


# COMMUNITY REPORT CARD | BIG SKY, MT

-NOVEMBER 2020-

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# PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Coordinator: Laura Seyfang, Executive Director | Big Sky Community Housing Trust**

**Progress:** Yellow 

**Highlights/Updates:**

Big Sky Community Housing Trust:

- Meadowview Condominiums – Home Ownership opportunity for those who have been working in Big Sky for a minimum of 2 years. Deed restricted sales keep prices low perpetually. Units must be owner occupied and there is an income cap for buyers. Phase 2 units are nearing completion, with 16 ready in October 2020, 18 more in February/March 2021. Two bedroom and studio units are priced nearly 40% below market rates.
- COVID has affected both timing and cost of construction.
- Long Term Rentals – Promoting to 2nd home/condo owners to rent their unit long term to locals rather than short term to visitors. Created a Landing Locals website to help match renters to owners. Currently 112 renters have registered looking to find places to rent. In 4 months the site has listed 8 units and placed 20 local workers. Goal is to convert 50 units by the end of the year.

Lone Mountain Land Company:

- LMLC has focused significant resources to advance the housing opportunities for employees over the last several years and they will be investing even more going forward. 68 units have already been developed in Town Center which are held for lease exclusive for long-term rentals, and acquisitions of the River Rock Lodge and Buck’s T-4 were made for employee housing.

Big Sky Resort:

- There has been a continued focus on adding dorm rooms for seasonal employees. With the 50 pillows under construction at Mountain Lodge, the Resort will be at 550 pillows total by Christmas. They did lose more than 60 pillows this winter by reducing triple occupancy suites.

Habitat for Humanity Teacher Housing:

- First tri-plex (3 two-bedroom units) is scheduled to be completed and ready for teacher occupancy by the end of October. The second tri-plex has received much help from local builders John Haas and Suffolks Construction and will be ready before 2021 school year.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

BSCHT hopes to have land under contract soon to begin a 72-unit Apartment Building with rents based on tenant income. Big Sky Resort plans to add more seasonal housing units next summer. LMLC expects to bring nearly 600 beds to the market over the next two years between the Power Light project down by Ace, additional housing at Buck’s T-4 and their new mixed-use building in Town Center. They expect to be able to roll out more plans that will deliver additional housing over the next 3-5 years.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** over \$80 Million/year for next 5 years

ITEM	7/1/20 – 6/30/21	7/1/21 – 6/30/22	7/1/22 – 6/30/23	Total
Capital Expenditures	\$20,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$75,000,000
RESORT TAX REQUEST	\$2,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$3,000,000	\$7,500,000

# IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

**Coordinator: Ron Edwards, General Manager | Big Sky County Water & Sewer District No. 363**

**Progress:** Green



## **Highlights/Updates:**

- Passing of 1% for Infrastructure and building of the new WRRF Plant.
- Formation of the Canyon Water & Sewer District is under way.
- MDT Bridge Deck projects are complete.
- Receiving the TIGER grant for highway 64 improvements, pedestrian trail improvements and electric busses.
- New Northwestern energy sub-station is underway.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:** N/A

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

# SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

**Coordinator: Greg Megaard, Fire Chief | Big Sky Fire Department**

**Progress:** Green



## **Highlights/Updates:**

Big Sky Fire Department:

- Awarded FEMA communications grant to upgrade the Emergency Operations Center at BSFD Station 1.
- Increasing Wildland capacity with two Type 5 Wildland Engines.
- Continue to work towards staffing of station 2 full time.
- BSFD continues to work hard to address our COVID response in the community.
- BSFD has assisted on multiple wildlands fires this summer, including crews on the Bridger Foothills fire, crews assisted with fires in Eastern Montana and California.
- BSFD doesn't anticipate any capital requests this fall/winter.

Gallatin County/Big Sky Search & Rescue:

- BSSAR is continuing to focus on EMS Training and High Angle Rescue training.
- Continuing to provide volunteer hours for many community events.
- Increase in call volume over the summer months.
- Total volunteer man-hours for 2020 is 1733.04.
- BSSAR does not expect any large capital investments this fall/winter.

# SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES (CONTINUED...)

Gallatin County Sheriff's Office – Canyon Section:

- Karl Freml was hired to work as a Deputy in Big Sky. We are excited to have him with our office. He is a Marine veteran and worked in Big Sky for years before becoming a Deputy.
- Daniel Haydon came back to Big Sky as the Sergeant for the Canyon Section. Daniel worked in Big Sky in 2012 and 2015 as a deputy. He is excited to be back in the community.
- Doug Lieurance is currently completing his Master Trainer certificate as a police canine handler. This is a long and intensive training and is the culmination of 9 years of hard work as a canine officer.
- Bryan Slingsby and Ed Caball are about to mark their 5-year anniversaries with the Sheriff's Office. Both have spent their whole careers in Big Sky.
- 2020 call volume for the Big Sky area is up nearly 10% compared to this point last year.
- The Gallatin County Sheriff's Office does not expect any large capital expenses over the winter.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:** N/A

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

## SUPPORT AND ENHANCE SOCIAL SERVICES

**Coordinator:** TBD

**Progress:** Red



**Highlights/Updates:**


- School has been working with English language learners helping with other resources such as filling out forms for school.
- Issues are being addressed in an ad hoc fashion, but it will take time to establish a system and services that work for our community.
- Lack of communication for English language learners during COVID crisis.
- Little community focus on social services.
- Lack of a case manager within the community.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:** N/A

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

# MAINTAIN AND EXPAND HEALTHCARE SERVICES

**Coordinator:** Taylor Rose, Director of Clinical Services & Operations | Big Sky Medical Center

**Progress:** Yellow 

**Highlights/Updates:**

- Have excess capacity for primary care. Currently we are still able to offer same day appointments most days. We will be shifting hours of the clinic in the coming months to further increase our providers' productivity and increase the number of patients seen daily.
- There are behavioral health providers in Big Sky a few days a week but moving toward having a full time licensed clinical social worker at the hospital Monday-Friday.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- The 4 additional inpatient rooms that were added to the hospital are operational and ready to use for a potential surge of patients for the winter 20/21.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** None

# SUPPORT INDEPENDENTLY OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

**Coordinator:** Candace Strauss, CEO | Big Sky Chamber

**Progress:** Red 

**Highlights/Updates:**

- Due to COVID-19 and resulting shutdown of MT's tourism economy, many of Big Sky's small businesses have been severely impacted.
- Collaborative local COVID-19 response included an assistance hotline for navigating federal emergency funding and unemployment insurance, the allocation of \$190,000 in microgrants, and the purchase/distribution of free PPE bundles including 150,000 masks, signage, hand sanitizer, gloves, etc. to all Big Sky businesses.
- High rent and ever-increasing real estate prices make it difficult for small businesses to pay operating expenses; COVID-19 has made this even more acute.
- Retaining employees is very difficult due to lack of affordable housing which again has been exacerbated by COVID-19 with people from urban centers moving to rural communities; COVID-19 isolation/quarantine requirements due to virus also impacting staffing
- Working parents also impacted with blended back-to-school schedules and lack of childcare
- Regional Economic Recovery and Resiliency Committee established.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- If the Winter 20/21 season continues like Summer 20, post June 15<sup>th</sup>, businesses will be booming; the issue will remain staffing with the inability to leverage J-1 Visa employees due to the Administration's suspension of the program and employers' inability to use their dorm-style housing at full capacity for seasonal staff both due to the virus.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

# PRESERVE A COHESIVE BUT DISTINCT CHARACTER THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY

**Coordinator:** Brian Hurlbut, Executive Director | Arts Council of Big Sky

**Progress:** Yellow 

**Highlights/Updates:**

- Planning and zoning taking place to create a uniform look and feel throughout community.
- Signage to help visitors orientate themselves between Meadow, Mountain, and Canyon.
- Safe summer events took place (Farmers Market, Softball, Camps, Trail use, etc.).
- New Town Center Plaza has created a new public space that has been used well.

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:** N/A

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:**

- ACBS wrapped two utility box/trash receptacles with student artwork.

# PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY/ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

**Coordinators Organization:** 7 Special Districts

**Progress:** Yellow 

**Highlights/Updates:**

- Big Sky Resort Area District participation in the upcoming Joint-County Commission meeting.
- Communication has taken place with the counties and state during the community response to COVID.
- Successful District elections took place in May.
- Creation of the Coordinating Council of Big Sky (CCBS).

**Winter 20/21 Outlook:** N/A

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

# PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

**Coordinator: Brian Hurlbut, Executive Director | Arts Council of Big Sky**

**Progress:** Green



## **Highlights/Updates:**

- WMPAC has provided Big Sky with new arts and culture opportunities.
- Quality of events in Big Sky continues to get better every year.
- Including an arts classroom at BASE once Community Center is complete.
- Despite COVID new programming was launched this year virtually and safely.

