedy. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	11 Jan 2026, 09:39 PM
<p>I urge City Council to adopt the updated development code. While change can be difficult, as a 30 year Missoula resident I know that change has been and will continue to happen. I remind those who are concerned about potential neighborhood change that this plan will not go into full effect overnight. It will provide guidance for the way Missoula grows in the next 30 years, and will provide Missoula with some of the tools it needs to grow in a healthy way. More housing is a clear need for Missoula. Denser housing leaves us with the open space around Missoula that so many of us enjoy and care about. More compact and mixed use neighborhoods will cut down on the need to get into our cars for every errand or coffee date. This walkability will support Missoula's climate goals. I thank all those who have worked so hard on this updated zoning plan. I hope that City Council will now make this plan a reality.</p>	12 Jan 2026, 08:12 AM
<p>I support building more housing in all neighborhoods in Missoula and the draft UDC. However, I also support maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods and am sensitive to the impact of tall new construction buildings that loom over existing homes. Please keep the height limits for UR-3 and UR-4 *AS IS* and reject ProHousing Missoula Amendment #3 that would permit 4-story buildings in single-family residential neighborhoods right next to single-story bungalows.</p>	12 Jan 2026, 04:55 PM

I am writing in reference to the proposed zoning plan in general, and specifically the rezoning of the Westside Neighborhood to include U-R4 zoning. I appreciate the thought and effort that has gone into this process, but feel strongly that there are changes in zoning that, while satisfying the need for more housing, will do so at the expense of historicity and livability of our neighborhood.

I have lived on the Westside for 37 years, and owned my own home on Howell and Burns since 1990. Our neighborhood, historically influenced and built by railroad employees, is characterized by smaller, modest homes that were employee built and owned. Throughout the last century, economic changes and residential growth into other parts of town, as well as attrition of the families through retirement and death, resulted in a significant change in demographics in both the North and Westside neighborhoods, as well as degradation of properties. In addition, many homes were purchased by out-of-neighborhood entities, resulting in a high percentage of rental properties and their concomitant variability in maintenance. For the first decade I lived here, most people purchasing a home in the Westside considered it a stepping stone to more valuable property elsewhere in the city. That changed over the next decade, and people began buying houses to make a home, rather than 'building equity' property. At the same time, ADUs began to appear, and there are many examples of lot divisions that have increased infill. Additionally, multi-unit apartment complexes have been developed, particularly along the north border with the railroad. All of this infill has created the opportunity for additional housing, and our neighborhood has grown and is still a desirable part of town.

However, many property developments have met the letter of the zoning law, but fallen woefully short of the spirit of the neighborhood's character. Increased number of cars, increased pavement and decreased greenspace, buildings that have little to no relation to the existing historicity or livability of particular blocks, and, although a nascent issue, conflicts between developers' building plans and heights, and residents who have installed solar on their houses, are all issues that affect the future of this neighborhood. I support increased infill, but done with thought, creativity and an eye towards sustainability and quality of life.

My concern is that the U-R4 zoning has the potential to pave the way for all sorts of mischief at the hands of out-of-neighborhood investors/developers who will create housing that checks off all of the zoning boxes but barely pays lipservice to neighborhood livability or historical consistency, all glossed over with a veneer claiming affordability. At a public meeting at the library, I was unable to get a clear answer to how this zoning designation will guarantee reasonable development and preservation of character. I was provided with a ratio of floor area to number of units (FAR formula) which I could not fathom, either in its application or in how it would create guardrails against development abuse. Also, the lack of limit on number of units associated with U-R4 zoning seems like a greasing of the skids towards high density/low quality of living.

12 Jan 2026, 10:56 PM

When I think of higher density done well and not-so-well, I need only look on my street, Burns. At Burns and Cooley, the Burns Street Commons combines multiple unit density, common greenspace, and landscaping/trees which provide shade, an oft-undervalued asset to property in an increasingly hot summer environment. Floorplans are well-laid out, and affordability is protected through a community land trust. This is a model that not only fits with the neighborhood but also provides inspiration for future developments that meet the goals of livability. Across Cooley is a development that, in my humble opinion, falls short in several ways (I work with a number of the families who live in Trinity, and am infinitely grateful that these apartments can provide shelter and a community at a price each family can afford based on income: I am not opposed to this development at all; however, it is an example of what can pass for housing under current zoning). My issues with this development are:

1. Minimal green common area for kids to play...the two east-west units on Cooley and Stoddard are separated by a large alley that runs the length of the block, providing only pavement for the community to have shared space. Although there is a designated playground structure, it is small and unshaded. Residents tend to walk to Lowell School park for reprieve from heat in the summer.
2. Minimal boulevard trees of a small diameter, ensuring little to no shade provision for units facing south and west for years to come; no other landscaping/vegetation to speak of.
3. Many residents would take advantage of gardening space if provided; the asphalt alley again precludes this option.
4. Poor design of floorplans in the three-story structures. Central stairwells connect living spaces with a bizarre network of hallways that are essentially useless.

