

An aerial photograph of Missoula, Montana, showing the city nestled at the base of a large, grassy mountain. The city features a mix of residential houses, commercial buildings, and a large sports field. A river flows through the foreground, with a bridge crossing it. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

2026
**ANNUAL
REPORT**



Letter from the Board Chair

Dear Friends, Investors, and Community Members,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I am proud and honored to share Missoula Economic Partnership's annual report with you and reflect on what we have accomplished together in service of a stronger, more prosperous Missoula.

MEP's mission has always been straightforward in principle and ambitious in practice: advance economic opportunity by building bridges between public and private sectors, across industries, and within zip codes. We believe significant and lasting change happens when local government, business leaders, and community institutions choose to work side by side to elevate Missoula. This past year proved, once again, that this belief is well founded.

MEP helped connect growing businesses like Montana Knife Company with the resources they need to expand operations, supported workforce development initiatives that aided displaced workers with long-term workforce transitions, and worked alongside municipal leaders to attract investments in Midtown Commons, among other places, that benefit the entire community – not just a select few. MEP also worked alongside regional partners to expand market access through an added year-round nonstop flight

service between Missoula and Chicago O'Hare. None of this would have been possible without the trust and collaboration of our investors and partners across sectors, who continue to see value in doing this work together.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to our staff, whose dedication turns strategy and big ideas into tangible outcomes; to our investors (both public and private), whose continued financial support makes this work and our mission possible, and to my fellow board members, who bring wisdom, accountability, and vision to every decision we make.

As you read through the pages that follow, I hope you will see not just a record of programs and numbers, but a story about what is possible when a community commits to lifting itself up together. The progress we celebrate this year is a foundation, not a finish line. There is more work ahead and MEP is well-positioned to meet it head on.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

With gratitude and optimism,
Liz Mellem



LIZ MELLEM

*Director and Vice President
Parsons Behle & Latimer — Missoula*

Building the Places Where Missoula Can Grow

MEP works to maintain a healthy and resilient economy in which community members can continue to build financially strong lives while businesses can realize their full growth potential. Throughout fiscal year 2026, Missoula Economic Partnership helped advance strategic redevelopment projects, expand workforce housing opportunities, and coordinate infrastructure investments that prepare Missoula for a vibrant future.

Advancing Midtown Commons

MEP continued to play a key role in advancing the Midtown Commons redevelopment project. This year, City Council approved the land sale, development agreements, and Missoula Redevelopment Agency funding, keeping the development on track for a summer groundbreaking.



“Miramonte is excited to continue investing in Missoula because it’s a community that values thoughtful growth. MEP has been instrumental in helping move Midtown Commons forward, bringing partners together, and helping navigate the process. Every community could benefit from having an organization like MEP committed to making quality development happen more efficiently.”

Chris Kemmerly, CEO, Miramonte Companies

The project will deliver approximately 230 for-sale and rental housing units, a new community park, and multimodal transportation connections for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Initial for-sale units are anticipated to target the low- to mid-\$300,000s.

Moving Franklin Crossing Forward

MEP joined the Missoula Midtown Association, Mayor Andrea Davis, and Councilman Mike Nugent in advocating for Franklin Crossing before the Montana Board of Housing during the project’s preliminary review. The development ranked highest in the state during initial review and remains on track for submission of its full tax credit application in October 2026.

MEP also continued supporting the Mayor’s Task Force on City Lands, helping identify productive uses for publicly owned property. In 2026, MEP advanced Franklin Crossing and participated in discussions with the U.S. Forest Service regarding future redevelopment of the agency’s Catlin Street property.



Planning for Future Growth

MEP helped shape long-term planning efforts that will guide Missoula's next generation of development.

MEP supported implementation of the North Reserve-Scott Street Master Plan update by serving on the consultant selection committee and collaborating with the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, City staff, and private-sector partners throughout the planning process. Planning efforts focused on annexation of the former Roseburg site, expansion of the Urban Renewal District, and developing implementation strategies that better align land use, infrastructure, and redevelopment opportunities supporting future housing and commercial growth.

