

**Opinion** | *Guest Column*

Kalispell Lumber Co. Building Bids Farewell From Original Location

I thank all my past customers and associates who have made it possible for me to preserve the Kalispell Lumber building

BY BRAD WRIGHT // AUG 24, 2017

In 1979, I purchased the Kalispell Lumber property and have operated my retail building materials business there since then. I've been winding down my business for the last three to four years and have donated my remaining inventory, fixtures, and equipment to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore on Highway 93. Additionally, I have been selling and donating much of the salvageable lumber and other building materials from the interior of the building in the hope of reclaiming as much material as possible.

Over the years, many people have approached me about either purchasing reclaimed material from the shell of the building or purchasing the land and the building for commercial purposes. If possible, I hoped that as much of the structure could be preserved despite the deterioration of some of the structural elements that made it obvious not all of the building could be preserved. I was also concerned that, had the building been purchased for commercial use, the character of the building would be compromised because of the modifications that would be required.

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I'm very grateful Tom and Kristin Davis were willing to purchase and preserve as much of the building as is reasonably possible and retain the essence of the structure without the modifications that would have affected its character. This is a substantial undertaking and I admire their determination to do this. I'm particularly pleased the public will be able to see the building with it being located near a major highway.

This would be much more difficult without the assistance and expertise of Gary Delp from Heritage Timber. Gary has substantial experience in dismantling of larger structures like this efficiently and at an economical cost, and has been a tremendous help figuring out the logistics of this project.

Concerning what I intend to do with the site once the building has removed, I believe the next step is to allow the city to implement B3 zoning so the site can be marketed. My understanding is this process has begun and may be finished soon. I think this is critical to the redevelopment of Kalispell's core commercial area.

I helped in the continuation of the Westside TIF District, which is being used to remove the railroad tracks and make infrastructure improvements to the core area. I believe this is another component that will result in the revitalization of downtown Kalispell, just as the Kalispell Center Mall did many years ago.

My hope is that whoever acquires the site will put in a substantial investment that will once again be a local landmark, as the Kalispell Lumber building was before. This will provide impetus for further development in this area, as we've seen with other local commercial projects recently.

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Brad Wright has owned the Kalispell Lumber Co. since 1979.

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