

Great Falls

MONTANA

Discover
6 facts about
Great Falls you
may not know –
but should!

*New medical
school creates
opportunities*

FRESH START

Newcomers explain
why the region is
the perfect place
to call home

Shred
**YOUR
GOALS**

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TO THE OFFICE, LOCALS PURSUE
WORTHWHILE ADVENTURES

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-  **Resources for New Residents**
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to do

- dinner reservations downtown*
- check out school district for kiddos*
- look at healthcare options*

Montana always had a draw. After visiting Great Falls we knew it was the place we wanted to raise our family. The low cost of living, potential to grow my career, and outdoor activities out my back door were huge wins. My wife is an entrepreneur and found opportunities immediately. Great Falls checked all the boxes!

Robert Carvell, Hanger Clinic



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Great Falls
MONTANA



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”

Johanna G

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Residents enjoy access to skiing and snowboarding at nearby Showdown Montana.

Photo by Jacob J Creative



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Great Falls

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V.P./Director of Content • **Bill McMeekin**

Senior Editors • **Lindsey Hyde,**
John Nalley, Holly Tilleros

Sponsored Content Editor • **Eleanor Palmer**

Contributing Writers • **Brittany Anas,**
Amy Antonation, Tere Caruthers, James Figy,
Stephanie Figy, Kevin Litwin, Candace Nagy,
Greg Phillips, Kelly Rogers, Rebecca Treon,
Patsy B. Weiler

V.P./Creative Services • **Laura Gallagher**

V.P./Operations • **Molly Morton**

Art Director • **Emmylou Rittenour**

Senior Graphic Designers • **Eliza Hawkins,**
Beatrice Herndon, Cynthia Hester, Claire Raby,
Lindsey Tallent

Photo Director • **Alison Hunter**

Photo Editor • **Jess Spence**

Senior Photographers • **Jeff Adkins,**
Nathan Lambrecht

V.P./Digital Strategy • **Richard Stevens**

Digital Editor In Chief • **Amanda Ellis**

Digital Marketing Director/Managing Editor
Cara Sanders

SEO Editor • **Misty Emery**

Web Developer • **Eric Montzka**

Integrated Media Manager • **Elle Teising**

V.P./Sales Operations • **Katie Middendorf**

Ad Traffic Coordinator • **Patricia Moisan**

Senior Ad Coordinator/Designer • **Vikki Williams**

Senior Marketing Designer • **Holly Bikakis**

Marketing Coordinator • **Sarah Henderson**



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For more information, contact:

Great Falls Development Alliance

405 Third St. NW, Suite 203, Great Falls, MT 59404
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Start Your Adventure

Discover six things you may not know about Great Falls – but should! • *By Kelly Rogers*

There are plenty of compelling reasons to live in Great Falls, and some of them may surprise you. Here are six things you might not already know about this great city:

1) IT'S SUPER AFFORDABLE

Great Falls has an impressive cost of living, 12% lower than the Montana and U.S. average. The median home value of around \$325,000 (Zillow, December 2024) is about 70% of the statewide average. It's especially affordable for single people, with monthly expenses totaling 50% less than the national average. More disposable income means you can have more fun adventures, and you couldn't ask for a better place to live and explore.

2) IT'S CENTRALLY LOCATED

Great Falls makes for a terrific base camp, especially if you want to take advantage of all the glorious outdoor recreation opportunities that Montana has to offer.

From Great Falls, you can get to four different mountain ranges within an hour – perfect for skiing in the winter or hiking in the summer. The state also has world-class fishing opportunities, made more enjoyable by the fact that you can fish in peace without overcrowding.

3) IT'S THE MUSEUM CAPITAL OF MONTANA

With over 10 museums located in Great Falls, it's easy to see why the city has earned that moniker. These museums cater to a variety of tastes and interests and very much add to the city's second claim to fame – its



Sluice Boxes State Park spans 1,450 acres along Belt Creek.



Great Falls Clinic

reputation as the Western Art Capital of the World. The vibrant art scene in Great Falls brings the community together and fuels tourism, especially at the annual

ArtsFest. Each year, this colorful event brings street artists from around the world to add new masterpieces to the city's 48 (and counting) murals.

4) IT'S FULL OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND GROWING FAMILIES

Did you know that the average age in Great Falls is under 39? While Montana overall has a large population of 60-plus residents, Great Falls is full of youthful energy, making it an ideal place for single, young folks. It's also perfect for families looking to grow and thrive. Whether you're looking for your

person, wanting to find friends your own age or seeking out people in the same phase of life, there's a good bet you'll find it in Great Falls.

5) IT'S FUELED BY RENEWABLE ENERGY

Great Falls is the city of nicknames, it seems! Besides its art accolades, Great Falls is known as Electric City due to its four hydroelectric dams. Renewable energy is top-tier here, with solar and wind power rounding out the city's portfolio of green, clean power.

6) IT'S GOT THE BEST HEALTH CARE IN THE ENTIRE REGION

Great Falls functions as a regional hub and access point for all things health care. Besides the abundant availability of resources that meet the medical needs of residents, Great Falls is also looking toward the future and training the next generations of doctors, thanks to the newly opened Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM). [TouroCOM](#)



BREATH OF FRESH





Air

Recent transplants share what they have come to adore about living and working in Great Falls



Alexandra Weston is store manager of The Farmer's Daughter Fibers. From fresh pies and snowy slopes to city lights and local delights, she likes that Great Falls offers a taste of everything.

With mountain ranges, rivers and wilderness areas, Great Falls offers residents backyard access to an adventurous playground and wide-open, scenic spaces. When it's time to get to work, the region's innovative economy and ample job opportunities provide a breath of fresh air, too. Factor in friendly neighbors, a thriving downtown and an affordable cost of living –

and it's easy to see why folks are flocking to Great Falls.

Ahead, two recent Great Falls transplants share why they made the move to Montana and what they enjoy about living in Big Sky Country.

Spinning a Yarn

Alexandra Weston loves fiber arts – knitting, crocheting, spinning, weaving, you name it. So, when she saw a job opening at The Farmer's Daughter

Fibers, a Great Falls shop that sells hand-dyed yarn and fabrics, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I was also drawn to the area because of the access to hiking and the idea of having a real winter again," says Weston, who moved from Tennessee in June 2024 with her 3-year-old Australian shepherd to take the store manager position at The Farmer's Daughter Fibers. Her girlfriend is joining them this winter.

