



## Defining Tomorrow 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

In 2020 Billings will be a dynamic center of regional commerce that draws families, workers, visitors and economic opportunities for our business community like never before.

The chief architect of this plan is you. "Defining Tomorrow" was a process that enlisted scores of business and civic leaders, partner organizations, and the community at-large and generated over 1,000 comments and pathways to community success.

Attaining this vision requires unwavering alliances with local and regional partners who own a stake in Billings' success; just as we rely on our entire region's prosperity for our success. Building a community for the Next Generation also necessitates that Millennials are part of the decision-making fabric.

Organizationally the Chamber will align its resources to meet current demands while understanding that demands of tomorrow may look different from today. Our leadership and decision making process will be both proactive and responsive, and unapologetically decisive when difficult decisions must be made for the good of our business environment and community.

The Billings Chamber does not exist to sell memberships, services and seats. We exist to move Billings forward and help your business grow.

To our future,

John Brewer

Strategic Objectives 2020

*Advance Billings as the Dynamic Regional Center*

*Grow and Recruit Trained Talent*

*Lead Visitor Growth*

*Influence Public Policy*

*Enhance Value to Members*

*Exceed Organizational Expectations*

### **Our Mission**

To develop a strong business climate and vibrant economy by serving the community in a leadership role thereby enhancing the quality of life.

### **Our Vision**

To achieve excellence in community leadership and growth.

## **Advocate. Connect. Grow.**

The Billings Chamber represents our 1,170 members who employ 44,000 people. We help you **grow** your bottom line by **connecting** you to opportunities and **advocating** for your business and our community.

## **Our Team Promise**

Our brand speaks loudly of change, energy and excitement. As a team we will consistently deliver the wow factor; innovative ideas, knowledge, integrity, leadership and laughter. We're proud of what we do and where we live. Let's SHOUT it out!

## **Core Competencies**

1. Support business needs including leading local, state and federal legislative issues impacting business and our quality of life;
2. Promote Billings as a preferred destination for visitors, business travelers and sporting events;
3. Provide opportunities for our membership relating to education, leadership development, networking and value added services.

## **Your Chamber**

The Billings Chamber received the highest award that a chamber can receive from the United States Chamber of Commerce: 5-Star Accreditation. Less than 1% of the 3,000 chambers in the U.S. have this designation. The Chamber has also been recognized as a 2015 "Chamber of the Year" finalist in our category across the country. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 representing and serving 1,170 members who employ more than 44,000 people. Your Board consists of community leaders representing small and large businesses and diverse business interests. We are governed by 17 voting members and four ex-officio members who provide expertise in their fields. Your staff consists of 14 professionals who are enthused, engaged in the community and full of great ideas and energy. The Chamber has strategic management agreements to further the regional travel industry with the Montana Office of Tourism (lodging tax); Billings Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID); and Visit Southeast Montana Tourism (SEMT).

## **Our Community**

Billings enjoys a large trade area (500,000 square mile retail trade area covering four states) with a diverse economy (healthcare, agriculture, tourism, natural resources). Educational opportunities (Montana State University Billings, Rocky Mountain College, a strong K-12 system) are abundant as are our recreational and scenic surroundings. Residents and visitors alike enjoy "River to the Rims" beauty (from Swords Rimrock Park to the Yellowstone River); cultural attractions (Yellowstone Art Museum, Western Heritage Center, ZooMontana); and an increasingly vibrant downtown (the heart of our community). A short drive finds international icons of beauty, heritage, and the old west (Pompeys Pillar, Yellowstone National Park, Little Bighorn Battlefield). Employers tout a strong employee work ethic, short commute and satisfied workforce.

As with any community on the move, Billings faces challenges such as: public safety; air service; workforce (2.6% unemployment; skills gap, housing, aging population); being an urban area in a rural state/region; taxing structure equality; lack of (or aging) facilities (event space, attractions, sports, infrastructure).

## **WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS (Source: Hight Consulting; Dr. Larry Swanson)**

- The quality of our community
- The quality of our workforce
- The quality of our surrounding environment

## **Strategic Objectives 2020**

### **Strategic Objective I: Advance Billings as *the* Dynamic Regional Center**

Billings is a desirable, regional destination to conduct business, for travel, relocation and business recruitment. We are Montana's Trailhead. By virtue of being the largest city in a vast region, our economy thrives. But being

the largest isn't good enough: Billings must be the best by offering a dynamic urban setting and quality of life that is viewed as the best.

