Great Falls MONTANA

Discover

All the ways to immerse yourself into the local art scene

GRADE A EDUCATION

Public schools play key role in launching in-demand careers

FIND Mour PIACE

Settle into this tight-knit community of scenic beauty and limitless opportunities

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FUELS INNOVATION

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REALLY STATISTICS.



Selena Coburn

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

"Moving back to Montana
was always part of my plan.
The opportunities that I had growing
up in Great Falls helped shape who I am and I
would like the same opportunities for my family.
We are able to be close to grandparents and native
culture - Blackfeet country is so sacred, it feels
wonderful to be back and able to learn even more
of the Blackfeet ways."





"We chose this area because of the beauty

of local wildlife and the peace of nature. We're both passionate about volunteering to keep the wilderness here healthy and thriving - we are truly so grateful to call such a beautiful place home."



Mark Juras

SENIOR CIVIL ENGINEER
FOR CITY OF GREAT FALLS

"Great Falls is my
hometown and my first
choice in Montana.
Options are endless:
bicycling along the river,
spending time on the
Missouri River in my rowboat

or canoe, fly fishing in nearby streams, cutting powder at Showdown, getting involved in the community. The infrastructure is great, too: conveniently located one-way streets, quality street intersections, crisp drinking water, efficient sanitation services, and the pro-business and pro-development attitude of the City and people in it."

Helal Al-Najrani

PROJECT COORDINATOR FOR SLETTEN CONSTRUCTION

"Whether I'm
looking forward to
a morning run on
River's Edge Trail or a
hike in the surrounding
mountains, Great Falls

always offers a great environment for an active lifestyle. In addition to the low cost of living and great jobs available, Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Air National Guard bring people from all sorts of backgrounds, making the community a multicultural place and a fertile ground for new businesses."

LiveInGreatFalls.com

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Abby & Brian Thompson

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Great Falls Development Authority

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Great Falls

– 2023 Edition 。 Volume 4

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There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing where to live. We have 16 questions you should ask yourself before making this lifechanging decision. **livability.com/find-your-next-place**



Test Drive That City

You've got your sights set on a new place to live! But here's why you should take that city for a spin first before making the final decision to move there. **livability.com/ test-drive-city**



Make Your Move

Moving can be daunting. You know you have tons to do, but where do you even start? Learn from someone who's moved five times to five different states. **livability.com/11-moving-tips**



New City! Now What?

So you chose your new city and made the move. What's next? Now comes the fun part! Check out these six things you need to know about starting a new life in a new place. **livability.com/life-in-new-city**

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On the Cover-

Great Falls offers plenty of outdoor activities, such as hiking near Rainbow Dam. *Photo by Matt Ehnes*

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A Perfect Place to Live

5 REASONS TO CALL GREAT FALLS HOME • By Kevin Litwin

Positive attributes about Great Falls are easy to list, including its natural beauty, high-quality education options, affordability, career opportunities and arts-and-entertainment choices.

1) GREAT FALLS IS GREAT

Residents in Great Falls have access to many attractive assets, including a comfortable 87.4 cost of living index compared to the national average of 100. Affordability extends to the housing market, with the typical home value in Great Falls at \$297,790. That compares to average home prices of \$700,288 in Bozeman, \$601,858 in Kalispell and \$574,769 in Missoula (Zillow, November 2022). Great Falls is the retail, entertainment, health care and educational hub for North Central Montana, and residents can enjoy 57 public parks as well as 40 miles of the River's Edge Trail along the Missouri River.

2) LIVE IT UP

Looking for a nice place to live?
Great Falls offers a variety of living options, including fully stocked upscale apartments, homes in established neighborhoods and new subdivisions. Building your own ranch house or buying a home with some land is also an option. GreatData.com recently named Great Falls among the Most Budget-Friendly Cities for Homeowners, pointing out that houses are affordable and becoming more attainable due to additional residential construction development.

3) OPEN FOR BUSINESS

It's a smart move for manufacturing, warehousing and distribution companies to locate in Great Falls, thanks in large part to an excellent





transportation network. Local logistical advantages include Interstate 15 and two U.S. highways, freight shipping via BNSF Railway, barge shipping along the Missouri River and the convenience of Great Falls International Airport. Also, the shovel-ready AgriTech Park industrial site has over 200 available acres subdividable into customized lots. Great Falls also has Foreign Trade Zone status.

4) CULTURE AND FUN

Great Falls hosts major events throughout the year, such as the Montana State Fair, Ice Breaker Road Race, Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals and the five-day Western Art Week every March. The city is also known as the Museum Capital of Montana, with more than a dozen destinations (including the Children's Museum of Montana) that chronicle the city's history, heritage and native culture. In addition, the Great Falls Symphony celebrates its 64th anniversary in 2023, and musical legends who have performed with the orchestra include Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell and Midori.

