

Benjamin Brewer

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To: Benjamin Brewer
Subject: Comments on Code Reform

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Dear council members and planning staff,

I am submitting comments on the Code Reform documents as a homeowner in the Lewis and Clark neighborhood. I am very concerned with the proposal to drastically upzone this residential area. I am struggling to see how the current proposal, and recent council amendments to maximum height in UR3 and UR4, are consistent with the stated goal of providing “context-sensitive” development. The neighborhood currently has R5.4 zoning and yet the UDC plans to rezone most of the interior neighborhood to UR3, with UR4 along the South Avenue and Higgins corridors. With the council’s recent amendment, 5 story apartment buildings will be allowed where there are currently single family homes. Similarly, 4 story apartments would be allowed throughout the interior of the neighborhood where it is essentially all single family homes. This is most certainly not “context-specific” infill as described in the standards for residential districts. This same comment could apply to most residential districts throughout the city. I would also like to provide some specific suggestions as well:

1. Use alleys as the delineation between zoning districts. Specific examples are the zoning boundaries along South Avenue and along Benton Avenue. Making this change would enable streets such as Livingston to be entirely within the same zoning district. The boundary along Benton Avenue is particularly troubling because it changes abruptly from UR3 to UR1. There should be a transition buffer with UR2 similar to the outer boundary near Higgins Avenue. Fairview Ave could change to UR2 to ease the transition to UR1 along Benton Ave.
2. Down-zone the entire neighborhood so that the interior is all UR1 and UR2 and the perimeter corridors are ideally UR2 or a maximum of UR3 in some instances. There should be no UR4 in any portion of the neighborhood.

The overall goal with Code Reform should be slow incremental growth and infill, whereas the current proposal seems like it is trying to maximize growth at all costs to existing residents and open the floodgates to developers to have free reign in areas that have traditionally been single family neighborhoods. This will not result in more affordable housing, but will reduce the quality of life for the existing tax-paying homeowners who are fully vested in their cherished neighborhood. When looking through comments on Engage Missoula I saw others expressing similar sentiment throughout many neighborhoods, so I hope these comments are taken into consideration.

Thanks,
Patrick Uthe