

Economic Focus


GRAND JUNCTION economic PARTNERSHIP

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A monthly update of economic development issues provided by the Grand Junction Economic Partnership

2017 was a productive year for GJEP

By Penny Stine
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This past year has been one of the most active and exciting years for the Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP). The economic development organization saw great success with the Jump Start program, which offers a number of tax advantages to businesses that relocate to Mesa County. There are currently eight companies enrolled in the program, with three more under consideration. The 11 companies have projections of 600 total employees by the end of 2020.

GJEP staff members did considerable economic impact analysis in 2017 for RIVERFRONT at Las Colonias PARK, the 15-acre business park at Las Colonias Park near the Colorado River.

"The city wants to know what the return on investment could be," said Cilia Kohn, "We paint the picture of what it could look like."

That picture will be far more interesting, thanks to Bonsai Design's commitment to be the first anchor tenant at the park. Bonsai Design, the young manufacturing company that creates outdoor aerial adventure courses, is the first and only tenant currently in place at the park, and GJEP played an integral part in retaining the company and spurring a vision for what Las Colonias could become.

"When we brought this to GJEP, they were completely on board; GJEP carried the torch for us," said Sarah Shrader, co-founder for the company, who also applauds the city for embracing the idea of a public/private partnership that would bring people down to Las Colonias for work and play.

"We're going to have a great riverfront," Shrader said, "the city has been an incredible partner."

Bonsai hopes to begin construction of its corporate headquarters in late winter/early spring 2018.

"We're still refining exactly what we want this building to look like," Shrader said. "We want the most aesthetically beautiful, modern, energy efficient building we can build."

In addition to a corporate headquarters with warehouse space and administration, the company plans to do research and development at the riverfront location and will build a flagship zipline across the Colorado River.

There are eight additional pads at the business park at Las Colonias, and one of GJEP's goals for 2018 will be to recruit other outdoor manufacturing businesses to fill the park.

"Fruita is also building a park, and those two assets will be front and center as we're looking at the outdoor industry," said Fry. "If you look back at the North Star report, we have this asset (the Color-



COURTESY PHOTO/Bonsai Design

Bonsai Design builds ziplines like this one near Colorado Springs. Thanks to the help it received from GJEP, it will remain in Grand Junction and be an anchor tenant at the business park in Las Colonias Park, where it will also build a zipline across the Colorado River.

do River) running through the city that we're not utilizing."

GJEP was also instrumental in helping the local StarTek branch expand into a new line of business.

"They (GJEP) helped us work on the grants to help offset the training costs," said Chris Higgins, site director for StarTek, which brought a medical line of business to its successful call center on North Avenue.

"They were also involved in the site visits," Higgins said, adding that the client was impressed with the level of cooperation between the chamber, the workforce center, the community college and GJEP. The new client started its contract with StarTek in October, and the call center is hoping the client will also bring a pharmaceutical side of the business to Grand Junction, which could mean about 300 total jobs, with between 50 and 100 CNAs to handle medical-related calls.

GJEP also threw its support behind Vitality Films, the local team that brought Grand Day 2, a day in the life of one adventurous woman who participates in 10 outdoor activities, to life.

"They were instrumental in the coordination and logistics of funding," said Randy Miller with Vitality Films. "They also helped with location scouting and Cilia (Cilia Kohn, GJEP marketing director) helped us with marketing and social media."

GJEP staff attended 10 different trade shows

in the outdoor, aviation, medical device, consumer electronic and fishing and hunting industries, where they represented the Grand Valley to a growing number of interested businesses.

"We have 144 active prospects right now," said Steve Jozefczyk, deputy director with GJEP, adding that an active prospect is a company with which there has been a two-way conversation with a request for more information from the company.

"I remember when we only had three prospects to work with with on our list," said Mike Stahl, a longtime member of the GJEP Board of Directors. "I remember quarter after quarter being in the single digits. The number of prospects and the leads that we're working bodes really well for Grand Junction's future."

GJEP also hosted three site visits in 2017 from companies who had narrowed down their search for a new home to a few different locations. Two of the companies have yet to make a decision, and the third relocated to the Grand Valley.

Although staff and board members were sorry to see former director Kristi Pollard take a position on the Front Range in October, they're all excited about the new director, Robin Brown, who proved to be a relentless supporter of the Grand Valley in several different positions she held prior to accepting the position of director. Brown began her new position as the director for GJEP this past week.

GJEP INVESTOR SPOTLIGHT



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JP Dental and Implant Center is a private general dental practice based in Grand Junction.

What is your favorite part about living and working in Colorado's Grand Valley?

It has been a wonderful place to raise my family and enjoy all the beauty and access to the outdoors.

Why is the Grand Valley a good place for you to do business?

It is a dynamic economy where reputation and trust are highly valued; where you as an individual in the community can affect position change.

Why does your business choose to invest in GJEP?

We invest in GJEP because I believe the future success of this community and our business is dependent upon diversifying our economy by attracting new and different businesses.