



ROOM A | 130 6TH STREET WEST
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

PHONE (406) 892-4391
FAX (406) 892-4413

AGENDA
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. A. Approval of August 8, 2024 Planning Commission Regular Meeting minutes
- B. Approval of September 12, 2024 Housing Study Workshop minutes.

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. **Request for a zone change from CR-5 to CRA-1 in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:**

Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, Inc are requesting a Zone Change from CR-5 to CRA-1. The property was previously used for the Boys and Girls Club in Columbia Falls which recently moved to the old elementary school site. A potential buyer of the property would like to open a physical therapy office in the old Boys and Girls Club building. A medical office such as a physical therapist office is a permitted use in the CRA-1 zone but not permitted in the CR-5 zone. The property is described as: Lots 4 & 5; Block 40; Columbia Falls Townsite; Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

- A. Adopt Staff Report CZC-24-01 as Findings of Fact
- B. Recommend Approval of the Zone Change to City Council

ADJOURNMENT

Next Regular Planning Commission Meeting – TBD

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES HELD AUGUST 8, 2024

REGULAR MEETING – 6:00 PM.

Fisher called Meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PRESENT: President Darin Fisher, Vice President Justin Ping via ZOOM, Commissioner Dulcie Berube

ABSENT: Commissioner Mark Johnson, Commissioner Sam Kavanagh

Also present: Finance Director Shawn Bates, Contract Planner Eric Mulcahy, City Attorney Justin Breck, Public Works Clerk Caleb Sobczak

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of May 9, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Berube to approve the May 9, 2024 minutes as presented, Seconded by Ping. Motion carried with all present voting AYE.

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

No public comment was presented.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ACTION:

Before the public hearing Fisher went over the process of approval the Commission will perform on the proposals for conditional use permits, subdivisions, zone changes, etcetera.

Jaqueline Smith and Carl Morsette are requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to operate a drive-thru coffee stand at 262 1st Ave WN (Location of Glacier Grappling). The property is zoned CB-2 Commercial however all drive-thru's require a conditional use permit in this zone. The coffee stand was moved to the site but not opened while the applicants go through the CUP process. The property is described as Lots 2, 3, & 4; Block 129; Columbia Falls Addition; Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Contract Planner Mulcahy presented Staff Report CCU-24-01 to the Commission. All drive thru's in this zone require a conditional use permit but this could be changed in future when the zoning regulations are revised. The Growth Policy designates this area as commercial so the proposed use is appropriate. The criteria the City looks at the suitability of the property for this use such as its access. This is a corner lot so it has adequate access to City streets. This property is flat with no steep slopes and no floodplain is present. This standard kiosk will need to be placed on a permanent foundation and connected to City municipal services. There are no fencing or open space requirements for this use but there is a landscape requirement for the Cities Small Building zoning code. A sign permit will need to be applied for through the City. Other permits include a Flathead County Health Department permit for food service operations, a driveway approach permit from Columbia Falls Public Works, and a building permit from the City for placing and constructing of the kiosk and foundation. These conditions are presented in the Recommendations sections at the end of the Staff Report.

The applicants Jaqueline Smith and Carl Morsette spoke to their application saying that everything was presented by Mulcahy. Smith asked about the landscape requirements specifically if they need to be raised or flat. Mulcahy said that it can be either beds or grass or a combination of both.

Fisher opened public comments regarding this application and none were presented.

Fisher asked the Commission if they had any comments on this application. Ping asked if the driveway access would be singlewide? Smith answered that the driveway would be a single driveway that wishbones, with an entrance and exit on each street. An additional condition was discussed about the moving of the existing shed. The shed was already proposed to be moved to another location on the property but there is not a listed condition for this. It was concluded that the shed would be required to be moved to meet the requirements of the application for paving and water and sewer connections, so an additional condition is not needed.

A motion was made by Berube to adopt Staff Report CCU-24-01 as Findings of Fact seconded by Ping. A voice vote was performed with all present voting AYE.

A motion was made by Berube to recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit to City Council seconded by Ping. A voice vote was performed with all present voting AYE. City Council will hear this proposal at the City Council Regular Meeting scheduled for August 19, 2024 in the same location.

Berube made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ping.

ADJOURNMENT – Meeting duly adjourned at 6:18 PM

President

Attest:

Public Works Clerk

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP MINUTES
HELD SEPTEMBER 12, 2024**

HOUSING STUDY WORKSHOP – 6:00 PM.

President Fisher called Meeting to order at 6:01 PM

PRESENT: President Darin Fisher, Vice President Justin Ping, Commissioner Mark Johnson, Commissioner Sam Kavanagh

ABSENT: Commissioner Dulcie Berube

Also present: Interim City Manager Mark Shrives, Contract Planner Eric Mulcahy, City Attorney Justin Breck, Public Works Clerk Caleb Sobczak

COLUMBIA FALLS HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION:

President Fisher asked WSW Consulting to begin their presentation.

Wendy Sullivan with WSW Consulting introduced herself and her team; Andrew Coburn with Urban Rural Continuum and Sarah McClain with Open Spaces.

Sullivan and her team presented a power point regarding the contents of the Housing Study beginning with an overview of the study purpose and process and continuing to the study goals and outcomes where she sought feedback from the Commission on their needs and hopes from this study.

Vice President Ping asked if temporary or seasonal housing needs for employees a part of the analysis? Sullivan said that it is looked at as its own segment.

President Fisher has observed that his employees have problems with housing in this community and would like to know if the anecdotal evidence he sees is correct or not.

Commissioner Kavanagh would like to see different financial levels broken out because he believes the housing we do see is not necessarily based on the local income. There are a disproportionate number of houses that are being used as second homes and vacation rentals and he is curious if there is statistics on vacation rental homes. Sullivan answered that vacation rentals will be looked at.

Commissioner Johnson wants to get a feeling of what is driving the gap of the housing cost being well over 30% of household income and how much a market and driver is short term rentals.

Vice President Ping would like it looked at not just from an STR perspective but a secondary and tertiary residence as well.

The next part of the presentation on roles, tasks and timing was turned over to Coburn.

McClain then presented more information on the employer survey.

Sullivan spoke on the planned meetings and deliverables from this project as well as the next steps of the study.

Commissioner Johnson asked how to account for remote workers in the 59912 zip code area.

