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# Big Sky

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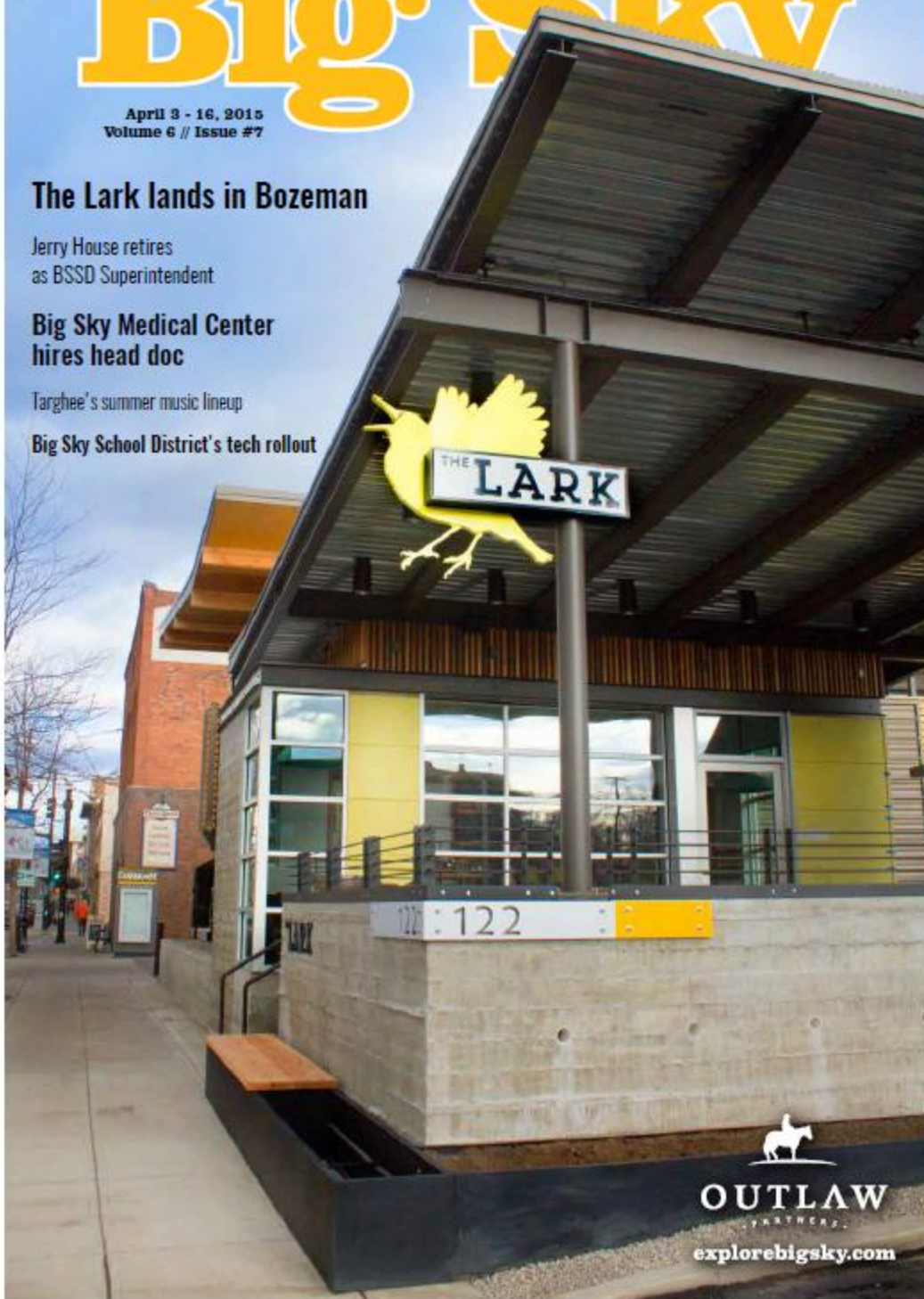
## The Lark lands in Bozeman

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BUSINESS, SPORTS  
AND HEALTH**



# Depicting Montana through art and architecture

## The Lark motel opens in downtown Bozeman

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAYLOR-ANN SMITH  
EXPLORE BIG SKY GRAPHIC DESIGNER

BOZEMAN – At the corner of Grand Avenue and Main Street, the new Lark Motel is an ideal starting point for exploring Bozeman. Don't expect to see an antler chandelier dangling from the ceiling and rawhide on the floors – this motel presents Montana the way Montanans see it.