A Fourth of July trip to Great Falls solidified relocation plans for Richard Armstrong and his wife, Anna, who moved from Seattle in 2022.

For years, the couple had visited Anna's grandparents at a cabin in Seeley Lake.

"Each time we drove back to the big city, we felt our hearts sink because we loved Montana's big sky

and friendly people," says Armstrong, a technology director who works remotely.

During their final trip to Montana as tourists, they visited spots like Enbär, a craft cocktail spot that showcases Montana spirits, and they fell in love with Great Falls' historic downtown.

A Place to Call Home

The move to Montana became a no-brainer, Armstrong says: Great Falls' inventory of "for sale" homes were not only charming, but also affordable – especially when compared to homes in the Pacific Northwest that have been escalating in price.

Great Falls has a range of real estate options, from affordable properties for first-time buyers to downtown rentals and more rural homes with lots of scenic acreage. Armstrong and his wife purchased a home near downtown.

"We love being able to walk somewhere to get a drink and safely make it home and being able to get dinner while walking our massive Newfoundland puppy," he says.

Weston also chose to live downtown, and because the area is so walkable, she didn't use her car the first four months she lived in Great Falls.

"I'm a sucker for historical charm, and I love that there are so many homes and buildings in this area that are registered with the historical society," she says.



The Farmer's Daughter Fibers neighbors other downtown small businesses like Klover.



“Our downtown area has truly made me feel more at home in Great Falls than any other place I have ever lived.”

– Richard and Anna Armstrong, residents

Weston and her pup make daily trips to Gibson Park, a favorite open space among locals that links with the River’s Edge Trail.

Getting Plugged In

Great Falls welcomes new residents with open arms.

Luna Coffee is a fantastic gathering space (“The vanilla matcha is absolutely to die for,”

Weston says.) Phoenix Pearl Tea Company is her favorite spot for tea and game nights.

“During the summer, going to the farmers market and listening to music in the park behind Great Falls Public Library were other great ways for me to explore,” she says.

Weston says she and her partner love date nights at Sidequest Arcade Bar, playing air hockey and nostalgic video games. She also loves getting out to

hike, and her favorite spot she’s discovered to date is Sluice Box State Park in nearby Belt, a rugged area with a beautiful canyon carved in limestone with mines and historic cabins abandoned by prospectors.

Armstrong says he and his wife hit the ground running when they moved to town and found it easy to get connected with the community. They made friends with the staff at Pizazz, a fun gourmet food and kitchen shop

that offers cooking classes, and they joined the shop’s wine club. Armstrong says Let’s Play Games and Toys has been like a second home, offering a place to play trading card games.

“Our downtown area has truly made me feel more at home in Great Falls than any other place I have ever lived,” Armstrong says. “From the amazing food, great spots to hang out and the incredible people, we do feel at home here.”

– Brittany Anas



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FALLING HARD

Her job is loving downtown Great Falls, and she's confident you will, too • By Amy Antonation

When Michigan-born Harley Severns moved to Great Falls in 2023, she didn't know a soul. But she was hired as the marketing and event coordinator at the Downtown Great Falls Association, a role that helped transform the city into her home.

"I have met some amazing folks who I otherwise would likely not have met if I worked any other job in Great Falls," she says. "This position has truly helped me blossom in a community where I knew absolutely no one!"

Severns offers some of her favorite things to do in downtown Great Falls.

For example, **Crooked Tree Coffee Cafe's** downtown location was the first coffee shop Severns visited in the city, and it remains her favorite.

"The folks who operate and work there are so kind, always greeting customers with a smile," she says.

Just next door, indoor cycling studio **ThriveCycle** opened in late 2023 and is "the perfect addition to our downtown," Severns says. "They have curated a beautiful community of women (and men!) who support one another and hype one another up every single day. I have so much fun at their themed classes and have enjoyed many group rides with friends there."

Whether you like concerts, comedy shows or fundraising events, **The Newberry** is the place to check out in downtown Great Falls for entertainment, Severns says. She shouts out recent Bowling for Soup and Charley Crockett concerts; the venue has also hosted comedians like Josh Blue and Paula Poundstone. Be sure to buy tickets in advance.

Drink to That

For local libations and elevated cocktails, Severns' pick is **Enbär Craft Cocktail Lounge**.

"It's a great spot to bring friends for a girl's night



out or for a romantic date night," she says.

The cocktail menu changes seasonally, the wine list is extensive, and the taps are focused on Montana brews. Among its excellent food menu, Severns especially loves the spot's truffle fries.

Fire Pizza's pies are "amazing," Severns says, and it makes "the best spinach dip I have ever had." With nearly 30 different varieties of pizza, diners won't run out of slices to try during the spot's Appy Hour (\$3 beer and \$5 wine) or Fire Lunch Special (half-pizza, soup or salad and soda for just \$15 total).


Don't miss Thursday trivia at **Magpie**; it's a must-do, according to Severns.

"I recommend getting there early," she says. "It fills up very quickly!"

That could be due to its excellent patio ("arguably the best patio in Great Falls") and superb food.

Start training now for May's **Mimosa Showdown**, which the Downtown Great Falls Association organizes.

"It is one of my favorite events to plan and attend, and it has grown so much since the start. Last year, we had 20+ participating businesses – that's a lot of delicious craft mimosas to try!" she says.

Her advice for the day? Hydrate, take food breaks, bring a sweater – and hydrate some more! 



"I have met some amazing folks who I otherwise would likely not have met if I worked any other job in Great Falls."

– Harley Severns, Downtown Great Falls Association



HIGHER ALTITUDE, *LOWER COST*

You'll find your money goes further in Great Falls

Four distinct seasons, stunning natural landscapes and a warm community feel are just a few reasons to fall in love with Great Falls. But the strong economy seals the deal – especially among young families and professionals. The *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Montana No. 12 among states with the lowest cost of living and No. 9 among states with the strongest economies.

When creative projects and brand manager Enya Spicer first landed

in Big Sky country, she immediately felt a sense of home. She shares what she most enjoys about Great Falls, including why the cost of living has been a major perk.

What brought you to Great Falls and how long have you lived here?

