



Developers are proposing to build a 62-lot subdivision on 24 acres off East Second Street in Whitefish

Neighbors silent on new plan for 2nd Street subdivision

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It appears that fourth time's a charm for the developers looking to construct a subdivision along East Second Street.

The Whitefish City-County Planning Board has unanimously recommended approval of a 62-lot subdivision on 24 acres of vacant land east of Cow Creek. No neighbors spoke against the project during public comment at the May 12 meeting — a significant change from when the project was first proposed more than a year ago.

“The thundering silence is telling me you did work with the neighbors on this,” board member Scott Wurster told developer Sean Averill of Community Infill Partners.

The project originally came forward as the 2nd Street Apartments with 174 housing units. Developers returned asking for 150 housing units, and then reformatted the design to 143 units.

Through several public hearings, neighbors of the project continued to voice opposition. They said it was too dense for the area and raised concerns about the increased traffic they said the development would create.

The latest design calls for less than half the number of housing units originally proposed. The 62-lot subdivision will include 54 single-family lots and eight townhouse lots with a density of 2.61 units per acre.

“This design shows how you can have a nice compromise,” Averill said. “We literally sat down with neighbors and drew this together.”

“A lot more than a couple of months went into this. We can't make everybody happy, but we had quite a bit of input.”

The developers are requesting a zone change and planned-unit development for the 24-acre property, which overlays zoning and allows for greater flexibility in the design. The site is currently zoned as one-family residential and agriculture. The request seeks to change the zoning to estate residential district.

The proposed design includes 30 percent open space throughout the project, including a tot lot and a basketball court. Averill noted that every lot touches open space.

The developers also are proposing to gift an area of wetlands on the east side of the property to the Whitefish Lake Institute. A boardwalk similar to the Viking Creek trail is being discussed.

“They’re very excited about resorting this wetland,” Averill said.

An extension of Armory Road will enter the property to the north to a “T” intersection. A curved road to the west will loop back to East Second Street, and a curved road to the east will end at a cul-de-sac.

Averill said they purposely avoided using straight roads on a traditional grid.

“We didn’t want to make another neighborhood with squared edges,” he said. “We tried to make it more exciting and a place someone would want to live in.”

An area of old-growth trees along the hillside will be preserved with the curved road.

“Some of the biggest old growth in town are in that open space,” Averill said. “We’re trying to keep the character of the hillside — it’s beautiful.”

One area of contention for the planning board was the road to the east that ends in the cul-de-sac. There were concerns about emergency egress, especially with the property being blocked in by the railroad tracks to the north.

The board recommended creating some type of emergency egress back to Second Street from the end of the cul-de-sac.