

EDITORIAL: Kalispell on the grow this year

Posted: Friday, October 7, 2016 6:00 am

Residential growth in Kalispell this year is reflecting the solid commercial growth of the past few years.

The city of Kalispell has issued 112 residential building permits through September, up from just 52 permits at the same time the previous year.

Most of those permits have been for single-family homes or two-unit townhouses, according to Tom Jentz, who is Kalispell's planning and building director.

Young workers are looking for entry-level priced homes for themselves and their families. This will help fill that gap, but Jentz pointed out that an important niche is still not being adequately filled — moderately priced rental units.

Many newcomers to the Flathead find themselves stymied by the cost of rental housing, which can result in problems for employers as well as the workers themselves.

It is hoped that the next big area of growth in building permits will be the kind of affordable housing that our nation's slow economic growth has made into a necessity.

Grant should boost Kalispell's core area

Another promising development for the local economy is the news that the city of Kalispell has accepted a \$400,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency that will help property owners with redevelopment.

This could be especially useful in the next few years as Kalispell goes forward with its core-area redevelopment plan. Many of the downtown properties involved have long and complicated histories that involve manufacturing, agriculture and other industries where chemicals may have been used.

The grant will allow the city to perform assessments of properties where there are environmental concerns, with an eye toward eventual cleanup and development. That could help with both residential and business growth in the core area in the coming years.