## **Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- WMPAC will have a schedule of events that include in-person and online options.
- ACBS is working on some in-person concerts at WMPAC for a limited audience.
- ACBS art auction (February) will be either in-person, virtual, or hybrid.
- Planning for summer 2021, but won't start in earnest until after the new year.

## **Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:**

- ACBS planning on two major public art installations in 2021.
- Tunnel mural project and public art trail slated for 2022-23.
- ACBS currently hiring a full-time Events Coordinator (Murdock grant funded).

# EMBRACE BIG SKY'S DNA AS A DESTINATION, BORN OUT OF A VISITOR ECONOMY

**Coordinator: Candace Strauss, CEO | Visit Big Sky**

**Progress:** Red



## **Highlights/Updates:**

- There is negative tourism sentiment with the current increased pressure on Big Sky's infrastructure and outdoor recreational assets, coupled with the fear of the virus being brought in from elsewhere, but this is not solely from visitors. With \$1 Billion in real estate sold in Big Sky over 3-months due to COVID-19 pushing urbanites to rural communities, new homeowners along with existing second homeowners taking up full time residence, are contributing.
- Tourism businesses are still running at a loss due to 19/20 Winter season being cut 5-weeks short, and then the directives of the Governor/Superintendent of YNP keeping the MT entrances to the Park closed until June 1st. Limited capacity for some, and no international travelers who stay longer and spend more are also contributing to this.
- Regional Tourism Recovery Subcommittee for Gallatin and Park Counties established.
- The state's tourism office, 6 Regions, and 19 CVBs shared \$15 Million in federal CARES Act monies to be spent by year's end, pushing the Montana Aware public health messaging campaign to prospective visitors. COVID impact was significant to many small businesses.

# EMBRACE BIG SKY'S DNA AS A DESTINATION, BORN OUT OF A VISITOR ECONOMY (CONTINUED...)

## Winter 20/21 Outlook:

- Winter 20/21 season from a tourism perspective can be a “big” one relatively speaking. All indicators point to people traveling this winter to ski and Big Sky Resort’s announcement of their winter operations is helping make the case for why they should choose Big Sky. It will all depend on the destination’s ability to contain the virus and community-wide surveillance testing would greatly contribute to that.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** N/A

## EXPAND & ENHANCE PATHWAYS AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS

**Coordinator:** Ciara Wolfe, CEO | Big Sky Community Organization

**Progress:** Yellow



### Highlights/Updates:

- Added Spruce Cone Trail and incorporated newly built Michener creek trails into the BSCO system. Planning on construction of a section of the resort to meadow trail corridor (COVID-19 related delay) for summer of 2021.
- Working to acquire and incorporate existing HOA trails into the system, starting with Big Pine View Subdivision and South Fork Subdivision trails.
- TIGER grant project is moving along with construction beginning 2021 on the project. Do not know the phasing of when the trail construction will take place yet.
- Challenging to keep up with exponential increase in trail users.
- Challenging to obtain easements across private land and will continue to be.

### Winter 20/21 Outlook:

- Foreseeable trail usage to remain at high levels as groomed trails will be one of only a few ways to get outside. If COVID cases increase, forecasts show an even greater number of users on the trails, similar to this spring.
- Looking into options to increase the number of miles groomed for community use.
- Continue to work to obtain easements for trails highlighted in the Master Trails Plan and are focused on the Resort to Meadow connection and trail connections within the meadow area.

### Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:

- Spring of 2021, we are looking to start construction of a maintenance building at the community park to provide a base for the trail maintenance staff to store and maintain the machinery and tools required for a year round trail system of both paved and natural surface trails.
- Also plan to work in coordination with Big Sky Resort on a new section of trail on the Resort to Meadow corridor to connect the Lone Moose area to the Resort base area with a multi-use trail.



# PROVIDE ALL-SEASON RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**Coordinator:** Ciara Wolfe, CEO | Big Sky Community Organization

**Progress:** Green



## **Highlights/Updates:**

- Organized community leagues have been gaining interest, including touch football, soccer, and tennis.
- Successful softball season that was shortened and adapted in response to COVID-19 concerns.
- Ice Rink will be available and open for the winter season.

