

Dear City Council Members,

I am an East Missoula neighbor writing in strong opposition to assigning the Urban Residential High place type and U-R3 zoning to the Aspire Subdivision parcel.

Let me be clear at the outset: East Missoula residents are not anti-growth. What we oppose is growth that ignores infrastructure limits, environmental constraints, and the City's own adopted planning logic. That is exactly what is happening here.

After extensive public testimony and multiple hearings, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board—your volunteer experts—recommended two very specific, targeted amendments for the Aspire parcel:

1. Change the place type from Urban Residential High to Limited Urban Residential, and
2. Change the zoning from U-R3 to LU-R2.

Those recommendations were thoughtful, measured, and responsive to community conditions. Staff's decision to dismiss them—without transparent analysis or explanation—is deeply troubling.

East Missoula Does Not Meet the City's Own Criteria for Urban Residential High

Staff has repeatedly explained that Urban Residential High is intended for amenity-rich, well-connected, walkable areas with transit access and strong infrastructure. By the City's own mapping and methodology, East Missoula is an amenity desert. We lack grocery access, multimodal connections, sidewalks, transit service, and street connectivity. Promised infrastructure improvements to the East Missoula corridor were revoked. Nothing about our neighborhood resembles the areas where Urban Residential High zoning is otherwise applied.

Yet staff insists on placing one of the highest residential intensities in the entire city here anyway—without justification.

Even more concerning, Urban Residential High was not identified as compatible with the parcel's existing RT5.4 zoning, despite staff repeatedly stating that compatibility with existing zoning was a guiding principle. The City's own compatibility tables point instead to Limited Urban Residential districts as appropriate here.

U-R3 Zoning Is Fundamentally Incompatible With This Location

The City's proposed UDC describes U-R3 as supporting:

- Walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods
- High connectivity street grids
- Alleys, small blocks, and urban services
- Context-sensitive development near the city core

None of those conditions exist in East Missoula.

The Aspire parcel is physically isolated, cut off by Mount Jumbo, the Clark Fork River, and the interstate. It is surrounded by low-density county neighborhoods and substandard roads. There is no

transit, no grid, no alleys, and no urban fabric to support U-R3 density. Calling this “context-sensitive” strains credibility.

The U-R3 designation here is not just inappropriate—it is an outlier, a dark orange island of high density zoning dropped into a location where it clearly does not belong.

This Is Not Incremental Infill—It Is a Blank Slate With Real Consequences

Unlike core neighborhoods where density is added incrementally, the Aspire parcel is an open field. U-R3 zoning here invites large-scale, high-intensity development all at once, layered on top of aging infrastructure, environmental constraints, and unresolved traffic safety issues—particularly along Highway 200 and Sommers Street.

This is how planning failures happen: density first, infrastructure later—or never.

Riparian Protection Has Been Treated as an Afterthought

East Missoula residents are especially alarmed by the Draft UDC’s 50-foot riparian setback along the Clark Fork. That buffer is inconsistent with state agency guidance and available science and falls well short of what is needed to protect riparian function, water quality, and public safety.

Missoula calls itself a river town. If that is more than a slogan, the City must do better than adopting arbitrary setbacks unsupported by evidence—particularly when pairing them with high-intensity residential zoning along the river corridor.

Staff may draft plans, but you are the final decision-makers. You are empowered—and obligated—to correct course when staff recommendations conflict with community reality, adopted methodology, and common sense.

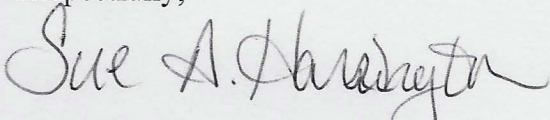
The Planning Board did its job. East Missoula residents did our part. What we are asking for is simple and reasonable:

- Adopt the Planning Board’s recommendation
- Apply Limited Urban Residential place type
- Zone the Aspire parcel LU-R2, not U-R3

This is responsible planning. It aligns with infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and the City’s own stated goals.

Please do not ignore the warning signs East Missoula residents are raising—again. Listen to the substance of our concerns, not just the tone of our frustration.

Respectfully,



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