I like to say that I moved here by accident because I started with training in broadcast journalism, and then I applied with *USA Today* and ended up getting a job with the

Great Falls Tribune. I've been in Montana for six years now, which is pretty wild for me because I like to move around a lot.

What has been your experience with the community?

I love the people I've met and the opportunities I've gotten here. I cannot thank this community enough for building me into the person I am today and for accepting me. This was the first place that



Enya Spicer enjoys working at Al Banco coffee shop, grabbing pho and soaking in scenic views.



I ever lived alone, and my friends here have taken care of me and been like my family. And being from Georgia, I am very far away from home, so it's been really nice to have them.

Is it easy to get around town or visit other nearby places?

The best thing about Great Falls is that it's centralized. So, if I want to go on a hike, I don't have to go too far. If I want to go to a different city, I don't have to go too far. I mean, I can get to Bozeman in less than three hours and the same for Missoula. If you want to have a weekend getaway, it's super easy to do that.

What is the housing market like in Great Falls?

It is very affordable compared to other places in Montana. A lot of people are moving here. Right now, I pay \$1,500 a month for a two-bedroom craftsman home smack dab in the middle of downtown.

I am very blessed and thankful to be able to live here comfortably.

What are a few of your favorite places to shop for groceries and what is your average weekly bill?

I like Super I Foods. It's open 24 hours, so that's extremely convenient, and they have a lot of things that other stores don't have. My average weekly grocery bill is around \$150, but I live with my boyfriend, and we have a dog. We also buy a lot of meat from Central Avenue Meats, a craft butcher shop downtown, for steaks, pork and all that good stuff.

What is the cost of dinner and drinks for two, and what are some of your go-to restaurants or bars?

I am half Thai, so I really love pho and Thai food and go to Pho 10 often. On the weekends, my boyfriend and I do end up getting drinks with our

food, so I would say our average bill is in the \$40 to \$50 range. Also, I might sound biased because my boyfriend and his brother own the shop, but Al Banco is an amazing coffee shop.

Can you recommend any free or low-cost recreation options in Great Falls?

There are so many trails to walk nearby, which is especially awesome because we have a dog. There's also a new recreation center here and a Planet Fitness, which is a great, low-cost gym. And the businesses in Great Falls are always hosting free or low-cost events on the weekends. I like to paint at Brush Crazy, and the Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art also offers art classes.

– Candace Nagy

Learn more about how you can live a richer lifestyle as a resident of Great Falls at livability.com/mt/great-falls.

College *to* Career

Hear why Great Falls became the ultimate destination for these two graduates



People are drawn to Great Falls for many reasons – some seek affordability and a high quality of life, others are attracted to the outdoor opportunities and strong community, and still others come for career prospects. Local colleges and universities also attract students, many of whom decide to stay in the area and make it home.

One such example is Luis Carranza, who is from Idaho Falls and attended a junior college in Wyoming before transferring to the University of Providence to complete his degree. Today, he is the head wrestling coach at Great Falls High School.

Similarly, Daniel Harvey grew up in the Butte area and joined the U.S. Air Force. After being stationed in Phoenix for 13 years, he returned to Montana to be closer to family. He enrolled in the Veteran Readiness and Education program at Great Falls College Montana State University, where he graduated with a degree in industrial tech and is in the process of completing a second degree in welding.

What brought you to Great Falls, and how did career opportunities influence your decision to stay?

Carranza: I came to Great Falls to finish my wrestling career and education. It was an easy transition because Great Falls is like Idaho Falls – a small town, homey environment – so that was a good fit for me. I fell in love with the surrounding area and the outdoors. Then, I met my wife, and I didn't have a reason to leave. I graduated in 2013, and the following year there was a teaching job opening where I had done my student teaching. I was blessed to get the job.



Great Falls College MSU offers a welding program.

“I really enjoy the work itself because you get to use a lot of your own ideas. You get to be creative on the job every day.”

– Daniel Harvey, alumnus of Great Falls College MSU

Harvey: I wanted to come back to Great Falls to be closer to my family that's in the area. I went to get my associate in industrial technology, and I had to have a year of welding, but I got approved to do two years. Republic Services, a company here in Great Falls, offers an internship program, so I have since completed that, and they have asked me to stay and work full time. Right now, I work there part time while I'm a full-time welding student.

What do you enjoy about your career?

Carranza: The PE Department welcomed me right away, and I fell in love with the environment and the camaraderie they had. I just love working with kids. I love mentoring them and hopefully making a positive impact on their

lives. I try to be a positive role model in their lives – teach them, build relationships and coach wrestling. It's something I always wanted to do, and I love doing it.

Harvey: I'm the container shop welder and that's working out pretty well. I'll go full time when I graduate in May. I really enjoy the work itself because you get to use a lot of your own ideas. You get containers coming that are pretty banged up, and you have to look at it from all different angles and figure out how you're going to fix it. You get to be creative on the job every day.

Do you feel Great Falls is a diverse or welcoming community? Are there particular groups that helped you plug into the community?

Carranza: People here are proud of Montana and to be Montanans, and

GET SCHOOLED

Three higher education options for students

The Great Falls region offers a diverse menu of higher education options, from career-focused training to professional degree programs – all tailored to local workforce needs. The region's colleges and universities support students through small class sizes, flexible course schedules and opportunities for dual enrollment, which make higher education more accessible for all residents.

TOURO COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM), part of Touro University, has a new campus in Great Falls. Committed to addressing disparities in health care through a diverse workforce pipeline, TouroCOM boasts students of many cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds and is a five-time winner of the HEED award for diversity excellence. More than half of the college's graduates pursue primary care, further helping to address a critical need for health care in underserved areas.



UNIVERSITY OF PROVIDENCE

The University of Providence, a private Roman Catholic liberal arts university in Great Falls, serves some 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The small enrollment offers an intimate learning environment, with an average class size of 12. The university focuses on holistic development through its "Corps of Discovery" program, supporting emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth. Students can choose from a wide range of on-campus and online programs in the Schools of Health Professions and Liberal Arts and Sciences, with options ranging from certification to master's degrees.

GREAT FALLS COLLEGE MSU

Great Falls College is a two-year technical and community college, affiliated with Montana State University since 1994. The college offers associate degrees and training certificates, with popular programs such as welding and nursing leading to successful local careers. Great Falls College also works with local school districts to offer dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit at a more affordable rate.