Sullivan answered that the survey would be targeting employers in the 59912 area and the survey will not be distributed to the Whitefish or Kalispell areas. There is secondary data sources that helps them understand the cross-commuting and the extent to which residents of 59912 are working in other communities. The employer survey will be paired with the secondary data to get into detail.

Commissioner Kavanagh wondered about the National Park Service and Forest Service as seasonal employers and there might be more employees living in our community versus other communities due to our proximity to Glacier Park so they might be a unique employer to look at.

Vice President Ping had a procedural question on who will receive the draft surveys. Sullivan stated that Contract Planner Mulcahy will be the primary contact between WSW Consulting and the City. Mulcahy expanded by saying that he will run drafts by the Commission via email.

President Fisher wondered about the best way for the public to get their ideas to the City.

Mulcahy said to send it to Public Works Clerk Sobczak and he will send to himself in a large batch.

Commissioner Kavanagh commented that we run the risk of not capturing the complete picture if building or septic permits are excluded to city limits only. Sullivan had a follow-up question on where to obtain information on the building in the adjacent area. Sobczak answered that the County would need to be contacted and they do not have a building department so no permits are required for residential projects and commercial projects obtain State building permits. Kavanagh said that an accurate attempt would have to be made by finding new septic permits. City Staff agrees.

City Attorney Breck stated that the previous planning boundary will have to be factored into this study. Mulcahy has spoken to Sullivan and Coburn on this and there is good data in the census but the census blocks around the City can be cumbersome and Sullivan will work through these challenges. She wants to look at the entire 59912 zip code to be able to pull in these wider trends around the City with a closer look around city limits and "the donut".

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: President Fisher opened public comment at 6:44 PM

Shirley Folkwein, 285 Shooting Star Ln, Columbia Falls. Donut will need to be included as much as possible and it is crucial to look at the subdivisions that have been approved by City Council but development has not begun. Vacant land will need to be looked at in the donut area. Need to consider the type of land and if it is appropriate for housing. Mulcahy said that this will not be looked at in the housing study but will be looked at during the Growth Policy update for Senate Bill 382. Public will need to be involved in input to the housing study. Will there be other points that the public will be informed? Mulcahy said yes, during outreach and draft dissemination, but a lot of this is data crunching by the consultants. President Fisher reminded everyone that this is just one piece of Senate Bill 382. Public portal on the website is difficult and needs to be streamlined. More housing equals price going down and would like to see data on this. Wants to know if there will be a survey of current City services? Mulcahy answered that this will be required in Senate Bill 382 but is not a part of this housing study.

Gary Hall, did not give address. Concern on annexation. Had good meeting with the County Planning Board regarding Columbia Falls residents and gave them opportunity for input. The public wants to be part of the process even though they are outside of city limits.

Mike Burr, 560 Talbot Rd, Columbia Falls. Concern on the public input, local residents need to be interviewed. Everyone says to not get hung up on this little segment but many little segments make a whole. Second homes need to be identified.

Dee Flemming, 24 Diane Rd Unit C, Columbia Falls. Concerned about adhering to people that have 30% of income for housing but mortgage lenders are looking at people that have more because it is difficult to qualify. Asks survey to include mortgage lenders. Average price of a home in Flathead Valley is \$540,000 for a 3 bedroom house. Doubts there

are very many people that can qualify for that. Bozeman has new employee housing that employers provide. Would like a tax credit to local business to provide housing because it is hard to find housing especially in the summer.

Gary Hall, did not give address. Wondering if Meadowlake will be a part of the survey process. Mulcahy answered yes.

Marissa Getts, 1306 3rd Ave W, Columbia Falls. Would like to offer to work with Sullivan to support her having worked with her previously in Whitefish. A housing crisis leads us to see any open lands as appropriate for housing and would like to encourage thinking about special ecological and cultural lands and prioritize incremental development using local developers and investments.

President Fisher closed public comment at 7:06 PM and asked Sullivan if she had any comments or needs from the Commission. Sullivan answered no, she has gotten a lot of good information and notes from the public and is excited to get started.

ADJOURNMENT – Meeting duly adjourned at 7:08 PM

President

Attest:

Public Works Clerk

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Item No.2.

The Columbia Falls Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for the following item at their regular meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on Monday, December 2, 2024 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

Request for a zone change from CR-5 to CRA-1 in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, Inc are requesting a Zone Change from CR-5 to CRA-1. The property was previously used for the Boys and Girls Club in Columbia Falls which recently moved to the old elementary school site. A potential buyer of the property would like to open a physical therapy office in the old Boys and Girls Club building. A medical office such as a physical therapist office is a permitted use in the CRA-1 zone but not permitted in the CR-5 zone. The property is described as: Lots 4 & 5; Block 40; Columbia Falls Townsite; Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Persons may testify at the hearings or submit written comments prior to the meetings. Written comment may be sent to Columbia Falls City Hall, Attention: City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, or email staalandb@cityofcolumbiafalls.com. For more information on the request call Eric Mulcahy, Columbia Falls City Planner at 755-6481.

DATED this 24th day of October, 2024

Mark Shrives

Mark Shrives, Interim City Manager/Planning & Zoning Administrator
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING COMMISSION

Publish: Daily Interlake Wednesday, October 30, 2024

**ZONE CHANGE REQUEST
COLUMBIA FALLS ZONING JURISDICTION
Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING OFFICE STAFF REPORT CZC#24-01
November 7, 2024**

A report to the Columbia Falls Planning Commission and the Columbia Falls City Council regarding a request to amend the zoning classification from CR-5 (Two Family Residential) to CRA-1 (Residential Apartment) within the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction. The zone change request is scheduled for a public hearing before the Planning Commission on Thursday, November 14, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. A subsequent hearing will be held by the Columbia Falls City Council December 2, 2024, at 7:00 P.M.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. PETITIONERS

Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, Inc
175 Hutton Ranch Road, Suite 103-194.
Kalispell, MT 59901

APPLICANT

Glacier Peaks Mobile Physical Therapy, LLC
Attn: Jackie Bullock
jackie@glacierpeaksmobilept.com

