



# 2012-2013 Strategic Business Plan

July 1, 2012—June 30, 2013

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

The Billings Chamber/CVB represents you, our 1,200 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 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.

## **Our Team Promise** to our members and the community is...

To always look at new and better ways to serve you, to do business and to make Billings a better place to live and work. 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, networking and value added services and effectively communicate those opportunities.

## **Your Chamber/CVB**

The Billings Chamber/CVB received the highest award that a chamber can receive from the United States Chamber of Commerce: 5-Star Accreditation. Just 1% of the 3,000 chambers in the U.S. have this designation. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 representing nearly 1,200 members who employ more than 44,000 people. We are here to serve you. Your board consists of community leaders representing small and large businesses and diverse business interests. We are governed by 19 voting members and four ex-officio members who provide expertise in their fields. Your staff consists of twelve professionals who are enthused, engaged in the community and full of great ideas and energy. The Chamber/CVB has strategic management agreements to further the regional travel industry with both the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District and Southeast Montana Tourism.

## **Long Term Strategic Objectives**

- Increase tourism to Billings
- Advocate for business and community
- Support regional energy development
- Encourage development of community assets
- Support an innovative workforce
- Connect business with opportunity

## Long Term Strategic Objectives

### Increase tourism to Billings.

Purpose: Promote and sell Billings as the preferred destination for leisure, corporate, group and sports visitors through the Convention & Visitors Bureau.

- GOAL Priority initiatives shall focus on building shoulder season traffic through the promotion of the Bring It To Billings campaign; sports recruitment; energy group meetings; and leisure campaigns.
- Action Successfully implement the CVB annual plan as established in partnership with the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District and Lodging Tax funds (Alex Tyson).
- GOAL Continue to grow the regional tourism economy that will result in direct benefits to Billings.
- Action Successfully implement the Southeast Montana Tourism annual plan (Nick Mann).
- GOAL As a fully integrated Destination Management Organization, develop Billings as a preferred destination through product development (Alex Tyson/John Brewer).
- Action Support community infrastructure projects that impact visitation such as new and expanded attractions, improvements to venues such as MetraPark, new conference center, trails and more.

### Advocate for business and community.

Purpose: Advocate for business and community issues with a unified voice for city, county, state and federal issues.

- GOAL Actively lead a pro-business and community agenda leading up to and during the state legislative session in Helena. During the 2011 session, the focus of the legislature was cost cutting to cover an anticipated \$300 to \$400 million dollar shortfall. The 2013 legislative session will begin with an anticipated \$400 million dollar surplus, so there will be a temptation to spend freely on a variety of programs and pet projects (Bruce MacIntyre)
- Action Develop our agenda for legislation with community, area and statewide partners by October. Critical areas of emphasis include energy infrastructure, education, lodging tax, workers compensation, and business equipment tax.
- Action Develop the Chamber/CVB Public Policy Manual prior to the beginning of the session. Manual will be available online and through a summary brochure.
- Action The Government Affairs Committee and its Task Forces (Agriculture, Education, Energy, Workforce/Business Development, Healthcare, Taxation, Transportation/Managed Growth, and Tourism) will meet on an as needed basis throughout the session to provide updates and recommendations to the Chamber/CVB Board.
- Action Provide information to members on bill drafts and bills that have an impact on business. Keep membership informed on crucial candidate races. Communication channels include the new public policy web site to be launched this FY; Capitol iNSiGHT eNEWS; and general member e-blasts.
- Action Develop a grassroots calling network to support or oppose issues.
- Action Lobby for issues through a full time lobbyist in Helena and part time staff lobbyist who will meet local area legislators as well as area lobbyists on a one to one basis prior to and throughout the session.
- GOAL Weigh-in on federal issues that impact priority issues for Billings including, but not limited to energy, transportation, and education (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Communicate directly with our federal delegation.
- Action Attend the Small Business Summit and Hill Climb in May sponsored by the US Chamber.