5) PLENTY OF SHOP TALK

Great Falls residents have multiple and diverse shopping choices all around town, from small boutiques to large box stores. You can find items like a designer handbag, a pound of Montana-roasted coffee, the latest fishing rod or a tuxedo rental for an upcoming event. And for the freshest food shopping in town, Great Falls Original Farmers' Market is open Saturdays from June through September.

Having Fun & MAKING AN IMPACT

HOW DEDICATION TO PEOPLE, PLACE AND POTENTIAL MAKES GREAT FALLS, WELL, GREAT!



Ith a population of about 64,400, Great Falls is just the right size – big enough to offer options in career and entertainment, yet small enough to feel like a tight-knit community. It's simultaneously an outdoor adventurer's paradise as much as it is a playground for those looking to give back to their community, and even still a thriving city for young professionals and business folks of all kinds.

A PLACE FOR ADVENTURE

When it comes to enjoying Great Falls' natural landscape and its countless opportunities for adventure, the Great Falls Bicycle Club is an excellent place to start. The club hosts regular cycling meetings – both leisurely and competitive – as well as its weekly group rides and free trail suggestions for those looking to set out on their own.

John Juras, organizer at the Great Falls Bicycle Club and board member of Bike/Walk Montana, says the club hosts competitive events like mountain bike racing and a road ride every year, but most of the time, the focus stays on fun.

"It's all about people

getting together to ride the amazing trail network we have here," Juras says. "Our weekly group ride is very well attended, where we ride the best trails along the Missouri River that our club has actually built over the years."

Some trails are more technical than others, so cyclists and mountain bikers of all abilities can find a trail perfect for them.

And if biking isn't quite your thing, there are tons of other outdoor activities to enjoy in Big Sky Country. Great Falls has access to standout outdoor activities, from Missouri River boating and fishing to great hunting to some of the best mountain bike and road cycling in the state.

"I take advantage of all of them," Juras says.

INVESTING IN ITS PEOPLE

Staying active in Great
Falls can also look totally
different, especially if
your interest is in public
service. The city is home
to a robust network of
nonprofits, and giving
back is one of the ways
residents get (and stay)
involved in the community.

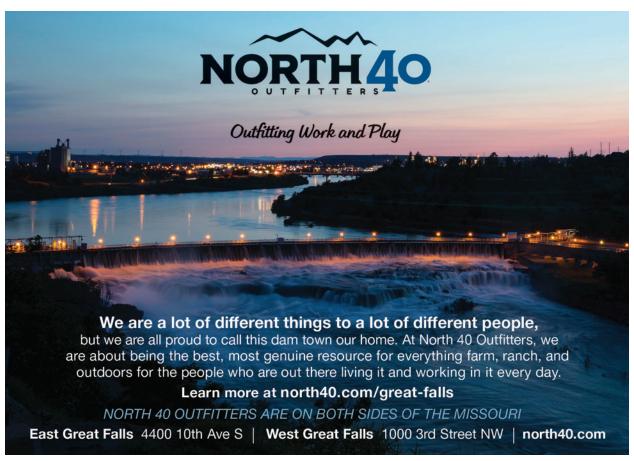
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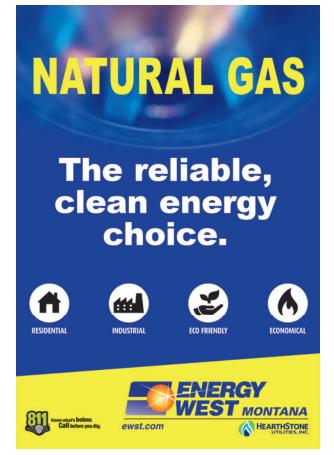


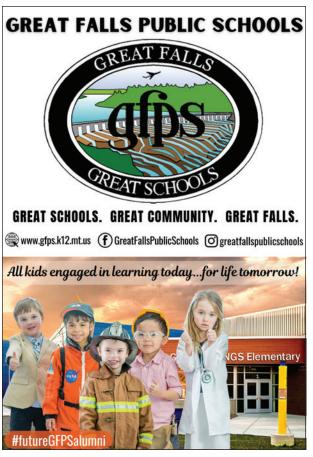












Cascade County, for instance, is fueled by volunteers who help to create projects like the Fresh Rescue Community Kitchen. And oftentimes, the act of giving back bleeds into other thriving aspects of the Great Falls community, like its business and professional sphere.

MAXIMIZING BUSINESS POTENTIAL

The Rotary Electric Club of Great Falls, a new network made up of both young and seasoned professionals, brings together emerging business leaders that are hoping to make an impact on their community.

Zach Swartz, Rotary Electric Club president, says the structure and overall feel of the club looks a bit different from its origins since its founding in 2020 in the middle of the pandemic.

"Members of the existing Rotary Club saw an opportunity to bring the community together through the traditional Rotary structure," Swartz says.

The original Rotary Club of Great Falls was meeting regularly, establishing an evening program where guest speakers were invited to share visions and attendees were encouraged to get involved in different service projects. Though that evening program stopped, it gave birth to what is now the Rotary Electric Club.

Now at 50 members and growing Rotary Electric's mission is to open opportunity to all professionals in the community.