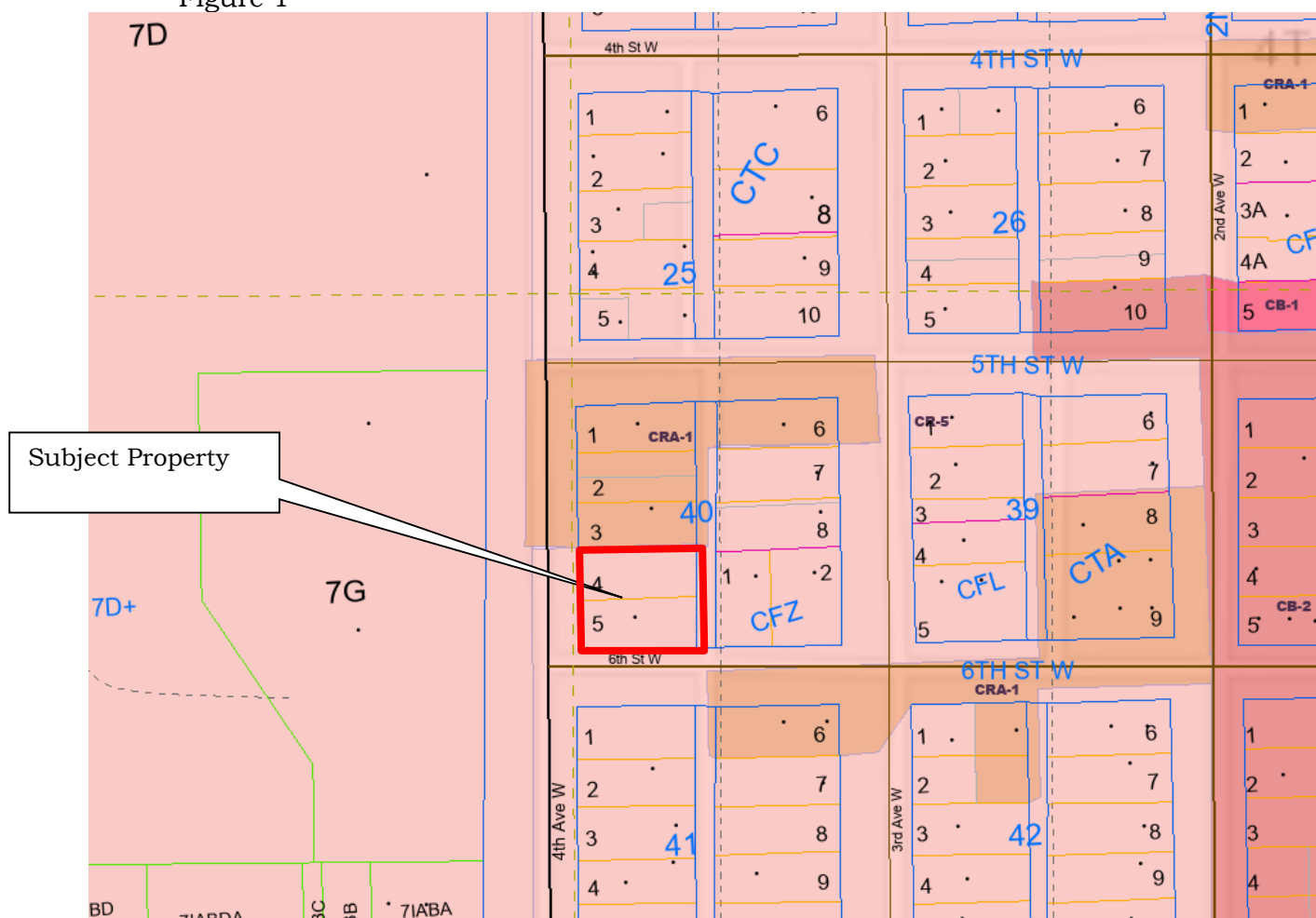
B. LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

The properties are located at 535 4th Ave W in Columbia Falls and has been used as the Boys and Girls Club in Columbia Falls until they recently moved across the street to the old school facility. The two City lots amount to 12,500 square feet. The properties are described as Lots 4 and 5, Block 40 of the Town of Columbia Falls in Section 8, T30N, R20W, P.M.M, Flathead County.

C. REQUEST

The request would amend the zoning on the property from CR-5 (Two Family Residential) to CRA-1 (Residential Apartment). See figure 1 for current zoning. The site is currently the unoccupied home of the Boys and Girls Club which recently moved just across the Street in the old Glacier Gateway school building. The Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country are selling the property, and the new purchaser has a Physical Therapy Business. Medical offices are not allowed in the CR-5 zone but they are allowed in the CRA-1 zone as a permitted use. As the property is directly adjacent to CRA-1 zoning and there have historically been medical offices in the neighborhood, the zone change appears to be appropriate provided it meets the review criteria.

Figure 1



Columbia Falls Zoning District Map (Current Zoning Designation, Flathead County GIS

D. EXISTING LAND USE

The property is the site of the former Boys and Girls Club. (See Figure 2)
Figure 2



Source: Flathead County GIS

E. ADJACENT ZONING AND LAND USE:

Figure 1 shows the existing zoning and use.

Direction from Site	Current Zoning	Current Use
North	CRA-1 (Residential Apartment)	Residential
South	CR-5 (Two Family Residential)	Residential
West	CR-5 (Two Family Residential)	Boys and Girls Club and Columbia Falls Elementary School
East	CR-5 (Two-Family Residential)	Residential

