



**DAWSON COUNTY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL**

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DCEDC reflects on a busy, productive 2019

It was a busy and exciting year for DCEDC in 2019, and while we were not able to achieve all of our goals for the year, we nevertheless had a productive year with some great successes and saw some major steps taken forward towards positioning Glendive and Dawson County for future economic growth.

The biggest win for DCEDC this past year — and the biggest win in terms of economic development for Glendive and Dawson County — was the successful lobbying of the 2019 Montana Legislature for the appropriation of \$1.3 million in the statewide infrastructure bill to construct a potable water line carrying City of Glendive water into Makoshika State Park. The water line, scheduled for construction in 2020, will eventually service a new, full-service campground. There is heavy lifting yet to be done in terms of identifying and securing funding to complete the new campground portion of the project, but the installation of a potable water line is a critically important first step towards the further development of Makoshika.

“Every dollar invested in the further development of Makoshika is a dollar that will reverberate several times over in terms of economic growth and opportunity for Glendive and Dawson County,” said DCEDC Executive Director Jason Stuart. “Tourism has become Montana’s number two industry, second only to agriculture, and Glendive is incredibly fortunate to have a first-rate tourist attraction quite literally in our own backyard. Unfortunately, for far too long, Makoshika has languished with a lack of funding support and tourism infrastructure development which has prevented it from becoming all that it could be as an economic driver for our community, county and wider region. But things finally appear to be changing in that regard, with the construction of the water line being a major step in the right direction, and the DCEDC will continue to work with other Makoshika supporters to fight for more funding and

further development of this incredible asset for our local economy.”

In May, the DCEDC welcomed the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) Spring Conference to Glendive, hosted in conjunction with Dawson Community College and the Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation. It was a somewhat momentous occasion, as this marked the first time a MEDA conference — and there are two each year — had been held anywhere east of Billings since 2010. Over 100 economic developers and state and federal officials from across Montana spent two days here in Glendive for the conference, and it was a resounding success.

“We earned rave reviews for the MEDA conference from all our attendees, the majority of whom were from western Montana and many of whom had never been to Glendive,” Stuart said. “And they not only were impressed by and glowing about the conference we presented them with, but about Glendive itself — its people, its unique downtown businesses, its natural beauty and its tremendous upside for economic development. And I don’t think it will take another decade to get a MEDA conference back to Glendive.”

In July the DCEDC hosted its second annual Celebrate Glendive! event in downtown Glendive. The event was an even bigger success than the first one in July 2018, with more bands, more food vendors, more beer and a lot more people in attendance.

“We were very pleased with how many folks turned out for our second Celebrate Glendive! and from everything we’ve heard back, people really enjoyed the event,” Stuart said. “We will continue hosting these events every July going forward and will also continue to seek more ways to grow and improve the event in the years ahead.”

During the summer, the DCEDC was able to work with the owner of the Jordan Inn, which has been sitting shuttered

by a court order since October 2013, to facilitate their submission of an application for an Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Assessment grant to conduct an internal survey of the structure. The grant was awarded and the assessment has been ongoing this fall. A full report from that assessment will be forthcoming soon.

“The Jordan has been a major concern for several years now, and we are fortunate we were able to work with the owner and convince them to submit an application for this Brownfields assessment grant,” Stuart said. “Once we have the official report in hand, it will give all concerned parties involved a clearer picture of the direction we need to take to find a permanent solution for that property.”

As the summer wound to a close, the DCEDC wrote and submitted a grant application through the new Eastern Montana Tourism Initiative on behalf of the Friends of Makoshika to fund the creation of new audio podcasts visitors to the park will be able to download, along with the purchase of trail markers to mark stops on the audio podcast tour. The grant funding was ultimately awarded and park staff will be working over the winter to record the podcasts so they are ready for download when the summer tourist season heats up. Once complete, the podcasts will be available for download by park guests through the park website and the FOM website for a charge of \$1, with the proceeds going to the FOM to be put back into projects in Makoshika.