"We're appealing to young professionals, but also to anybody in any position that's willing and has a strong passion for the community," Swartz says.



Volunteering is a great way to get involved in the Great Falls community.

Service projects include improving Downtown Great Falls, creating safe play spaces for kids and coordinating Tardi Gras – a purposefully late Mardi Gras celebration benefiting the Youth Rec Room at the Alliance for Youth Resource Center.

Also, to celebrate the ethnic diversity in Great Falls, the Rotary Electric Club organized a fair. With more than 1,000 people in attendance, the inaugural Montana Multi-Cultural Fair took place in August 2022 along Central Avenue in the downtown district.

Highlights included a melting pot of Celtic music, Pacific Island hula dancers, American Indian activities, Alaska Native arts and crafts, and Hispanic entertainment. Passports were available so attendees could sample all the different ethnic foods on display, and also on-site was a beer and wine garden.

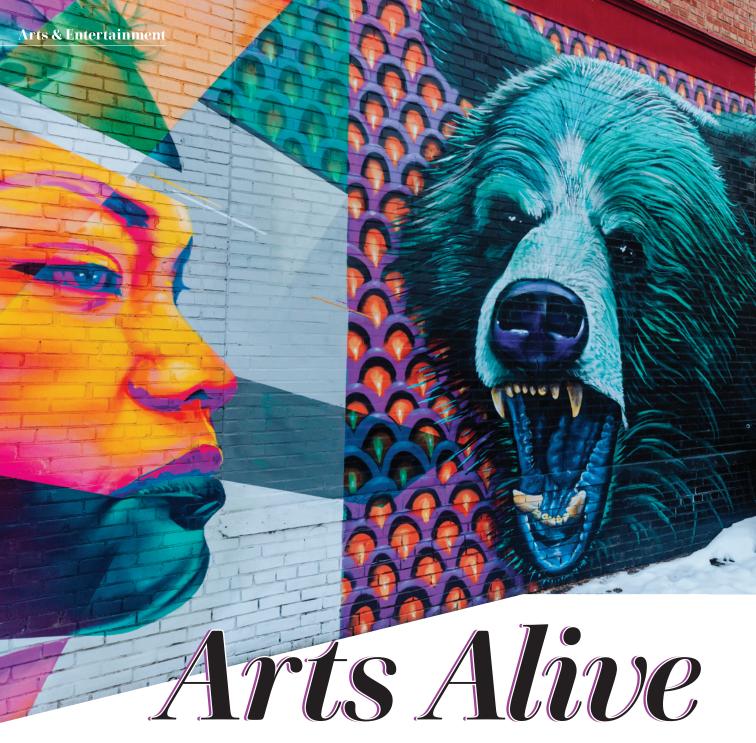
"I think the community and the culture that we have within Great Falls is so amazing; businesses, people, everybody comes together to support each other," Swartz says.

– Erica Buehler



5 Must-Visit Trails for Newcomers

You do not have to go far to find fitness and adventure in Great Falls. Check out these five great hiking opportunities. Happy trails! **livability.com/great-falls-trails**



GREAT FALLS IS A HUB OF WESTERN ART -

As home to a dozen museums and known as the Museum Capital of Montana, Great Falls offers myriad ways to experience the arts, especially those highlighting and reflecting Montana's Western heritage and history.

"Great Falls is a town of about 60,000 people and is a hardworking, blue collar, genuinely Montana community. But it's also very culturally interesting and significant concerning history and

heritage," says Kristi Scott, executive director of The History Museum in Great Falls. "We have a recent series of murals throughout town created by renowned Montana artists; we have several new businesses downtown; we have numerous museums to explore, and everything's easy to navigate."

Great Falls is home to ArtsFest Montana, an event where muralists gather each year to beautify the city. Many downtown murals depict icons of Western history, including bison, cowboys and indigenous people.

"We have exhibits that are free and open to the public; we have a great







gift shop, and we do an annual jazz night and bring a nationally recognized musician to the Ozark Club, our event space in The History Museum," Scott says. "What we're most proud of is the archives and collections of North Central Montana that we hold in our repositories – that's over 10,000 historic photographs. There are blueprints, historic maps, correspondence, diaries and 50,000-plus objects, and all of that is available to research. Plus, the majority of our museums

A Picture of Past & Present

in Great Falls are free."

History buffs will also want to explore the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, a



Great arts and entertainment options include mural painting during ArtsFest Montana and exploring history in the C.M. Russell Museum and Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center (top right).

25,000-square-foot facility with an exhibit hall, theater and education room. The museum is dedicated to educating people about the journey to expand America into the west and the challenges Lewis and Clark faced on the expedition.

The C.M. Russell Museum, dubbed "The Art and Soul of the American West," features the work of a cowboy artist documenting the everyday lives of the people of the American West. The museum complex features thousands of works from

Russell's lifetime, including oil paintings, watercolors, sculptures and written works.