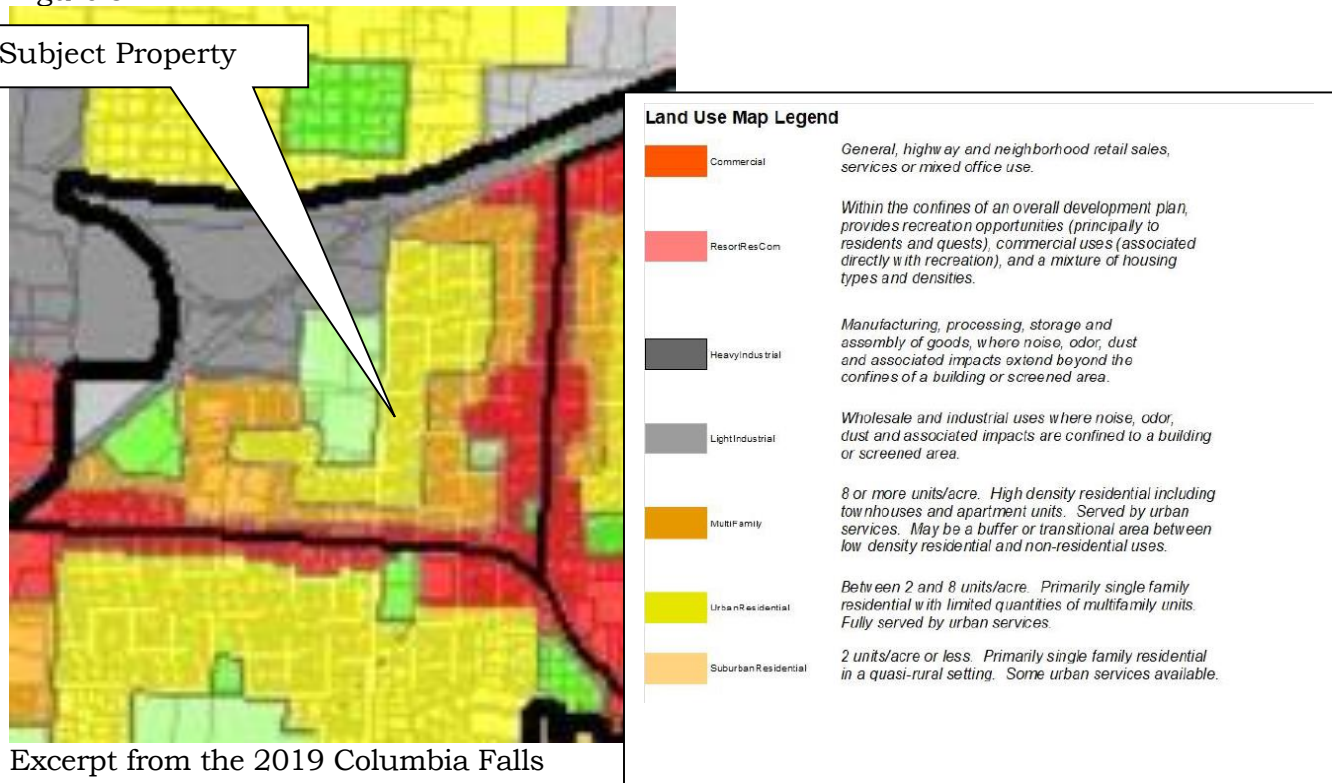
F. GROWTH POLICY DESIGNATION

The Columbia Falls Growth Policy map designates the subject property as urban residential with a density of two to eight units per acre. The designation allows residential and limited quantities of multi-family.

The property is located within the City Limits and is served by City Sewer and Water. 4th Ave West is an Urban Collector Street with a mix of low-density office, multi-family, single family and the school. The proposed CRA-1 is supported by the Growth Policy designation.

Figure 3

Subject Property



G. UTILITIES/SERVICES

The property is in the City limits of Columbia Falls.

Water

Sewer

Fire Protection

Police Protection

Electricity

The property is served by City water.

The property is served by City sewer

Columbia Falls Fire Department

Columbia Falls Police Department

Flathead Electric Co-op.

EVALUATION BASED ON STATUTORY CRITERIA

This request is reviewed pursuant to the criteria set forth in Section 76-2-304, M.C.A., and as stated by the Montana Supreme Court. The following findings are made:

1. **Does the requested zone comply with the Growth Policy?**
The Columbia Falls Growth Policy Map designates the subject property for Urban Residential which supports the single family and limited multi-family found in the district. The zone change to CRA-1 complies with the long range planning document. (Figure 3)
2. **Is the requested zone designed to lessen congestion in the streets?**
The subject property is located along 4th Avenue West, a designated collector street. 4th Avenue West is slated for a major upgrade with a full City cross section, including curbs, gutter, sidewalk and boulevard. Parking for the Boys and Girls Club is currently provided with on-street parking. With the new use, parking will be provided off alley behind the building on-site, as off-site parking cannot be used to meet parking standards. With the building permit for the remodel, the applicants will pave the portion of alley providing access to the parking as well and the parking spaces. Should the property convert to the physical therapist office, parking and access will continue to be from the alley. Parking will be reviewed at time of building permit and conversion.
3. **Will the requested zone secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers?**
The property is located within the City Limits of Columbia Falls. The property is served by City sewer and water. The Columbia Falls Police and Fire departments serve the site and the police and fire stations are located two blocks from the subject property. The property is not located or mapped within the 100-year floodplain of the Flathead River (FIRM Panel 1435J). The property is adjacent to a collector street providing good access to the proposed use.
4. **Will the requested change promote the health and general welfare?**
Neighboring land use consists of a mix of office, single family residential, multi-family residential, community services (Boys and Girls Club and the wrestling club), and the public elementary school. The proposed zone change is compatible with the neighboring uses and will promote health and general welfare.
5. **Will the requested zone provide for adequate light and air?**
The existing CR-5 setbacks are 20 feet in the front, 5-feet on the side, 15 feet on the side corner and 20 feet in the rear yards. The proposed CRA-1 setbacks are 15 feet in the front, 5-feet on the side, 15 feet on the side corner and 15 feet in the rear yards. A slight decrease in front and side yard setbacks. However, the proposed CRA-1 zoning is identical to the properties adjoining the property on the north. The proposed setbacks will match those of neighboring properties.
6. **Will the requested zone prevent the overcrowding of land?**
The proposed zone change closely complies with the Community's long range planning document, the Columbia Falls Growth Policy, 2019 Edition. The proposed zoning matches the zoning designation for the property located directly north of the property. The subject site is suitable for low density multi-family or the proposed physical therapist office which fits in the permitted use category of "clinic, medical and dental". The use and the intensities associated with the proposal should not create overcrowding of the land.
7. **Will the requested zone avoid undue concentration of people?**
The proposed CRA-1 zoning will have similar concentrations of people as the neighboring CRA-1 zoning located along the subject property's northern boundary. The

proposed zoning is compatible to neighboring zoning and will not create an undue concentration of people.

8. Will the requested zone facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements?

The property subject to the CRA-1 zoning map amendment is located within the City Limits of Columbia Falls, it is connected to City sewer and water. The proposed physical therapist office will not generate school aged children but its location is across the street from one of the Columbia Falls elementary schools. The property is located on a collector street that is slated for significant upgrades. The property is located in an area that facilitates the urban intensities identified in the zoning regulations.

9. Does the requested zone give reasonable consideration to the peculiar suitability of the property for particular uses?

The subject property is located in an area of mixed use and densities. There is office space, single family residential, multi-family residential and a public school in the neighborhood. Converting the Boys and Girls Club to a physical therapist office will likely be less intense than the previous use. The proposal does give reasonable consideration to the suitability of the proposed use.

