

Position on Land Use, Planning, & Growth in the Missoula Area Adopted in 2020 after reconsidering the 2003 position on growth in the Missoula.

Background

This is the-third fourth time the Missoula League has studied land use, planning, and growth in Missoula to come to consensus on a position.

- The first was in 1973, when it focused on land use;
- the second in 1980, when it consolidated the position on land use with the 1980 position on growth in the Missoula area;
- the third was in 2003 when we looked closely at citizen involvement in government housing/development decisions and neighborhood integrity;
- and the fourth in 2020 when we focused on affordable housing.

As a result of the 2019-2020 local study on affordable housing, the members decided to adopt a specific Affordable Housing position separate from our Land Use, Planning, and Growth in the Missoula Area position and narrow the focus of the growth position.

Since 2003, several significant changes have taken place that necessitated revising the League's positions.

1. Modern technology now permits citizens easy access to and notification of government land use policies, planning decisions, and growth and development debates via the internet and media. This facilitates citizen participation in the decision making process.
2. Addressing Climate Change has become a priority for Missoula governments and the Missoula League
3. Both the Missoula county government (in 2016) and the city (in 2015) have adopted update growth policies to guide their decisions through the 2030s. These growth policies address Missoula League concerns such as:
 - a. Missoula's transitioning economy,
 - b. Our growing population (over 2% annually since 2000),
 - c. Climate Change,
 - d. Our distinctive communities within the county,
 - e. Sustainability,
 - f. Livability,
 - g. Improving infrastructure, and
 - h. Affordable homes.

Position

In this position, the League defines:

planning as a process governments use to develop ordinances and rules that guide growth;

growth is *new development*;

land use is *how land is utilized as residential, commercial, industrially, recreational, agricultural, and as open space.*

I. The Missoula League of Women Voters believes the public has a right to participate and influence growth decisions.

- A. Citizens must be allowed to protest zoning variances and rezonings;
- B. Citizens must be able to challenge administrative decisions that impact neighborhoods;
- C. Government entities should respect neighborhood input and the desire of people to protect the character of their neighborhoods;
- D. Government has a responsibility to provide clear, early public notification and education about proposed development and decisions.

II. The Missoula League of Women Voters accepts the premise that there will be continued growth in the Missoula valley. Generally the League believes that all growth (commercial, industrial, and residential) should be efficiently managed and that growth decisions made for the Missoula valley should be based upon:

- A. Human needs, which include shelter, privacy, health, safety, dignity, green space, public meeting spaces, and the preservation of aesthetic, cultural, and historic values;
- B. Land use planning and development that incorporates systematic planning studies and impact analysis;
- C. Equitable home supply that provides opportunity for residents of all income levels;
- D. Environmental protection that respects the inalienable right to a quality environment as guaranteed by the Montana Constitution; that recognizes preserving and enhancing air quality, water quality and quantity, and green space is an obligation to future generations; that accepts the natural limitations imposed by such determinants as soils, slopes, flood-plain, and other factors of geography and climate; and that preserves well-maintained open space, parks, recreational areas within the urban area;
- E. Available and affordable clean energy;
- F. Access to public services (such as transportation, fire protection, police, parks, sewage treatment facilities, and schools) within the urban area, and with the costs of these services distributed equitably;
- G. Maintaining a healthy economy.

- III. The Missoula League of Women Voters supports residential and commercial growth that promotes:
- A. Residential in-fill that is compatible with neighborhood character and that has neighborhood support;
 - B. Sufficient supply of affordable homes, including rentals and owner-occupied homes.
 - C. Non-polluting industrial and commercial development;
 - D. Commercial development that improves the per capita income for Missoulians;
 - E. Mixed-use commercial/residential buildings that respect neighborhood integrity and has neighborhood support.