- GOAL Support Billings' agriculture industry and our committee's mission to educate and inform businesses and residents on the value of the industry (Montana's largest industry) (Bruce MacIntyre committee liaison; Kama Humphrey events liaison).
- Action Continue successful Ag Banquet, Ag Tours and monthly committee meetings.
- Action Engage CVB and SEMT on the opportunities to tell the ag story through visitor communications (Kelly McCandless; Nick Mann).
- Action Feature more ag information in Chamber/CVB's eNEWS, website, etc (Kelly McCandless).
- Action Develop and implement a Spring Thaw Newsmaker Forum or Rise and Shine event featuring Ag (March/April).
- Action In November or December, develop an Ag Committee forum to host area legislators and the business community prior to the state legislative session.
- GOAL Maintain Billings' air service and identify opportunities to grow service into new targeted destinations (John Brewer).
- Action Focus on luring American Airlines and develop Billings/Dallas service; encourage daily service from Chicago and Portland.
- Action Increase and support regional air service expansion to destinations such as Williston, Missoula and Helena.
- Action Working with the CVB, position Billings as the preferred gateway to Yellowstone National Park to increase flights and passengers through the airport.
- Action Develop a definitive position on incentives for luring air service.
- Action Evaluate pros and cons of International Designation/Customs for potential action.
- GOAL Be a resource to assist small business with bottom line needs (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Participate in Big Sky Economic Development's Business Expansion committee

### Support regional energy development

Purpose: Position Billings as an energy hub that will connect local businesses with opportunities throughout the region. Southeastern Montana has seen a marked increase in energy resource development over the past few years and Billings is in a position to become a national energy hub. Coal from Spring Creek, Decker and Signal Peak (and soon Otter Creek) mines are being shipped through Billings. Colstrip units burn Montana coal and generates electricity that is consumed by many Montana companies and individuals and is exported to other states. The Bakken Formation as well as newly discovered oil fields bring a lateral drilling (fracking) process to get significantly more oil out of the oil fields. Natural gas development is being developed as a byproduct of coal. Judith gap wind generation units and other renewable resources round out an "all-of-the-above" strategy for American energy independence. All of these industries rely on Billings' vendors to supply a variety of products and services.

All objectives and action items below are in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development and can be found in the Community Action Plan for Energy Development.

- GOAL Create leadership and community engagement on the topic of energy development (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Develop Eastern Montana coalition consisting of cities and towns, local chambers and economic development partners. Develop and promote the message that energy helps grow our regional economy (John Brewer).
- Action Host regular local leadership meetings inviting legislators, media, community leadership groups and energy experts in a variety of disciplines to create ways Billings can be promoted as the business center for energy development.
- GOAL Create greater public awareness through accurate messaging of the issues surrounding energy development.

- Action Create and distribute regular energy-focused electronic newsletter that shares insight as to our efforts and ways members can benefit from our actions (Kelly McCandless).
- Action Develop a regional energy promotional campaign to keep the general public informed of the value and positive economic impacts while dispelling many of the negative perceptions with regard to energy development (John Brewer explore).
- Action Integrate energy topics into Leadership Billings programs, annual meetings, seminars, and look for opportunities to create awareness through MontanaFair sponsorship etc (Kama Humphrey).
  
- GOAL Recruit energy related businesses to Billings.
- Action Support Big Sky Economic Development on their Target Industry Analysis; development of recruitment materials focused on those targeted industries and trade missions to other energy hubs.
  
- GOAL Create an environment that encourages energy growth in Billings and across the region though legislative action (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Inform the community about candidates who will promote the growth of energy and energy related businesses in eastern Montana.
- Action Work to reduce worker's compensation costs, reduce business equipment taxes, keep business taxes low, improve the regulatory process, and generally improve the business climate so we are highly competitive with the states around us.
- Action Support Downtown Billings' efforts to ease traffic congestion in downtown due to train traffic while communicating facts that coal traffic only accounts for 2-3 trains daily and is not at the root of the problem.
- Action Support the development an Unobstructed Route for transporting mega loads through the state.
- Action Support the Federal regulatory approval and development of the Keystone XL pipeline.
  
- GOAL Workforce Development (Bruce MacIntyre)
- Action Ask existing and prospective energy companies to define areas of need and work with City College, MSU-Billings, Career Center, Rocky Mountain College, Montana Job Service and others to assure workforce, training and support needs are met.
- Action Partner with Billings Realtors Association and the Homebuilders Association of Billings to connect energy companies with opportunities to grow much needed housing.
  
- GOAL Develop needed infrastructure to support energy industry (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Identify and develop resources necessary to adequately support the energy industries, including the ability to move resources to the consuming markets.
- Action Explore options for direct air service between Williston and Billings (John Brewer).
  