#### GOALS:

1. Improve air service and the airport experience by increasing direct service and passengers.  
Action 2015-16: Create a regional marketing campaign to increase passengers and encouraging BIL over other regional airports;  
Action 2015-16: Secure federal funds and match to lure new destination service;  
Action 2015-16: Create a stronger aesthetic welcome and touch-points that satisfy the traveler.
2. Connect business to the issue of public safety to create greater safety awareness to reduce crime.  
Action 2015-16: Launch task group to connect residents, government, business; evaluate safety levy.
3. Expand the Heritage Trail System and improve historical assets and amenities to increase miles of trail and usage.  
Action 2015-16: Progress toward Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site development by reaching fundraising goal to restore this asset, developing a stronger sense of place and fulfilling chamber's 1928 commitment.  
Action 2015-16: Progress toward Marathon Loop connection including: Yellowstone River Connection completion; and Feasibility of Zoo and Zimmerman connections;  
Action 2015-16: Completion of Swords Rimrock Park entryway.
4. Improve meeting and convention space.  
Action 2015-16: Explore funding and development.
5. Realize a Trailhead Hospitality Corridor in east Billings.  
Action 2015-16: Steering committee partnership.
6. Lead a Community Appeals structure to prioritize community investment by 2017.

#### **Strategic Objective II: Grow and Recruit Trained Talent**

Billings' unemployment rate is 2.6% (June 2015). Employers are demanding a larger workforce and more certified and trained specialty workers with a culture for lifelong learning. A comprehensive roadmap produced by BillingsWorks (a partnership between the Chamber, Montana State University Billings, City College, Rocky Mountain College, private business and led by Big Sky Economic Development) will be the driving structure to address workforce needs.

1. Attract talent by promoting the benefits of living and working in Billings.  
Action 2015-16: Develop key messages; online talent attraction site; business toolkit
2. Retain higher-ed graduates through the Chamber's NextGen group.  
Action 2015-16: Grow mentorship program to help students build a professional network, offer resources for career development and retain incoming young professional.
3. Increase K-12 graduation rates through Graduation Matters from 85% to 91% by 2018.  
Action 2015-16: Participate in United Way's steering committee.

#### **Strategic Objective III: Lead Visitor Growth**

Tourism is Montana's second largest industry and impacts nearly every business. Visitors to Billings are exposed to our community, opening the door to future economic opportunities including relocation and business development. They are our future residents and workforce. As the region's urban destination, Visit Billings will capitalize on our significant regional trade area as a target. Managing tourism promotion for Visit Southeast Montana (13 counties and two Indian Reservations) connects our region and creates marketing, sales and political synergies.

1. Support and manage Visit Billings (including the Tourism Business Improvement District and Montana State Lodging Tax) with the following goals as outlined in a separate strategic plan:
  - a. Grow Billings as a Tourism Destination
  - b. Foster Airport Progression
  - c. Improve Visitor Experience
  - d. Increase Awareness in International Marketplace
  - e. Increase Leisure Visitation with Value Season Emphasis
  - f. Position Billings as Regional Leader for Sports Events

- g. Increase Small Meeting and Citywide Convention Recruitment Efforts
- 2. Support and manage Visit Southeast Montana Tourism with the following goals as outlined in a separate strategic plan:
  - a. Develop Marketing Partnerships
  - b. Grow In-Region Partnerships
  - c. Support Tourism Product Development
  - d. Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives

#### **Strategic Objective IV: Influence Public Policy**

The Billings Chamber serves as the voice for business at all levels of government: local, state and federal. The Chamber will advocate for issues impacting business and community and communicate to our members to create a better understanding of issues affecting the Billings region and eastern Montana. Advocacy efforts will be coordinated with a regional voice.

- 1. Be the voice of Billings business on local issues: City of Billings, Yellowstone County, School District #2
  - Action 2015-16: Improve local government leadership by conducting candidate schools for all levels of local government each year;
  - Action 2015-16: Board to evaluate development of candidate endorsements and report cards;
  - Action 2015-16: Develop local issues agenda;
  - Action 2015-16: Evaluate the rationale and need for school levies for the May 2016 ballot.
- 2. Be the voice of Billings business on statewide issues in Helena.
  - Action 2015-16: Develop a strategy with steering committee, and work with legislative interim committees, to introduce enabling local option legislation in 2017;
  - Action 2015-16: Develop a stronger voice for eastern Montana and urban areas throughout Montana on issues affecting our regional economy, especially finding a solution to the state's infrastructure shortcomings;
  - Action 2015-16: Begin to identify policy issues for our 2016-'17 agenda.
- 3. Be the voice of Billings business on federal issues impacting key industries and quality of place.
  - Action 2015-16: The Chamber's public policy web site will be the regional resource for all things policy.

#### **Strategic Objective V: Enhance Value to Members**

With over 1,170 members who employ over 44,000, the Chamber will provide platforms to cultivate leaders, grow customers for our members and help them establish business relationships.