MEP also partnered with the City of Missoula and Clearwater Credit Union on the Municipal Investment Fund Phase 1 planning process to identify catalytic clean energy, infrastructure, and redevelopment projects. Working with developers, project sponsors, and community partners, the initiative identified eight downtown and urban-core projects representing more than \$150 million in potential investment.

Coordinating Infrastructure Investment

Infrastructure remains essential to economic competitiveness.

Throughout fiscal year 2026, MEP convened the Missoula Infrastructure Coalition, bringing together private-sector leaders, transportation agencies, local governments, and community partners to coordinate around infrastructure priorities affecting Missoula County's growth. Discussions focused on downtown construction coordination, reducing impacts on local businesses, federal transportation advocacy related to surface transportation reauthorization, BUILD grant and bridge funding opportunities, and long-range transportation planning.



Montana Knife Company: Scaling in Missoula County

Helping existing businesses grow is one of the most important ways MEP strengthens Missoula County's economy. Throughout FY26, MEP continued working alongside Montana Knife Company as the rapidly growing manufacturer expanded its operations and established its new headquarters in Missoula County.

What began as a small garage operation has become one of Montana's fastest-growing manufacturers. In January 2026, Montana Knife Company began operations in its new 50,000-square-foot manufacturing facility, creating additional capacity to expand production, grow its workforce, and keep more manufacturing in Montana.

As the company has grown, MEP has served as a strategic partner, connecting Montana Knife Company with resources, coordinating with local and state partners, and helping navigate opportunities that support continued expansion. In fiscal year 2026, that role evolved beyond making introductions to facilitating deeper conversations around financing, tax incentives, and other tools to help MKC leverage resources



for its current and future growth. From workforce and site development discussions to facilitating relationships that help remove barriers to growth, MEP's role has been to ensure the company has access to the tools and partnerships needed to continue investing in Missoula County.

MEP's work doesn't end when a project is announced or a ribbon is cut. Through ongoing engagement with one of Missoula County's largest employers, MEP continues to support Montana Knife Company as it grows, connecting the company with workforce and site development resources, facilitating key relationships, and helping identify solutions to barriers that could limit expansion. This ongoing partnership helps Montana Knife Company navigate the opportunities and challenges that come with growth.

The company's expansion represents more than the success of a single business. It reflects the broader impact of supporting homegrown companies with the potential to create high-quality jobs, strengthen Montana's manufacturing sector, and attract new investment to the region. Montana Knife Company's continued commitment to producing its products in Missoula reinforces the community's reputation as a place where manufacturers can innovate, scale, and compete nationally while remaining rooted in Montana.

By supporting businesses as they expand, MEP helps create an environment where local companies can continue investing in Missoula, creating opportunities that benefit workers, suppliers, and the regional economy for years to come.



Scan the QR code to hear from Montana Knife Company founder Josh Smith and how MEP helped to expand his company into an \$18 million manufacturing facility.

Supporting Business Growth and Economic Competitiveness

MEP continued helping existing businesses succeed while positioning Missoula to compete for future investment, talent, and opportunity.

Story House Montana

MEP continued its support of Story House Pictures Montana following its relocation to the former Roseburg Forest Products site. Assistance ranged from introducing potential lease tenants to hosting MEP board members and investors for facility tours that showcased the project's progress. In



October of 2025, Story House filmed St. George, generating more than \$630,000 in third-party qualified expenditures in Montana, including local wages and payments to local vendors, which supported the film's production and the local economy.

Business Resources and Guidance

MEP also worked alongside businesses pursuing growth and expansion by providing operational guidance, cash flow analysis, location assistance, capital introductions, and connections to trusted attorneys, accountants, and bookkeeping professionals. MEP is pleased to report that Montana Fire Pits Missoula is among those businesses that worked with MEP and is now expanding its operations to the Wye. Additionally, what began as expansion conversations with Jess Wogsland, owner of Green Source, ultimately evolved into the purchase of the building on Missoula's Hip Strip where Green Source first established its business. This was a significant investment in both the company and community.