- GOAL Support local business in their desire to connect with the energy industry (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Conduct outreach meetings with businesses that are currently working in the energy sector to understand their needs and business opportunities. Coordinate tours for members of regional energy projects and prospective projects in Williston, Roundup and/or Lewistown
- Action Develop list of current members and prospects that are not currently connected directly to the energy sector and encourage and facilitate connecting them with opportunities.
- Action Conduct a Zoomerang survey this summer to determine the players and support companies in the energy sector and use this information as a guide for other businesses planning to expand into areas of energy development
- Action Develop a Roundup and Lewistown tour, taking place this fall, to determine the activity in the area and offer our support and assistance.

- GOAL Market and sell Billings as a meeting and convention destination to state, regional and national energy corporations and associations. Campaign will include a “Work. Play. Live.” Theme (Alex Tyson).
- Action Search national convention and meeting databases, meet with local energy companies to “Bring It To Billings,” position certain marketing materials to reflect the footprint of energy in the region.
- Action Facilitate tourism opportunities to allow oilfield workers and their families the opportunity to come to a larger city and enjoy our amenities. As Billings is seen branded throughout the Bakken area, our community should be better positioned as top of mind for corporate decisions makers to consider locating facilities here.

Encourage development of community assets.

Purpose: Developing a sense of place and “placemaking” by improving community infrastructure has become critical for communities wishing to lure new business, visitors and workers while improving resident’s quality of life. Integrate “Billings: Montana’s Trailhead” branding into every opportunity (John Brewer).

- GOAL Develop our trail system for the economic and healthy community benefits that result from active transportation (to work and school and for leisure). This strategic priority was initiated July 1, 2009 by the Chamber/CVB Board of Directors. Long term objectives include three critical elements: 1) Connect The Marathon Loop (A 26.11-mile continuous off street paved trail around Billings). Secondary Focus: Heights Loop; Vital Spokes: Downtown to River; Billings Bench Water Association (The Ditch); 2) Support the maintenance of existing trails; 3) Trail system must include directional and interpretative signage and trail amenities starting with Swords Park as the model. (Staff liaison: John Brewer; Board liaison Bill Cole)
- Action Bring trail support groups and stakeholders from the business community together to find solutions to connect and promote our trails. Build momentum with committee by emailing individuals and letting them know specific goals and asking them to select a specific task group to assist (Yellowstone River Connector; Swords Park; License Plate Promotion, etc). Meetings will be held quarterly over the noon hour.
- Action Work with elected officials on pursuing federal funding through transportation, health care and appropriations; while seeking grants and other funding opportunities
- Action Communications staff will share the value of trails to the business community by attending at least one meeting and developing a media blitz around the value of trails. (Kelly—media blitz spring 2013)
- Action Prepare a white paper on the economic value to our community due to trails (Complete April 2013).
- Action CVB will seek opportunities to book conventions with a non-motorized transportation theme and encourage visitors and convention delegates to use our trail system (CVB team will present at one meeting and seek assistance in bringing more trails groups to Billings). (Alex is staff liaison).
- Action Host a Rise & Shine Event featuring community trails progress report during Bike, Bus, Walk to work week in partnership with Bike Net, YRPA and City (Kama staff liaison. May).
- Action City Council and County Commissioners formally adopt “Heritage Trail” name for entire system (September).
- Action Make progress to connect the Yellowstone River segment of the “Marathon Loop” by securing landowner agreements, having land surveyed and engineering recommendations in place (complete June 2013).
- Action Re-engage fundraising campaign for Swords Park to identify a specific project to fundraise for and complete by year end.
- Action Increase license plate sales to generate no less than \$10,000 annually to trails. Invest a portion of new revenue from this project into promotion.