—By Terece Caruthers—

as much as they want to keep the state a hidden gem, they welcomed me with open arms and are super awesome people. I'm part of a group at Great Falls High called "I am Bison," where we raise awareness about cultural diversity and educate people about the differences in cultures and backgrounds. That's one of our big things – just welcoming people and being good human beings.



"Great Falls was a good fit for me. I fell in love with the surrounding area and the outdoors."

— Luis Carranza,
alumnus of University of Providence

Harvey: Very much so. I just bought my house a couple of years ago, and I know all my neighbors already. They all came over to say hello. I owned a home in Phoenix, and it wasn't anything like that. I've seen both sides of the spectrum, from a bigger city to a smaller town. Also, I'm a veteran, so I started going to the Veterans Center. They were looking for people to help out with the local Disabled American Veterans chapter, and I am now the junior vice commander of Chapter 2. The Catholic Church has been another [place to make connections], so has the college and Electric City Speedway.

— Rebecca Treon

Community Profile

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

60,373

13%

Population with veteran status

39

Average age

FUN FACT

Great Falls is named for its five individual waterfalls located along a 10-mile stretch of the Missouri River. Each falls has a hydroelectric dam, so Great Falls is nicknamed "The Electric City."

Sources: Census Reporter, U.S. Census, Great Falls Development Alliance, City of Great Falls, Zillow

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



High school grad or higher



Bachelor's degree or higher

LOCATION ADVANTAGES

- ✓ Affordability
- ✓ Arts and entertainment
- ✓ Diverse economy
- ✓ High-quality education
- ✓ Natural beauty
- ✓ Outdoor recreation
- ✓ Strong health care

SIGNATURE EVENTS

- » Mimosa Showdown
- » Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals
- » Montana State Fair
- » Western Art Week
- » 4th of July Hootenanny

REAL ESTATE

\$325K

Average home value
(Zillow, December 2024)

25,720

Number of households

HOMEOWNERS / RENTERS



Owners 66%
Renters 34%

Did You Know?

The city is home to the 201-foot-long Roe River, touted as the world's shortest river by the Guinness Book of World Records.

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On the RIGHT PATH

Great Falls students jump-start their careers with CTE programs in high-demand fields

For many students in Great Falls, the path to a promising local career begins with the Great Falls Public Schools career and technical education (CTE) programs. Through CTE, students can gain hands-on experience, earn certifications and build a foundation for success in such high-demand areas as health care, industrial technology and business/computer science.

Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) actively works through nationally recognized career and technical education pathways to provide rigorous, high-interest workforce experiences. In addition to coursework, the pathways include opportunities for job shadows and internships, says Becky Nelson, community connections manager for GFPS. “When and where possible, dual credit

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

A HEALTHY START

Health care is one of the fastest-growing sectors in Montana. The health science program at GFPS prepares students to enter this critical field with foundational knowledge in medical terminology, anatomy and patient care.

Students can earn certifications, such as certified nursing assistant (CNA), that qualify them for health care roles immediately after high school. The district partners with the Continuing Education & Training division at Great Falls College Montana State University to provide training.

“We hold classes monthly and offer both in-person and hybrid options along with offering classes at the high school each semester. We invite local businesses to every class to recruit students, and we have an exemplary pass rate for state licensure. Over 400 students have enrolled in the CNA program and over 25 businesses in our region have benefitted by employing these students,” Nelson says.

One such business taking advantage of this workforce pipeline is Benefis Health System, which offers students internship opportunities and has become the second-largest recruiter of program graduates.

“We have an excellent opportunity to introduce students to Benefis with guest speakers, job shadowing and internships. Benefis also has a strong relationship with HOSA, the international student organization. They often hire students based on interactions they see during high school class observations,” says Mark Yaeger, CTE/Career Pathway adviser for GFPS.

Local students receive real-world medical training.



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Industrial technology is yet another high-demand field in the Great Falls region. The GFPS industrial technology program provides students with hands-on training in areas including welding, pre-construction, woodworking and drafting. The program also collaborates with local employers to offer internships and work-based learning that can transition into full-time roles after graduation.

GFPS partners with Great Falls College to offer dual college credit and the chance to earn industry certifications, which John Stewart, woodshop instructor in C.M. Russell High School's Industrial Technology Department,

says can result in students being hired locally right out of high school.

"Over the years, we've had many students leave our programs and forgo college to go right into the workforce and/or military. Some have gone on to work for Sletten Construction, Talcott, ADF, Anderson Steel, BNSF and many others," Stewart says.

BETTER BUSINESS ACUMEN

With technology becoming integral to nearly every industry, GFPS' business and computer science program is a gateway for students looking to build digital and business skills valued by employers. The curriculum covers topics like accounting, business law and marketing.



An industrial technology program includes welding courses.

Graduates of the business and computer science pathway can pursue entry-level positions in business administration, IT support or digital marketing, or further their education in college.

"The Career & College Readiness Center plays a key role in developing our current and future

workforce by collaborating with our education and training partners, various business sectors, and multiple service organizations," Nelson says. "It's through these joint efforts we are able to create multiple pathway opportunities."

— Teree Caruthers



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By day, Johanna Gamboa is a supply chain manager at North 40, but after work, you can find her enjoying the outdoors.



COMMAND *of Chain*

SPEND THE DAY WITH A SUPPLY SPECIALIST BASED IN GREAT FALLS

Johanna Gamboa, supply chain manager for private brands at North 40 Outfitters, jokes that her job is on the complete other side of town from where she lives. Coming from a city in Colombia of 700,000 people to Great Falls, which has a population of around 60,000, a 15-minute commute isn't so bad.

Gamboa, who earned a bachelor's degree in Colombia, came to the U.S. about a decade ago to learn English and take her new skills back home for better opportunities. But she ended up falling for Montana, finding passion in her career and meeting her now husband.

"I love Great Falls and Montana," Gamboa says. "Humans are adaptable. Coming from a big city with warm weather, it took a bit to get used to. But skiing and outdoor recreation makes winter more enjoyable. And North 40 has been really flexible in letting me work remotely from Colombia for a week or two every year."

That way she can truly thrive in her adopted Montana community.



Growing with North 40

When Gamboa first started working at North 40 Outfitters, a retail chain tailored to rural and outdoor lifestyles, the company only had one store, the East Great Falls location on 10th Avenue. She found her in as a buyer with the hard line and lawn and garden departments.

