



# ZONE CHANGE APPLICATION

Community Development Department, Planning Division  
316 North Park Avenue, Room 445, Helena, MT 59623  
406-447-8490; [citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov](mailto:citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov)

Date received:

APPLICATION FEE: \$410.00  
(PAYABLE TO THE CITY OF HELENA)  
ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

Application to the Helena Zoning Commission and City Commission for an amendment to the official Zoning Map. Such amendments re-classify property from one zoning district to another.

**PROPERTY OWNER: Primary Contact?**

Name: Phoenix Project Primary Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: 515 N Ewing Other Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT (If different from property owner): Primary Contact?**

Name: Rebecca Stanfel Primary Number: (916) 216-1580  
Address: PO Box 491 Other Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: rebecca@montanajewishproject.com Company: MT Jewish Project

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Primary Contact?**

Name: Kathy Brown Primary Number: (406) 459-8045  
Address: PO Box 1881 Other Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: kzbrown61@gmail.com Company: 2 Sams Property Management

Address of the Property: 515 N Ewing Helena, MT 59601  
Address City State Zip Code

Legal Description (Lots, Block, & Subdivision, COS #, deed reference)  
Allen addition, S30, T10 N, R03 W, Block 434, LTS 10-12 S2

Provide a current deed and plat/COS with the metes and bounds of the subject property

Geocode 0518830316170000

Current City Zoning District PLI

Proposed Zoning District R3

Adjacent Zoning Districts R3, R0, R-2, TR + PLI

Are there other related Land Use Applications being submitted: Yes  No

Submit proof of current paid taxes

Existing use on the property Offices

**To: Helena Community Development Planner**  
**From: Rebecca Stanfel, Executive Director, Montana Jewish Project**  
**Re: Zoning Change Application – 515 N. Ewing, Helena, MT 59601**

Please accept this application on behalf of the Montana Jewish Project to change the zoning for 515 N. Ewing from PLI to R3.

The Montana Jewish Project (MJP), a Helena-based 501 (c) (3) organization incorporated in April 2021 for the purpose of buying back historic Temple Emanu-El at 515 North Ewing. This 1891 building is listed on the National Register for Historic Places, is Montana's oldest synagogue, and the first synagogue built between Portland, Oregon, and St. Paul, Minnesota.

The building itself is testament to a unique and often-overlooked aspect of Montana history. Jewish Montanans played an important role in the history and development of both Helena and the state. Prior to 1935, historic Temple Emanu-El was a community synagogue. It had a large sanctuary with 36-foot vaulted ceilings, and a basement used for administration and education.

In the midst of the Great Depression, Temple Emanu-El's congregation recognized they could no longer maintain their synagogue. In 1935, they "sold" the building to the State of Montana for one dollar, asking only that it "be used for a good and social purpose." It was. The State divided the sanctuary into two additional floors of offices and headquartered the Department of Health and Human Services there.

By 1981, the State was mainly using the building for storage, and agreed to sell it to the Bishop of Helena to house administrative offices for the Catholic Diocese. Between 1981 and 2022, approximately 30 employees worked in the building.

MJP received tremendous community support from Helena for our efforts to reacquire the building for the Jewish community. Most of our 2,000 donors were small donors, and most were not Jewish. Local business and churches fundraised for us, including the Montana Book Co, the Windbag Saloon and Grill, Headwaters Brewing, Gulch Distillers, Plymouth Congregational Church, the Cathedral of Helena, and numerous Lutheran and Episcopal churches. It was clear that Helena saw the benefit in returning this building to Jewish ownership and use.

When MJP decided to proceed with the purchase of the building, our business plan was always to rent out office space in the basement and first floor levels to professionals. We were shocked to find out the current zoning designation of PLI would not allow that type of use, as the building has provided office space since 1935. MJP will occupy the second floor to house up to three volunteer staff people to operate our statewide Jewish community center. The second floor will also be used to provide space for the Helena Jewish community to hold religious observances, holiday celebrations, and gatherings. Renting out the two lower levels to a maximum of 10-12 professional tenants will allow MJP to remain a viable organization, cover the building expenses, and maintain an historic treasure for the city of Helena and the state of Montana.

Rezoning historic Temple Emanu-El as R3 is in keeping with the character of this neighborhood. Our use of historic Temple Emanu-El would not alter this quiet stretch of North Ewing Street. With our current designation of PLI, we are entitled to rent out space as a large daycare to help us cover maintenance costs. This would generate much more traffic, congestion, and noise than rezoning this building for MJP's intended uses.

