



Northern Rocky Mountain ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Yellowstone National Park Project largest in District's history.

On Aug 29th NRMEDD was advised it was approved for a \$50,000 EDA grant. The EDA grant will join with \$50,000 in local monies to fund NRMEDD's Yellowstone National Park study project. This is NRMEDD's most significant planning initiative. The West Gate of the Park in West Yellowstone is currently 30% over capacity and the District is joining with Yellowstone National Park, Gallatin County and the Town of West Yellowstone to assist in formulating a smoother entrance while also protecting the economies of gateway communities.

An early step was the creation of a Scoping Committee comprised of the Deputy Director of YNP, the YNP Chief Landscape Architect (head planner), representatives of the West Yellowstone Town Council and Town Manager, the Executive Director of the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (comprised of 12 federal agencies, County Commissioners from Gallatin County and the NRMEDD executive staff).

It is clear that YNP's receptive attitude to working with NRMEDD and local communities opens a unique window for economic development that has not previously existed.

Looking to the future the predictions are that the majority of "Alpha" generation children, those just now being born in major US cities will not in their lifetimes own a car. This poses significant uncertainties for an area that depends on cars, and tourists with cars, for its economic base. The NRMEDD has engaged America's largest think tank, the Information and Technology Innovations Foundation out of Wash D.C. On June 20, executive staff of the ITIF shared its vision for the future and the artificial intelligence, autonomous cars and other innovations that are predicted.

Visitor numbers to Yellowstone National Park (YNP) are now at 4.2 million. Approximately 715,000 international visitors arrive and pass through major US cities including San Francisco, New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. Overall visitation is up 50% since 2000 and increases have been managed with no increase in park staffing. The West Yellowstone gate represents 45% of all YNP entry traffic and 54% of that traffic returns to the same gate.

In the recent past, waiting lines to the single gate have exceed 7 miles in length. Tour buses have increased 267% since 2008. the visitor influx is over-

whelming both the YNP entry gate and some infrastructure within the Town of WY. Visitor traffic in high season impacts hotels for 100 miles and swells the small town of 1,200 to more than 10,000. The NRMEDD study seeks to research, conduct field observations, collect data, report and make recommendations. It will consider congestion, signage, way-finding, safety, parking, truck traffic, restrooms, road configuration, park information and international visitors.

This project will impact the economies of all the surrounding towns and counties. Our involvement provides a safety net to ensure that economic impacts are valued along with transportation issues. Like the June 20 event with Steven Ezell, our "Speaker's Luncheons" are designed to bring resources available to government and community leaders to help guide their efforts.

The NRMEDD also prepared an economic impact report in order to better understand the economic implications of this project. The report showed that the Town of West Yellowstone generates \$200.4 million in annual economic impacts and supports 3,002 regional jobs.

A second study by the US Department of the Interior study showed that tourist spending in Yellowstone National Park Gateway Economies exceeds \$630 million annually in economic output and that labor income has increased to 31% since 2012.





In July, 2018, NRMEDD secured a Big Sky Trust Fund Grant for Ascent Vision, assisting them with a beneficial State Grant for hiring new employees. Ascent Vision CEO Tim Sheehy stated, "NRMEDD has been a valuable partner in helping Ascent Vision navigate the complexities of economic development grants. Securing these funds has been very helpful in managing our rapid growth and has accelerated the pace of reinvestment back into the Montana economy." Below is an article recently published by the Montana High Tech Business Alliance.

Veteran-owned Ascent Vision & Bridger Aerospace Celebrate New Belgrade Facility

By Christina Henderson
Photos by Edward Meier, Digital Aerial Media.

On November 17, 2017, CEO Tim Sheehy and his team welcomed guests to their 30,000-sq. ft. facility at Bozeman airfield in Belgrade to celebrate the grand opening of the new headquarters of Ascent Vision and Bridger Aerospace. Congressman Greg Gianforte and co-founder Matt Sheehy offered remarks at the event.



"This building is a physical manifestation of what this company, this team, this enterprise, have achieved in three years," Tim said. "We've gone from two guys and that old airplane in a barn to a company of over sixty people with clients on six continents. This building represents not just what this company has done, but what's happening in the Gallatin Valley and the rest of the State of Montana. It's really exciting to be a part of the tech wave that's happening here."

