

January 12, 2026



The following are Climate Smart Missoula comments regarding the Our Missoula zoning and UDC update, provided by Amy Cilimburg, executive director.

Please find comments on page 2 regarding transportation that I did not have time to convey during my public comments.

I want to start by thanking City staff for these years of efforts, Council for careful consideration as this moves forward, and community members who are striving to help Missoula thrive for decades to come.

We at Climate Smart Missoula have been involved in this Our Missoula effort since the outset. We participated in myriad community meetings where we heard that housing availability and affordability are a real priority, as are considerations of climate, nature, and livability.

We've provided comments earlier regarding our priority considerations, and we're a member of Common Good Missoula and appreciate the collaborative recommendations they've offered.

We are generally supportive of where this has landed before Council.

We know that change is hard. We know that this UDC update is imperfect and that none of us have all the answers. Competing interests are a challenge, even when our overarching values align.

In reviewing the Planning Board and staff presentations and updates over the last couple weeks, and after visiting with City staff and others, I offer a few comments.

First, given the City of Missoula's myriad established climate goals and given that climate impacts are here today and projected to intensify, I think it's imperative we consider these directly.

- We've had recent damaging windstorms.
- We're experiencing weeks of days over 90 degrees and hotter nights.
- December broke temperature records and rivers were at risk of flooding.

Considering all this and more, I recently spoke with scientists at the Montana Climate Office, and they confirmed that yes, what we are experiencing now is a "window into the future". For example, ten years ago, "atmospheric rivers" were not on scientists' minds. They are today. Flooding and rain deluges *will* hit Missoula. We *will* experience more severe heat waves. The risks are real and no place is immune.

I bring up these direct impacts because it is imperative we design our community to deal with these. Or in 20 years we'll be saying "if only...", and we'll be dealing with unaffordable expenses.

Here are a few ways we can get this right in the new UDC:

Tree planting and tree care, bioswales, greenspaces, and flexible landscaping—all are needed as temperatures rise, rain comes in deluges, and our physical and mental health are challenged. We strongly support these provisions.

We need more affordable housing, and we support measures that increase units and density more equitably throughout Missoula. These are crucial climate solutions. At the same time, we need permeable green infrastructure to balance all the hard infrastructure of buildings if we are going to manage these increasingly significant precipitation events.

Parks are crucial but not sufficient—we need green space woven throughout the urban landscape not just for all the quality-of-life benefits but because water needs somewhere to go. For that reason, we support keeping landscaping requirements as written and requiring activity areas for developments over 10 units. This compromise offered by staff does seem to allow for this while also encouraging space for more housing units. We also support the options for cash-in-leu to support Park's efforts.

Beyond green infrastructure, part of what makes denser urban development more climate friendly AND livable is adequate transportation options that don't require a car.

We support Council taking a look at amending the current UDC version to promote Transit Oriented Development along high frequency Mountain Line routes (via Place Types, parking minimums, and FAR adjustments, for example).

As housing costs rise, we can make it easier and cheaper for folks to get around, saving money. Whether by a free, all-electric bus or by bike.

Some have argued that we should eliminate covered bike storage in larger apartment complexes. But particularly with the growth of electric bicycles, adequate bike storage is necessary enabling infrastructure for this inexpensive and low carbon way to get around.

And when paired with other programs—perhaps e-bike rebates or incentives for bike charging, as many other communities are doing—this option can work for even more residents. As staff note, “multi-modal transportation is critical to allowing Missoula to grow without overwhelming our transportation system,” and we support keeping this requirement and encouraging bike storage wherever feasible.

Thank you for the thoughtful considerations as we work to develop Missoula in ways that meet today's needs and those of our children as they grow.