

Missoula City Council Land Use and Planning Committee Minutes - DRAFT

January 14, 2026

9:35 am

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

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

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, Jennifer Savage

Members absent: Amber Sherrill

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m.

1.1 Roll Call

Amanda Vermace called the roll.

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from January 7, 2026 morning meeting

The minutes were approved as submitted.

1.2.2 Minutes from January 7, 2026 afternoon meeting

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment on items not listed on the agenda.

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Amend City County Interlocal Agreement for Planning Services - 2026

Laval Means, Planning supervisor with the Community Planning, Development and Innovation department, shared a presentation regarding the interlocal agreement amendment. Ms. Means gave some background on the agreement and explained that the amendment removes the section on coordinated functions, as the City has established a municipal Planning Commission and disbanded the Consolidated Planning Board. This change aligns with prior resolutions and compliance with the Montana Land Use and Planning Act (Title 76, Chapter 25). The amended agreement retains all other sections and continues to support joint planning efforts. The County supports the amendment and plans similar adjustments to its boards.

Moved by: Bob Campbell

Approve and Authorize the Mayor to sign an amended City County Interlocal Agreement for Land Use Planning Services

AYES: (10): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (2): Kristen Jordan, and Amber Sherrill

Vote results: Approved (10 to 0)

3.2 Amendments to the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan

Public comments were heard prior to the committee's discussion and motions for amendments. Several community members provided input on proposed zoning amendments and the Unified Development Code (UDC). Comments included support for an amendment to zone the Ben Hughes subdivision as LUR-1 for consistency with the land use plan, and opposition to a proposed amendment for Fort Missoula that would allow residential development, citing misalignment with amenities and land use goals. Other speakers raised concerns about East Missoula's place type designation and Aspire Subdivision zoning, questioned riparian setback standards, and urged adherence to planning methodology. Additional comments advocated for increased housing density near the university and along high-frequency transit routes, while others cautioned against excessive height and density changes. Concerns were also expressed about historic overlay regulations at Fort Missoula, glazing and build-to requirements in mixed-use zones, and reduced protections in the Airport Hazard Overlay. Speakers requested clarity on staff decisions and encouraged Council to consider amendments that balance growth with safety, environmental, and neighborhood character considerations.

The committee began its work session focused on reviewing staff-recommended amendments to the UDC. The committee talked adopting staff's recommended amendments as a package, while allowing individual items to be pulled for separate discussion. Council members clarified that adopting the package does not prevent future amendments. Specific items flagged for separate review included: Item #6 – Floor Area Ratio (FAR), map amendments along Orange Street (UMU-1 and UMU-2 zoning) and the Westside zoning designations.

Staff provided an overview of the process behind the updated recommendations, noting that changes were based on Planning Commission input, public comments, and corrections of staff errors. Examples included adjustments for building reuse and commercial zone expansions. After discussion, a motion was made to adopt the updated staff-recommended amendments (dated January 5, 2026), excluding Item #6.

The first amendment discussed sought to remove maximum unit caps for apartment buildings in UR-1, UR-2, and UR-3 districts. Discussion focused on balancing housing flexibility with neighborhood compatibility, considering factors like FAR, height limits, and parcel size diversity. Concerns were raised about potential impacts on neighborhood character, affordability, and infill development feasibility. Staff explained the intent behind unit caps and FAR as tools to manage building scale and referenced the land use plan as a guiding framework. Additional related amendments were previewed, including proposals to adjust FAR limits and increase height allowances in UR-3 and UR-4. Visual examples were shared to illustrate how FAR and height changes affect building size. The

conversation highlighted the interconnected nature of amendments and the need to consider policy goals for housing equity, climate, and growth management.

The meeting was adjourned for a recess at 12:01 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 12:51 p.m.