"Our vision at the museum is to advance and continue Charlie's legacy. He provided a timeless look at the American West, and those pieces still resonate well with broad and diverse audiences," says Tom Figarelle, executive director. "He's an icon in Great Falls, and we have the opportunity to celebrate him as well as those working in the contemporary West, who deserve

A Storied STAGE

Belt Performing Arts Center welcomes a packed house

A half-hour's drive from Great Falls in the tiny former mining town of Belt (population 519), a small, volunteer-run community theater is making waves.

Housed in a newly renovated former Masonic lodge in the historic downtown, the Belt Performing Arts Center brings amateur and professional performances to rural Montana. It's the home of the Belt Theater Academy's

Community Players

— a community
year-round adult
and youth theater
program — and the

Belt Valley Shakespeare Players, who have performed twice at Scotland's Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The theater offers a key outlet for schoolage performers, hosting everything from choir concerts to poetry readings.

"We couldn't be more proud of and excited about what a real small town has been able to accomplish," says Mayor James Olson, who is also the president of the board at Belt Performing Arts Center. "We have a lot of great people involved."

The 114-seat theater sells out often, while driving business to local restaurants for theatergoers making a night of it. Regular monthly performances include comedy, acoustic string, vocal jazz and storytelling.

The center even produced an original play, "Mine Tailings: The Valley," chronicling the founding of Belt by Mattie Castner, a freed enslaved person and her white husband, John. The play is part one of a project to document the region's stories. The Belt's signature event, Beltstock & the Belt Summer Bash, is a summer music festival that features carnival rides, food and drink, and crafts in conjunction with the Belt Rodeo. Now in its fourth season, the center has become a centerpiece of the community, offering access to stage shows in the heart of Montana's backcountry.



recognition and have a great deal to offer the larger American arts community. We're able to thrive here, bringing artists throughout the West to our community."

Downtown's Wrangler Gallery sells the artwork of Western masters past and present in an eclectic range of media – paintings, lithographs, photos, bronzes and artifacts.

Immersive Experience

Contemporary Western art is alive and kicking in Great Falls. Every year, the city transforms into the Western Art Capital of the World during the popular Western Art Week, which is set to run again in March 2023.

The town comes alive as numerous venues throughout Great Falls host events and show the work of 750 Western artists. Artists, buyers and art enthusiasts gather for this unforgettable art experience, which

includes live music, "quick draws," auctions, competitions, artist interactions and more in every medium imaginable, from fiber arts to sculpture.

"This isn't a museum-type experience, where you walk through quietly with your hands in your pocket – every booth has an artist to engage with, and you can find out what inspires them," says Rebecca Engum, executive director of Western Art Week.

"Western art isn't just cowboys on horses or elk on a mountaintop – the art is so varied and inspired by the Western landscape. You might find a cowboy riding a fish. There's jewelry, clothing, furniture, water colors, pastels, bronzes, photography. You're just immersed in art and people who are loving art. It's so crazy and fun – a weeklong of all that art in one location."

– Rebecca Treon

"This isn't a museum-type experience, where you walk through quietly with your hands in your pocket – every booth has an artist to engage with."

- Rebecca Engum, Western Art Week







Agribusinesses have deep roots in the region



The farm-to-table movement has never been stronger, and Great Falls-area agribusinesses are answering the call with a wide and growing range of products using locally sourced ingredients.

Given the area's proximity to the Golden Triangle, long known for its bountiful wheat harvests, it's no surprise that local bakers and brewers are using grains in their offerings. What's





innovative is that they now are joined by other entrepreneurs who are revitalizing traditional products while pioneering new ones.

BREWED HERE

Jeremiah Johnson Brewing Co. has been brewing and shipping out a growing menu of products from its Great Falls home since 2018. While expanding its local footprint, the company continues to expand its product line across the country.

Owners Jeremiah and Katherine Johnson say the best craft beer in the country is being brewed in Montana, and they are proud to call the area home.

The brewery continues to ramp up production to meet increasing demand, and recently added two new, 60-barrel fermenters to bring capacity to eight, as well as an additional hot-liquor tank and additional canning line that also expand production capabilities. Now seven canned-beer products are available in Montana, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota. Next up is a planned small-batch brewing location, where seasonal and one-off products will join a production output that is nearing 10,000 barrels per year.

In nearby Power, the Pfeifle family has operated Farm Power Malt for more than 100 years. Utilizing their years of barley-raising expertise, the family is now exploring how those grains might work in craft beer and spirits as well as traditional beers.

To convert barley into malt, the Pfeifles have built a one-of-a-kind malting drum and begun collaborations with other distillers, including one in Patagonia, Argentina, so that they can provide a full, turnkey operation: Grow and malt the grain, make the whiskey and age it all in one spot.

Nearby Teton County is also getting in on the action, with a planned 10,000-square-foot production facility to be built near Gordon.

The building will also have a 7,000-square-foot warehouse facility, according to Joel Almeida, co-founder and CEO of Karhu Koski Distillery, who told local media that this site would create new employment opportunities as well as fuel the local economy with tourism dollars.

