

## View results

Respondent

5 Anonymous

94:01

Time to complete

### 1. Name & office you are seeking \*

Mark Thane, Montana House District 89

### 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? \***

I served on the House Local Government Committee and heard each of these bills in committee hearings. On the floor I voted in favor of all three. With regard to SB382, I was particularly supportive of reducing the requirement for parking in multifamily projects to no more than one space per unit. I also supported the idea of allowing duplexes on properties zoned for single family residences. Although I support the construction of ADUs, I do believe that issue would have been better addressed at the local level with due consideration given to infrastructure (streets, alleys, sewer, etc.) and specific local lot conditions (drainage, slope, etc.) I strongly support the reduced timelines for approval/denial of subdivisions in SB131. HB211 is a reasonable approach to determination of the necessity of a new hearing ONLY if new information presented represents a substantial change to the design of the subdivision. The refined language on phased developments is especially important.

### 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? \***

HB819 in the 2023 session allocated \$106 million to support the development of workforce housing through a revolving loan account. An additional \$50 million was allocated from the Coal Trust Fund for the development and preservation of homes and apartments for low to moderate income Montanans. We need to audit those programs and assess whether the programs are successful and, if so, if the impact to date merits consideration of enhancements to the legislation.

### 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? \***

Montana should require sites that list short-term rentals to include verification that the units are registered with the state and meet code. Secondly, since the units compete directly with hotels/motels, I believe they should be taxed at the commercial property tax rate of 1.89% instead of the residential rate of 1.35%.

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? \***

Below market interest rate loans for infrastructure projects from the Coal Trust Fund could be used to support local infrastructure development. Deferred maintenance and funding for infrastructure to support new development demand far more than the available funding. Greater flexibility with the SID programs and infrastructure bonding (with recapture as properties are sold or new connections to infrastructure are made) may be a partial solution.

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? \***

A two-pronged solution to the property tax problem is needed to provide residential property tax relief. Class 4 residential and commercial property has appreciated much more rapidly than the other 15 classes of property in Montana. In order to "rebalance" property taxes and shift a portion of the burden back to those properties (centrally assessed, industrial, etc.) that have experienced significant reductions relative to residential and commercial properties, we need to lower the class 4 tax rate from the 1.35% to a lesser figure like 1% and/or pair that with a homestead/comstead exemption that reduces the assessed value of residential and commercial (main street) properties.

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? \***

One need only look at the enhancements in downtown Missoula which have been supported by TIF to see the vibrance and economic development that has resulted. An investment of just over \$13 million in the downtown TIF district has supported over \$186 million in construction and taken the pre-construction taxes on those properties from an aggregate of \$188,000/yr to an aggregate of \$2,011,340/yr. This increment repays the TIF investment and supports other TIF projects in the district. Additionally, those downtown businesses who received TIF support report that the investment resulted in over 300 new jobs created as a result of that investment. I do believe that when new bond or levy requests are voted in following the creation of a TIF, those bonds/levies should not go to the TIF increment, but should instead be part of the base and support the entities for which they were voted.

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? \***

I absolutely support the use of septic systems where they are necessary. They must, however, be regularly maintained and there needs to be consistent enforcement of health and safety regulations in order to protect adjacent wells and waterways.

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? \***

Exempt wells are necessary to support development of properties that do not have access to municipal water systems. I support the current exempt statutes and the Montana Water Courts adjudication processes.

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

Absolute support for the prevention of discrimination in housing.

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? \***

While I believe in private property rights, I also believe there must be redress for adjacent property owners who may be impacted by the exercise of an individual's property rights. No one wants to build their dream home on a five acre plot only to have a neighbor put a rendering facility on his adjacent property. A certain reasonableness must prevail. Long-term master planning and appropriate code review/reform is necessary to protect the rights of all property owners. Planning and code review is an issue that, in most cases, should be resolved at the local level with local stakeholder input through the public hearing process.

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

Mark Thane for HD89, P.O. Box 692, Missoula, MT 59806, Gary Hughes, Treasurer

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.