Another round of public comments was heard. During this portion of public comment, several speakers expressed support for zoning reform and emphasized the importance of flexibility in mixed-use districts to accommodate affordable housing and dense development. Multiple commenters advocated for increasing the FAR to around 1.6, noting it aligns with successful apartment projects and promotes housing choice. Affordable housing providers, such as Front Step Community Land Trust and Homeward, highlighted concerns that overly restrictive rules could prevent well-loved apartment buildings from being built and urged adoption of amendments related to unit caps, FAR, and building heights. They also cautioned against overly prescriptive design requirements, such as build-to zones and transparency standards, which could limit staff's ability to adapt projects to site-specific needs. Architects stressed that FAR is a new and complex concept for Missoula and recommended aligning any changes with the land use plan for clarity. Additional comments related to the need for higher building height limits to reduce long-term costs and improve affordability, as well as clarifying historic preservation definitions to avoid confusion. While other commenters reiterated opposition to residential overlays and requested zoning changes to reflect their preferences.

The committee discussed how to proceed with multiple residential district amendments, including those related to FAR, building heights, and unit caps. There was debate over whether to withdraw or table certain amendments to allow time for collaboration and potentially combine related proposals into a single package. Some members suggested voting on building height first, as it could influence decisions on FAR and other standards. Others emphasized the importance of making progress now rather than delaying, noting that amendments could be revisited or modified later if needed. Staff assured the Council they would help identify conflicts between amendments.

An amendment to increase the FAR in UR-4 zones from 1.2 to 1.6 to allow greater flexibility for infill development was discussed. The sponsor of the motion emphasized the need to preserve the ability to build projects similar to existing examples and avoid overly restrictive standards. Staff clarified current recommendations, planning board input, and provided real-world examples of buildings at FAR 1.2 and 1.6, noting that higher FAR primarily affects upper-story square footage and overall density. Discussion highlighted that increasing FAR could raise unit counts significantly (e.g., from 12 units at 1.2 FAR to 17 units at 1.6 FAR on a typical parcel), and members debated impacts on corridors versus neighborhoods like the Westside. Some committee members expressed concern about density increases in areas already zoned UR-4 and preferred a more holistic approach to mapping and related amendments before making changes. Others supported the amendment as a way to promote housing equity and connectivity.

The committee addressed how to proceed with competing proposals for the FAR table in residential districts. Before considering a second motion on density, members agreed to vote on staff's recommended FAR table (Item #6 that was excluded from an earlier vote) to clarify what would be in place if no changes were made. Staff explained that the

current adoption draft includes FAR values that exceed land use plan recommendations for UR-1 and UR-4, and their updated recommendation adjusts those high-end ranges to better align with policy and maintain compatibility. Specifically, the staff table sets UR-4 at 1.2 FAR for seven or more units and lowers UR-1 for three or more units to .6 FAR.

It was also discussed whether to adopt maximum density limits for residential districts using staff-calculated numbers based on the Land Use Plan. The sponsor explained that their intent was to keep zones aligned with the plan's principles. Staff clarified that maximum density was not part of their official recommendation, but they provided suggested numbers in response to the Planning Board's prior proposal. Members confirmed that the earlier vote adopted staff's FAR table but left the maximum density boxes blank, meaning this motion would fill those with staff-calculated values.

The meeting was adjourned for a recess at 2:29 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 2:44 p.m.

The committee reconvened and considered amendment to raise the FAR exemption threshold from 3,250 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft., allowing lots under 4,000 sq. ft. to be exempt from FAR restrictions. The change aims to permit slightly larger homes or duplexes on small parcels without disrupting historic lot patterns and to reduce administrative burden. Staff noted the amendment does not alter the FAR table but provides flexibility for rare small lots, enabling modestly larger unit sizes with minimal impact on neighborhood compatibility. Council concluded the effect on FAR as a scale regulator would be limited.