As the company prepared to open the West Great Falls location, Gamboa was offered the opportunity to work as an executive assistant for

the son of the company owner.

"It was a scary move for me, because I was enjoying my position in purchasing a lot," Gamboa says. "But I'm so grateful for that opportunity, because I was able to learn so many things about the store operations side."

In her role, Gamboa helped develop many operational processes as the company expanded to new stores and brands. Today, the company has 12 stores and over 1,000 employees. And Gamboa has found her footing in supply chain management, a career where no

two days are ever the same.

"I wear multiple hats. Our team is growing, but it's still a small team," Gamboa says. "I help to develop the customer service and e-commerce experience. I'm in charge of purchasing, inventory, forecasting and keeping track of deliveries."

And sometimes the supply chain is unpredictable and deliveries don't come in time.

"You always have to have a backup plan," Gamboa says. "You might

already have campaigns and advertisements set to run, but if the product isn't arriving in time, you have to pivot. You're troubleshooting all the time. It's stressful in a sense but also brings you excitement. Every day is different."

Gamboa oversees the company's Artifacts line and even got to handle all the sourcing and development for its 100% virgin wool and 80% alpaca blankets while she was home in Colombia.

"To see that little piece from home in one of our stores was a very proud moment for me," Gamboa says.

Supply chain management involves everything that happens to get a product to a shelf, from design and packaging to pricing. To get it right, Gamboa collaborates with many departments: e-commerce to ensure orders are being fulfilled; merchandising to move products

in and out; retail to execute sales; marketing to collaborate on promotions; and developers to handle assortments.

"It's a family-owned business and it feels like that," Gamboa says. "The owner takes the time to go to your desk, shake your hand and say good morning. He knows everyone by name"

AFTER HOURS

When she's not at work, Gamboa enjoys tending to her garden, hiking and camping with friends, and skiing in the winter.

"I have met a group of women, some from in state and some from out of state, and we have developed a really strong friendship," Gamboa says. "I enjoy catching up with them and meeting others in the community as well."

— Stephanie Figy

NORTH 40

A GREAT FALLS SUCCESS STORY

1997

The year North 40 was founded in Great Falls

12

Stores in three states

3,500

Brands carried by company

1,100+

People employed by company

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Make an Impact

Young professionals pursue passions and purpose in Great Falls • *By Kelly Rogers*

Great Falls isn't just a great place to live, it's also a great place to work. Finding purpose, building communities and getting actively involved is easy to do, especially for Gen Z, a group that cares a lot about doing work that matters.

Emma Nelson relocated to Montana from Washington state and decided to put down roots. Her experience is one of many, but it speaks volumes to all that Great Falls has to offer for those considering moving here.

How did you hear about Great Falls and why did you make the move?

I first moved to Helena, Montana, from a small town in Washington. I graduated from Carroll College in 2020, and I intended on leaving Montana after graduation, but then the pandemic hit.

I stayed in Helena, and during this time, I absolutely fell in love with Montana. I ended up meeting my now husband at the Great Falls 4th of July Hootenanny. My husband was living in Great Falls as active-duty military, so once we decided to get married, I moved to Great Falls.

I'll be the first to admit that I was initially hesitant about moving to Great Falls, yet it took almost no time at all

before it felt like home in a way nowhere else had before.

How does your profession align with your passions?

Even as a kid, I've always felt a calling to the nonprofit sector. I spent a lot of time volunteering for numerous nonprofits and community organizations when I was growing up.

My journey really began with an internship at the Montana Community Foundation, and after graduating college, I worked in human resources at another nonprofit organization.

Now, at NeighborWorks Great Falls, I have the opportunity to witness the power of homeownership and financial stability firsthand. I hear some pretty incredible stories, and I can't imagine working for a company without a mission I believe in or where I can't see the tangible effects of our efforts.

In my current role, I've been fortunate to have so many opportunities to engage with the community. I love meeting new people and connecting with others who share the same passions. To be in a position where I get to not only make a difference but



4th of July Hootenanny Parade
Left: Emma Nelson, a resident

get to work so closely with others – my younger self would be proud.

How does the size of Great Falls – with a population of 60,000 – impact your ability to get involved and meet people?

I think Great Falls is the perfect-sized town. It has everything you could possibly want – local and commercial shopping, unique restaurants, fun events, networking opportunities – without losing that sense of a community.

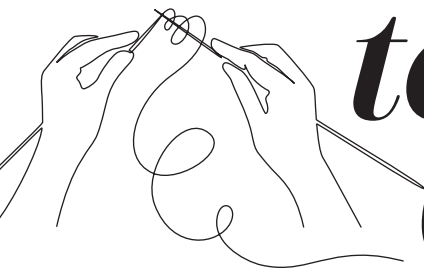
Great Falls is small enough that it is incredibly easy to get involved in groups or find people with similar interests. I've met most

of my friends through my passion for rock climbing. I started going to a climbing gym here in town just for something to do on cold days. In what felt like the blink of an eye, I suddenly had this close group of friends I do nearly everything with.

There are also plenty of professional groups available. Whether that be getting involved in a young professional's group like Rotary Electric, volunteering for an event downtown or maybe joining a board – there is a lot offered if you're willing to look. When I attend events, I see so many familiar faces I can wave to, yet I always have the chance to meet new people. The size of Great Falls truly offers the best of both worlds, and I don't take that for granted. *gr/falls*



