The Billings Chamber of the Future: Defining Tomorrow

strategic business development plan
2014-2019
The Billings Chamber of Commerce represents you, 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 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, 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 7,000 chambers in the U.S. have this designation. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 representing and serving 1,170 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 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 both the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and Southeast Montana Tourism (SEMT).

What’s Important to our Members (Source: Hight and Swanson)
- The quality of our community
- The quality of our workforce
- The quality of our surrounding environment
Strengths of Billings
Large trade area (500,000 square mile retail trade area covering four states); Diverse economy (healthcare, agriculture, tourism, natural resources); Educational Opportunities (Montana State University Billings, Rocky Mountain College, strong K-12); “River to the Rims” beauty (from Swords Rimrock Park to the Yellowstone River); Cultural attractions (Yellowstone Art Museum, Western Heritage Center, ZooMontana, and more); Strong work ethic; Surrounding beauty, heritage, and old west (proximity to Pompeys Pillar, Yellowstone National Park and Little Bighorn Battlefield); Vibrant downtown (the heart of our community).

Threats/Weaknesses to Billings
Public safety (challenges facing a growing community); Air service (greater connectivity and more affordable rates); Issues facing our workforce needs (3% unemployment; housing, wages; aging population); Urban issues in a rural region; Tax structure (no local option authority); Lack of (or aging) facilities (event space, attractions, infrastructure).

LONG TERM STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Strategic Objective I: Advance Billings as the Dynamic Regional Center
Strategic Objective II: Grow and Recruit Trained Talent
Strategic Objective III: Lead Visitor Growth
Strategic Objective IV: Influence Public Policy
Strategic Objective V: Enhance Value to Members
Strategic Objective VI: Exceed Organizational Expectations
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Advance Billings as the Dynamic Regional Center

PHILOSOPHY
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. To achieve this vision, support must be obtained to fund projects from public and private avenues.

PRIORITIES
Convention Center  ●  Public Safety  ●  Marathon Loop
Swords Rimrock Park  ●  Air Service  ●  Trailhead Hospitality Corridor

GOAL COMPLETION

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Expand the Heritage Trail System and improve its historical assets and amenities:
   • Connect the 26-mile Marathon Loop; ................................................................. 2019
   • Swords Rimrock Park: Gateway Entryway ...................................................... 2015
     Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site ................................................................. 2018

2. Explore the development of a convention center in a campus setting that includes a theater, attractions and growth opportunities for private investment (hotels, restaurant, and retail) ................................................................. 2015

3. Connect business to the issue of public safety ............................................. 2014

4. Improve Billings’ air service (specifically a direct connection to DFW) and the airport experience .................................................. 2016

5. Participate on the Trailhead Hospitality Corridor Steering Committee in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings and others to improve the east end of Billings ................................................................. Ongoing

6. Lead a Community Appeals structure to prioritize community investment ................................................................. 2016
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Grow and Recruit Trained Talent

PRIORITIES
NextGen Mentorship (Higher Ed)  •  Graduation Matters  •  BillingsWorks Partnership

DEFINITION
Billings’ unemployment rate is just over 3%. We need a larger workforce; more certified and trained specialty workers with a culture for lifelong learning, and Billings needs more high school and four-year graduates. BillingsWorks is leading the charge to develop a comprehensive plan addressing each of these areas in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development, Billings Chamber, Montana State University Billings, City College, Rocky Mountain College and others.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Retain higher-ed graduates through a partnership with the Chamber’s Next Gen group ................................................................. Ongoing

2. Be an active partner in the Billings Works Initiative following that strategic plan.
   Mission: Cooperatively identify workforce issues, establish goals, develop and implement strategies, and monitor outcomes to address near and long term workforce needs to achieve our 2023 Workforce Vision ............................................ 2023

3. Increase K-12 graduation rates through Graduation Matters from 85% to 91% ........................................................................... 2018

4. Increase relocation efforts and connect new residents with jobs and housing ........................................................................... 2016

GOAL COMPLETION
Tourism is Montana’s second largest industry and impacts nearly every business. Visitors to Billings are introduced 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.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Lead Visitor Growth

PRIORITIES
Book 24,000 room nights with $5.4 million economic impact

DEFINITION
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KEY STRATEGIES

1. Support and manage Visit Billings and Visit Southeast Montana with the following goals as outlined in separate strategic plans:
   - Build shoulder season traffic through regional leisure, sports and targeted convention recruitment between January to April and October to December; Ongoing
   - Increase total trackable group bookings to 36 groups totaling 24,000 room nights Annually
   - Book one citywide mega event each year; Annually
   - Receive 130,000 web visits to www.VisitBillings.com Annually
   - Receive 50,000 web visits to www.SoutheastMontana.com Annually
   - Receive a report card grade of at least 88% from hotel stakeholders Annually