"I just got off calls with Dakota Business Lending and MT Department of Commerce. Funds are available for what I am trying to do. My brain is swirling with information. Thank you for the introductions. Thank you MEP!"

Jess Wogsland, Owner, Green Source

Food and Beverage Industry

Missoula's food and beverage sector continued to face significant economic pressures throughout fiscal year 2026. In response, MEP remained committed to supporting established businesses, newly opened operations, and entrepreneurs determined to enter the industry despite ongoing challenges. This year, MEP expanded its network of direct business support by connecting more local food and beverage businesses with experienced consultants. Firms including J. Vader Consulting, Blue Merle Bookkeeping, Laura Lee Accounting and Consulting, and Dave Liegakos' Intrepid Consulting provided specialized expertise and, in many cases, flexible pricing to help businesses navigate an increasingly challenging operating environment.

"Missoula's food and beverage businesses are central to the vitality, identity, and sense of place that make this community what it is. These businesses are passionate, creative, and remarkably resourceful. I'm proud to work alongside MEP and other local professional service providers to help strengthen the financial and operational foundations that allow them to thrive here."

Jennie Vader, J.Vader Consulting

Downtown Business Improvement District

Downtown remained an important focus area. Through its partnership with the Downtown Business Improvement District, MEP provided one-on-one assistance to more than 50 downtown businesses while co-hosting Downtown Dialogues, a panel series highlighting local business perspectives. MEP also remained engaged in implementation of The Downtown Safety, Access, and Mobility (SAM) Project and ongoing code reform efforts.



Business Growth in Action

MEP supported 17 startup entrepreneurs as they refined their business concepts and prepared for launch during fiscal year 2026. As a result, three businesses are now fully operational in the Missoula community, with an additional three expected to open in fiscal year 2027.

MEP completed 80 individual business retention and expansion visits, with approximately one-third of those businesses engaged in multiple follow-up meetings, receiving several hours of tailored guidance, technical assistance, and strategic support. It was a busy year filled with new ideas, expanding businesses, determined entrepreneurs, and meaningful partnerships. This reflects the strength and diversity that define Missoula's business community. MEP has the privilege of supporting businesses and entrepreneurs that continue to shape Missoula County's vibrant economy.



Expanding Market Access

This year marked a significant milestone for regional connectivity.

Working alongside the Missoula Montana Airport, Destination Missoula, Glacier Country Tourism, and the Montana Department of Commerce, MEP helped lead the effort that secured year-round nonstop American Airlines service between Missoula and Chicago O'Hare.

The partnership successfully secured an \$875,000 federal Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) award to launch the route. Service began in December 2025, expanding Missoula's direct access to eastern U.S. and international markets while strengthening business travel, tourism, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Strengthening Missoula's Workforce

MEP strengthened connections between education, industry, and workforce partners.

This year, MEP helped Story House Pictures establish a new internship partnership with Missoula College tied to production of *St. George*, filmed in Missoula during October 2025.

Following the announced closure of UFP Edge's Bonner facility and the layoff of approximately 100 employees, MEP participated in community and workforce response efforts focused on supporting displaced workers and long-term workforce transition. MEP also continued participating in the City's quarterly meetings with local labor organizations to strengthen collaboration across workforce partners.

Manufacturing in Missoula: Botanie Soap

Manufacturing is an important driver of Missoula County's economy and a strategic focus for MEP. Companies like Botanie Soap demonstrate how locally grown businesses can create jobs, drive innovation, and strengthen the region's economic resilience.

Founded in Missoula more than 25 years ago, Botanie has grown into a nationally recognized private-label manufacturer of bar soaps, liquid soaps, shampoo bars, and other personal care products. While its products are sold under brands across the country, the company's commitment has remained firmly rooted in Missoula.



"We built this business here because we love the Missoula community and this is where we wanted to raise our family," said President and Owner Lindsay Iudicello. "It's really about being a part of a community who has cared for us and who we care for."

As demand has grown, Botanie has continued investing in its operations while maintaining a focus on quality and efficiency. Strategic investments in semi-automation have increased production capacity and streamlined manufacturing processes, allowing products to move from raw materials to finished pallets within a single shift.