Tim Sheehy, a former Navy SEAL officer and Army Ranger, and his wife Carmen, a former Marine, moved to Montana and lived in a tent with their one-year-old daughter and a baby on the way while establishing successful ventures Ascent Vision and Bridger Aerospace in the Gallatin Valley.

Gianforte complimented Ascent Vision and Bridger Aerospace on their achievements as prominent tech employers in the Bozeman area.

"I'm just so thrilled at the success you're seeing with high wage jobs, which is really the engine of our economy," said Gianforte. "We now have 100 high tech businesses in the [Gallatin] Valley. [The Montana High Tech Business Alliance now has] more than 300 high tech firms in the

State of Montana. And it's an awfully important part of our growing economy. What you're doing is essential so that our kids can stay in the state, for our veterans who are coming home, so we have jobs in the private sector, so people can prosper."

Tim, a former Navy SEAL officer and Army Ranger, formed an LLC and became an entrepreneur in 2013 just after retiring from the military. He moved his family – his wife, a one-year-old child, and another baby on the way – and his new enterprise to Bozeman in November 2014. The first venture, service company Bridger Aerospace, leveraged Sheehy's passion for aviation, and sent planes to find lost cattle for ranchers, lost people for search and rescue, and fires for the U.S. Forest Service. But Tim and his partners soon realized that it was the company's aerial sensors that were driving the real value for clients, so they soon spun off a product company, Ascent Vision.

Tim's team saw that military operations were increasingly based on aerial surveillance, using real-time information from sensors and cameras on planes, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and satellites to make better decisions in the field.

"Our clients exist in environments that are inherently unforgiving, whether it's a battlefield or a wildfire," Tim said. "What we're trying to do, whether it's flying an airplane over a fire or building a better sensor for our marines overseas, is to empower that decision-maker so that when they have to make that life-and-death decision in a split second, they have the best information possible as quickly as they can get it."

In addition to improving the capabilities of government agencies, Tim also saw the need for better sensors in private sector applications like maritime surveillance and self-driving cars and expanded his customer base to include those industries.

Ascent Vision formed a joint venture with Australian gimbal maker UAV Vision and in the first eighteen months grew to 50 employees and multi-millions of dollars in sales. Employees are typically either new MSU engineering grads or military combat veterans, and every employee owns a piece of the companies.

Tim showed an image of the next phase of facility expansion for Ascent Vision and Bridger Aerospace, which could come within the next few years if the companies continue their trajectory of rapid growth.

About the author: Christina Quick Henderson has served as executive director of the Montana High Tech Business Alliance since its launch in April, 2014.



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

District Board Member Highlight— **Ann Cole, Three Forks**



Ann Cole is one of the newest NRMEDD board members, representing the City of Three Forks. Ann has been with the District for a full year now. Ann moved from CA to Idaho where she met her husband. He was born and raised in Montana so they decided to make their home in Three Forks. Ann has been in banking for 30 years now and has held several positions with different banks. She has been with First Community Bank for 13 years. Her position at First Community Bank is very diverse and she finds it challenging to balance her time between home life, mentoring, work, and volunteering within her community. Ann's says that her greatest accomplishment was to help raise her son to be a responsible adult. Another victory for her was to advance to the position of branch manager. Ann got involved with the District when First Community Bank was asked to help sponsor membership for the Three Forks Community and she thought it was such a great organization. In her spare time, Ann likes to read, work in her garden, take her kayak out on the lake, and take long walks.

NRMEDD helps solve Madison County parking issues with Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG)

Tourism is Virginia City's key economic driver, generating more than \$75 million in total economic impact. The Town is the summer-time hub of Montana's largest historical attraction that hosts more than 582,000 annual visitors.

Parking is vital to this community's economic success and one of the key parking facilities is privately-owned.

For many years the Town has been able to secure annual leases for the parking lot. However, they were recently advised that the leases would not be renewed and the land would be sold.

If the Town had not been able to acquire the land then it stood to lose a major asset that supports more than 58 licensed local businesses representing 220 employees.

NRMEDD worked with Justin Gatewood, Mayor for Virginia City to prepare and submit a USDA grant. The Enterprise Project will acquire seven lots in the center of town.

