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Respondent

7

Anonymous

93:52

Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Bob Carter, HD96

2. The 2023 Legislature passed several bills to encourage housing development by revising land use laws (subdivision), reducing regulatory barriers, and streamlining processes.

SB 382 – Montana Land Use Planning Act.

SB 131 – Revise exempt subdivision review timelines.

HB 211 – Revise local subdivision review process.

What are your opinions of the legislation listed? What specific policy changes would you recommend/support to further encourage housing development in our community? *

SB131 - I supported this legislation.

SB382 - I supported this legislation.

HB211 - I was opposed to this because it would allow a government body to deprive the public of its right to participate and comment on issues that would affect them, and I am against policy that can lead to less government transparency and public participation.

3. Missoula is an employment anchor in western Montana, but a quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. The 2019 Missoula County Housing Action Plan states, "Underlying high housing costs is an undersupply of around 2,400 housing units in Missoula County".

What specific policies would you pursue to address the community's workforce housing deficit and ongoing needs? *

We should consider some no-frills workforce housing options, and consider higher zoning densities in the areas where existing services already exist rather than encouraging urban sprawl and negative impact to our valuable ag-lands and our surface and ground water resources. Economic incentives like a revolving fund for development, more attractive financing options, and public-private partnerships with the ultimate goal of increased home ownership.

4. During past few years as home prices have soared, rental rates have seen a similar trend. Locally some people have voiced concerns that short-term rentals are reducing available rental units and increasing rental rates.

What is your opinion on short-term rental regulation? *

While I agree every dwelling unit matters when it comes to the housing shortage, I feel more progressive policies could have better long term impact to increase the housing supply rather than trying to regulate a few hundred short-term rentals.

5. Montana policymakers must address the disconnect between growth in our communities and inadequate infrastructure.

What legislative changes would you support or propose to help communities invest in infrastructure to keep up with the demands of growing local economies and populations? *

Public-private partnerships is just one way to attack this, but a problem of this magnitude is going to require additional support from the state and federal government. This past session addressed these issues with HB819, SB528, SB323, and SB245, all of which I supported and I would continue to support similar legislation.

6. Property taxes are the primary funding source for local government services and infrastructure and help to fund public services, infrastructure, and education. Increasing mill levies and increasing property value assessments have left many property owners demanding relief.

What policies would you support to provide permanent property tax relief to Montana homeowners? *

Not long ago private homeowners were responsible for 40% of property tax revenue and businesses & corporations were responsible for 60% of state property tax revenue. Now those numbers are reversed. I think it may be time to start moving the pendulum in the other direction again. Additionally, a greater supply of housing could help to ease the burden on existing homeowners.

7. State Law provides for tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within urban renewal districts to combat blight and promote economic development. However, critics of TIF say that these urban renewal districts can be in place for many years, and TIF diverts property tax revenue away from schools and county governments.

What is your opinion of TIF? What changes to TIF statutes would you recommend, if any? *

TIF can be a powerful tool for districts aiming to improve underdeveloped areas with the goal of stimulating economic growth, and they can only be approved with voter input. If representatives are listening to their constituents, TIF will be used wisely and only when needed. I do not know enough about the details of TIF financing to recommend any changes, but I have seen some very positive changes as a result of it.

8. One in five homes in Montana is serviced by an onsite septic system. If properly installed and maintained, septic systems are a safe and cost-effective means of waste disposal for homeowners and businesses. Some regulations on septic systems are enforced by local health departments, and enforcement is inconsistent. For instance, how bedrooms are counted to determine what size of system is necessary and how nonconforming systems are handled varies.

Will you support legislation that brings greater consistency to the enforcement of regulations on existing septic systems? *

Yes, I would support reasonable legislation to address this.

9. Housing development outside of areas with access to municipal water systems frequently rely on exempt appropriations statutes for water supply.

What are your thoughts on current statutes? What, if any, changes would you support? *

I recognize these exemptions for water supply are essential tools for ensuring critical water infrastructure projects can move forward without being delayed by sometimes lengthy permitting processes, that said, I think proper planning is essential and we need to take a long term planning approach with our sights on the next 50 and 100 years of water planning, not just the immediate 3 to 5 year outlook.

10. **Do you support Montana's existing code regarding exemptions on discrimination in housing (49-2-305)? ***

Yes.

11. REALTORS® believe that private property rights are fundamental to our free-market system and are a cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. Our United States and Montana Constitutions recognize and protect the right to own property. A strong economy depends upon preserving the right to freely own, use, and transfer real property.

If elected, what approach will you take to balancing private property rights with public interests? *

Private property rights should not be infringed without a compelling public interest. I feel the current bar is a high one to cross, and rightfully so.

12. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number *

Barbara Berens, 406-273-1243

13. Will you accept PAC contributions? *

Yes

No

Thank you!

We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey so that we might better understand your position on key issues facing our community. The committee will be evaluating surveys received and responding within a few weeks regarding next steps.