



To: Flathead County Planning Board

Re: FZC-16-03 SWO Highway 93 South Whitefish Overlay: An **amendment to the text of the Flathead County Zoning Regulations (FCZR)**. The proposed amendment would add an overlay zoning district called the “Highway 93 South Whitefish Overlay” to the FCZR as Section 3.51. The “Highway 93 South Whitefish Overlay” will also be added to the list of use districts found in Section 3.01.020 as part of this text amendment.

Date: May 8, 2017

Citizens for a Better Flathead appreciates this opportunity to comment on the proposed Highway 93 South Whitefish Corridor Plan and Zoning proposal before you tonight. Our organization was founded in 1992 and we represent some 1500+ supporters throughout the county. Our mission is to foster informed and active citizen participation in the decisions shaping the Flathead’s future, and to champion the democratic principles, sustainable solutions, and shared vision necessary to keep the Flathead *Special Forever*. **We believe that thoughtfully planned growth can and should occur without diminishing the very special characteristics of the Flathead Valley, and in this case specifically Whitefish, that play such an important role in attracting and retaining investments that grow the Flathead’s economy.**

We are providing additional comments tonight to the comments we made to the Whitefish City Council on December 5th that are already part of your packet, and comments we made at the 1/11/17 public hearing and the 3/8/17 public workshop. We ask that our comments for this hearing and for the related map amendment hearing be jointly considered for each of these hearing records, as we believe these applications should not be considered in isolation of each other.

In regards to this proposed text amendment we would ask that you consider the following issues:

Issues and questions:

1. Corridor Standards are important and we firmly believe that for the economic health of the Flathead which relies so heavily on tourism and the synergy that from tourism that in turn attracts new business investments and more visitors to the Flathead, now more than ever is the time for the county to work with the three cities and the towns to put in place corridor wide development standard for all major roads in the Flathead. Not only has this been called for at a recent meeting of the three cities and the county, but also it is one of the guiding principles of the Flathead County Growth Policy.
2. Corridor standards as proposed in this text amend while important, should future development occur in this area, they should not be proposed as a proverbial carrot to some how justify an

inappropriate set of land use zoning map amendments that are not consistent or supported by the near by the municipality and do not follow cost effective development principles—for in this case the City of Whitefish.

3. We agree with concerns raised in the comments by the Montana Department of Transportation and the City of Whitefish that conclude that this SWO should include more intensive requirements to address traffic safety issues including mandatory approach consolidation and required development of frontage and backage roads. This we believe can best be achieved by stepping away from the zoning map and text amendments before you and working collaboratively with the city of Whitefish on the proposed corridor study that they have invited the county to participate in. The comments provided by the Montana Department of Transportation raise significant concerns that would best be addressed in working with the MDOT to better address corridor issues and their traffic impacts.
4. We would further argue that wider landscaped buffers from the highway are needed than those proposed in the SWO and the proposed underlying zoning. Under the BSD only a 30-foot building setback is required and only a five foot landscaped buffer along the front highway frontage. In contrast as development has been proposed along the southern gateway entrance to Kalispell landscaped buffer requirements increase from closer in towards the city at 40 feet and outward in the areas they identify as their gateway to 150 feet. We urge you to revise and expand your proposed landscaped buffers in the SWO. We have attached some examples of Kalispell standards.
5. We would also call your attention to the inadequacy of relying on the bike path provisions in the current Flathead County Trails plan. While this plan clearly calls for the need for bike and pedestrian facilities in this corridor, the plan suggest that these may only be at this time with in the existing highway roadway. Yet comments you received from the Montana Department of Transportation suggest that changes to their highway right of way standards may not allow for such shared facilities in the future. Statements within the staff report that bike paths will be included under the propose SWO should be reviewed for accuracy and what bike and pedestrian facilities will be required should be more clearly fleshed out.

Increase buffers widths along this corridor can better help facilitate the inclusion of a safer road separated trail system that is important for this corridor. Potential solutions for properties that are currently built out will need to be fleshed out as well to ensure a continuous connection for this trail system.

6. Page 8 of the staff report includes the following wording and raises these questions:

“I. LANDSCAPING

These standards apply to all new development in the B-2A and BSD districts and new commercial development in the SAG-5 district. These standards take precedence over section 5.05 Greenbelts“

- Why do these standards only apply to “all new development”; shouldn’t they also apply to expansion of existing uses or changes in access or additional buildings within an existing development?
- Why don’t these standard apply to all types of development and property in the corridor so that there is a consistency in how property develops along the corridor?