10. Does the requested zone give reasonable consideration to the character of the district?

The character of the neighborhood/district is a mix of use and intensities. The zone change does consider the character of the neighborhood and through this Map Amendment will convert the Boys and Girls Club use to a medical clinic and more specifically a physical therapist office.

11. Will the new zoning affect property values?

The applicant indicates that there will be some interior remodeling to bring the property and building up-to-date which would increase the value of the building. As the property is in a neighborhood with a mix of office, single family residential and multi-family residential there should be no detriment to neighboring property values.

12. Will the requested zone encourage the most appropriate use of the land throughout the municipality?

The subject property is designated in the Columbia Falls Growth Policy as Urban Residential. The text of the Growth Policy supports the zone change in this location. The zoning to the north is currently zoned CRA-1. This is an appropriate location for the requested use.

SUMMARY

The property is designated urban residential by the Columbia Falls Growth Policy. This designation supports two to eight dwellings per acre along with single family use and multi-family use. The proposed CRA-1 zoning designation allows “clinics, medical and dental”, as a permitted use. The property is located adjacent to lands already zoned CRA-1. The intensity of the physical therapist office will likely be noticeably less than that of the Boy and Girls Club. The proposed densities are supported by the urban services and utilities of the City of Columbia Falls.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the subject sufficiently meets the adopted review criteria and supports the property rezoning from CR-5 to CRA-1. Staff recommends that the Columbia Falls Planning Commission adopt staff report CZC-24-01 as findings of fact and recommend approval of the zone change to the Columbia Falls City Council.

Exhibit A – Legal Description

Lots 4 & 5, Block 40 of the Town of Columbia Falls, Section 8, T30N, R20W, P.M.M.,
Flathead County MT



Planning Department

130 6TH STREET WEST
ROOM A
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

PHONE (406) 892-4391

FAX (406) 892-4413

PETITION FOR ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

FILING FEE ATTACHED \$ 1250

Zone Change Base Fee SEE FEE SHEET

Transferee:
Glacier Peaks Mobile Physical Therapy, LLC
Jackie Bullock
jackie@glacierpeaksmobilept.com
phone: 406-426-1560

NAME OF APPLICANT: Boys and Girls Club

MAIL ADDRESS: 175 Hutton Ranch Road Ste 103-194

CITY/STATE/ZIP: Kalispell MT 59901

PHONE: 651-338-5059

INTEREST IN PROPERTY: Current owner

Ron Osterbauer - CEO

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

- A. Address of the property: 535 4th Avenue West Columbia Falls, MT
- B. Legal Description: (Subdivision Name, Lot & Block and/or Tract Number
(Section, Township, Range)
Columbia Falls. S08, T30N, R20W, Block 40 Lot 4 and 5

(Attach sheet for metes and bounds)
- C. Land in zone change (ac)
0.28 Acres
- D. The present zoning of the above property is: CR5
- E. The proposed zoning of the above property is: CRA-1
- F. State the changed or changing conditions that make the proposed amendment necessary:
Transfer of ownership with the intention to use the existing structure as a physical therapy clinic. The zoning code would need to change from CR-5 to CRA-1 in order to operate as a clinic.

HOW WILL THE PROPOSED CHANGE ACCOMPLISH THE INTENT AND PURPOSE OF:

- A. Promoting the Growth Policy
The proposed zoning change will increase healthcare access for Columbia Falls residents and increase employment opportunities for skilled workers. The building's new use and

business model will also increase the Columbia Falls tax base.

- B. Lessening congestion in the streets and providing safe access**
The physical therapy clinic will have a lower number of patrons at more dispersed intervals in comparison to the current use model. Following zoning guidance, sufficient and safe clinic parking will be ensured.
- C. Promoting safety from fire, panic and other dangers**
The clinic will ensure adherence to applicable fire and safety codes.
- D. Promoting the public interest, health, comfort, convenience, safety and general welfare**
A physical therapy clinic will increase healthcare access to residents of Columbia Falls.
- E. Preventing the overcrowding of land**
The clinic will operate within the existing structure.
- F. Avoiding undue concentration of population**
The physical therapy clinic will have a lower number of patrons at more dispersed intervals in comparison to the current use model.
- G. Facilitating the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks and other public facilities**
In comparison to the current use model, the clinic will likely have a reduced footprint in terms utility consumption. Transportation, schools, parks and other public facilities should not be impacted.
- H. Giving reasonable consideration to the character of the district**
Buildings directly adjacent to the existing structure are similarly zoned within CRA-1. Other lots within the vicinity are also zoned as CRA-1. Structure upgrades will take care to

preserve the building's character where possible and economically reasonable.

- I. Giving consideration to the peculiar suitability of the property for particular uses
The building's charm and character provide a warm environment, supporting healing.

Minor upgrades to the interior will improve functionality and facilitate privacy.

- J. Protecting and conserving the value of buildings
Inspections and upgrades will support the long-term structural integrity and property value,
Further, upgrades will take care to retain the building's character where possible.

- K. Encouraging the most appropriate use of land by assuring orderly growth
Columbia Falls is a growing, active community. Additional physical therapy offerings will
support its residents in maintaining their active lifestyles.

The signing of this application signifies approval for Columbia Falls Planning staff to be present on the property for routine monitoring and inspection during approval process.