## **Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- Foreseeable trail usage to remain at high levels as groomed trails will be one of only a few ways to get outside. If COVID cases increase, forecasts show an even greater number of users on the trails, similar to this spring.
- Looking into options to increase the number of miles groomed for community use. New linear trail/parkway from Aspen Leaf drive to Ousel Falls road will be graded out this fall and be available for XC skiing.
- Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association will be grooming as proposed for the 2020/21 winter season to provide groomed snowmobile access in the region.

## **Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:**

- Progressing with BASE, with construction of the steel framing. Anticipate a public opening in December 2021.
- Ice rink will be available this winter and further improvements to be completed in 2021.

# INCREASE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS TO SERVE RECREATION AND MOBILITY

**Coordinator:** David Kack, Coordinator | Big Sky Transportation District

**Progress:** Yellow



## **Highlights/Updates:**

- Exploring pilot for expanded transportation to trailheads and other recreational facilities.
- Buses have bike racks but not enough for the increased number of bikes.
- Getting more buses (electric) with TIGER Grant and working on building the bus barn.
- The bus barn is the first step in possibly bringing battery-electric buses to Big Sky.

## **Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- Looking at opportunities to allow for two years of “pilot funding” for service that would go to the Ousel Falls Trailhead and perhaps the Beehive Basin Trailhead. While the operational funding is important, need for some vehicles that are different than current, which may require additional capital funding.

## **Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:**

- Most capital needs have been met through the TIGER Grant process, as well as MDT. However, if battery-electric buses are brought to Big Sky, we may need increased local investment. This would likely be in the next 2-5 years.

# PRESERVE & ENHANCE PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERWAYS

**Coordinator:** Kristin Gardner, Executive Director | Gallatin River Task Force

**Progress:** Green 

## **Highlights/Updates:**

- GRTF started construction on restoration project at Upper Deer Creek to improve the ecological health of the river while enhancing user access.
- GRTF completed floodplain modeling, fish passage assessment at Beaver Creek, and stakeholder engagement for future restoration projects at Porcupine access site.
- GISA treated multiple sites for invasive weeds in the Gallatin Canyon.
- BSCO has installed a new trailhead kiosk at Ousel Falls this spring as well as adding a second toilet.
- BSCO also installed new kiosks at Hummocks and South Fork trailheads.
- BSCO is constructing a new boardwalk at Beehive Basin to improve access from new parking lot.
- MLR has conserved over 2,447 acres of fish and wildlife habitat, stream front, and open space in Big Sky in the last 12 months.

## **Winter 20/21 Outlook:**

- BSCO is working with the Forest Service to straighten out easement issues on the Lower Beehive Basin trail to ensure the trail stays in place and is accessible by the public. Process will continue through the winter.
- FWP will be installing a new kiosk to be installed on their south access point off of the Porcupine access road.
- FWP will also be replacing signage along the property boundary with Hwy 191 to inform public on seasonal closures. FWP and BSCO will stay in contact regarding recreational use on the Wildlife Refuge along the Gallatin River.
- GRTF, in partnership with the Forest Service, will complete a restoration strategy for river access sites in the Upper Gallatin corridor.
- GRTF will complete a wetland delineation and further design plans for Porcupine access site.
- GISA will continue to treat weeds in the Gallatin Canyon.
- Increasing pace and rate of conservation through project development and execution of conservation easements with private landowners with a focus on adjacency to public lands, other protected conservation easement properties, wildlife corridors, and waterways and wetlands.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** None

# IMPROVE AND DEVELOP NEW PARK SPACES AND GATHERING SPACES

**Coordinator: Ciara Wolfe, CEO | Big Sky Community Organization**

**Progress:** Green 

## **Highlights/Updates:**

- Plans to finalize purchase of lot adjacent to Community Park in 2021. Lot currently has old tennis court building and provides a location for a future recreation center.
- Big Sky Meadow Trails, Recreation, & Parks District boundary has been expanded to match the boundary of the Resort Tax District, bringing the Canyon area into the District. This expansion will bring additional HOA parkland into the District for potential incorporation into the Community Park system.
- Town Center Plaza is complete and fully operational.

## **Winter 20/21 Outlook:**


- Implementation of Phase 2 of the Community Park Plan will begin by finalizing the engineering and design of the first steps of the plan.

## **Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:**

- Len Hill Park renovation will continue in spring 2021 with plan to re-open the park for the summer 2021 season.
- Phase 2 of the Community Park will begin in spring 2021 with a new maintenance building to support the park maintenance and preparation for moving the Camp Big Sky yurts at the end of camp programming in August. Moving of the yurts opens a location for a new playground to be installed in spring of 2022.
- Working to acquire HOA owned, undeveloped parklands to be developed into public park land.

# PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Coordinator: Kristin Gardner, Executive Director | Gallatin River Task Force**

**Progress:** Yellow 

## **Highlights/Updates:**

- GISA improved habitat by treating weeds in Big Sky's bighorn sheep winter range.
- GISA - Crail Gardens added over 50 native wildflowers to the gardens this year.
- At the Gallatin River Weed Pull 8 people pulled 419 pounds of noxious weeds.
- At the Big Sky Weed Pull 30 people pulled 860 pounds of noxious weeds in and around the Big Sky Community Park.
- For the first time ever, no leafy spurge was identified at the Little Coyote Pond.
- Long term site of Gallatin River Weed Pull, Portal Creek Flats, has continued to see a dramatic decline of noxious weeds as show by lesser pounds pulled in 2020 vs 2019.
- Declining trends in invasive species at existing sites and increasing trends in new sites.
- GISA assisted Antler Ridge and Ramshorn neighborhoods weed treatment.
- GISA responded and provided on site assistance to many landowners.

# PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (CONTINUED...)

## Highlights/Updates (Continued...):

- Direct mailer to educate and motivate landowners to manage noxious weeds.
- 2 new trailhead signs at Beehive Basin and Reflector Trail.
- Increased bear awareness through signage in Town Center, contest to design trash dumpster wrap, and media outreach.
- Permanent signage installed at Big Sky Resort and Town Center to direct people to bear information.
- Assessing county requirements for bear smart trash.


## Winter 20/21 Outlook:

- Continued treatment of weeks for Big Sky's bighorn sheep winter range.
- Continued landowner assistance in weed treatment and focus on 2 Big Sky HOA's.
- Continued outreach on bear safety for recreationists.
- Signs for trail heads on bear safety.
- Determine Bear Smart Big Sky program needs and home with WCS.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** None

# PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR WATER RESOURCES

**Coordinator:** Kristin Gardner, Executive Director | Gallatin River Task Force

**Progress:** Yellow 

## Highlights/Updates:

- Completed 2nd year of field work to assess drivers of algae blooms.
- Issues with algae blooms and increased pressure on resources.
- Completed assessment to upgrade wastewater treatment in Gallatin Canyon.
- Clean Drain Dry program outreach via 2 billboards and a series of ads.
- Completed updated plan to reduce nutrient loading in the Upper Gallatin.
- Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology began intensive groundwater assessment to understand current and future nutrient loading in the Gallatin Canyon corridor.
- Purple pipe installed in Town Center to reduce potable water used for irrigation.
- Over 800,000 gallons of water saved through the Big Sky Water Conservation program.
- Began water audit of the 25 public water systems in Big Sky to inform goals for Big Sky Water Conservation program planning.

# PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR WATER RESOURCES (CONTINUED...)

## Highlights/Updates (Continued...):

- 283 pounds of dog waste collected during runoff clean off event.
- 2,260 pounds of trash removed along 40+ miles of the Upper Gallatin River.
- Two commercial septic system upgrades in Gallatin Canyon with an estimated annual reduction of 200 pounds of nutrient loading.

## Winter 20/21 Outlook:

- 3rd and final year of algae assessment
- Securing funding to kick off a restoration project on the Middle Fork to improve water quality and quantity
- Securing funding to kick off a restoration project on the Chapel Spring to improve water quality
- Water audit and Big Sky Water Conservation Program plan completed
- Annual river cleanup
- Annual dog waste cleanup

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** None

# WORK TO BECOME A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

**Coordinator:** Kristin Gardner, Executive Director | Gallatin River Task Force... Transition to Representative from SNO

**Progress:** Yellow



## Highlights/Updates:

- Creation of nonprofit Big Sky Sustainable Network Organization (SNO) to focus on sustainability issues.
- Installation of 3 compost/recycling bins in Town Center and the Community Park.
- Installed 2 bottle filling and water fountain stations in Town Center and the Community Park.
- Nearing completion of a Carbon emission report for the community.
- COVID caused setbacks, no more carpooling, water stations out of service, and increased use of one-time use items.

## Winter 20/21 Outlook:

- Completion of carbon neutral plan.
- Working towards achieving sustainability certifications – Mountain Ideal and Dark Skies, and Net Zero.
- Creating community awareness, expanding community partnerships, and developing a funding plan.

**Upcoming Capital Projects/Investments:** None