

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this rezoning issue. Listening to this meeting over the last several hours reminds me how thankful I am for the engagement and sacrifice of long hours and tough decisions required of our city leaders.

I have the privilege of leading ALPS, a national company based in downtown Missoula, and the #1 issue on a staff survey was affordable housing in Missoula. This is a real issue for our community, and I am a strong supporter of responsible plans to address it. All neighborhoods need to be a part of the solution.

FOGC supports the current zoning and opposes the rezoning application. At the risk of departing from my neighbors, an honest assessment of safety simply requires opposition of even the current zoning. I would submit that, if it is possible within the options Council has available, the “right thing to do” would be to approve the current zoning subject to the precondition that traffic egress is addressed first to reduce existing traffic congestion risk during an emergency evacuation from our “one way in, one way out” valley. The DOT work already underway on that intersection will help the current buildup, but even a non-traffic expert can observe that 500 new residents/vehicles will more than overwhelm those improvements. Grant Creek residents have for years already turned one lane into two lanes by allowing folks to turn right from the shoulder. To approve the current zoning would be like the [Uber driver who drove his car into a lake](#), because “Google Maps said it was okay”. Sometimes even when the document directing our decisions says it’s okay to do, we must then apply common sense and address the obvious issues honestly. Approving the rezoning would be, to be candid, crazy. Approving the existing zoning would seem responsible...if the existing safety egress issues were addressed first. Otherwise it *will be* the oldest and slowest residents who manage to get in the evacuation line last, and this would be an astonishing level of danger to invite upon them.

Mr. Morgan stated something along the lines of, the “one way in, one way out” was an issue “to be dealt with at another time, not associated with this project”. While I trust Mr. Morgan is a reputable architect, anyone familiar with the existing traffic and safety issues would see this comment as reckless. I wonder, if Mr. Morgan boarded up his doors and windows and all available forms of egress other than his front door, then added 100 people in his living room before starting a fire in his kitchen, if he would still feel so cavalier about the timing of when the “one option out” route of egress should be addressed?

The development team on this project is attempting to gear the project in the most profitable way possible. As a “pro-growth” member of our community I support them creating a reasonable profit. But after listening to both the Planning Board meeting and this meeting, and therefore feeling compelled to speak when I typically avoid engaging on these types of issues, I feel compelled to offer an observation; I found the presentations of Mr. Morgan and Mr. Abelin to be sufficiently detached from the observable reality at that intersection, such that I can’t help but assume that the motivation here is increased profit, cloaked as a way to offer more density and basic amenities. This land was purchased with the existing zoning. Holding hostage, subject to the rezoning, basic amenities those residents will require like the green space and dog parks is very disappointing to witness.

I suggest members of City Council don’t take mine, or anyone else’s, conflicting perspectives at face value. Go to the intersection and witness it for yourself. The traffic at normal “pulse times” daily (and also at random times like we saw in Ms. Sippy’s presentation) will illustrate clearly for you what a dangerous evacuation down a one-way-out corridor will look like with flames in the backdrop.

Thank you for listening to my comments.                      David Bell