Council considered an amendment to exempt residential units above neighborhood commercial spaces from FAR calculations to encourage mixed-use development and housing diversity. All other code requirements, such as height and setbacks, would remain. Members discussed potential loopholes, but staff noted size and height limits would constrain scale, and additional safeguards could be added if needed. The City Attorney, Ryan Sudbury, confirmed that emergency measures could address any abuse. Council expressed general support for the proposal.

Council debated height limits for UR-3 and UR-4 zones, considering an amendment to raise maximum heights from 35 to 45 feet in UR-3 and from 45 to 50 feet in UR-4. Supporters argued the change aligns with housing goals, provides flexibility for infill, and helps projects pencil out without mandating taller buildings. Opponents favored retaining staff's recommendation of 35 and 45 feet, citing concerns about neighborhood compatibility, visual impacts, and shadowing. Staff clarified that height increases would not affect FAR but allow vertical stacking, and shared shadow calculations to illustrate impacts. The discussion highlighted trade-offs between housing needs, accessibility benefits at four stories, and preserving neighborhood character.

The Councilmembers discussed clarification on density methodology and amenities mapping, particularly on the Westside, and a proposed amendment regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The sponsor noted lingering questions about how amenities influenced density increases but did not propose an amendment at this time. On ADUs, staff confirmed that current code already guarantees one additional unit by right regardless of FAR, and upcoming staff amendments will clarify transitional provisions and definitions to address public concerns.

Additionally, committee considered removing the restriction on driveway access for lots under 40 ft of frontage. The sponsor argued the rule limits infill housing, while staff noted its intent to preserve street trees, utilities, and parking. Alternatives like shared driveways were discussed, and staff indicated design issues could be managed without the hard rule. Council generally supported added flexibility.

Lastly, a preliminary discussion on mixed-use design standards, including whether to retain elements from the Design Excellence Overlay (e.g., build-to zones, transparency, street-facing entrances, parking limits). Members raised concerns that strict rules could deter neighborhood services, while staff emphasized walkability goals and suggested flexible approaches. The group agreed to defer major decisions and advance an exemption for medical facilities from transparency requirements.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

City Council adopt a Resolution to Adopt amendments to the *Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan* and Place Types Map, based on the information and considerations in the staff report.

[Vote Planned - January 26, 2026]

Moved by: Sean McCoy

Adopt the package of staff recommended amendments in the Updated Staff Recommended Amendments Document, except for amendment #6.

AYES: (9): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Justin Ponton

ABSENT: (3): Kristen Jordan, Jennifer Savage, and Amber Sherrill

Vote results: Approved (9 to 0)

Moved by: Bob Campbell

Table 4.02.03-2 (units per building) - Amend table, to set maximum number of units per building, for apartment buildings, to “No Max” for UR1, UR2 and UR3. All else as-is.

AYES: (9): Stacie Anderson, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

NAYS: (2): Mirtha Becerra, and Sean McCoy

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results: Approved (9 to 2)

Moved by: Jennifer Savage

Code Section: Table 4.2.03-3 FAR and Density: Increase FAR in U-R4 to 1.6 to allow for more infill projects.

AYES: (4): Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Mike Nugent, and Jennifer Savage

NAYS: (7): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, and Justin Ponton

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Failed (4 to 7)

Moved by: Sean McCoy

Move to modify Table 4.2.03-3 in 4.2.03-D Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and Density to allow more flexibility in developing small infill projects while maintaining growth described in the Land Use Plan. Respectfully request staff include the table from the Planning Board related to the amendment.

AYES: (1): Sean McCoy

NAYS: (10): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Failed (1 to 10)

Moved by: Stacie Anderson

Adopt staff's recommended amendment to FAR (Staff Recommended Amendment #6).

AYES: (8): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Gwen Jones, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

NAYS: (2): Betsy Craske, and Mike Nugent

ABSTAIN: (1): Kristen Jordan

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Approved (8 to 2)

Moved by: Sean McCoy

Adopt maximum densities for U-R1, U-R2, U-R3, and U-R4, based on the recommendation of Planning Commission but using the density maximums proposed by staff.