Authentication
Ron Osterbauer CEO, BGCGC

10/10/24

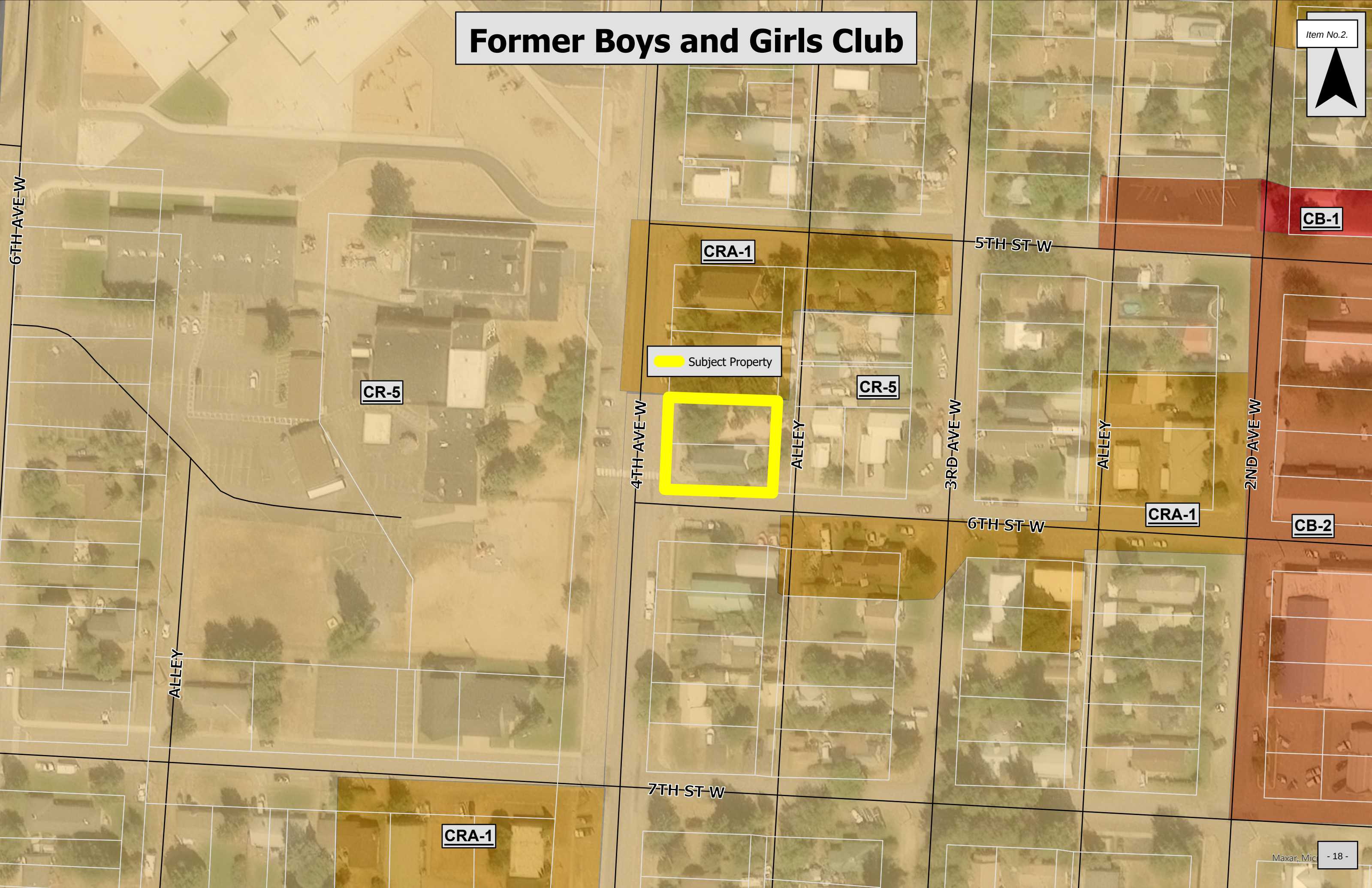
(Applicant Signature)

(Date)

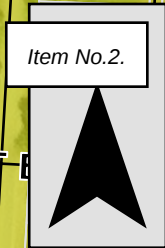
Authentication
Keith Valentine President, BGCGC

10/10/24

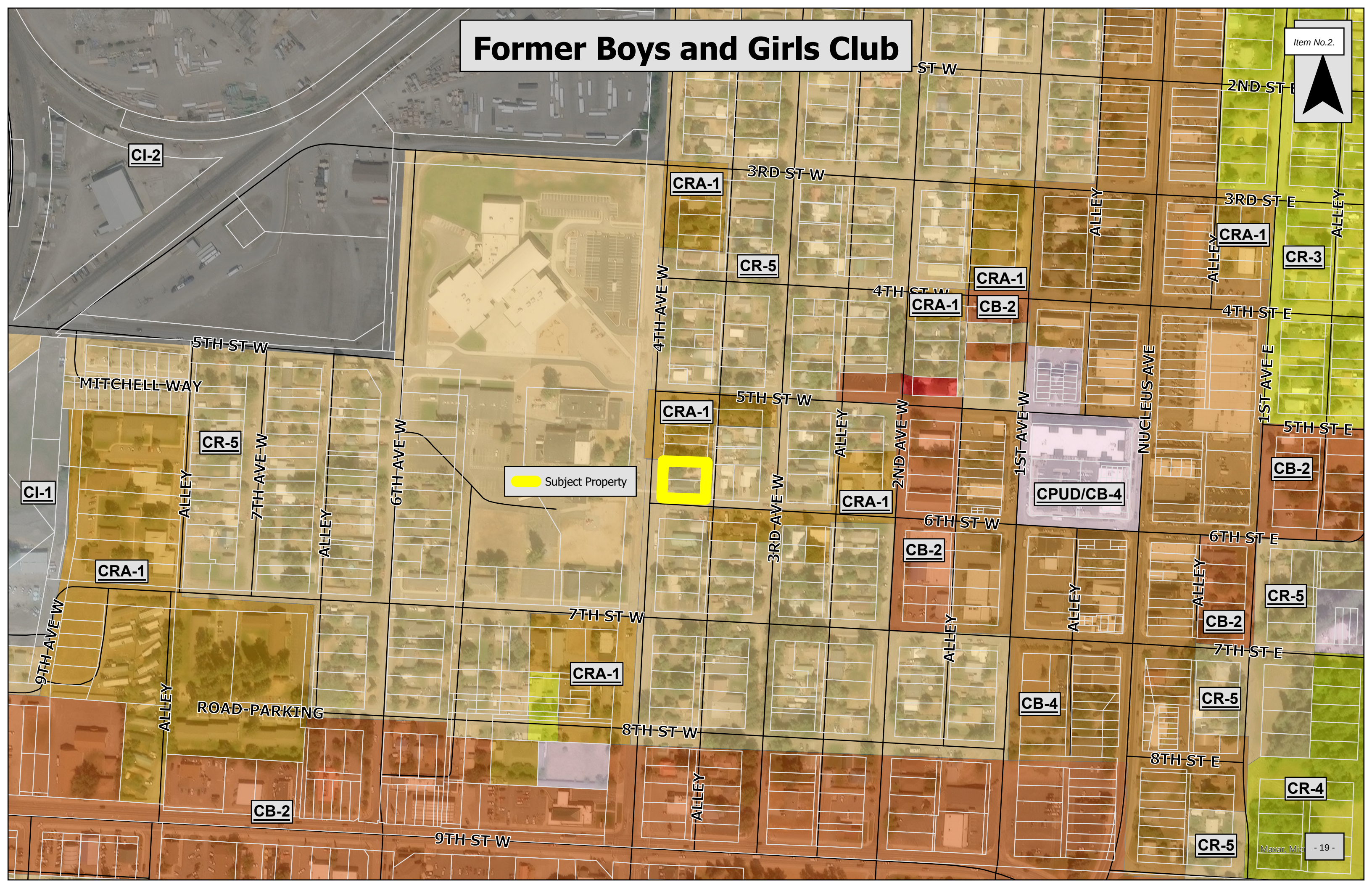
Former Boys and Girls Club



Former Boys and Girls Club



 Subject Property



CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS
Item No.2.