My concern is that fewer zoning guardrails under a difficult to understand U-R4 standard will result in more housing but less careful consideration for those who would live there.

A U-R3 zoning standard fits the character of our neighborhood; U-R4 does not. The planning board met on December 2nd; an amendment to the FAR formula came out of that meeting which could help to create guardrails for zoning. Please approve this amendment in its full form.

Thank you for your work in representing this ward. Sincerely,  
Steve Nelson  
1638 Howell

My comments focus on two issues.

1. Traffic problems.

Our family has lived on the southeast corner of Van Buren and Cherry since 1984. When we moved out of an apartment in the University District and into our neighborhood in 1984, we noticed very little problems in traffic flow.

Since that time, we have observed in the Upper Rattlesnake's tremendous expansion of expensive single-family houses as well as high end condominiums. For years, large construction- related vehicles would rumble north past our house which faces Van Buren. Now, especially in the commuting hours, we sit for up to 10 minutes or more before we dare try to enter the traffic line flowing almost bumper to bumper from the Upper Rattlesnake- an area with no stoplights and few stop signs.

Adding a significant number of residents (even 50 new residents) will overload the traffic snarl in this tiny section of the neighborhood which is bounded by Mount Jumbo and Van Buren. The city's plan of infill will only exacerbate our current traffic struggles. The new zoning codes are guaranteed to bring to our little section insolvably serious traffic issues.

In my 30 years of service on our Neighborhood Council's leadership team as well as Community Forum, we dealt with serious concerns about exiting the Upper and Lower Rattlesnake area in case of emergencies such as fire, train accidents like the Alberton disaster, or other natural disasters which would require evacuation. We worked hard with the city's help but even working together, we NEVER REACHED any kind of plan that would accommodate safe exits for all. Adding any more residents to our tiny section would be guaranteeing destruction for us because we have no way to flee. Van Buren either north or south is our ONLY avenue of escape. I imagine Van Buren being jammed with traffic trying to flee Ward one, while we, trapped residents, east of Van Buren experience the kind of fate we have witnessed all too often in California and Colorado Springs and other areas.

It amazes me that our city traffic engineers have not weighed in on the zoning code proposal and offered some kind of plan to avoid these concerns. The only proposal I can think of is to make this endangered section of the Lower Rattlesnake exempt from the zoning code changes. For some reason you have chosen to exempt the northern section of our ward from these radical changes, and I am asking that, with some foresight, you amend the current plan to exclude our little section as well, in order to avoid the real prospect of a future of traffic hazards and even worse disasters.

17 Jan 2026, 03:13 PM

2. Wise infill:

I am very sympathetic to your goals of affordable housing, diversity of structures and other visions. But to overcrowd the lower section of ward one and leave the upper section untouched by your vision seems unwise as well as short-sighted. Surely the Upper Rattlesnake has a lot more land and opportunity for creative development and wise infill. With free bus service and bike paths there is access to downtown for all incomes. It seems to me there should be firm guidelines in the code that would specifically detailed plans for affordable housing and include the upper rattlesnake to share the vision. I think the majority of pushback from Lower Rattlesnake residents is the feeling that we are not represented on the City Council. Both ward one City Council representatives live in single family dwellings in the Upper Rattlesnake and are very content to adopt the vision of infill and decrease the single-family dwellings to the Lower Rattlesnake. We are a small ward, and I have no idea why the Upper Rattlesnake could not enjoy the benefits of a plan they are so very enthusiastic about. When Mr. Melson talked to a long-term resident of our neighborhood, he couldn't understand her concern for what would happen to the community in our neighborhood, especially the little section east of Van Buren. When she expressed her concern that infill would diminish the neighborhood atmosphere that we have carefully built through working together to improve the neighborhood and to care for one another, Mr. Melson replied, "Oh, you have the 'not in my neighborhood' syndrome. Laura didn't respond to the comment, but I would ask Mr. Melson and our other ward one representative, who both seem to be nice people, why do they have great enthusiasm for a wonderful plan imposed on others but which they don't seem to want to have for themselves. Sounds like "not in my neighborhood" on their part!

If you want to increase the population of the city with creative infill, consider the whole ward, not just force it into one small area, which is crowded already.

My final comment on this is that I am wondering if the Mayor and City Councilors are willing to show true leadership? Or are they in imposing their vision on others but not participating themselves. When I listened to the plan, I felt there was an implied devaluation of single-family housing. How many of you live in single family houses now? Are you happy to see a zero lot line apartment in the window of your house? I would be inspired if proponents of the plan would lead the way by choosing to live in neighborhoods similar to what you wish for us to have. Thank you for listening. I hope you will postpone the final vote until you have sincerely considered some of the proposals mentioned in this letter.

END OF REPORT