AYES: (2): Mirtha Becerra, and Sean McCoy

NAYS: (9): Stacie Anderson, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Failed (2 to 9)

Moved by: Mirtha Becerra

Move that the City Council amend Section 4.2.03-D.4 (Floor Area Ratio FAR and Density, Exceptions) of the Unified Development Code to increase the lot-size threshold for the FAR exemption for one-unit houses and duplexes, as follows:

1. In Section 4.2.03-D.4, revise the exception for one-unit houses and duplexes to read: "One-unit house and duplex building types are exempt from floor area ratio (FAR) requirements on parcels/lots with an area of 4,000 square feet or less."
2. Replace any previous numeric reference to 3,250 square feet for this exception with 4,000 square feet for consistency.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

Moved by: Sean McCoy

Move that the City Council amend Section 4.2.03-D (Floor Area Ratio FAR and Density) of the Unified Development Code to encourage residential units over Neighborhood Commercial in Limited Urban and Urban Residential districts, as follows:

Section 4.2.03-D.4 – Exceptions to FAR (add new subsection)

h. In the LU-R1, LU-R2, U-R1, U-R2, U-R3, and U-R4 zoning districts, gross floor area devoted to residential dwelling units located above a ground-floor Neighborhood Commercial use on the same building footprint is exempt from maximum allowed gross floor area when calculating Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

1. To qualify for this exemption, the ground-floor Neighborhood Commercial use must meet the Neighborhood Commercial building type standards in Article 4.7, and the exempt residential floor area must be located on stories above that Neighborhood Commercial space.
2. This exemption does not alter other applicable height, setback, or building width standards."

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

Moved by: Betsy Craske

Amend table 4.2.03-7 Building Form and Components to increase the maximum height in the U-R3 district from 35 feet to 45 feet and in the U-R4 district from 45 feet to 50 feet.

AYES: (5): Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Sean McCoy, Mike Nugent, and Jennifer Savage

NAYS: (6): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, and Justin Ponton

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Failed (5 to 6)

Moved by: Sean McCoy

Move that the City Council not adopt the staff -recommended amendment creating Section 4.2.03-E.3 “Driveway Access Restriction on Narrow Lots” (prohibiting street -accessed driveways on lots with street frontage less than 40 feet), and that this subsection be deleted from the adoption draft in its entirety.

AYES: (9): Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

NAYS: (2): Stacie Anderson, and Eric Melson

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Approved (9 to 2)

Moved by: Mike Nugent

Waive transparency requirements for healthcare facilities, hospitals, and medical offices.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, and Jennifer Savage

ABSENT: (1): Amber Sherrill

Vote results:Approved (11 to 0)

3.3 Our Missoula Project – Adoption of the Unified Development Code & Zoning Map

This item was discussed simultaneously with item 3.2: Amendments to the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan. Some of the votes and attachments to item 3.2 relate to the adoption of the Unified Development Code and Zoning Map and will be properly reflected before the public hearing closes.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

City Council adopt an ordinance establishing Title 22 – City of Missoula Unified Development Code (UDC) (Attachment A), repealing in its entirety Title 16 – Manufactured Housing and Mobile Home Parks; Title 17 – Subdivisions; Title 20 -

Missoula City Zoning Ordinance; Title 21 – Form Based Code (Sx wtpqyen); and any Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Special District (SD) found on Attachment C – Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Special Districts (SD) Repealed/Retained – as well as any PUD or SD not listed as Converted to Historic Resource Overlay; with all of the foregoing based on the findings of facts and conclusions outlined in the staff report.

[Vote Planned - January 26, 2026]

Moved by: Mike Nugent

City Council adopt an ordinance establishing a new City of Missoula Zoning Map (Attachment B), and repeal the existing Zoning map, to come into compliance with the Montana Land Use and Planning Act, MCA 76-25, based on the findings of facts and conclusions outlined in the staff report.

[Vote Planned - January 26, 2026]

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 p.m.