The company's investment extends beyond equipment. Botanie has prioritized workforce development by offering a living wage, cross-training employees across multiple skill sets, and creating opportunities for long-term career growth. Continued innovation has also fueled expansion, including the successful launch of its shampoo bar product line in 2023 and plans to continue expanding its product offerings.

Community partnerships have played an important role in that growth. Botanie credits organizations including the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center and Missoula Economic Partnership with supporting its continued success.

"Botanie is going to be growing in Missoula County for a long time," Iudicello said. "We love being a part of this community and, as we continue to scale as a mid-size manufacturer, this is our home."



Scan the QR code to hear directly from Botanie's leadership and learn how one homegrown manufacturer continues to invest in Missoula's economy.

Connecting the Community to Economic Progress

Economic development succeeds when the community understands both the work being done and the opportunities it creates. Throughout the year, MEP expanded its communications efforts to increase transparency, elevate local success stories, and engage investors, business leaders, and residents in conversations about Missoula's economic future.



Recognized for Community Leadership

In recognition of its sustained leadership in Midtown redevelopment, the Missoula Midtown Association named MEP its 2026 Nonprofit of the Year. The award recognized MEP's long-term role in implementing the Midtown Master Plan and advancing redevelopment projects that create lasting economic and community impact.

Sharing Missoula's Economic Story



**Scan the QR code
to sign up for
The Indicator.**

MEP continued publishing *The Indicator*, its monthly economic newsletter highlighting projects, trends, and initiatives shaping Missoula's economy. The publication

combines original reporting, partner updates, community resources, and video storytelling to help readers better understand local economic development. Readership exceeded industry benchmarks throughout the year.

As part of these storytelling efforts, MEP produced an original video featuring Botanie Soap, highlighting the company's success while showcasing the important role manufacturing continues to play in Missoula's economy.

"The Missoula Economic Partnership is doing incredible work moving housing and business initiatives forward across the Midtown district, and throughout our community. The Missoula Midtown Association is grateful for the critical role MEP plays in the redevelopment of Midtown and we are honored to recognize the organization as the 2026 Midtown Nonprofit of the Year."

Melanie Brock, Executive Director, Missoula Midtown Association



MEP also expanded the reach of its monthly *Econ 101* segment on KGVO NewsTalk Radio to a statewide audience. Throughout the year, the program explored housing, workforce development, infrastructure investment, entrepreneurship, business resilience, and broader economic trends affecting both Missoula and Montana.

Bringing Partners Together

MEP created opportunities for investors, business leaders, and community partners to engage directly with transformational projects shaping Missoula's future.

The MEP Annual Meeting convened leaders from Story House Montana, the Montana Department of Commerce, and Missoula College to discuss the redevelopment of the former Roseburg site and the long-term opportunities surrounding film production, workforce development, and industry diversification.

In May 2026, MEP also hosted an investor and community engagement event at Story House Montana, providing attendees with a firsthand look at the facility and insight into the vision, scale, and long-term economic potential of the redevelopment project.

Supporting Local Businesses

MEP continued its partnership with the Downtown Missoula Partnership to host Downtown Dialogues, a series designed to bring business owners together around timely issues affecting the downtown business community. Each session featured local experts and practical conversations on topics ranging from economic trends and business



resilience to marketing, customer experience, and navigating change. By creating opportunities for business leaders to share ideas, learn from one another, and connect with community resources, Downtown Dialogues strengthened collaboration and provided valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities shaping downtown Missoula's continued growth and vitality.

Keeping Businesses Informed

MEP represented the business community on the Downtown Safety, Access, and Mobility (SAM) Project Communications Committee, working alongside project partners to communicate construction timelines, maintain business awareness, and support transparent engagement as downtown infrastructure improvements moved forward.



