

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

Out-of-state developer Montarise LLC will make millions while
local taxpayers are left with the bill

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

About the Montarise Development (West side of Highway 93 and KM Ranch Road)

- An out-of-state developer, Montarise LLC, seeks to rezone 155.9 acres of natural forest from SAG-5 (5+ acre lots) to R-1 (1+ acre lots) with a Mixed-use Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay that will create high density housing on less than 1 acre-lots and 3 lots for significant commercial enterprises.
- Montarise, LLC wants to build 268 residential units, a 73-stall resort RV park, a church, private school, and convenience store with *no commitment to affordability*.
- Primary access to and from the development will be off the winding, two-lane KM Ranch Road with no plan to remedy the road and intersection improvements needed to accommodate the additional traffic caused by their development.
- According to a US Census average of 2.6 persons and .35 factor for students per HH, Montarise will add approximately 850 residents to our community and 93 children to the Whitefish School District.

Facts

- ***Montarise will NOT provide affordable, workforce, or entry-level housing. It only promises more housing at market values. A resort RV park 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.
- **The Montarise development only benefits this out-of-state developer at the cost of Flathead taxpayers.** Their plan acknowledges roads will have to be improved and a stop light added to Hwy 93 and KM Ranch Road but offer no provision to pay for them. Also, adding 93 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. So, who will have to pay? Taxpayers.
- **Montarise development will create unsafe fire hazards and traffic conditions**
 - The proposed development is located in a **Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI)** area, a mixed- to high- severity class of wildfire. High- density housing would endanger

public safety in the event of wildfire or other emergencies because of limited exits, narrow roads, and increased traffic on KM Ranch Road.

- o Traffic onto Highway 93 from KM Ranch Road is already unsafe and will worsen. Adding 3,000+ daily vehicle trips (DVT) will make the KM Ranch/Hwy 93 intersection dangerous and wait times untenable. Imagine the impact from 73 vacationing RVs entering the intersection during peak times and winter.
- **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.
 - o There are several significant errors and omissions in the Montarise Village Traffic Impact Study. Therefore, the zoning change request fails to 'facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements' making their report unreliable.
 - o Montarise expects 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, 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 plus Montarise's on the impact of the traffic from that growth on Hwy 93 corridor.
- A zone amendment to from SAG-5 to R-1 with its mixed-use, high-density housing developments *violates the [Flathead Valley County Growth Policy](#)*, and 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 attempting to deceive the Planning Board by claiming their high-density housing and commercial spaces are similar to our community by citing Happy Valley Homesites and other businesses from a couple miles away – for which they are not. 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.
- 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 93+ 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 out-of-state 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 or mail your letter to Flathead Planning and Zoning Board, 40 11th St. West, Suite 220, Kalispell, Montana, 59901.
- Sign up to receive updates on our website FFRRG.org.
- Volunteer! Email info@ffrrg.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 and click on Donate OR mail a check to Friends for Responsible Rural Growth P.O. Box 4577, Whitefish, MT 59937.