GOAL YEAR

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Influence Public Policy

PRIORITIES

Be the Voice ● Grow Regional Partnerships ● Pass Local Option Tax
PublicPolicy.BillingsChamber.com

DEFINITION

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 with 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. Agendas will be developed and led by the Chamber in each area.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Be the voice of Billings business on local issues: City of Billings, Yellowstone County, School District #2
   - Evaluate local governance structure as found in City of Billings and Yellowstone County Charters (number of commissioners, strong mayor and consolidation).
   - Improve local government leadership by conducting candidate schools for School District #2 and possible other levels of government each year. ................................. 2016
2. Be the voice of Billings business on statewide issues in Helena.
   - Develop and pass enabling local option legislation ........................................... 2017
   - Support quality of place and primary Billings industry including hospitality, healthcare, energy and agriculture ................................................................. 2017
   - Partner to develop a stronger voice for eastern Montana and urban areas throughout Montana on issues affecting Billings business. ..................................................... Ongoing
3. Be the voice of Billings business on federal issues impacting key industries and quality of place. ................................................................. Ongoing

GOAL COMPLETION
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Enhance Value to Members

PRIORITIES
NextGen Young Professionals  •  Shop Small  •  Support Major Industry  •  Leadership Development

DEFINITION
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.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Lead programs to assist members in growing their customer base
   • Develop a year-round Shop Small campaign while growing Small Business Saturday .................................................. 2015
   • Develop Business-To-Business opportunities for members and NextGen committee .............................................. 2016
   • Connect members to new residents and visitors ........................................................................................................ Ongoing

2. Connect businesses through networking, events, marketing opportunities, virtual networking, and regional networking programs and provide online tools for small, start up and struggling businesses in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development .................................................................................................................. Ongoing

3. Support Billings’ major industries such as agriculture, healthcare, energy and tourism. .............................................................................................................. Ongoing

4. Cultivate business and civic leaders
   • Leadership Billings (adult, youth and alumni programs) .......................................................................................... Ongoing
   • Trailhead Tourism Ambassador program .......................................................................................................................... Bi-annually
   • Develop and grow the NextGen program to 200 members .......................................................................................... 2016
   • Conduct Aspirational City visit ........................................................................................................................................ 2014, 2016, 2018

GOAL COMPLETION

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE  Exceed Organizational Expectations

PRIORITIES
Committees/Ad Hoc Opportunities ● Events ● Maintain 5-Stars ● Maintain Net Promoter Score
Integrate Outcomes from Horizons

DEFINITION
Be the strongest Chamber in the country.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Maintain high operational standards
   - Achieve “Chamber of the Year” designation through ACCE ................................................................. 2015
   - Maintain 5-Star Accreditation through the U.S. Chamber ........................................................................ 2015

2. Provide exceptional service to our members
   - Maintain high Net Promoter Score of 39.8 (customer service ranking) .................................................. Annually
   - Focus on communications ......................................................................................................................... Ongoing
   - Be a technology and social media leader ................................................................................................. Ongoing

3. Grow membership/revenue though the implementation of the 2019 Growth Plan. .................................. 2019

4. Improve and streamline governance structure.
   - Develop relevant committees/taskgroups ............................................................................................... 2015

5. Continue to Define Tomorrow and maintain our reputation as the Chamber of the Future. ......................... Ongoing

GOAL COMPLETION

2015  2016  Annually  Ongoing  2019  2015  Ongoing
Purpose: Provide an environment of bold leadership and positive change, energy and excitement to better serve our community and business members.

- Assure the long term financial strength of the Chamber to be able to carry out our mission and provide cutting edge resources for our membership.
- Create an environment that encourages a passionate, professional Chamber team.
- Fulfill board member expectations for their service and cultivate potential new board members.

2015 OPERATIONAL DELIVERABLES

- Successfully generate and manage $3 million budgets including Chamber, Tourism Business Improvement District, Billings Lodging Tax and Visit Southeast Montana budgets.
- Grow dues revenue to $678,000 by attracting 170 new members resulting in $60,000 in new membership dues.
- Achieve 88% membership renewal by realizing no more than 150 dropped members totaling -$53,000.
- Generate $44,000 in member migration dues, due to new tiers and benefits.
- Increase net event revenue by $50,000 and attendance by 10%.