Dedicated to Their Crafts



Local entrepreneurs weave their family histories into their work

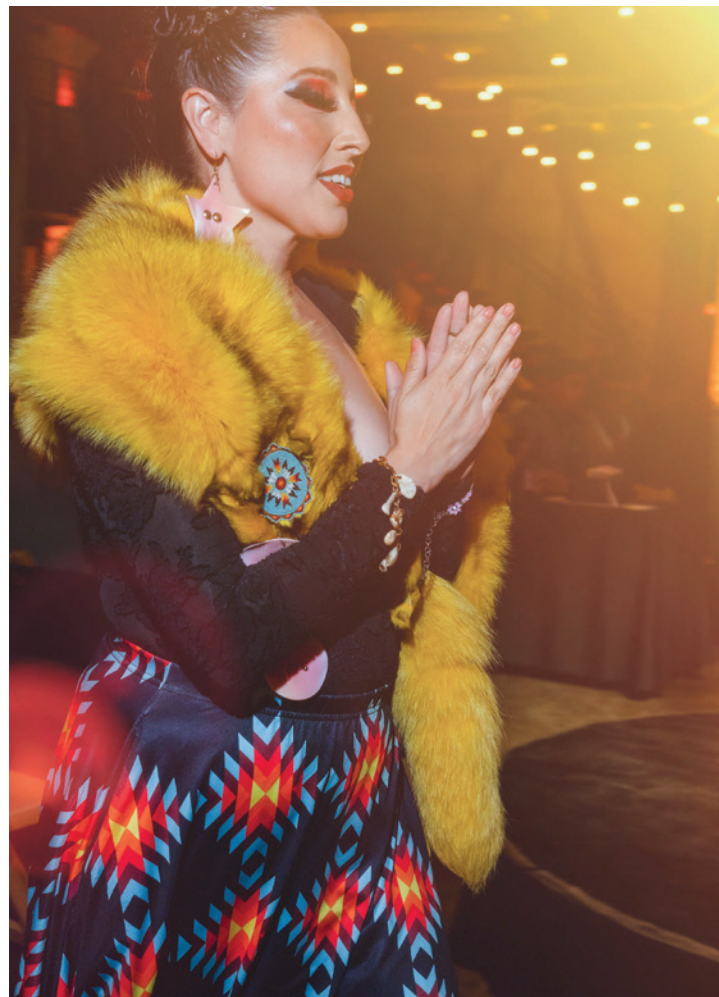
Rebekah Jarvey and Meagan Anderson have different backgrounds but their journeys as entrepreneurs run parallel. As they grow their businesses, both women are living their best lives and having a blast along the way in Great Falls.

From Great Plains to Fashion Runways

Jarvey was raised northeast of Great Falls. She's a member of three different tribes, Chippewa, Cree and Blackfeet, and she grew up learning to sew.

"I come from four generations of sewers and beaders, and I'm

PHOTO: MATTHEW HINES



teaching my son. That's how our legacy and traditional knowledge has been passed on," says Jarvey, who launched her business in 2020. "I started off making face masks and ribbon skirts, which are 100% cotton with ribbon that's sewn on."

By marketing on Facebook and Instagram, she started gaining a large following.

"Then one of my masks went viral, and that's how I got discovered," she says.

As the owner and designer of Rebekah Jarvey Sewist, she's shifted her focus as her business has evolved over the years.

"I mainly sell ready-to-wear clothes like dresses and shirts, and then I make one-of-a-kind pieces for the runway," she says.

"I draw inspiration from my tribe. Through fashion, we can honor our designs and share them with the world."

— Rebekah Jarvey, international designer

In 2024, she did over 20 fashion shows. From Montana, Seattle and Denver to Fashion Week in Paris and New York, she's traveled across the globe.

"I also designed a shoe for Nike that's in the Spencer Museum of Art in Kansas," she says.

Another career highlight was a fashion show held during the Cannes Film Festival that was attended by the cast of *Killers of the Flower Moon*, the 2023 film that

focused on a series of murders of members of the Osage Nation in Oklahoma in the 1920s.

"It was a really remarkable time," says Jarvey of the show. "Indigenous fashion is at the forefront right now. We're getting recognized."

Her color palette distinguishes her work, with its use of bright neon colors. She also incorporates geometric patterns.

"I draw inspiration from my tribe," she says. "Through fashion, we can

Business 101

SBDC IS ONE OF THE FIRST STOPS FOR ENTREPRENEURS IN GREAT FALLS

Successful entrepreneurs know it's important to get advice from a variety of sources.

In Great Falls, one of the key resources is the Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

"The SBDC is designed to provide support and guidance to small businesses at various stages of growth," says Deb McGregor, Great Falls SBDC regional director. "Our primary purpose is to offer no-cost consulting, training and other assistance to help small businesses start, grow and succeed."

The SBDC assists with business and marketing plans, financial forecasting, strategy, and creative problem-solving.

"One of our standout programs is the entrepreneurship cohorts, where small-business owners come together to learn from each other in a collaborative environment," McGregor says.

"They build a strong network of support."

If you're dreaming of launching a business, one of the first tasks is to research your idea's viability.

"We can help you determine if it's a need in the community and if it can be profitable in this market," McGregor says.

Once you've determined your business is a good fit for Great Falls, you've got to home in on your target market.

"Successful startups take the time to deeply analyze their market and plan accordingly," she says.

With resources like the SBDC, Great Falls is a welcoming place with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and tools to get off to a good start.

"We often hear from small business owners that they wish they'd known the SBDC was here when they started," McGregor says. "It would have made such a difference."

honor our designs and share them with the world."

Alaskan Artist Moves to Montana

Meagan Anderson draws inspiration from her background, too. As a child in Alaska, she made necklaces from rocks that she collected. She also grew up with horses in a family deeply involved in the rodeo. As an adult, she's driven horse-drawn carriages in Texas and done therapeutic equine riding in Wyoming. Today, she's a full-time jewelry maker, mostly creating accessories like bracelets, earrings and hair clips.

"I also really love making rings because they're the most intimate piece of jewelry. When you shake hands, your ring touches the other person," she says.

While gathering and polishing stones captured her initial interest, silver is the catalyst behind Anderson's success.

"I knew from the time I started silversmithing that I wanted to do this," she says. "My great-grandfather was a silversmith, and we have some handwritten instructions from him. My grandma and I took a class together to really learn how to do it."

Today, teaching silversmithing is a big part of Anderson's business.

"For a lot of people, the classes are an outlet, a way to meet others," she says. "My favorite part is helping people empower themselves. I get to see that creative light come on."

Work Hard, Play Hard

Anderson runs Sweet Pea Custom Silver from her home just east of Great Falls.

"I'm very outdoorsy, and I really like the atmosphere in Great Falls. Whether you're an outside or indoor person, there's a lot to do. I play volleyball, and there are trivia nights and fun nightlife," she says. "I've mostly been boots on the ground networking with local artists, figuring out what works for them."



Anderson says it's also critical to have solid backup plans "but don't give up on the long-term goal."

Jarvey says her key to success is determination.

"I don't take no for an answer," she says.

"Always figure out how to be in the room where decisions are made."