- Action Develop a running list of successes that the committee has been involved with, including: Number of miles of off-road paved trail developed since initiation of priority (support); Yellowstone River Trail Feasibility Study (lead); Trail Asset Management (maintenance) Plan (lead); Marathon Loop vision development (lead); Chamber/CVB bike loan program (lead); Swords Park fundraising campaign and awareness (lead); Approval of Parks Maintenance District by City Council (support)
- GOAL Partner with Big Sky Economic Development, City, County, Metra, and East End Business District in the development of needed infrastructure and business opportunities within the east end transition zone. The goal will be to develop a community entryway and active business district along Exposition Drive making this area a vibrant destination and visually attractive area. Chamber/CVB's focus will be to develop a sense of arrival to a unique destination through perimeter enhancements including gateway signage. Connecting this area via trails from Swords Park to the River is also important (John Brewer).
- Action Attend quarterly planning meetings and support the objectives of the groups:
  - a. Exposition Gateway Development Plan
  - b. Master Plan update for METRAPark
  - c. Swords Park Redevelopment
  - d. Trailhead Entryway and "edges" along corridor
  - e. Trail connections in the project area
  - f. Transportation links (light rail, etc.)
  - g. Convention center facilities/location
  - h. Museum of the Yellowstone
- GOAL Assist MetraPark in fulfilling its community mission and securing its future as a viable economic driver for tourism and venue for quality of life activities.
- Action In partnership with Tourism Business Improvement District, assure the continued Montana High School sporting events take place at Metra.
- Action Support growth and upgrades to the facility through master planning.

Support an innovative workforce.

Purpose: Developing and sustaining a sizeable and innovative workforce to meet the needs of Billings' diversified industry starts at the earliest levels. K-12, technical training and post-secondary education must remain strong to grow and retain the correct mix of talent to meet future needs.

- GOAL Support quality K-12 education for Billings' future (John Brewer/Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Develop and grow relationships with School District 2 administration and school board
- Action Evaluate effectiveness and use of Yes For Kids branding while evaluating support for levies and bonds.
- Action Develop future-focused core group of community business leaders to recommend opportunities for improvement ("Education-Business 2020").
- Action Study school budget and make recommendations by working with SD2 to reinstitute the Budgeting For Results Committee.
- Action Be an active participant in the facilities master planning process.
- Action Connect business to K-12 through support of Partners In Education and Junior Achievement.
- Action Continue our support and involvement in Graduation Matters community action planning
- GOAL Support growth of our workforce.
- Action Participate in the Bridging Cultures workforce meetings in partnership with the Crow Tribe and Billings businesses (Bruce MacIntyre).
- Action Fulfill requests for individual and family relocation information (Rene' Beyl).

- Action Work with Big Sky EDA, City College, and Job Service to develop a workforce pool that will meet the needs of the community
- Action Continue to request and support a National Work Readiness Credential that will measure basic and soft skills of high school students and that will be requested by employers.

Connect business with opportunity.

Purpose: Provide opportunities for Chamber/CVB members to grow their bottom line through member-to-member sales, education, networking, and value-added services.

- GOAL Provide members with value-added resources for growing their bottom line (Jennifer Reiser).
- Action Conduct an Environmental Scan as recommended during our accreditation process that will result in an ongoing community economic health dash board. Partner with other organizations to make this report inclusive and sustainable (John Brewer/Staff TBD).
  
- GOAL Communicate regularly and effectively with members and community through the implementation of the Communications Plan beginning early July (Kelly McCandless).
- Action Use the new tag/value proposition in all communication pieces:  
Advocate. Connect. Grow.  
The Billings Chamber/CVB represents you, our 1,200 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.
- Action Enhance communication through website communications that include new Chamber/CVB site and new Public Policy site.
- Action Successfully develop and launch new e-communications.
- Action Promote 5-Star accreditation as often as possible.
- Action Maintain regular social media communication.
- Action Partner with outside vendors to create publications that serve the needs of the community and membership while sharing the Chamber/CVB mission with the community.
- Action Develop media release and media events that showcase significant actions and opportunities from the Chamber/CVB.
- Action Grow general eNEWS recipient database from 2,500 to 3,500.
  
- GOAL Engage members in meaningful activities through committee and task force participation; and “community” development via communication channels (John Brewer/Staff).
- Action Evaluate each committee/task force focus and structure a consistent agenda and process for each while adding specific goals. Groups include: Executive Committee; Finance Committee; Trails; Air Service; Past Board Group; Ambassadors; Ag Committee; Collaborate; Connections; Legislative (Workforce, Energy, Healthcare, Taxation, Transportation/Managed Growth, Education).
  