I am enclosing the application along with answers to the supplemental questions as part of the application. I hope you will consider our application favorably. We will be available at all public hearings to answer questions or share more information.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Stanfel

Executive Director and Board Chair

## **Supplemental Questions and Answers:**

### **2. Describe how your proposal relates to the above zoning review criteria.**

Our request to change the zoning from PLI to R3 should have very little, if any, effect on the growth policy. Prior to the building being purchased by the Montana Jewish Project, it was owned and occupied by the Catholic Diocese of Montana as office space. Prior to that, the building was owned by the State of Montana who also used it for offices. We would be leasing a maximum of six (6) offices on the main floor and five (5) offices in the “garden level” basement. With that in mind, we believe:

- Changing the zoning to R3 aligns with the growth policy for that area.
- Our proposal would not adversely affect public health, public safety or the general welfare of the neighborhood.
- Our proposal would not require any additional provisions for transportation, water, sewer systems, schools, parks or any other public requirements.
- There is already adequate light and air.
- There would be no change in the current motorized or nonmotorized transportation systems.
- Our use would be consistent with the current promotion of compatible urban growth.
- As the building has been used for office space since 1935, our continued use as professional office space would offer consistency. We went door to door to talk personally with the neighbors in a several block area and encountered no objections, and in fact, most all were very supportive. They are not open to a day care or an educational facility as that could, and likely would have an adverse effect on the character of the neighborhood.
- Allowing us to lease to professional clientele will aid us in our intent to maintain the building and the neighborhood in a positive way.

### **3. Provide a statement why the proposed change should be approved.**

As stated above, our application to change the zoning will not actually change the prior use of the building nor would it change the character of the neighborhood. As has been the case since 1935, professionals will be using the office space during regular business hours. As we understand it, the current zoning would only allow us to use the building for educational purposes or childcare. We do not want to lease the space to a daycare facility or an educational facility as we firmly believe that is not a good use for the building and would not serve the

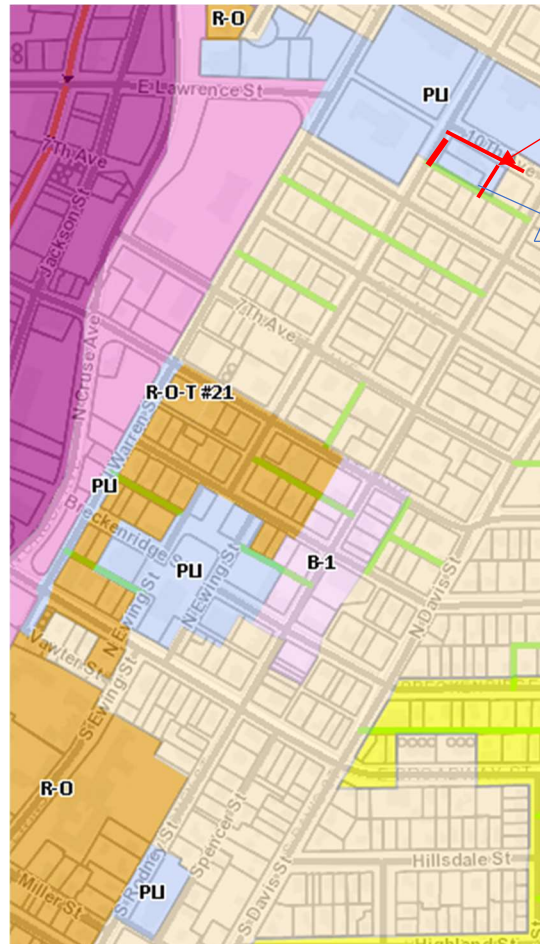
neighborhood well either. It would create more traffic on a daily basis, particularly at drop off and pick up times. It would impact the parking in the neighborhood as well. We believe it is in the best interest of the neighborhood to grant this request for a zoning change, as it will have little impact to the neighborhood, and will continue to enhance the building and the community.

**4. Submit a traffic impact study for a proposed zoning district that is anticipated to generate more than two hundred (200) vehicles a day.**

The Catholic Diocese had approximately 30 people utilizing the offices during their tenure. The Montana Jewish Project staff is small, and even if we rented all eleven (11) offices, it is highly unlikely we would exceed that number of tenants. We have a parking lot for the building so we would not create any problems with parking either.

**5. Provide vicinity map of the area.**

Our building, 515 N Ewing is shown here at the top right-hand corner, intersecting 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ewing Avenue. As you see, this map shows a mixture of residential, residential office, and PLI zoning which all currently interact very well together. Our request to change from PLI to RO will have little impact on this neighborhood, whereas adding additional educational or childcare uses would.



**6. Submit a statement on how the proposed zoning conforms to the Helena Growth Policy and Land Use Map; include how proposed zoning conforms to area neighborhood plans if one has been adopted.**

This map below clearly shows the mixed uses of residential, commercial and public lands and institutions in this downtown area. The various uses are already intermingled in this neighborhood with no adverse results. We truly believe our request for a change would not have a negative impact on the neighborhood in any way.