In June 2018 a USDA grant was approved for \$52,000 to assist in the land acquisition. The Town and Chamber will match the grant with an additional \$223,000 in local funds.

**In 2018, Rob Gilmore
celebrated 6 years
with the NRMEDD.
Congrats to Rob!**



Northern Rocky Mountain

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

FreeAgent CRM Raises \$5.6M to Help Small Businesses Grow Sales Big



Free Agent founder Dave Stephens

In July 2018, NRMEDD secured a Big Sky Trust Fund Grant for FreeAgent, assisting them with a beneficial State Grant for hiring new employees. "The help we receive from NRMEDD was instrumental in FreeAgent receiving our first grant from the Big Sky Trust Fund. We're using the grant money to accelerate hiring talented Montanans. For most new hires, we are their first high tech job! We're getting great new employees and they are getting great new knowledge-based careers. The District flawlessly guided us through the grant application process, and we sincerely appreciated their help." said Free Agent CEO Dave Stephens.

FreeAgent CRM, the CRM that helps small businesses grow sales big, announced this year that it has raised \$5.6M in seed financing. Investors include BlueRun Ventures as well as technology leaders such as former Oracle EVP Ron Wohl, and ServiceNow EVP of Worldwide Sales Kevin Haverty.

FreeAgent CRM's CEO Dave Stephens plans to use the new capital to accelerate R&D and expand its sales & marketing team to reach the company's target market - small companies with big ambitions. "Unlike other CRM entrants, we're not out to dethrone Salesforce," Stephens said. "Our passion is to help small businesses that already have great products get great at sales. We're delivering the system I wish I'd had when I founded my first startup."

That first startup was Coupa Software, now a \$2B publicly traded company. So, Stephens is no stranger to the startup scene. He's also harnessed his entrepreneurial spirit inside larger enterprises,

building out new lines of business as an executive at tech behemoth Oracle and enterprise cloud leader ServiceNow.

"What CRM your business uses is incredibly important," added FreeAgent CRM Chief Strategy Officer, Ryan Manning. "With ours, managing sales is 10x more productive, which means you win more business and make more money."

FreeAgent CRM's cloud-based service can be set up in minutes, includes a free trial, and is priced at \$29 dollars per user per month in the US and Canada or \$499 pesos per user per month in Mexico. Customers describe it as the easiest to use, simplest to set-up, and most complete CRM for small business.

Easiest to Use

Because small businesses have zero time to learn how to use a new system, FreeAgent CRM offers an incredibly intuitive user interface that eliminates manual work at every turn.

"I've used Salesforce and a bunch of other CRM, and FreeAgent CRM is by far the easiest. It's not even close. I love the email integration, the in-app calling, and especially the way it automatically records everything while we just keep doing our jobs." said Ajay Chawla, CEO of GroupClique.

Simplest to Set Up

Small businesses don't have time or money to burn implementing a CRM. They want to get value right away. With FreeAgent CRM that's just what they get. A simple 8-step guided setup gets businesses up and running in minutes. And product specialists are available to chat online with when you need help.

"FreeAgent CRM built setup help right in. I chatted with a product specialist when I had questions, and was up and running 30 minutes after I signed up." said Jonathan Jones, Owner of Jones Search Group.

Most Complete for Small Business

Small businesses move fast by keeping things simple. Having separate systems for sales and marketing is too slow and costly. FreeAgent CRM does everything a small business needs by tracking prospects, leads, accounts and deals in one platform.

"It's great to be able to send batch emails using rich custom templates. And being able to track metrics like open rate and clicks is wonderful. Very rare to see these marketing capabilities available in a sales platform." said Loren Baker, Founder of Foundation Digital.



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

NRMEDD Executive Board Member

Highlight— Pierre Martineau—West Yellowstone

Pierre is one of the longest serving members of the District's Board of Directors, serving the region since 2006. He joined the District's governing committee when Earl Mathers was the initial Director of the District. Pierre sat on the Personnel Committee when current District Staff Members Rob Gilmore and Mike Hedegaard were hired.

Pierre's background is in the service industry. He started in 1959 as a bellman at Old Faithful Inn. At the end of the season a bunch of fellow workers would go to Palm Springs to work in the resort hotels there. At Old Faithful, after their shifts were completed, many would drive to the Gusher in West to drink beer and have fun. After a sufficient amount of libations, they would return to Old Faithful and a lot of the guys would climb the chimney in the Inn lobby.