She believes the risks and sacrifices are part of the thrill.

"I've missed birthdays and other events because I have to meet deadlines, make orders and travel," Jarvey says. "Sometimes I don't know what I'm getting myself into, but I take that leap because I want to see where this journey goes. This is the life that I want, and I'm working toward my goals."

— Greg Phillips



Top left: Meagan Anderson, owner of Sweet Pea Custom Silver

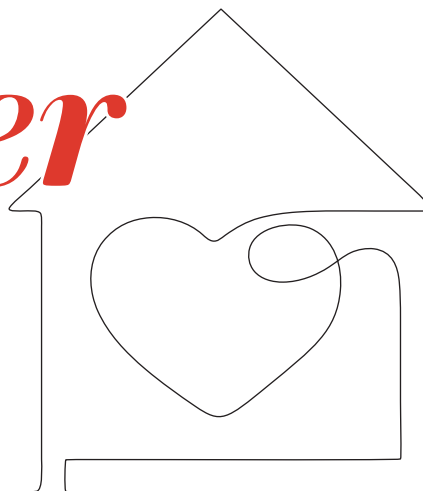
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Forever HOME BASE



Learn why service members and their families choose Great Falls

Montana was like no place Brittany Riley had seen. But here she was, driving through rolling hills with her spouse, Andrew, an active-duty airman who was being transferred to Malmstrom Air Force Base outside of Great Falls. Although the mountainous scenery was new, Riley discovered that Great Falls felt like home.

For service members and their families, Great Falls offers opportunities to grow their careers, explore the outdoors and join a charming community. Many veterans put down roots in the area after leaving the Air Force or Montana Air National Guard, and some relocate

there after serving in other branches. Still, Montana was different from Honolulu, Hawaii, where Riley grew up and met Andrew while he was stationed there. And it was unlike Italy, a country where they resided for four years after getting married. “We met later in life, so he was already halfway through his career,” Riley says. “We knew Malmstrom would be his last base. Because of that, we wanted to buy a house and have the opportunity to stay longer.”

Spicing Up the Community

Today, Riley feels that Great Falls offers much more than some may think. After just a few years, she has

experienced everything from fishing, hiking and learning about the area’s Lewis and Clark history to exploring farmers markets, festivals and downtown murals in Big Sky Country.

Riley saw it as her duty to make connections in the community, especially since she and Andrew live off base. She currently serves as a branch manager for Horizon Credit Union and sits on the board of the Great Falls Development Alliance.

In addition, she founded the International Spice District after an old friend, who is a chef, encouraged Riley to pursue this project.

“One of my former employees from when we worked in Hawaii together

lived in Montana. So, I reached out and was like, ‘Hey, what do you guys need in Montana?’” Riley says. “She knew I had gone to Morocco and had sent spices to friends and family. And she was like, ‘If you could bring your spices here, we could really use that.’”

The International Spice District sells about 50 spices imported directly from Morocco. The business collaborates with local chefs to teach them how to use the spices on their menus. It also provides education and cooking classes so home chefs can use fewer common seasonings.

“I have things like 35 spice, which a lot of people don’t realize is really good for hunting or game meats,” Riley says. “I was able to showcase that you can season your lamb or elk with this.”

A Fundamental Appreciation

Of course, Riley – and most others – wouldn’t know about Great Falls if not for its military presence.

Located just east of Great Falls, Malmstrom AFB affects many aspects of life. Roughly 4,000 active-duty military and civilian workers as well as 2,500 family members live and work on or around



“So many vets retire in Montana – it’s just a welcoming space.”

— Brittany Riley, International Spice District and military spouse —

the base, generating a \$425.6 million impact on the local economy.

Great Falls is also home to the Montana Air National Guard. These specialists focus on cargo airlift capabilities with Lockheed C-130 Hercules airplanes and Red Horse heavy construction.

With such a large military presence, Cascade County is home to a major proportion of Montana's more than 85,000 veterans, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Montana also ranks as one of the most patriotic states due to its residents' participation in civic life and military service, according to a 2024 WalletHub study. The state is ranked fourth nationally for veterans per capita. More than 10% of Montanans have served compared to about 6% nationally, based on U.S. Census data.

"Montana is home to some of the most freedom-loving and patriotic people in the country," adds Gov. Greg Gianforte in a statement on Independence Day



Brittany Riley started International Spice District after her spouse transferred Air Force bases.

2024. "From our support for our veterans to our strong defense of our way of life, Montanans share a fundamental appreciation for what makes America, America."

Riley has experienced this support many times.

To her, that deep appreciation for service members is one thing that makes Great Falls, and the state overall, such a great place to call home. That's partly why they're not only planning to stay in the area when Andrew's time in the Air Force ends

but also looking to build a new house on more land.

"I've had people cry when they found out my spouse was military," she says. "The fact that so many vets retire in Montana, it's just a welcoming space."

— James Fygy

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People come from near and far to Great Falls to train for their medical careers

Take the pulse of the people of Great Falls and you will find a community of folks who love to throw out the welcome mat to new neighbors. Add the recent opening of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine's Great Falls campus – Montana's first nonprofit medical school – plus the workforce resources offered by Benefis Health System and the Great Falls Clinic and Hospital, and it is easy to see why the city is an excellent location to start or advance a medical career.

City Welcomes New Medical School

Dr. Stephanie Zeszutek has been practicing medicine for nearly 20 years and came to Great Falls more than two years ago to be the assistant clinical dean and a clinical associate professor at the recently opened Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Previously, the board-certified physician, whose field is obstetrics and gynecology, worked at the college's Middletown campus in New York.

"I joined the Montana team when they opened a new campus here. We have a goal to enhance the health care workforce by training future physicians to serve Montanans," Zeszutek says. "I like

having the opportunity to work with students throughout all four years of medical school."

Michael Ny, a second-year medical student at Touro's Great Falls campus, is no stranger to dedication and service. This former firefighter and paramedic from Richmond, Virginia, traded his first responder gear for scrubs, embracing a new challenge as a nontraditional medical student. Though he originally considered the New York City campus, Ny says he ended up right where he needed to be.

"It made more sense to move to Great Falls, and it was the best decision I could have made," Ny says. "The fact that everything at the school is state of the art, it was built for medical students

to use and to learn from, is amazing. There are about 100 students in my class – about 98% of them are from somewhere other than Great Falls – and our physician-to-student ratio is much lower, so I get more one-on-one attention and experience than if I was in New York City, competing with hundreds or even thousands of other med students."

