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Sprawl increases travel time and increases the costs of public services. In 1970, Billings had a population of 61,581 and was 14.7 square miles in size. Today Billings has 109,550 residents living in 43.5 square miles. This is a population density decrease from 4,189 people per square mile to 2,517 people per square mile. As residents and businesses move to the once “green fields” surrounding Billings, Downtown and now Midtown have slowly emptied out. We need to support the re-code effort and put mechanisms and incentives into place which slow down growth on the edges and promotes reinvestment within the existing borders of Billings. Promoting density and active infill policies need to define our development priorities for the foreseeable future.

2. Both Montana and the city of Billings are required by law to be fiscally conservative which I define as running on a balanced budget and saving for the future needs and rainy days. Some define "fiscally conservative" as cutting taxes and government services until there is nothing left. I call that being "fiscally cheap". The 2020 Billings budget was an act by fiscal cheapskates to take advantage of the franchise fee lawsuit to both enact budget cuts and let a "tax cut" stand at the cost of spending down the reserve. This is robbing Peter tomorrow to pay Peter today. It is unsustainable and is not sound fiscal practice. No one wants to hear this, nor do the fiscal cheapskates have the courage to stand up and admit we need to raise revenue. And the only option that the franchise fee lawsuit leaves the city is to raise property taxes. I strongly support adjusting the mill levies for public safety, parks, the library, the general fund to reflect the actual budget of each department providing a higher level of transparency. We should push back, hard and firm on the lawsuits by the fiscal cheapskate movement to cripple local government by eliminating revenue sources. We need to work hard to elect true fiscal conservatives to city, county and state governments. This means paying for the costs of essential services, planning for the future and protecting our budget from the ups and downs of a resource-based economy