Missoula by the Numbers

OVERALL NUMBER OF JOBS

75,244
2024

75,490
2025

+246



OVERALL AVERAGE EARNINGS

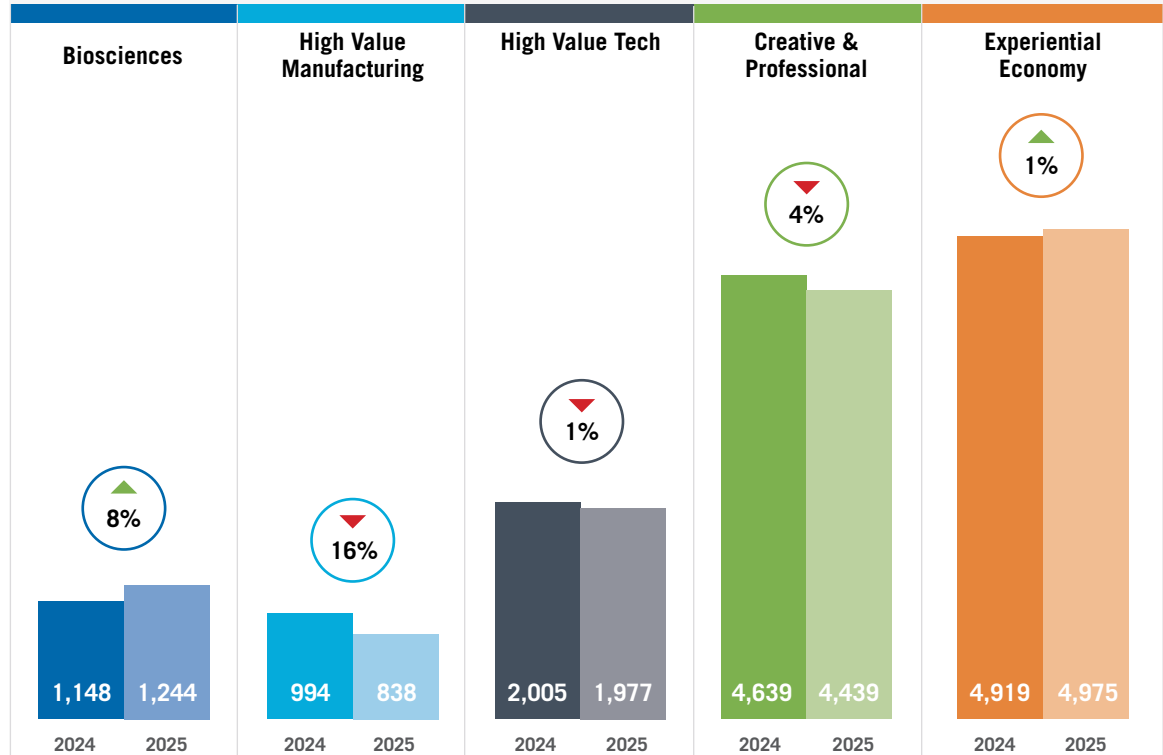
\$69,422
2024

\$73,232
2025

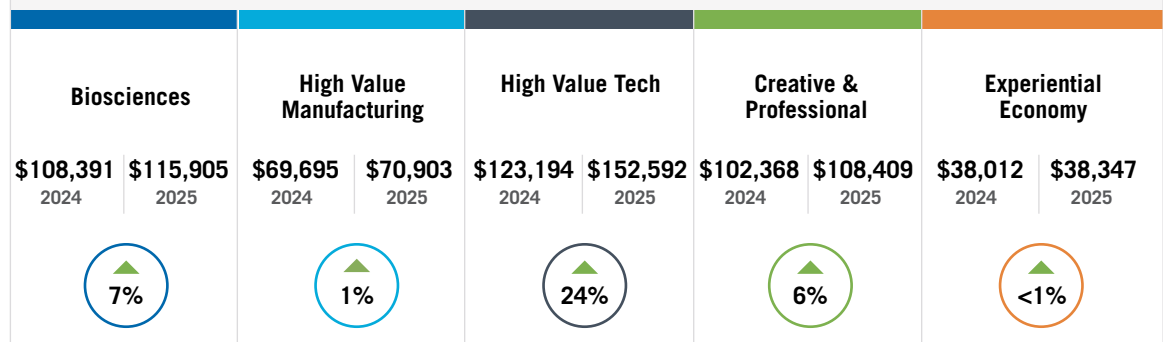
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NUMBER OF JOBS BY SECTOR

