

PROJECT COULD BOOST EAST SHERMAN GROWTH

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This conceptual drawing shows what the planned 30-unit “Lake Drive Apartments” project will look like when they are constructed at 315 E. Coeur d’Alene Lake Drive. A special use permit was granted to developers this week by the city’s planning commission, allowing developers to double the number of residential units built on the property.

COEUR d’ALENE — A planned apartment complex in an underdeveloped gateway to downtown Coeur d’Alene cleared a hurdle this week, sparking hope of further growth in the area.



The Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission approved a special use permit which will allow the Lake Drive Apartments, located next to O'Shay's Irish Pub and Eatery at 315 E. Coeur d'Alene Lake Drive, to double the allowed density of the project, bringing the total number of units to 30 for the five-story, multi-family apartment building. Ben Widmyer, of Lake Drive Apartments LLC, told The Press Thursday the group hopes to break ground next spring and complete the project within seven months.

"We see it as a good project for us," Widmyer said. "Hopefully it kickstarts some additional development in that area."

All that remains before the group can break ground is meeting two conditions of the special use permit — not building the proposed carport over an existing public sewer main, and properly connecting to the public sewer main.

Widmyer said that "should be easy to achieve."

He added it's too early to estimate rental costs, although his company's proposal to the planning commission states the building will be "upscale."

To be granted the special use permit by the planning commission, the project had to meet the following criteria:

- A.) The proposal is in conformance with the comprehensive plan.
- B.) The design and planning of the site is compatible with the location, setting and existing uses on adjacent properties.
- C.) The location, design, and size of the proposal are such that the development will be adequately served by existing streets, public facilities and services.

Tom Messina, vice chair of the planning commission, said the commission was overwhelmingly in support of the project. He added that development in the area is long overdue, and he too hopes this initial project will attract other developers to the area.

"It's exciting to see that they're investing in East Sherman," agreed Hilary Anderson, Coeur d'Alene community planning director.

Anderson noted the inclusion of a coffee shop, or similar commercial space, on the first floor of the complex is a great example of the mixed-use developments the area needs, and will be great for people who use the Centennial Trail. A healthy mixture of residential and commercial areas, according to Anderson, is important to revitalize the East Sherman corridor.

The project, she added, is also in line with the results of a Housing Needs Assessment conducted by the city.

"We need to continue to provide all types of housing in the city, as well as housing in the downtown core," Anderson said.