

## **STOP THE MONTARISE DEVELOPMENT DON'T LET THE DOMINOES OF URBAN SPRAWL FALL**

*Urge the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Board  
to Vote **NO** on the Montarise Development*

### **About the Montarise Development** (Intersection of Highway 93 and KM Ranch Road)

- A Canadian developer, Montarise LLC, seeks to rezone 155.9 acres of natural forest from SAG-5 (5+ acre lots) to R-2.5\* with a Mixed-use Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay.
- Montarise, LLC seeks to build 103 dwellings units that include 12 hospice homes for 60 residents plus 26 recreational cottages and a large residents' RV storage park
  - 25 single family homes on 2-acre lots
  - 32 'adult bungalows' on ½ acre lots
  - *There is no commitment to affordability*
- Main entry to the subdivision is off Bowdish Road and Hwy 93 and the other from KM Ranch Road --a winding, two-lane county road with many blind curves.
- Montarise's traffic study projects additional 741 daily vehicle trips on KM Ranch Road
- According to a US Census average of 2.6 persons and .35 factor for students per HH, Montarise will add more than 215 residents to our community and 20 children to the Whitefish School District.

\*According to section 3.09 of the Flathead County Growth Policy, "R-2.5 is appropriate in transition areas adjacent to and between higher-density Residential and lower-density Suburban Agriculture (SAG) zones. This district is **not** appropriate in areas primarily surrounded by lower-density SAG and AG zones... Furthermore, public facilities should be appropriately developed to accommodate the density and land uses of this designation."

### **Facts**

- ***Montarise will NOT provide affordable, workforce, or entry-level housing. It only promises more housing at market values. Recreational cottages will only attract visitors vs. creating long-term housing.*** In response to addressing our need for affordable housing, Montarise representative Apec Engineering stated, "...increasing supply, i.e., housing inventory, can serve to fulfill the demand, and eventually reset the 'affordability.'" This thinking does nothing to help today's teachers, nurses, hospitality workers, police officers, etc. ability to live affordably in Flathead Valley.
- **Montarise development will create unsafe fire hazards and traffic conditions**
  - The proposed development is located in a **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)** zone and is considered a 'high' county wide priority area. Higher density housing surrounded by ongoing business enterprises would endanger public safety in the event of wildfire or other emergencies due to narrow, winding roads and increased traffic on KM Ranch Road. Although the proposed development is 3.6

miles from the Whitefish Rural Fire district, the station is unmanned and could compromise the current commitments of fire personnel.

- o Traffic onto Highway 93 from KM Ranch Road is already unsafe and will worsen. Adding 756+ daily vehicle trips (DVT) will make the KM Ranch/Hwy 93 intersection dangerous and wait times untenable – especially with the added volume of staff necessary to operate a 60-person hospice center.
- **A zone amendment to from SAG-5 to R-2.5 with its mixed-use, higher density housing development violates the [Flathead Valley County Growth Policy](#) and would negatively impact urban growth between Whitefish and Kalispell by degrading the rural buffer and potentially lead to a continuous suburban area along Hwy 93. If approved, is spot zoning. *If the commissioners allow this spot zoning to pass, they will have no choice but to approve every other development in rural Flathead to avoid lawsuits and our rural community will become an endless flow of urban sprawl.***
- **Montarise is not suitable for this community according to the Flathead County Growth Policy.** By claiming their higher density housing and commercial businesses are similar to our community by citing Happy Valley Homesites and other businesses from a couple miles away is pure deception. In fact, Happy Valley was built prior to the Growth Plan's inception and therefore not applicable. What is comparable are the *adjacent* Whitefish Hills and Whitefish Hills Village where properties range from two- to 40- acre lots. These developments are not being used in their comparisons.
- **The Planning and Zoning Board lacks crucial information to review the impacts on community water, waste water, and air quality to make an informed decision.**
  - o The plan proposes using community water, tapping major wells from the underground aquifer. The developer has NOT given assurances that the neighborhood's water source will be protected from the landfill's leachate contamination into the aquifer – **See articles from 2015 about the landfill's ground water contamination levels being elevated ([Daily Inter Lake February 4, 2015](#) and [NBC Montana February 6, 2015](#))**. Also, the community hasn't seen a study addressing the risk of contaminants from its large leach field from migrating into the ground water. *Large scale developments are better suited when connected to city water supplies.*
  - o The easement to Bowdish from Montarise crosses a contiguous property and is being disputed by its landowner. If Montarise does not gain access to Bowdish, all traffic will flow on to KM Ranch Road making it even more unsafe for drivers, horseback riders, bicycles and others.
  - o Based on Montarise first traffic study, they expect 10% of its DVT to go north on KM Ranch but failed to recognize that most of the road is unpaved, incapable of handling the additional traffic, and could create adverse environmental issues caused by increased dust.
  - o In addition to Montarise' subdivision, there are approximately 800+ new housing units permitted, but not yet built, along Hwy 93 corridor. Their traffic study does not address the impact of these developments beyond the Range Rider stadium on the impact of the traffic from that growth on Hwy 93 corridor.

- **The Montarise development only benefits this Canadian-based developer at the cost of Flathead taxpayers.** Their plan acknowledges higher levels of congestion during peak summer traffic conditions with little consideration for those already living in our community. Also, adding 20 school-aged children to the already strained Whitefish schools and buses come with a cost. The sheriffs already commented that population growth from the development will further strain their understaffed department.
- **Montanans care deeply about our open spaces and wildlife.** Montarise will bulldoze most of the forested land that is home to eagles, red tailed hawks, white tail deer, bear, mountain lions, foxes, and other wildlife. Forcing that much wildlife out of their habitat and onto roads will increase vehicle/wildlife collisions making our roads dangerous.
- **Whitefish schools are already strained.** Adding 20 children will not only exacerbate Whitefish's school systems but will also require more buses that struggle on KM Ranch's winding 2-lane roads. Per the school board's Aug. 2021 meeting minutes, its high school building was at capacity then and is still today. To accommodate growing enrollments, the school district will have to propose a massive school bond to pay for new or expanded facilities, placing the tax burden on Whitefish residents. Remember the December 2016 school bus with 35 children that overturned on icy KM Ranch Road.
- **Friends for Responsible Rural Growth acknowledges that growth and development are inevitable. We do support housing of compatible, single-family homes within its existing SAG-5 zone and retaining the rural character of our community.** If approved, this development, along with other future subdivisions, will render the County's existing growth plan ineffective and result in high density creep and urban sprawl across rural Flathead Valley.
- Montarise Development benefits the Canadian developer at the expense of almost all surrounding neighbors. Their request for a zoning adjustment undermines what residents came together to say we wanted for the future of our community.

### How you can help

- Sign our petition by clicking [here](#).
- Attend The Flathead County Commissioner's Planning and Zoning and County Commissioners meetings. Your voice and attendance matters!
- Write or email the County Commissioners at [planning.zoning@flathead.mt.gov](mailto:planning.zoning@flathead.mt.gov) or mail your letter to Flathead Planning and Zoning Board, 40 11<sup>th</sup> St. West, Suite 220, Kalispell, Montana, 59901.
- Sign up to receive updates on our website [FFRRG.org](http://FFRRG.org).
- Volunteer! Email [info@ffrg.org](mailto:info@ffrg.org) to support our opposition.
- Make a donation to Friends for Responsible Rural Growth, a 501c3 nonprofit organization (EIN #88-2741284) by going to our website at [FFRRG.org](http://FFRRG.org) and click on Donate OR mail a check to Friends for Responsible Rural Growth P.O. Box 4577, Whitefish, MT 59937.