**7. Statement indicating if the existing structures meet the proposed zoning dimensional standards requirements without the need for a variance.**

We believe the existing structure does indeed meet the proposed zoning dimensional standards requirements. It has long been used as office space. We want to continue to lease to professionals which we absolutely believe will maintain the integrity of the building and the quality character of the neighborhood, the city and the state.

**8. Statement indicating if the existing use of the property meets the proposed zoning permitted uses.**

Currently, the MJP staff are occupying the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building and using it as administrative office space. This is a proper use of the PLI zoning. We want to expand that to include other non-profit organizations who need office space, as well as professionals such as licensed counselors, accountants, attorneys, association executives, engineers, etc.

**9. Historical uses, established use patterns, and recent changes and trends in the neighborhood.**

As detailed above, Historic Temple Emanu-El has changed ownership four times since 1891. Since 1935, this landmark building has been home to office spaces—first for State employees and then for Diocesan employees. It stands proudly on what some call “Church row,” across the street from the Cathedral of Helena and next door to the First Presbyterian Church. Since 1981, approximately 30 Diocesan employees worked in the building.

If the proposed zoning permits are allowed, MJP will not change the use pattern of this building. We expect to rent to far less than 30 professionals and will not allow retail space inside. The building will remain a historical landmark, without bringing additional traffic to the area.

This area is a desirable one to own property in. It is close to downtown, and yet away from the bustle of those businesses. The City’s investment in the Rodney Street area has enhanced the neighborhood and makes it likely that property values will continue to increase. Keeping historic Temple Emanu-El as close to its historic use—which is MJP’s intent—is best for the entire neighborhood and the surrounding areas.

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As recommended and stated earlier, MJP did go door to door and speak personally to many of the neighbors to alert them of our intended zoning change application and assured them we only want to continue to use the building for professional offices. We encountered no negative feedback or opposition, and in fact, received great support. For those neighbors that were not at home, we left printed information.

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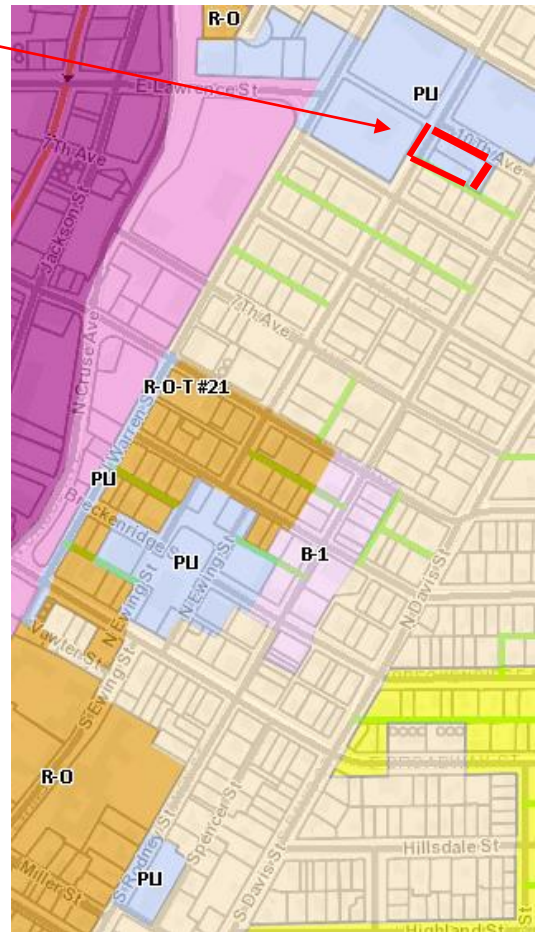
**4. Submit a traffic impact study for a proposed zoning district that is anticipated to generate more than two hundred (200) vehicles a day.**

According to the IT & E Trip Generation Manual, we are told there are 138 trips per day. This is based on the office building calculation of 11.01 trips per every 1,000 sq ft of space. There is no evidence to show that our requested zoning change will have any impact on the current traffic pattern. The Catholic Diocese had approximately 30 people utilizing the offices during their tenure. The Montana Jewish Project staff is small, and even if we rented all eleven (11) offices, it is highly unlikely we would exceed that number of tenants. We have a parking lot for the building so we would not create any problems with parking either.

**5. Provide vicinity map of the area.**

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This photo shows the manhole at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ewing Street – about a half a block away from the subject property.