“This is a small grant, but it is a grant that will keep on giving in terms of putting funding back into Makoshika as well as providing another amenity for visitors to the park to enjoy,” Stuart said.

The DCEDC also worked in 2019 with the owners of Bloom Coffeehouse, providing official support, counsel and advice as they struggled to gain a zoning variance so they could continue expanding and improving their business. That

effort was ultimately successful when the local Board of Adjustment voted in October to grant the variance to the Bloom, allowing them to move forward with their expansion plans.

“We are just thrilled the Bloom was able to get that variance so they can continue to grow this unique and popular local business,” Stuart said. “I would also like to point it out as an example of the fact that the DCEDC is not only interested or engaged in trying to bring new, large businesses to town. We are also here to provide support and guidance to existing local businesses who are looking to expand their operations and to local entrepreneurs thinking about starting their own business.”

The DCEDC is currently awaiting word on the outcome of another pair of grant applications submitted near the end of the year. The DCEDC worked with the owners of the Manor Apartments and convinced the City of Glendive to submit a CDBG Planning Grant application to conduct an architectural review of the complex, which has been vacant for two years due to the need for refurbishment.

“A lack of affordable housing has been a serious problem here in Glendive in recent years, so we are very hopeful we will get this CDBG grant so that we can identify a way to move forward to putting the Manor complex back in operation,” Stuart said.

The DCEDC also submitted another application through the Eastern Montana Tourism Initiative to fund the purchase of a professional-grade portable stage for use at community events.

“We at the DCEDC obviously would like to have a stage like this so we can continue to grow and improve our Celebrate Glendive! event,” Stuart said. “But we made the application not just for ourselves, but for the entire community. If we get it, having a stage like that will allow all of our community events throughout the year the opportunity to grow and improve as well.”



For the first time in several years, the DCEDC hosted an Annual Banquet for its Member Investors and local leaders at the Yellowstone River Inn on Nov. 21. Attendees were treated to a free drink, a free meal and a pair of presentations from Christie Williams of Dakota Business Lending and Brenda Maas, marketing director for Visit Southeast Montana.

Approximately 40 people came out for the banquet, and 2019 DCEDC Member Investors were gifted with an engraved wooden bookend in thanks

DCEDC hosts Annual Banquet

for their contribution to DCEDC.

“We wanted to get back to hosting an annual banquet primarily as a way of saying ‘Thank You’ to our Member Investors, without whose contributions DCEDC would not be able to continue its mission,” said DCEDC Executive Director Jason Stuart. “And for those Member Investors who were not able to make it out for the banquet, we want to reiterate how truly thankful we are for their contributions to and support of DCEDC.”

Williams, who lives in Lewistown, began the dinner portion of the banquet with some brief remarks, primarily stressing her view that Glendive is well-positioned — and better so than most Montana communities — for the development of new businesses and economic growth.

“We here at the DCEDC know that Glendive has the real potential to be more than the sum of its current parts,” Stuart said. “But it is especially encouraging to hear a person from another community who is also engaged in economic development efforts say the same thing. Christie doesn’t even live here, but she firmly ‘Believes in Glendive,’ and

that should give all of us who do live here cause to believe even harder.”

Maas, who was the keynote speaker, gave an extensive presentation on the continuing growth of tourism to Montana, including in Eastern Montana, and the increased opportunities for business development and economic growth that tourism is creating.

“Brenda gave an excellent and thorough presentation that served to reinforce what we at the DCEDC already knew — that the best and most immediate opportunity for economic growth for our community is based on tourism,” Stuart said. “We have Makoshika, we have the Short Pines OHV area, we have the Yellowstone — which is woefully underutilized as an outdoor recreation resource — we have world-class hunting opportunities, we have a wealth of Western history here and we have opportunities for agri-tourism. These are all things we possess that people from other parts of the country want to see and experience when they visit Montana, and as a community we just need to really begin capitalizing on those assets more so than we have before.”