



KALISPELL

Chamber of Commerce
Convention & Visitor Bureau

Annual Report



2020 Chamber Highlights

During 2019-2020, met with 264 developers, business owners, realtors, and builders to promote the outstanding investment opportunities available in downtown Kalispell with Opportunity Zone, New Market Tax Credit, B3 zone incentives, and tax increment financing.

Successfully continued the expansion of the Bioscience and Tech Alliance to an association of 26 business and organizations advancing the growing industries while converting events and educational opportunities to robust virtual and on-line experiences.

Renewed the Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District with the City of Kalispell through 2030 to provide funding for tourism and convention marketing.

Answered the call from members for COVID-19 tools and resources: Provided multiple weekly updates on COVID-19 resources; virtually convened elected officials, healthcare, and policy experts to hear directly from our members, and continued to respond to a growing number of relocation requests.

Added 84 new members in 2020.

With appreciation to our sponsors and members, we had a financially successful 116th annual meeting and recognized Ray and Ladeine Thompson as the 49th Great Chief, Shawwna Steele of Desoto Grill as Businesswoman of the Year, and Gerrid Gandrud of Kalispell Auto Group as the Businessman of the Year.

Launched an entrepreneurship program, Lemonade Day, to 100+ Kalispell-based youth to teach the basics of business, financial and social responsibility.

Discover Kalispell shifted priorities from an anticipated record year of conferences and room nights to one of organizational and industry stabilization.

- Reduced expenses while retaining brand awareness and connection with travelers.
- Became a resource for information and industry advocacy: Shop small campaigns, PPE resources to tourism businesses, CARES Act Grant Funding promoting the Montana Aware, and Safety First Adventure Second campaign between July and December.
- Focused on the success and safety of local community. Communicated with visitors during planning stages and when visiting Kalispell reminding them of health and safety guidelines and importance of traveling and recreating responsibly.
- Hotel Occupancy and TBID and Bed tax revenue performed better than anticipated. 2020 ended at a 17% decrease in occupancy compared to 2019, up from a projected 40-75% decrease.
- Discoverkalispell.com's COVID Resources and Travel Safe page received 22,147 page views by 9,682 unique visitors.

2020 Business & Community Highlights



Flathead Valley Community College began construction on the \$22M Paul D. Wachholz College Center.



Two Bear Capital lead a \$22 million investment in Inimmune, a Missoula-based biotechnology company developing immune therapies and components for more effective vaccines.



Southern Pines Plantations acquired 630,000 acres of Montana timberlands from Weyerhaeuser.



The Great American Outdoors Act passed, permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will provide \$9.5B over five years to address maintenance backlogs in America's national parks.



Several of Kalispell's historic properties, including the Kalispell Grand Hotel and KM Building sold to new owners who express their confidence in the future of downtown. All three former CHS sites were placed under contract by Montana West Economic Development. The Rail Park also sold out.



Realtors and mortgage lenders report major increases in the number and size of real estate transactions in the Flathead Valley. Extended COVID lockdowns and school closures in metro areas across the country led to an increase in interest in NW Montana.

Strategic Initiatives for 2021



67th Legislative Session

In 2021, the Kalispell Chamber will strengthen our strategic pro-business agenda with two new items, stable and adequate education funding (K-16) and affordable/workforce housing to address the Flathead Valley's growing employer needs. By working with our Flathead legislative delegation, the Governor, Montana West Economic Development, and our members and other stake holder partners, we will support an environment that encourages investment and measured risk, economic opportunity, and free enterprise.



Business Resiliency and Recovery

- Proactively provide programming, information and resources to assist our businesses through the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and to recovery.
- Promote safety guidelines, messaging and use of PPE to ensure doors stay open for business.
- Convener/Organizer of the Flathead Valley Business Recovery Team.
- Leverage our unique position as the designated tourism agency and business organization for the greater Kalispell area resulting in greater opportunities for economic development, business retention and attraction.



Destination Promotion to Attract Visitors to Kalispell

- Educate the broader community on how Discover Kalispell strengthens the economic vitality of our community through promotion as an attractive travel destination, ultimately enhancing Kalispell's image as a dynamic place to live, work and play.
- Continue and enhance Travel and Recreate Responsibly campaigns to promote safety protocols to visitors on their way here. Connect visitors already here with resources for safe and healthy activities and respect for the community and natural resources.
- Champion tourism as the key industry which supports, grows, and sustains our small businesses from retailers and restaurants, to recreational businesses and guides.



Economic Development

- Take an active role in convening discussions on affordable/workforce housing needs to promote public-private partnerships and other tools that results in a growing supply of mixed-use housing options.
- Build on infrastructure progress (Hwy 93)/Reserve designation to improve freight mobility thereby reducing the costs of doing business and reducing congestion so capacity for growth exists.
- Strengthen manufacturing, innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives with our partners.
- Work with our partners and key stakeholders to define and deliver a forward-facing, well-organized, cohesive, and welcoming economic development ecosystem for businesses considering relocation to our area.
- Expand existing workforce initiatives to include retaining/retooling of existing workforce, additional career discovery programs, and talent development.
- Actively support our public school system including our Community College (K-16). Participate in SD5's strategic planning process ensuring future business needs are addressed and our schools are preparing our local youth for the jobs of Kalispell's future.



Promoting a Vibrant Downtown Kalispell

- Continue partnerships and involvement with the Parkline Trail Committee, Kalispell Downtown Association, the City of Kalispell and others to promote 18-hour vibrancy and walkability through the heart of the city.
- Prioritize artist partnerships to create new murals, street art, and sculptures downtown.

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