- 1. Lead programs to assist members in growing their customer base (B2B, tourism, general population)
  - Action 2015-16: Develop a year-round Shop Billings campaign while growing Small Business Saturday;
  - Action 2015-16: Connect more members to new residents and visitors;
  - Action 2015-16: Provide online tools for small, start up and struggling businesses in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development.
- 2. Connect business through networking, events, marketing opportunities, virtual networking, and regional networking programs.
- 3. Support Billings' major industries such as agriculture, healthcare, energy and tourism.
- 4. Cultivate business and civic leaders (Leadership Billings, Trailhead Tourism Ambassadors, NextGen)
  - Action 2015-16: Identify city and coordinate our second Aspirational City Visit in May, 2016.

#### **Strategic Objective VI: Exceed Organizational Expectations**

Be the strongest Chamber in the country.

- 1. Maintain high industry operational standards
  - Action 2015-16: Achieve "Chamber of the Year" designation through ACCE;
  - Action 2015-16: Maintain 5-Star Accreditation through the U.S. Chamber;
  - Action 2015-16: Exceed annual benchmarking data for Chambers across the country in our category.
- 2. Provide exceptional service to our members
  - Action 2015-16: Maintain Net Promoter Score above national average (customer service ranking);
- 3. Grow revenue through the implementation of the 2019 Growth Plan to assure the long term financial strength of the Chamber to be able to carry out our community leadership mission.
- 4. Continue to Define Tomorrow and maintain our reputation as the Chamber of the Future.

Action 2015-16: Evaluate ACCE's Horizons 2025 Influences and determine actionable items.

5. Provide an environment of bold leadership and positive change, energy and excitement to better serve our community and business members.

Action 2015-16: Improve and streamline governance structure by completing the governance evaluation of bylaws, policies, and decision making processes;

Action 2015-16: Create an environment that encourages a passionate, professional Chamber team;

Action 2015-16: Fulfill board member expectations for their service and cultivate potential new board members.

## Deliverables

| Strategic Objective                | Measure                  | 2014-2015 Current      | 2015-2016 Goal                                       | 2020 Goal                              |     |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--|--|-----|
| I. Dynamic Center                  | Increase Trail Miles     | 40 miles               | River Connection                                     | Marathon Loop Complete: 55 total miles |     |
|                                    | Enhance Heritage Assets  | Underway               | Reach fundraising goal for Yellowstone Kelly Project | Yellowstone Kelly Project Complete     |     |
|                                    |                          | Underway               | Complete Swords Rimrock Park Entry                   | Complete                               |     |
|                                    | Airport Passengers       | 860,000                | 875,000  | 2% annually                            |     |
|                                    | Convention Center        | Feasibility            | Determine Funding                                    | Under Construction                     |     |
| II. Visitor Growth: Visit Billings | Room Nights Booked       | 56,164                 | 30,000   | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | VisitBillings.com Visits | 143,372                | 145,000  | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Stakeholder Satisfaction | 88%                    | 89%  | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Room Demand (Jan)        | 7.5%                   | 3%   | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Visit Southeast MT       | Regional Lodging Tax   | \$4.7 Million  | \$4.85 Million                         | N/A |
|                                    |                          | Call Center Inquiries  | 750  | 650                                    | N/A |
|                                    |                          | SoutheastMontana.com   | 37,500   | 38,500                                 | N/A |
|                                    |                          | Social Media Followers | 20,107   | 21,200                                 | N/A |
|                                    |                          | Digital Ad Impressions | 11 million   | 13.5 million                           | N/A |
| III. Talent                        | Relocations Requests     | 200                    | 300  | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Web Relo Unique Views    | 600                    | 700  | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Graduation Rates         | 85%                    | 87%  | 91% by 2018                            |     |
| IV. Public Policy                  | PublicPolicy.com         | 2,465                  | 4,000  | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Local Option             | n/a                    | Bill Draft and Sponsor                               | Complete local Implementation          |     |
| V. & VI. Membership & Organization | Dues Revenue Base        | \$637,000              | \$709,000  | \$753,000                              |     |
|                                    | New Investors            | 166/\$80,000           | 170/\$60,000   | 180/\$63,000                           |     |
|                                    | Cancelled Investors      | 160/\$50,000           | 150/\$53,000   | 150/\$53,000                           |     |
|                                    | Number of Investors      | 1,166                  | 1,190  | 1,300                                  |     |
|                                    | BillingsChamber.com      | 32,302                 | 3%   | 3%                                     |     |
|                                    | Media Exposure/Eyes      | 90,193                 | Maintain   | Maintain                               |     |
|                                    | Accreditation            | 5 Stars                | 5 Stars  | 5 Stars                                |     |
|                                    | Chamber of the Year      | n/a                    | #1   | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Net Promoter Score       | 24.6                   | 26.7   | N/A                                    |     |
|                                    | Total Managed Revenue    | \$3.73 Million         | \$4.146 Million                                      | N/A                                    |     |