GROWER-TO-CONSUMER PIPELINE

Area residents also benefit from growers who are providing everything from feed and fiber to what's going to be for dinner.

For instance, Fort Benton's IND HEMP is taking hemp to many new levels and providing opportunities all along the way. This family-owned business has a strong environmental focus, working with farmers across the West to create a processing infrastructure

A Transparent Trade

BIG-CITY-STYLE BUTCHER SOURCES, CUTS AND SERVES LOCAL INGREDIENTS

Geraldine native Drew Hicks, who says Great Falls was his "big city" growing up, honed his butchering skills in many different places, learning his craft in various Colorado venues as well as completing Fleisher's Butcher Apprenticeship Program in Brooklyn. Now he, along with his wife Louanne, operate Central Avenue Meats, where they take pride in being a bridge between area meat producers and local consumers eager for high-quality products.

How do you describe Central Avenue Meats?

We are a craft butcher shop, in the style that's usually thought of as a "New York butcher shop" what people have seen in the past, where it's an open storefront and a very transparent operation. We emphasize the local sourcing of the animals, as well as the craft of processing the animal itself. Our customers know exactly where we get our meat from, right down to the source ranch for each species, and then we do everything out in the open so people can



see how we prepare their order.

How is Great Falls as a place to operate a small business?

I grew up outside here, and after being away for a while, it was great to come back. Great Falls has always been a supportive community. We opened mid-pandemic, and while it has taken us a while to get our foothold in terms of offering what people were looking for, the community has been so great. We were blown away by how many people went out of their way to do business with us from the very beginning. When they support us, they support the ranchers we source from, so it's a great place to be in terms of everyone helping businesses do well here.

That approach to sustainability is also on full display at Cordova Farms, a 100-year-old family farm that provides many Great Falls restaurants with beef, lamb, chicken and pork products, even shipping those high-quality meats directly to consumers.

Owner Josh Hill grew up on the farm, and in 2018, he relocated back from Bozeman with his wife and co-owner, Igrid, who was also no stranger to a family-run farm.

Residents enjoy the results of all the hard

YIELD OF DREAMS

Food processors are succeeding thanks to local wheat crop

Great Falls is located in what is known as the Golden Triangle, a region of North Central Montana famous for amber fields that are ideal for growing wheat high in protein and gluten strength. The hard red spring wheat crop is grown in abundance.

Thanks to this wheat, several companies are yielding successful crops, such as Columbia Grain, a leading supplier whose network includes 8,000 farmers. General Mills also operates a flour mill and several grain elevators in Great Falls.

Grain Craft is the largest independent flour miller in the nation, and produces bulk and bagged flours. Malteurop is composed of craftsmen who specialize in making malt beers. Montana Milling makes 100% certified organic products, while Montana Specialty Mills has more than 20 years of oilseed processing experience. Also benefiting from this fertile region is Pasta Montana, which manufactures about 80 million pounds of pasta a year.

by Kevin Litwin -

work farmers and ranchers do at multiple local eateries, including Harvest Craft Kitchen, which offers a variety of dishes featuring local ingredients. There's also Fifth & Wine, which bundles a wine bar, deli and restaurant into a former sheet-metal shop, and Wheat Montana Bakery, which offers up baked goods containing the area's high-quality, nutrient-rich wheat and grains.

- Joe Morris





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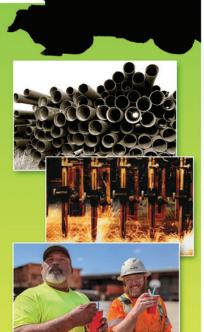
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EDUCATION LEVEL

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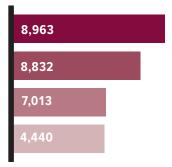
- » Albertson's
- » Alluvion Health
- » Benefis Health System
- » Centene Corp.
- » City of Great Falls
- » Easterseals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain
- » Great Falls Clinic
- » Great Falls Public Schools
- » Loenbro
- » Malmstrom Air Force Base
- » University of Providence
- » Walmart

BUSINESSES

5,747

Total Establishments

LABOR



- Health Care and Social Services
- Education
- Retail
- Public Administration

TAXES

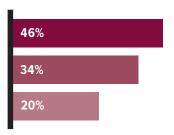
0%

There is no state or city sales tax on general purchases in Great Falls.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$52,735

Median household income



- Under \$50,000
- **\$50,000-\$100,000**
- **\$100,000**

RESOURCES

Thinking about launching a startup or relocating a business to Great Falls? Check out all the information, training, financial resources and business services available to you

at GrowGreatFallsMontana.org.



Sources: Census Reporter, Great Falls Development Authority, U.S. Census Bureau, liveingreatfalls.com

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Great Falls companies are leading with renewable diesel development

Many farmers in Montana grow crops like wheat, canola, barley and peas, and now they have another growing option that isn't tied to the food market.

A flowering plant called camelina grows well in Montana, and renewable diesel fuel can be produced from the camelina feedstock.

