

Missoula City Council Land Use and Planning Committee Minutes - DRAFT

December 3, 2025

2:30 pm

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

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

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka

Members absent: Eric Melson

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

The meeting was called to order at 2:23 p.m.

1.1 Roll Call

Amanda Vermace called the roll.

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from November 19, 2025

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments on items not listed on the agenda.

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 2315 Clark Fork Lane Casino and Tavern Conditional Use Request

Pre-public hearing - informational only.

Lauren Stevens, Senior Planner with the Community Planning, Development and Innovations department, presented an informational overview of the conditional use request for a proposed casino and tavern at 2315 Clark Fork Lane, located near the Mullan–Reserve corridor. She explained that the project is a scaled-down version of a previously approved plan whose conditional use had expired due to the applicant not securing a building or zoning compliance permit within the required timeframe. The parcel is zoned C1-3 Neighborhood Commercial, and while restaurant and retail uses are permitted outright, casino and tavern uses require conditional approval. Stevens summarized the site layout, parking requirements, building design, and compliance with Title 20 standards, noting that the project meets criteria related to compatibility, operational characteristics, traffic safety, and alignment with the Missoula 2045 land use plan. She also highlighted that one condition of approval is recommended: the project must conform substantially to the plans reviewed at the conditional use stage.

Council questions focused on zoning density considerations for commercial uses, the role of use-type buffers, and how the upcoming Unified Development Code (UDC) will treat casinos—specifically that such uses would not be permitted under the future zoning framework. Council members also requested clarification on the expiration of the prior approval.

3.2 Code Reform Polling

Informational Report.

The subject item was introduced but a recess was called at 2:53 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 3:00 p.m.

Pro Housing Missoula representatives, Shibu Arens and Trenton Marlar presented results from a survey of 520 registered Missoula voters conducted in November concerning updates to the Unified Development Code (UDC). Mr. Marlar reviewed the methodology, demographics, and shared the data's margin of error. Key findings included broad agreement that Missoula lacks sufficient housing, widespread personal or familial impact related to housing affordability, and significant concern—particularly among younger adults and renters—about the ability to remain in the community long-term. Respondents favored adding housing supply over preserving neighborhood character and expressed majority support for several components of the draft UDC, such as increased housing flexibility, small-scale neighborhood commercial uses, and reduced parking requirements.

Mr. Arens emphasized that the goal was to reach residents less likely to attend formal meetings, clarifying that the poll was not intended as an endorsement of specific policy outcomes. Council members asked about the decision to sample registered voters, the framing of neighborhood-specific questions, crosstab detail, weighting to reflect 2024 voting patterns, and the neutrality of question wording. They also discussed assumptions underlying the interpretation of results, including the proportion of respondents who may not have been previously familiar with the UDC.

3.3 Our Missoula Project – Unified Development Code

Q & A on the Unified Development Code

Staff with the Community Planning, Development and Innovation department (CPDI) provided an update on the draft Unified Development Code (UDC) and summarized the materials produced in response to community and commission feedback. Mark Hendrickson, Associate Planner with CPDI, presented the methodology used to translate the Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan into the proposed zoning map. He outlined the data-driven approach, which included proximity to multimodal infrastructure, parks, commuter trails, transit frequency, grocery access, local food sources, schools, sensitive environmental areas, floodplain considerations, equity and displacement risk analysis, and the forthcoming bus rapid transit corridor. He also demonstrated how these criteria guide step-up or step-down adjustments within multi-tiered zoning districts and provided neighborhood-specific examples illustrating how block-level differences in amenities or constraints result in different zoning assignments.

Council questions centered on the consistency of methodology across neighborhoods, the relationship between place-type designations and allowed zoning ranges, treatment of historically dense districts such as the Westside and University area, long-term

expectations if new amenities are constructed, and the need for clearer visualization tools to compare existing zoning, land-use maps, and proposed districts. Several members requested additional mapping resources, including overlays of place types, infrastructure availability, and degree-of-change assessments. Staff acknowledged these requests and noted forthcoming updates to public-facing map tools.

During public comment, folks raised concerns that the amenity-based methodology used to assign zoning—particularly UR-4 on the Westside—does not reflect real walkability challenges, citing a lack of contiguous sidewalks, limited nearby amenities, and the potential for disproportionate up-zoning in vulnerable neighborhoods. Several speakers objected to the creation and application of the CD1 civic district, arguing it is overly restrictive, inconsistently applied—especially at Fort Missoula—and conflicts with long-range planning goals. Commenters also questioned the fairness and purpose of a district-wide historic resource overlay applied only to Fort Missoula despite most parcels being government-owned. Additional comments highlighted concerns about street congestion and parking impacts from increased density, inconsistent zoning within small subdivisions, driveway prohibitions on narrow lots, and confusion about how amenity scoring justified certain zoning outcomes, including in East Missoula.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.