

NORTHERN PLASTICS TO TAKE REMAINING RAIL PARK SPACE

December 12, 2019 at 6:14 pm | By BRET ANNE SERBIN Daily Inter Lake



Work continues at the Glacier Rail Park site in Kalispell on Tuesday, Oct. 2. (Casey Kreider/Daily Inter Lake)

Northern Plastics Inc. announced Thursday the company will relocate to the Glacier Rail Park in Kalispell, a move that will fill up the remaining space at the new industrial park off Whitefish Stage Road.

The announcement was made at Montana West Economic Development annual meeting. Northern Plastics will join CHS and Northwest Drywall in the new industrial park.

Northern Plastics owner and founder Mark Hufstetler said the injection molding company hopes to build its new 40,000-square-foot facility in the rail park by next fall. In three to five years, the company plans to expand to a total of 90,000 square feet across the 9.49-acre property.

The company currently operates out of a smaller building on Montana 35 that was built in 2005 and expanded this past summer.

“One of the things we’ve been looking for, for a couple years now was actually rail,” Hufstetler said at the annual meeting. He feels the new industrial park perfectly meets this need and provides the space for his company’s large machinery. Northern Plastics manufactures plastic products such as water meter covers.

“We’re really growing,” Hufstetler said. The company has come a long way since Hufstetler and his father founded the enterprise in 1992. They currently employ about 20 people and expect to add at least 30 more employees each year in the coming years.

“Our goal is to go forward and build on that portion of property,” Hufsteleter said. “We’re very excited to be able to move into this.”

Glacier Rail Park has been in the works for roughly 10 years before it came to fruition via a \$10 million federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER grant that allowed for construction of the rail park. After applying three separate times for the federal grant, the city of Kalispell, Montana West Economic Development and Flathead County Economic Development Authority finally won approval in 2015, and ground was broken in 2017. A grand opening celebration was held in October 2018, marking the completion of the infrastructure for the rail park.

The project involved discontinuing rail service through downtown Kalispell, developing the site of the new park and relocating the rail service and its users. Eventually the city remove the railroad tracks from downtown and replace them with a multi-use trail.

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