From: Chloe Runs Behind
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Preserving affordable rentals on East Front St.
Date: Tuesday, June 14, 2022 6:39:17 PM

Hello City Council members,

My name is Chloe Runs Behind, I have lived in Missoula for 4 years and have actively participated in local decision-making processes in my time here.

I love this place and the community that has found me, and I've given a lot to Missoula through organizing work in return. While in Missoula and at UM, I've grown immensely as a community organizer & artist, advocating for numerous social justice causes through direct action, mutual aid, and facilitation. I was a Pride Foundation Scholar and a 2020 Dennison Civic Engagement Scholar, and received a Fitzgerald Scholarship and a Forward Montana's 25 Under 25 Award for my work around racial justice, food sovereignty & security, LGBTQIA2S+ empowerment, indigenous healing, and access to housing for youth.

However, myself and many other organizers and activists have been or are being pushed out of Missoula due to a dearth of affordable housing. One specific house, that was called a "blight" to the neighborhood in the newspaper and is currently being threatened by a plan to build new apartment, has housed many passionate and influential community organizers, the majority of whom are LGBTQ+ community members. For years before I moved here, the Front Street house has been THE queer house, a safe space for low-income queer people to live, create community, birth art and music and action, and it remains so to this day. For years, the Front Street house has been a refuge for me, a place where I could go to feel welcome, despite never having lived there. And I know it's not just me - that house is loved by many across Montana and is nestling in hearts from coast to coast.

We've always feared that this house and the memories it holds in it's old bones and peeling paint would get destroyed, maybe it's just that we're queer and used to transience, suddenly being unwelcomed, being erased. But now it could really happen. A house that was brought to Missoula by train, a landmark of both Missoula and queer history, could suddenly be erased.

I love Missoula but I love this house more. If it gets knocked down I'll have another good reason to leave on top of my rent slowly eclipsing my income.

But I don't want that to happen. I'm reaching out to urge you to please not vote for the utility easement at Kiwanis Park. It is important to me that we preserve current affordable rentals in Missoula right now.
This utility easement that is being requested is going to displace about 12 current renters of these affordable homes. This easement is also being used to cut down trees at Kiwanis Park and build on what is now essentially park land.
Please postpone this vote until our housing crisis cools down or vote no on this easement for the sake of keeping all of these renters in their affordable housing rentals.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you will support us renters.

With love & rage,

Chloe Runs Behind
(they/them)