A Great Falls company involved in that process is Sustainable Oils, which celebrated the first anniversary of its North American headquarters here in November 2022.

Sustainable Oils is a subsidiary of California-based Global Clean Energy Holdings, which also operates a fuel refinery subsidiary in Bakersfield, California. Now, Montana farmers can grow acres of camelina and then haul

that grain to any of seven handling facilities located in different parts of the state, where the camelina is then transported by rail to the Bakersfield refinery where the grain is made into renewable diesel.

"Taking a plant and making diesel fuel from it is really amazing," says Keith Horton, Sustainable Oils commercial manager. "Camelina gives Montana farmers a brand-new market to be involved in

and can provide incremental income for growers – and that's a bonus for rural communities."

The Sustainable Oils headquarters in Great Falls has 12 employees who work in areas such as agronomy, and research and development. Those employees are largely involved with developing new varieties of camelina that will continue to advance the company's

renewable diesel market.

Renewable diesel is in increasing demand in many states, especially in California where efforts are underway to reduce the carbon footprint associated with petroleum-based diesel. Horton adds that all renewable diesel produced from camelina at the Bakersfield refinery is currently used as fuel in mass transit vehicles like buses and diesel-based delivery vehicles, not everyday passenger vehicles.

"Camelina has many advantages, including that it is drought tolerant, can be planted early in the year and can be harvested early in the summer," he says. "In addition, our camelina varieties used by Sustainable Oils are the only ones approved to meet the stringent California Low-Emission Vehicle Program's low-carbon fuel standards."

Montana Renewables

Another Great Falls company involved in the diesel industry is Calumet Montana Refining, which has long imported heavy crude oil from Canada to produce petroleum-based diesel fuel. Conventional diesel is different from renewable diesel in that conventional diesel is produced from crude feedstocks for its fuel, while renewable diesel is fuel made entirely from feedstocks such as beef tallow, mustard seeds, vegetable oil and animal fat - and camelina.

The heavy crude oil



imported from Canada allows Calumet to make a variety of products like diesel jet fuel along with propane, butane and kerosene. The company also manufactures polymer-modified asphalt.

Calumet has expanded to add a company called Montana Renewables that is located on its Great Falls campus.

While Calumet Montana Refining continues to be involved in diesel production, its Montana Renewables subsidiary will only produce renewable diesel fuel from feedstocks grown in the Big Sky State. Montana Renewables is expected to be running at full speed in 2023.

"A lot of refineries in America are only producing renewable diesel, but our facility will be producing renewable and conventional diesel," says Marlena Halko, Calumet Montana Refining human resources manager. "And to produce our renewable diesel, we will be partnering with as many farmers and

ranchers as possible in Montana to get the feedstocks we will need."

Halko says current construction of the multimillion-dollar Montana Renewables plant is also a benefit to the Great Falls economy, with nine new tanks being constructed and 1,600 contractors on-site.

"Starting this new subsidiary company also means more full-time, high-paying jobs with full benefits so that employees can provide their families with an excellent quality of life," Halko says. "In 2022, Calumet celebrated 100 years of doing business in Great Falls, and we feel that with Montana Renewables and this new renewable diesel project being added, it will take us through the next 100 years."

– Kevin Litwin



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CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN LOCAL HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

Health care in Great Falls is poised for a major boost through strategic collaborations that are building a strong workforce for the community's current and future needs.

Keeping It Local

Benefis Health System, the region's largest health care provider, is supporting both Montana State University and Touro University to help ensure a ready supply of nurses and physicians for the area. Benefis donated land to help create a Great Falls campus for MSU's Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing, and also is helping with the development of the new Touro University Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine set to open in 2023.

"Supporting economic development and growth in our community goes hand in hand with advancing the future of health care," says Kaci Husted, vice president of communications and business development at Benefis. "If we can get students to stay or come to North Central Montana, we dramatically increase the odds they will stay in the region for their careers."

Creating a Pipeline

The Touro University Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine will admit 125 students to its inaugural class in 2023. Dr. Elizabeth Palmarozzi, Touro's founding dean and professor of family medicine, credits Benefis and its CEO, John Goodnow, for the commitment to bring a medical school to Great Falls.

"Our mission is to train osteopathic physicians with an emphasis on practicing medicine in underserved communities and increasing the number of underrepresented minorities in medicine," Palmarozzi says. The college will develop pipeline programs locally and in Native American schools and colleges throughout the state, helping to make a difference for underserved tribal communities and patients.

Putting Down Roots

MSU's nursing college is already the largest producer of registered nurses in Montana, and the sole provider of doctoral nurse practitioner education in the state.

Michael Becker, MSU spokesperson, says the new construction in Great Falls will mark the first time the nursing college's students will operate out of their own dedicated facility.

Like the rest of the nation, Montana is facing a nursing shortage, and current space constraints mean MSU is at capacity for the number of nurses it can prepare.