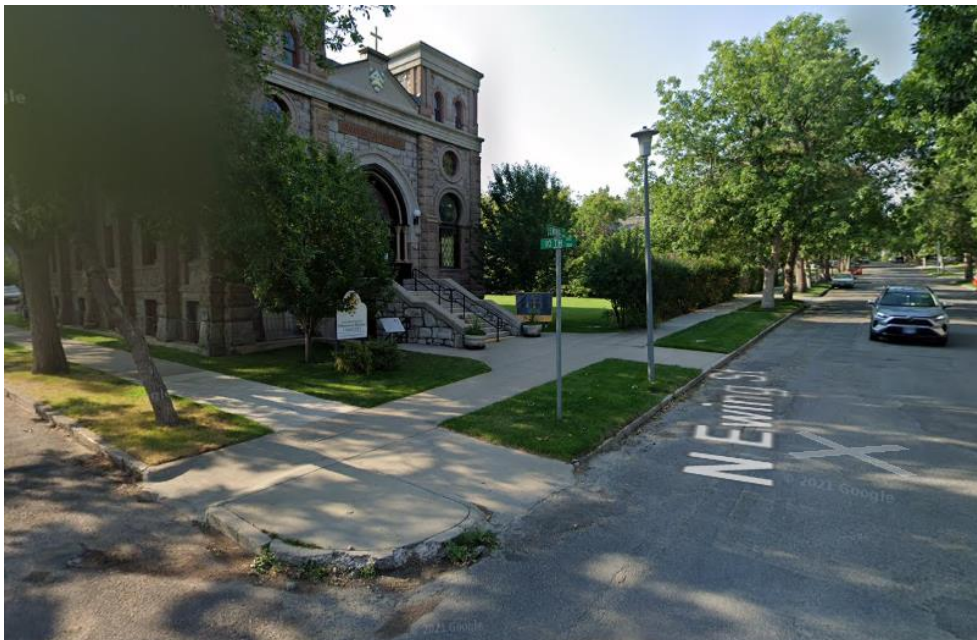
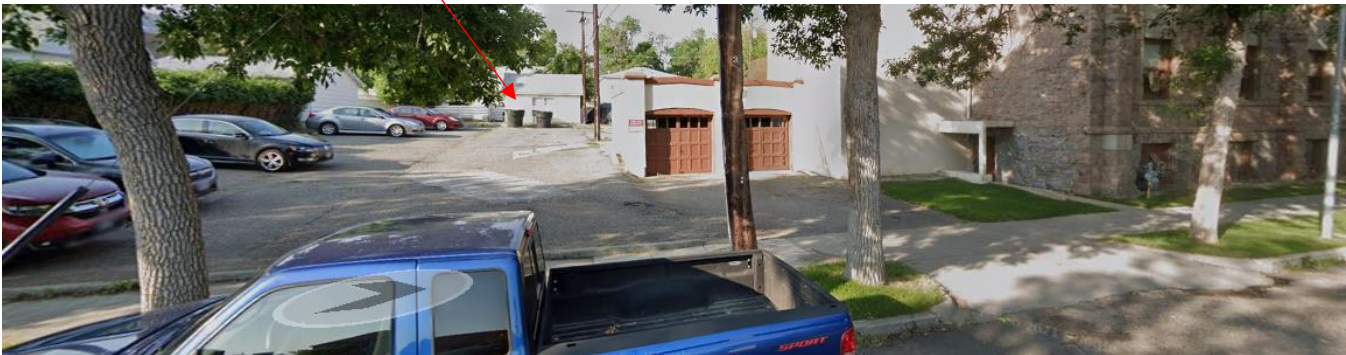


The manhole shown in this photo is on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in between Ewing and Rodney Streets.

The entrance to the parking lot for the building is just behind the blue truck.

This photo shows the parking lot located at the back of the building.

You can also see the sanitation receptacles in place.



This photo shows the sidewalks along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ewing Street, with existing curb cuts. The sidewalks are level and easily walkable.

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**7. Statement indicating if the existing structures meet the proposed zoning dimensional standards requirements without the need for a variance.**

We believe the existing structure does indeed meet the proposed zoning dimensional standards requirements. The Montana Cadastral identifies this property as an office building – low rise. The building has two stories with a basement and is compliant with the city of Helena Zoning ordinance which allows for a maximum height of 36 feet. The ordinance also requires a 10-foot setback on the front and rear lot lines and a 6-foot setback on the side lot line. In addition, the ordinance references a 40% maximum lot coverage. The lot is 12,500 square feet and the building perimeter footage is 252 feet. Based on our research, the building meets the zoning dimensional standards requirements.

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# 515 N Ewing

## Site Plan



- **Yellow Dotted line shows Pedestrian ingress and egress to premises**
- **Red dotted line shows 2-way vehicular traffic on Ewing and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave as well as bicycle traffic**
- **Green outlines the parking lot and loading area behind the building**
- **Orange line shows the mature shrubbery, hedges, trees, etc. surrounding the subject property**
- **X marks the site of the sanitation bin with easy pickup from the alley**

Our narrative offers more detailed descriptions and photos of these items, but this gives you a good sense of the entire picture.