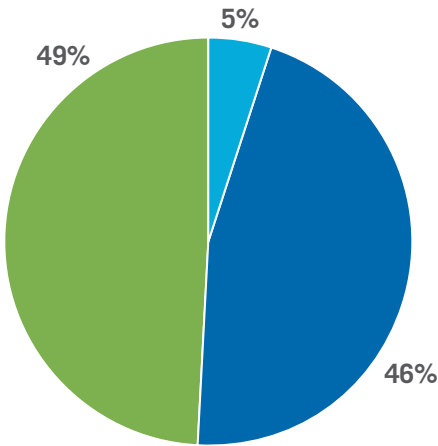
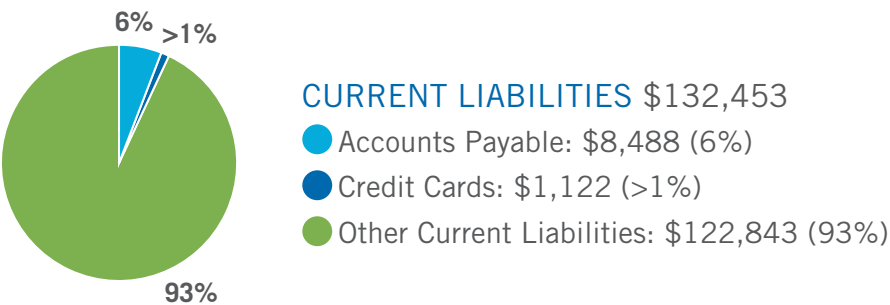
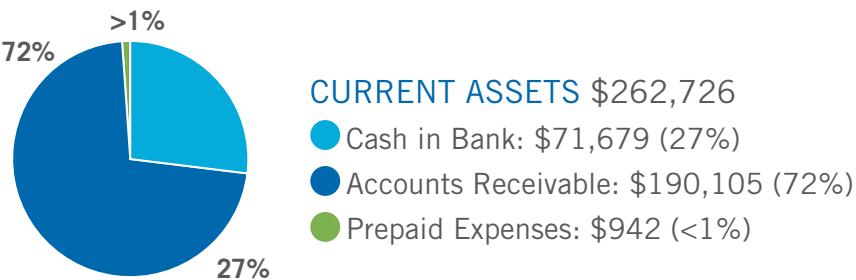
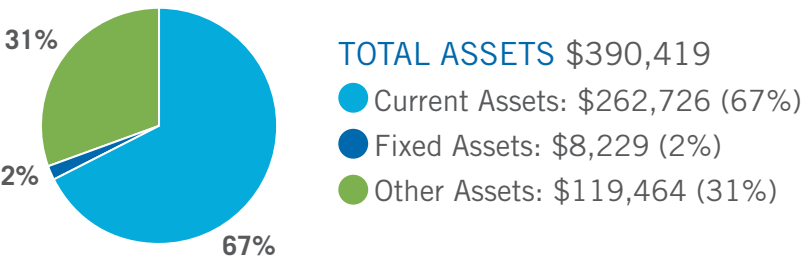


AVERAGE EARNINGS BY SECTOR



Statement of Financial Position

MEP continues to operate under the five-year strategic plan laid out in 2022. It identifies CEDS goals and strategies that our organization will lead and be accountable for through 2026. View the strategic plan on our website: missoulapartnership.com



TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY: \$390,419

- Unrestricted Assets: \$19,879 (5%)
- Temporarily Restricted Assets: \$177,531 (46%)
- Total Liabilities: \$193,008 (49%)







Letter from the President & CEO



GRANT KIER

CEO, Missoula Economic Partnership

Five years ago, as we emerged from the COVID pandemic, we came together as a community and charted a course to build a more resilient economy. With broad input, we developed a formal plan, the Missoula County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Together with a diverse group of partners, we committed to work that would address our community's biggest challenges and seize our greatest opportunities.