"Our new building and dedicated space in Great Falls, made possible by the Jones' support and the partnership with Benefis, will allow MSU to increase its enrollment by about 60%," Becker says. "Up to 80% of these nurses will remain in Montana, carrying what they learn to where care is needed, especially the remote and rural communities."

Rayn Ginnaty, Benefis chief nursing officer and hospital chief operating officer, says nursing education in Great Falls means students are in local clinical settings and rural communities.

The Touro University Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine campus is set to open in 2023.



"They broaden their exposure to real-world nursing, and some will discover their passion for rural or tribal medical care. They will put down roots here and carry us forward into the future," Ginnaty says.

Serving the Community

One place these new nurses and physicians will use their skills is Alluvion Health, a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center that provides high-quality, cost-effective primary and preventive care, particularly for the community's underserved populations.

With the help of funding from the Great Falls Development Authority, Alluvion is revitalizing the Rocky Mountain Building downtown to become the main hub for all of its services.

"Having all our top-quality medical, dental, behavioral health and other services under one roof will create

"Up to 80% of these nurses will remain in Montana, carrying what they learn to where care is needed, especially the remote and rural communities."

- Michael Becker, Montana State University

the best possible patient experience in a state-of-the-art facility," says Trista Besich, Alluvion's CEO

Besich says the expansion and growth of services creates the opportunity for new internships, training and career development opportunities for individuals pursuing health care or related fields.

Changing Lives

Underscoring the impact of all these programs, Dr. Paul Dolan, Benefis chief medical information officer, says he thinks about Khi Kuka

Soldano, a family nurse practitioner at Benefis who battled racism. weathered tragedy and overcame other hardships as she pursued a medical education far from her home and the Blackfeet Nation.

"Khi also has inspired others, among them her sister, to pursue a medical education," Dolan says. "Now, imagine a hundred people like Khi as health care providers. What a profound difference they would make as doctors, nurses and role models in our tribal and rural communities."

– Karen Vernon



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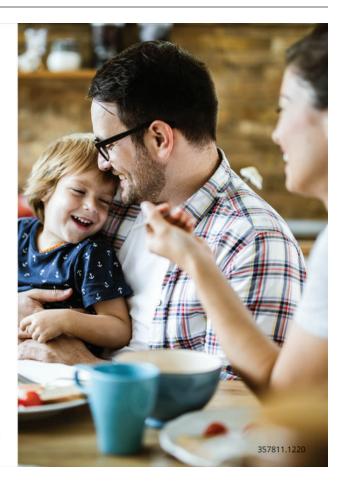
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plays a
pivotal role
in ensuring a steady
pipeline of skilled and
diverse talent is available
for the region's in-demand
industries. An impressive
roster of career and
technical education
courses, for example,
helps prepare students
for careers in such

high-demand fields as agriculture, health care and industrial technology.

READY FOR THE WORKFORCE

"In addition to focused coursework, the pathways include opportunities for job shadows and internships," says
Becky Nelson, community connections coordinator for Great Falls Public Schools.

Nelson says dual credit and stackable credential opportunities are provided to students to help them begin their workforce development journey as early as possible.

Teachers partner with local postsecondary institutions and community partners to delve deeper into the workforce needs within each specific pathway area, and high school counselors work closely with Department of Labor and Industry officials and industry leaders to educate students and parents about in-demand pathways.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The school district partners with Malmstrom Air Force Base, for instance, to create a host of educational opportunities, including job shadowing and internships for junior and senior high school JROTC members, an internship program for students interested in careers in early child development and professional development programs for teachers.

Local service and business partners create close partnerships with students and parents to reach at-risk students, Nelson says, helping them stay in school and develop work-ready skills that are necessary to becoming productive citizens.

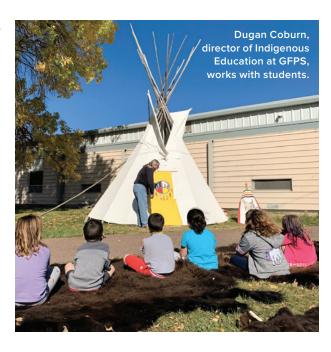
The district also plays a role in producing a diverse workforce. Native American and Hispanic students make up nearly a third of the student population, and the district's diversity and inclusion efforts help ensure those students are supported and successful.

DIVERSITY MATTERS

"Great Falls is home to people from a variety of backgrounds. We know that when a person feels safe and has a sense of belonging, he or she is more likely to be successful academically. It is paramount that we support a culture of inclusion in our schools," Nelson says.

The nonprofit Great Falls Public Schools Foundation works with community organizations and private donors to fund innovative education programs as well as scholarships.

In 2022, the foundation



received a \$20,000 grant from Sisters United – a nonprofit that works to empower Indigenous women, children and communities - to fund projects, including raised garden beds with plants held sacred by Native American tribes, field trips to learn more about Native American history, a tribal elders lecture series and a plan to incorporate Native dance into physical education classes.

"The grant also provides funding for scholarships for Native American students. [Sisters United] wanted to support students with their educational goals," says Stephanie Schnider, executive director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation.