Pictured—Pierre with his great-granddaughter Briar

Pierre and his family were like many others; they loved the area so eventually bought land west of town and built a cabin. In 1982 Pierre and his family moved to West Yellowstone full time. He worked in

hotels and convenient stores until the '90s when he was promoted to management of one of the stores.

In 2008 he was elected to West Yellowstone's Town Council and has been on the Council since (with the exception of the year and a half he served as a Gallatin County Commissioner).

Pierre feels he really enjoys the political positions. He loves West Yellowstone and Bozeman/ Gallatin County, and enjoys seeing them both move forward into the future.

He knows there have been some setbacks in West Yellowstone over the years, however, Pierre also says "We have to constantly remind ourselves of our successes". Those successes of late have been numerous including the 2016 purchase of 80 acres of land from the Forest Service after ten years of negotiating. There was also the 2017 project where the Town of West Yellowstone spent over a hundred thousand dollars erecting a new pavilion in the park and remodeling and updating the restrooms. In 2018, the Town funded and built the Little Ranger day care center. The Town and the community worked together to build a million-dollar facility. Gov. Bullock even showed up for the dedication.

Pierre admits that life in politics is weird; "You go from day being frustrated and all of a sudden you have a beautiful pavilion or a learning center and you realize that you have actually accomplished something."

Pierre is proud of the way the community encourages startups and try to introduce them to the community. Their Director is very quick to recognize issues and work for solutions which often involve finding grant money.

In his spare time, he is a big sports fan and spends a lot of his time watching games or at games. Pierre has coached or managed on many levels, including high school baseball and basketball, tee ball, little league and recreation softball.



Friends of Gallatin and Park (FOGP) successful in business recruitment

efforts – Friends of Gallatin and Park was successfully recognized as a 501 (c) (3) organization at both Federal and State levels at the end of 2016. Since then, the District has been building FOGP in a multipronged effort. The work of incorporating and securing status as a charitable tax exempt organization is now finished. A consultant was contracted and a development plan was created. The plan now is to approach fund-raising from several fronts.

Since its inception, FOGP in conjunction with the District has assisted the region in recruiting numerous businesses, including Kudos, Free Agent, and Eagle Mountain Blockchain Inc.

Jerry Pape, board member of the District, was provided the narrative documents to assist in his outreach to the banks that contributed in NRMEDD's first funding round. With Jerry's assistance, FOGP has received \$26,000 in contributions toward business recruitment efforts and two additional board members have been identified.

A flyer has been prepared for a general mailing to prospective donors, and PFL has agreed to help print and distribute the flyer. Current FOGP board members include Don Seifert, Jeren Starr, Bill Simpkins, Claire Daines, Jerry Pape and Rob Gilmore.



FRIENDS OF GALLATIN & PARK

A 501(c)(3) SUPPORTING BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

Join us, we are forming a Founder's Team for Friends of Gallatin and Park Counties.

The Founder's Team is limited to 25 member/donors. Members will greet incoming business leaders, receive briefings on major activities and provide input in the formation of regional planning and strategy.

Vibrant communities and economic regions do not happen by accident. They are built with vision, long-range planning, and the dedication of many.

Since 2009, the Northern Rocky Mountain Economic Development District (NRMEDD) has been one of the primary business recruitment organizations serving Gallatin and Park Counties. Working in concert with other community development organizations, we strengthen our local economy by focusing on projects that best fit our communities.

Individual contributions are now possible with the formation of Friends of Gallatin and Park, a new 501 (c)3 nonprofit which provides fundraising for NRMEDD's recruitment efforts.

We seek your input into growing our region.

Suggested Donation Levels include:

Granite Peak - \$5,000 and Above

Glacier Peak - \$2,500 to \$4,999

Wilson Peak - \$500 to \$2,499

Sage Peak – up to \$499

YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS:

NRMEDD programs and activities, Active recruitment of targeted technology companies. Sponsorship of forward-thinking events that will guide our community.

Please make a tax-deductible donation at nrmedd.org/donations or contact us at 406.577.2541 to learn more.