The Columbia Falls Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for the following item at their regular meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on Monday, December 2, 2024 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

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Persons may testify at the hearings or submit written comments prior to the meetings. Written comment may be sent to Columbia Falls City Hall, Attention: City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, or email staalandb@cityofcolumbiafalls.com. For more information on the request call Eric Mulcahy, Columbia Falls City Planner at 755-6481.

DATED this 24th day of October, 2024

Mark Shrives
Mark Shrives, Interim City
Manager/Planning & Zoning
Administrator
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING
COMMISSION



130 6TH STREET WEST
ROOM A
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

Planning Department

PHONE (406) 892-4391

FAX (406) 892-4413

Item No.2.

October 28, 2024

Re: Public Hearing Notice for a Zone Change for the Boys and Girls Club property at 535 4th Avenue West, Columbia Falls.

Dear Adjacent Property Owner:

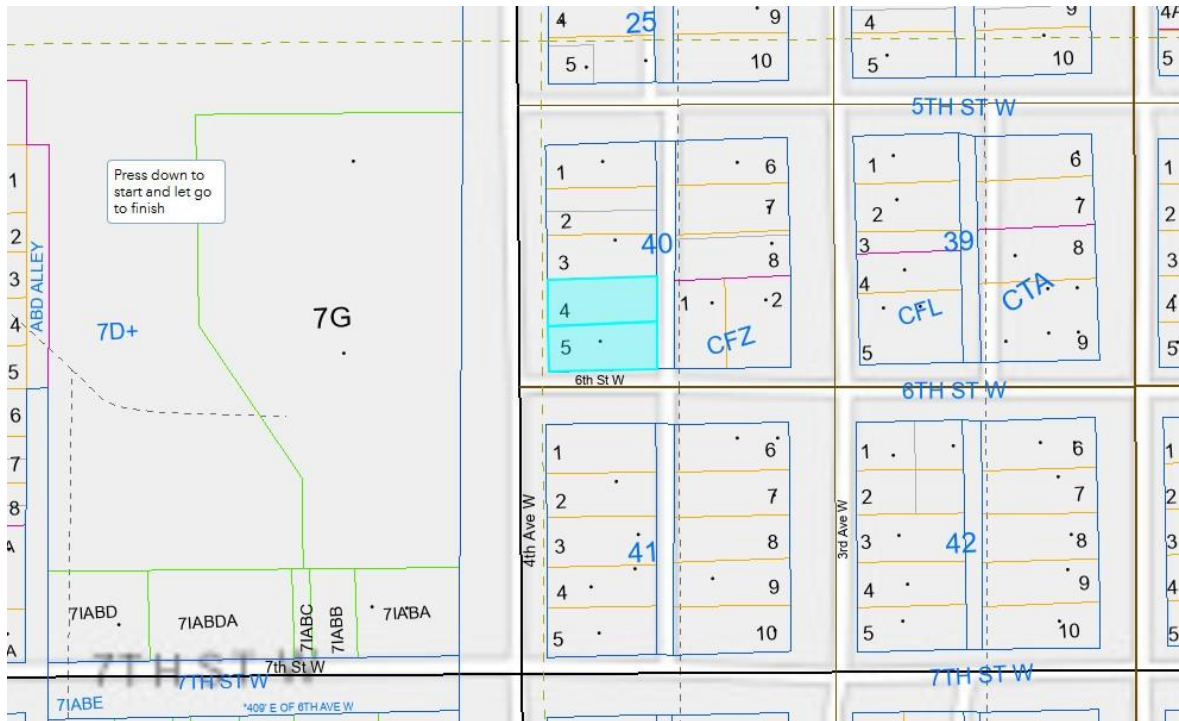
Our records indicate that you are the owner of property within 150-feet of the proposed project.

As the Planning Staff for the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction, I am writing to provide you with a notice of a public hearing that involves a request by the Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country for a zone change from the existing CR-5 zoning designation to the CRA-1 zoning designation. The reason for the change is to allow for a physical therapist office within the existing building. Medical offices are allowed in the CRA-1 zone but not in the CR-5 zone.

If you have questions or comments concerning this matter, please call Eric Mulcahy, Columbia Falls City Planner at 755-6481. For written comment to be included in the Planning Board packet, it needs to be submitted to the City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, MT 59912 no later than Thursday November 7th or by email: staalandb@cityofcolumbiafalls.com. Written or emailed comments may be provided up to 5:00 pm on the day of the hearing, it will just be passed out at the hearing. You are also invited to present verbal or written testimony during the public hearing on November 14, 2024.

Sincerely,

Eric H. Mulcahy, City Planner



CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Columbia Falls Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for the following item at their regular meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on Monday, December 2, 2024 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

Request for a zone change from CR-5 to CRA-1 in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, Inc are requesting a Zone Change from CR-5 to CRA-1. The property was previously used for the Boys and Girls Club in Columbia Falls which recently moved to the old elementary school site. A potential buyer of the property would like to open a physical therapy office in the old Boys and Girls Club building. A medical office such as a physical therapist office is a permitted use in the CRA-1 zone but not permitted in the CR-5 zone. The property is described as: Lots 4 & 5; Block 40; Columbia Falls Townsite; Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Persons may testify at the hearings or submit written comments prior to the meetings. Written comment may be sent to Columbia Falls City Hall, Attention: City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, or email staalandb@cityofcolumbiafalls.com. For more information on the request call Eric Mulcahy, Columbia Falls City Planner at 755-6481.

Daily I read stories about the lack of affordable housing or NIMBY challenges to new housing projects or service workers forced to commute hours to find housing or young families forced to live in shelters or unsafe, crowded housing conditions due to high rental prices or a high percentage of housing stock empty most of the year due to second/vacation home owners. Housing is definitely an issue and concern and should be a high priority for everyone, but what are the real problems and solutions.