Since adopting that plan, we've worked month by month to implement the strategies we developed together and deliver on the plan's objectives. As 2026 comes to a close, MEP, our partners, investors, and fellow community members have accomplished much of what we set out to do.

Almost every accomplishment listed in MEP's annual report can be tied directly to a particular metric, strategy, goal, or objective set out together five years ago. Infrastructure to support light industry and manufacturing at the Wye?

In the plan. New investment in and expedited delivery of workforce housing in the City and County? In the plan. Improved and expanded air service to the eastern seaboard? In the plan. Supporting local entrepreneurs who have the potential to grow and scale here? In the plan.

As important as MEP's accomplishments are, many of our partners, other service organizations, and local government can and did point to the plan as they accomplished big things for Missoula over the past five years.

In 2027, MEP looks forward to continuing to deliver tangible wins that advance our community's economic goals, celebrating what we've already accomplished together, and bringing the community together to assess where we are today and look ahead at where we want to go next. Now that we've proven our ability to deliver, I hope for two things: First, that we'll be more ambitious and authentically Missoula than ever. Second, that you will be a part of that process.

Thank You to Our Investors

Thank you to all who invest in the work of Missoula Economic Partnership. We continue to work to expand prosperity and improve the quality of life in our city by engaging in strategic business development, creating pathways for people to realize their potential, and fostering a culture of diversity and innovation.

A&E + SMA Design
Access Property Management/Bike & Type
ALPS Corporation
Annelise Hedahl
ASJ Ventures, LLC
Bank of Montana
Beach Transportation Co.
Bedrock Sandals, LLC.
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Montana Properties
Big Dipper Ice Cream
Blackfoot Communications
Blackfoot Crossing
BlueLine Development, Inc.
Bonner Property Development, LLC.
Boone Karlberg, P.C.
Capital Matrix
City of Missoula
Clearwater Credit Union
Comfort Systems USA
Community Medical Center
Consumer Direct Care Network Montana
Craton Consulting
Crowley Fleck, PLLP.

CubCloud AI
Cushing Terrell
D&B Partners, LLC
DCI Engineers
Dick Anderson Construction
Diversified Plastics, Inc.
DJ&A, P.C.
Downtown Business Improvement District (BID)
Drew & Sheena Winterer
First Interstate Bank
First Security Bank
Garlington, Lohn, & Robinson, PLLP
Green Diamond Resource Company
Grizzly Disposal and Recycling
Grizzly Liquor
Headwaters Tech Hub
Hi-Noon Petroleum, Inc
Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown
Horizon Credit Union
IMEG, Corp.
InFocus Homes, LLC
Ink Realty Group
Jackson Contractor Group
JCCS, P.C.

Jones Brothers Trucking
Kiewit Corporation
LEDGER
L&H Associates, LLP
Loci Architecture + Design
Marsh McLennan Agency
Miramonte Companies
Missoula County
Missoula Electric Cooperative
Missoula Redevelopment Agency
Missoula Residence Inn and AC Hotel
MMW Architects
Montana High Tech Business Alliance
Montana Knife Company
Montana Timber Products
Morrison-Maierle, Inc.
Mountain Line
Muralt's Travel Plaza
NeighborWorks Montana
Nick Caras
NorthWestern Energy
OZ Architects
Paradigm 3 Architecture
Park Side Financial Credit Union

Parsons Behle & Latimer
Pathlabs, an MiQ Company
Providence St. Patrick Hospital
Pyramid Mountain Lumber Inc.
Quality Construction Company
Republic Services
Scheels
SG Long Financial
Spectrum
Sterling Commercial Real Estate Advisors
Stockman Bank
Story House Montana
Summit Beverage
Swank Enterprises
The University of Montana
United Housing Partners
United Way of Missoula County
Upslope Group
Western Excavating, Inc.
Western Montana Clinic
WGM Group
Williams Law Firm, P.C.
Worden's Market and Deli
ZillaState



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