



GUEST COLUMN

Whitefish's Identity Crisis

By Web Master, 2-21-13

What do an eating disorder clinic, the Zinke Inn and brewery, the new DePratu VW business locating in Kalispell, impact fees, and Whitefish High School all have in common? They all illustrate Whitefish's identity crisis that makes us, in my opinion, too much of a resort/retirement community, at the expense of our families, our businesses and our future.



Over the past several years, the Heart of Whitefish, joined by left-leaning city council members, have pushed policies to make Whitefish into a resort/retirement community, instead of a family-focused community with resort amenities. In fact, a "resort/retirement community" is how they describe Whitefish on the city website.

These activists like to spend our tax money on "wayfaring" signs but force us to beg the city council for high school funding (who needs good schools in a resort/retirement community?). They steadfastly refuse to reduce impact fees, and continue to sue the county over the doughnut because, according to an affidavit in the lawsuit, Whitefish's resort/retirement economy requires it to keep jurisdiction over the doughnut!

More alarmingly, these same people want to spend millions on a new trophy City Hall – downtown – which will make downtown parking even harder for tourists and us local residents. A justification for locating this expensive new building downtown is to make it easier for locals to pay their water bills, a silly excuse when most folks pay their water bills by mail or the Internet.

Due to their advocacy to mold Whitefish into an anti-business, resort/retirement community, our school enrollments are declining and businesses such as the proposed Zinke Inn and Brewery get stuck in zoning limbo until they are no longer viable.

DePratu VW's recent announcement that it will be locating in Kalispell should serve as a wake-up call to those misdirected leftists who care more about the tourists who don't live here than the people who do. If the Whitefish mayor and his council allies didn't make every effort to keep a business like DePratu VW in Whitefish, along with its 30 jobs, there's something seriously wrong with our city leadership.

Whitefish is a wonderful town, but its future will require families, jobs and residents, not just second homeowners and childless retirees. Wayfaring signs, high impact fees, and a new City Hall may feel good to a few activists, but they will not improve our schools, bring our town more

living wage jobs or encourage good people to move their businesses to our town.

Rick Blake lives in Whitefish. **[End of article]**

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