"Often, we don't see
Native American students
pursuing post-secondary
education to the same
degree that their
counterparts might.
Organizations like

Sisters United are really committed to making sure that money is not a barrier for students who want to continue to grow academically."

Schnider says the support of private donors also allows the foundation and school district to help meet students' basic needs so that they can thrive in the educational environment.

"The school district does a fantastic job of creating opportunities for (students) to explore career paths to grow in different fields that will help give them direction for moving forward in their professional lives or postsecondary education paths," Schnider says. "That's motivation for a lot of our donors who want to support students in their postsecondary plans whether they be traditional or nontraditional."

- Teree Caruthers

TEACHERS WANTED

Program helps North Central Montana develop educators

The Montana State University Northern Teachers of Promise Pathways was launched in 2022 to attract more prospective teachers to education careers in North Central Montana The initiative allows sophomore, junior and senior high school students to begin their education-focused courses through dual enrollment classes. Besides students earning dual-enrollment credits, Teachers of Promise Pathways offers financial and professional support for high schoolers interested in becoming Great Falls educators. MSU Northern has long been an advocate for training area students to become teachers. The university also participates in a 2+2 program with Great Falls College that allows students to earn an associate degree at Great Falls College, then transfer into the MSU Northern education program.





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Moving Forward

NEW SUPERINTENDENT WORKS TO FOSTER A LOVE OF LEARNING

Serving some 300 students from the Ulm, Deep Creek, Cascade, Craig and Wolf Creek areas. the Cascade Public Schools district plays an important role in the workforce development efforts of rural Montana. Levi Collins, the district's new superintendent, details the advantages the district offers students, their families and the business community.

What role does the district play in the region's workforce development efforts?

Our main goal is to try to prepare kids to be successful adults. We live in rural Montana, and we have a lot of ranchers and landowners who need students with a technical education and with trade skills. Right now, we're really deep into our agricultural programs, which are merging with our technology programs. For example, one of our graduates is using drones to mark better GPS maps that help farmers determine the best time to spray fertilizer.

What advantages does the school district offer students and their families?

The relationships that students are able to develop with teachers are truly amazing. We're a smaller district, so the student-to-teacher ratio is less than it is in bigger schools, and teachers really get to know their kids well, and they really become huge fans of the kids and try to tailor the kids' education to that specific student. We can't always offer quite as many courses, but to make up for that, we have a wide array of online courses that we offer.

What plans do you have for the school district now that you are at the helm?

One of the things that a lot of community members as well as some of the board members said they wanted to see was an uptick in some of our morale culture, and I feel like so far we're achieving that. We're making this an enjoyable place to be.

By Teree Caruthers

Community Profile

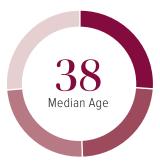
DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

161,470

(Total of region)

2,627.9



AGF

■ Under 19	26%
2 0-39	23%
4 0-59	24%
■ 60 and older	26%

TRANSPORTATION

COMMUTE

14.8 Minutes

Mean travel time to work







Drives alone	.76%
Carpools	. 11%
Public Transit	1%
Walks	5 %
Other	1%
Works from home	6%

DISTANCES TO OTHER CITIES

in miles

Helena	90
Butte	155
Missoula	165
Billings	219
Calgary, Canada	318
Spokane, Washington	362

REAL ESTATE

\$297,790

Typical home value

28,152

Total housing units

25,742 Number of households

HOME OWNERS / RENTERS



Sources: Census Reporter, Great Falls Development Authority, U.S. Census Bureau, Zillow (October 2022)

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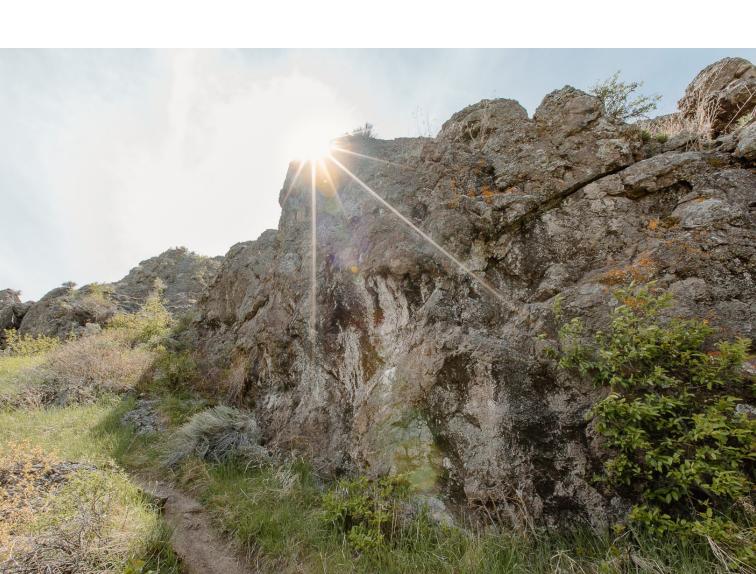
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