

# Silo development gets green light from Kalispell Planning Board



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An artist's rendering shows developer Mick Ruis' vision for a mixed-use project at a former CHS Inc. grain elevator property in Kalispell. Ruis wants to build a bar and restaurant atop the old silos and more than 200 residential units on the surrounding property. (Courtesy of Mick Ruis)

By

**BRET ANNE SERBIN**

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A plan to transform defunct grain silos in downtown Kalispell into a mixed-use development featuring apartments, commercial space and a top-story restaurant received a unanimous endorsement from the city's Planning Board on Tuesday.

The project is the brainchild of Mick Ruis, the developer behind many transformational projects in the Flathead Valley and particularly in Columbia Falls. He recently purchased the silos at Fifth Avenue West and Center Street from CHS Inc., which stopped using the century-old infrastructure in 2019 when the company relocated to the new Glacier Rail Park northeast of downtown.

Ruis aims to build about 264 apartments at the site, along with commercial space and parking. Most notably, he also wants to build [a bar and restaurant atop the old silos, which would give patrons views of much of the valley](#).

On Tuesday evening, Ruis' Big Sky Investments Kalispell LLC asked the Planning Board for a conditional-use permit to start the project. The request includes an exemption to the city's 60-foot building height limit.

The silos stand 71 feet tall by themselves. With gabled roofs and first-floor parking, Ruis' plan would bring the total height of the development to 110 feet.

Additionally, parts of the surrounding area are subject to railbanking agreements and can't be developed, meaning it's easier to build upward than outward.

"The additional height for the multifamily component of this project helps allow more density while providing a better architectural appearance ... as well as adequate parking, which is being included on the first floor of the buildings," senior city planner PJ Sorenson told the Planning Board.

"Preserving the silos with the proposed improvements maintains an important aspect of the history of Kalispell, while creating a new interesting use for the structure."

One woman who lives near the silo property told the Planning Board she was concerned about the increased density and traffic that would result from the proposed development.

The proposal now goes to the Kalispell City Council, which is scheduled to vote on it Sept. 7.

The Planning Board also unanimously endorsed a request from Go Development LLC to annex and rezone 0.02 acres on Palmer Drive near the Village Greens Golf Course. The proposal would rezone the property as R-4 residential, allowing an additional 2 feet of depth to existing lots on the property.

Reporter Bret Anne Serbin may be reached at 406-758-4459 or [bserbin@dailyinterlake.com](mailto:bserbin@dailyinterlake.com).