

Kalispell Annexes 40 Acres Where Rail Park Could Surface

Councilors praised the annexation as a smart move for the city and an integral one for the redevelopment strategy

BY DILLON TABISH // APR 22, 2014 // [LATEST HEADLINES](#)



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The Kalispell City Council unanimously voted to annex 40 acres of land off Whitefish Stage Road and prepare the site for the potential development of an industrial rail yard, a pivotal part of the city's core area revitalization plan.

Councilors praised the annexation as a smart move for the city and an integral one for the redevelopment strategy.

"This is extremely important for the city of Kalispell," Councilor Phil Guiffrida said.

The city's

cost to serve the land now that it is annexed is estimated at \$18,515 and the property will generate roughly \$13,323 in total annual revenues to the city, leaving a net cost to Kalispell of roughly \$5,191. Yet city staff noted in a memo to the council that the potential revenues could far exceed that initial cost based on build-out scenarios, including \$79,715 in net revenue to the city for "50 percent build-out at the site."

The site features 40.69 acres that was previously occupied by the McElroy-Wilkins gravel pit operated by Knife River. The chunk of county land has sat largely undeveloped for years and was purchased by the Flathead County Economic Development Authority in 2011 with the intent of becoming a railroad-served industrial park. The property would connect to an adjacent spur track running from the mainline in Columbia Falls that is part of a bigger network from Seattle, Wash., to Minneapolis, Minn., and Chicago, Ill.

The creation of the rail park is seen as one of the first steps toward enacting the city's Core Area Revitalization Plan, which centers on removing the railroad tracks from downtown and replacing them with a pedestrian pathway system. With a rail park established, the city could move forward with removing the tracks from downtown and help relocate rail-served businesses to the new site.

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