- GOAL Connect members through events and networking activities allowing them a venue to do business with each other and learn about priority community issues (Kama Humphrey).
- Action Continue to enhance and grow attendance to annual events: Annual Meeting/Business Showcase, Salesperson’s Breakfast, Ag Banquet, Roche Jaune Awards for Business Excellence, Trailhead Classic Golf Tournament.
- Action Develop meaningful content and environments to do business at other events throughout the year: Business After Hours (monthly), Rise and Shine (3x year); Newsmaker Forums (3x year); Connect 4 Lunch (weekly); Java with John (4x year); Member Orientation (3x year).
  
- GOAL Implement new Retention Plan to connect new and existing members with resources, opportunities to engage and to make the most of their membership investment and enhance their membership experience (Keri Wilson).

- Action Identify “at risk” members by lack of event participation or committee involvement; then engage retention staff and Ambassadors in contacting “at risk” members to assess their satisfaction, remind them of Chamber benefits, and provide feedback to staff regarding individual member needs.
- Action Ambassadors will visit new members to share and inform them on their Chamber/CVB benefits and Strategic Initiatives.
- Action Connect with all levels of membership to better understand their business, provide individualized customer service and connect them to services and programs based on their individual needs to fulfill their expectations.
- Action Create opportunity to highlight long-standing members.
- Action Involve Board of Directors in showing appreciation for event sponsors and major investors.

### **Administration**

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

- GOAL Assure the long term financial strength of the Chamber/CVB to be able to carry out our mission and provide cutting edge resources for our membership (John Brewer/Jennifer Reiser).
- Action Increase reserves by no less than 10% by year end. Goal of \$120,000 reserves by June 2016.
- Action Continue management arrangements with the TBID and SEMT to fulfill our mission.
- Action Seek opportunities to increase dues and non-dues revenue.
  
- GOAL Create an environment that encourages a passionate, professional Chamber/CVB team (John Brewer).
- Action Keep the team promise at the forefront.
- Action Provide professional growth opportunities through industry Chamber and CVB education.
- Action Provide the technology (computers, etc) and support needed to keep the Chamber/CVB on the cutting edge and in most cases in a technology leadership position.
  
- GOAL Fulfill board member expectations for their service and cultivate potential new board members (John Brewer/Jennifer Reiser).
- Action Encourage board participation in committees and task forces.
- Action Provide board applications and steps to becoming a board member online.
- Action Conduct meaningful “Past Board Member” gatherings to help plan future initiatives.
- Action Keep board materials at a strategic level and provide them with materials well in advance of meetings to read and thoughtfully consider.

### **2012-2013 Key Priorities and Deliverables**

- Grow Billings’ position as an energy hub to connect local businesses with opportunities.
  - Make at least one city visit sales call/awareness trip.
  - Develop and engage the Eastern Montana Energy Coalition at a much higher level to reach our objectives.
- Increase the number of visitors to Billings.
  - Increase total trackable group bookings to 27 groups totaling 21,000 room nights with an emphasis on bookings between January to April and October to December
  - Receive 90,000 unique web visits to [www.VisitBillings.com](http://www.VisitBillings.com).
  - Increase calendar year room demand year over year by 3%.
- Connect Yellowstone River Trail segment and add amenities to Swords Park Trailhead.
  - Make progress to connect the Yellowstone River segment of the “Marathon Loop” by securing landowner agreements, having land surveyed and engineering recommendations in place.



- Re-engage fundraising campaign for Swords Park to identify a specific project to fundraise for and complete by year end. Generate \$10,000 from license plate sales for trails.
- Advocate for and lead a pro-business state legislative agenda.
  - Develop a Public Policy Manual to guide pro-business priorities.
  - Generate successful grassroots lobbying efforts through the development and launch of [www.PublicPolicy.BillingsChamber.com](http://www.PublicPolicy.BillingsChamber.com).
- Support quality K-12 education for Billings' future.
  - Develop and grow relationships with School District 2 administration and school board and encourage the development of a comprehensive approach to improving our schools.

### **Operational Deliverables**

- Attract 156 new members resulting in \$46,800 in new membership dues.
- Grow money market fund by at least 10% totaling no less than \$25,000.
- Achieve 90% membership renewal, totaling \$564,000 in dues revenue.
- Increase Net Promoter Score (NPS) over 2012 high of 34.
- Secure no less than \$130,000 in local media exposure.
- Successfully roll out and implement communications strategy.
- Successfully roll out and implement retention strategy.