Our family just completed a 7,000-mile cross country car trip. We visited 17 states and hundreds of mostly small towns. Whether walking, biking or driving we saw for sale and for rent signs, we saw new construction, we saw lots of vacant land or saw unoccupied and/or poor condition housing and we saw millions of square feet of upper story empty commercial space along Main Streets. We saw very little of persons being unhoused, living in cars or public space. We saw housing purchase prices vary beyond belief: from \$1.3 million in Newport Rhode Island to \$185k in Malone New York. Though we did not visit these states we know that median home prices nationwide vary from as low as \$229,000 in Arkansas to as high as \$787,000 in California. The US has a median home price of \$412,000 (source: Redfin, September 2023).

Montana and especially tourist destinations like the Flathead and Gallatin Valleys have seen median housing prices jump from \$138,950 in 2000 to **\$699,000** today in the Flathead and from \$260,000 in 2013 to **\$757,000** today in Gallatin. This compares to Montana overall at \$99,500 in 2000 and **\$559,983** today. (sources: Redfin, Flathead Growth Plan, Gallatin Association of Realtors, US Census, Zillow). Meaning....most of us could not afford to purchase the homes we live in today at these prices! With the growth of housing purchase and rent pricing far outstripping wages, we all know there is a housing affordability problem. But what is to be done?

Knowing there's a problem is one thing, but finding appropriate solutions is quite another. As you know, the 2023 Montana State Legislature took some steps to act by passing several pieces of legislation and appropriated \$225 million. HB 819 appropriated \$175 million toward unspecified local housing initiatives and \$50 million for low-interest developer loans. SB 245 forces towns over 7,000 to allow more apartments in commercial zones. SB 528 requires towns to allow accessory dwelling units. SB 323 makes duplex housing allowable on any residential lot in towns over 5,000. SB 382 requires towns over 5,000 and counties over 70,000 to overhaul planning and zoning ordinances (which you are doing now). Many other ideas died (like taxing and regulating STRs, establishing a state workforce housing tax credit, providing assistance for renters, and protect mobile home park tenants). Many observers have said these changes are too restrictive, too limited in scope, and too underfunded.

In October 2022 the Montana Department of Labor released a report with some very general recommendations to reduce the affordability gap by expanding housing production and the residential housing construction workforce. (<https://lmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/EAG-Articles/1022-HousingAffordability.pdf>). In April 2024 the Montana Budget & Policy Center offered some suggestions for 2025 action. (<https://montanabudget.org/post/hb-819-affordable-housing>). Some MT cities have suggested local communities and developers be more aggressive in preserving existing affordable housing, authorize deed restricted housing, securing Federal tax credits/CDFI/HOME funding, establishing and funding housing trust funds, expanding affordable housing incentives, promoting infill development (like ADUs), investigating rent-control, etc.

From my 45 years as a community planner, the issue boils down to four areas. First, community development codes, secondly community social services, third tax policy, and four personal resident income/expenses.

- A. On the development side **the primary issue is density**. Density plus exclusionary zoning that allow only single-family and excludes apartments/ADUs, etc.; has too high parking requirements; promote land trusts; allow for tiny homes/modular housing/RVs/manufactured home parks; grant density bonuses; use expedited permitting, Other factors include revising/reducing development standards (ROW/street widths, private v. public streets, reducing impact fees, sidewalks, etc.).
BUT.....ONLY for truly affordable, permanent housing (not the PR stuff most local developers say).
For example: <https://www.theurbanist.org/2024/11/04/sleepy-bainbridge-island-decides-how-to-grow-up/>
- B. On the services side, communities need some form of or access to trust funds for cheap financing, housing voucher programs for housing authorities, rental assistance support, eviction prevention and relocation services, home purchase assistance, facilitating employer-assisted housing/workforce housing (like with Weyerhaeuser, Xanterra, etc.),
For example: <https://www.theurbanist.org/2024/11/01/county-advances-social-housing-billion-dollar-bond-study/>
- C. On the tax side our country needs to modify property tax policy to allow for higher **property taxes** on vacant homes, second/vacation homes, luxury homes, and vacant land. Some countries utilize site value taxation which can be very helpful in driving growth and development to vacant and underutilized land instead of open space or farmland. Gain approval to impose **real estate transfer taxes** at time of any purchase/sale like Washington State (which can fund the service strategies). Advocate for a sales tax so that tourists can more directly participate in funding municipal expenses like water, sewer, drainage, bike trails, etc.
- D. On the **cost of living side** there is not much any municipality can do. However, by reducing commute distances, promoting transit/carpooling, promoting a local living wage, encouraging energy efficient home designs (like solar), etc. you can directly impact the affordability gap (by influencing short and long-term operating costs).

Resources:

<https://localhousingsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Housing-Solutions-Lab-Framing-Paper-Final.pdf>
https://apautah.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Affordable-Housing-Guide_20200720.ss-002.pdf
<https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/addressing-the-affordable-housing-crisis-requires-expanding-rental-assistance-and>
<https://www.townofeagle.org/DocumentCenter/View/17261/Innovative-Strategies-to-Promote-Affordable-Housing>

Increasing overall town density is the single greatest tool you have (and by that I mean 3 to 4 times what it is today). The Appendix shows a variety of housing forms and neighborhood density designs - all come from Washington State. By increasing density I'm also referring to increasing building heights, reducing setbacks, reducing parking, promoting more mixed use development, etc. (To fully achieve this type of urban form you will need to prepare detailed design guidelines, initiate a design review process and undertake a lot of developer education).

Even my hometown of Spokane has finally begun to more fully embrace inclusionary zoning that favors multiple over single-family development. (Read article - <https://www.inlander.com/news/how-spokane-gained-its-urbanist-reputation-28817737>).

Our family lives in the Wildcat Estates subdivision, which I believe should be the lowest density in town. Anyway, some initial thoughts and best of luck.

Patrick Copeland Malone, 1373 Wildcat Drive.

APPENDIX

Pictures of density by form:



The “missing middle” density housing. The goal for many communities to increase affordability.



Pictures of density by units per acre:



10 units per acre (appropriate for areas previously zoned SF, approximately Talbot south, Hilltop to west)



15-18 units per acre (appropriate for areas previously zoned multi-family, approximately 12th ave to west, Talbot to south & Nucleus ave to east)



34-36 units per acre (appropriate for the core area/CBD, approximately Railroad on north, 4th ave on east & 4th ave on west)