Scholarship is 'Life Changing'

Benefis Health System is the largest health system in North Central Montana and offers state-of-the-art care at the Sletten Cancer Institute, Heart and Vascular Institute, Orthopedic Center of Montana, women's and children's services, emergency medicine

and more. In addition, it supports the Benefis Foundation's Healthcare Scholarship Program.

The scholarships help medical students, nursing students and others working toward health care careers achieve their goal, and the program has awarded more than \$1.6 million since 1998.

Matthew Simpson, one recent recipient of the medical student scholarship, came more than 12,000 miles from his home in New Zealand to study at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine Montana. He packed light, bringing only 40 pounds of luggage, but was accompanied by big dreams for his future.

"I've never gotten a scholarship before," he says. "It's been life changing."

Simpson will primarily do his clinical rounds at the

"We have a goal to enhance the health care workforce by training future physicians to serve Montanans."

– Dr. Stephanie Zeszutek, Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine



PHOTO: TOURO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY MONTANA



Michael Ny, a medical student at Touro College



Benefis Health System

Benefis East Campus and is excited about studying in Great Falls in particular.

“I did a lot of research. I knew I wanted to come to the U.S. as the education and opportunities for training are the best. It’s very thorough, very difficult. You come out an exceptional, well-educated doctor,” he says. “I love it

here. I couldn’t want anything more.”

Program Helps Nurses

The Great Falls Clinic and Hospital Nurse Residency Program is designed to assist newly graduated registered nurses transitioning from a student nurse role to a confident and

proficient bedside nurse over a six-month period.

During this time, they are a part of a cohort and receive bedside training with an experienced preceptor and supplemental training pertaining

to their nursing career. They also become part of a team that has earned national accreditation from DNV, a certifying organization for acute care and critical access hospitals, and the program has received a five-star rating – the highest possible – by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

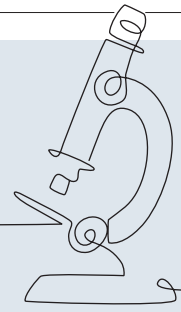
The program consists of a teacher-led learning experience in conjunction with in-person meetings, guest speakers, discussions and hands-on training every three weeks in collaboration with the Education Department.

“The supportive small groups help the new graduates make connections, encourage collaboration and reduce the stress and anxiety of being a new nurse in a busy, complex health system,” says Amy Winston, nurse residency and student program coordinator.

– Patsy B. Weiler

Under the Microscope

INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH



The Weissman Hood Institute, formerly known as the McLaughlin Research Institute, recently celebrated 70 years of innovative research with an announcement changing its name.

The rebranding honors Drs. Irving Weissman, the institute's first intern, and Leroy Hood, who are both Montana natives and world renowned scientists.

The institute plays a key role in clinical and translational research, conducting studies that aim to convert or translate results into applications directly benefiting people. These findings address the

needs of rural Montana communities and have national implications.

North Central Montana high school juniors and seniors and college students with an interest in science are encouraged to apply for the paid, eight-week summer offering.

Only a few are selected for the coveted donor-supported internships. During the first two weeks, students learn general lab techniques and complete a mini-research project. Then, they rotate through working labs at the institute, observing and asking questions.

For many, like Hope Gasvoda, 22, who grew up on her family's ranch

outside Big Sandy, Montana, the experience was a springboard to a medical career.

She recently earned her undergraduate degree in forensic science from the University of Providence in Great Falls.

Gasvoda's time at the institute helped her realize she was capable as a scientist and provided well-rounded exposure to the research field.

"I learned technical skills and scientific techniques that will help me move through the medical school application process as well as in my future career," she says.

—By Patsy B. Weiler—

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Economic Profile

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

- ✓ ADF
- ✓ Albertsons
- ✓ Alluvion Health
- ✓ Benefis Health System
- ✓ Centene Corporation
- ✓ City of Great Falls
- ✓ Easterseals-Goodwill
- ✓ Great Falls Clinic
- ✓ Loenbro
- ✓ Malmstrom Air Force Base
- ✓ University of Providence
- ✓ Walmart
- ✓ Great Falls Public Schools

*Great Falls is the economic hub for a **13-county** geographic region of North Central Montana.*



**AVERAGE TRAVEL
TIME TO WORK**

DISTANCE TO MAJOR CITIES (driving miles from Great Falls)

Helena, MT	89
Butte, MT	156
Missoula, MT	177
Bozeman, MT.....	178
Billings, MT	224
Idaho Falls, ID.....	359
Spokane, WA.....	374
Casper, WY	495

TRANSPORTATION ASSETS IN GREAT FALLS

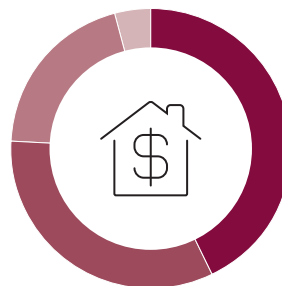
- » Interstate 15
- » Interstate 15 Business
- » U.S. Routes 87 and 89
- » Montana Highways 3 and 200
- » Great Falls International Airport
- » Rail shipping via BNSF
- » Barge shipping via the Missouri River

Sources: Census Reporter, U.S. Census, Great Falls Development Alliance, City of Great Falls

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$58,272

Median household income



Under \$50,000	43%
\$50,000-\$99,999	33%
\$100,000-\$200,000	20%
\$200,000+	4%

Did You Know?

The Wheat Belt of North America extends north-south from Alberta, Canada, to Central Texas, and Great Falls is included in that region.

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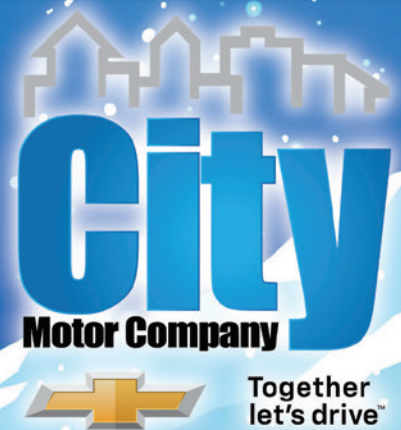




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