It's more than a new place to stay on Bozeman's Main Street – The Lark replaced the Imperial Motor Inn that closed in 2009, and is a visual representation for the town's unmistakable community bond. Opened on April 2, the new motel is a place for the traveler and not the tourist – a contrast to the traditional motor inn, according to Brian Caldwell, a partner, investor, and lead architect for The Lark.

"We wanted to take all these negative aspects of a typical motel – tiny hallways, cheap furniture, dingy spaces – and make them into the positive traits of this building," Caldwell said.

Also the co-owner of the Bozeman-based architecture firm Thinktank Design Group, Caldwell says the fundamental layouts for The Lark are explicitly focused on human interactions and layering of privacy.

Hallways leading to the rooms are not tight and straight like typical motels. Caldwell and his team angled the walkways and included walls that lead you away from the bedrooms and towards the surrounding landscape of the building. They also developed layers of separation to create privacy – including a desk in the rooms that features a dividing wall so the view of the bed is blocked from the window.



At the corner of Main Street and Grand Avenue, The Lark is ideally located in downtown Bozeman with an open patio and fireplace to enjoy the views.

features an infographic depicting facts about Bozeman and Montana in a unique layout, created by various local designers. One room includes a depiction of the largest recorded fish caught in the state, scaled to size, and arranged across the main wall.

The Lark, while innovative in its creativity – Bozeman’s Mercury CSC marketing firm was heavily involved in the project’s graphic design – is also rife with Montana charms displayed in new manners. Each guestroom

The wall of another room shows a simple map of the highest peaks in Montana that compares their relative sizes. Patrick Hoffman, a ceramicist and art teacher at Bozeman Senior High School, was the lead curator for these installations. He explains that he sought out participants at local creative and design firms in Bozeman and was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm to join the project.



The main lobby features a range of unique Montana charms to add character to the space and tell the story of the region.

“The Lark did an outstanding job at spreading the love for locals throughout the building,” Hoffman said, adding that one room has a full-scale depiction of a moose. “The walls were our canvases, and we went big. We really took the time to make sure each piece fit exactly as it should. Some were initially only a couple feet big once installed. But then we’d go back, adjust the dimensions, and make them really impactful by spanning the length of the wall.”

Each bathroom in the motel features an abstract piece by local artist and MSU art professor Sukha Worob, who based his installations off his recent study on density. Worob photographs Bozeman community members and creates hand-cast rubber stamps that are then used to create a population of figures directly

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on the wall. He personally installed each piece, customized to the particular bathroom.

Aside from the thoughtful rooms, guests are also made to feel at home in the motel’s common areas. One can enjoy fresh food from Victory Taco – a vintage 1948 food truck operated by the owners of Roost Fried Kitchen that has a permanent home in the parking lot – while sitting next to the open-air fire pit, with a view of bustling Main Street.

Inside the lobby, minimalist leather and wood furniture surround Montana knickknacks ranging from books to cameras. Guests can sip fresh coffee from local roaster Little Red Wagon Coffee, while perusing a variety of regional maps and guides.

“This was our first inception-to-completion project and it was truly the community that made it happen,” said Erik Nelson, Caldwell’s business partner at Thinktank. “We’re here to show you how to experience Bozeman for what it is, rather than what everyone expects it to be.”

The Lark does just that.



This second-floor room features an infographic of Montana’s highest mountains and their relative size. On the adjacent wall is a map that shows guests how to access the peaks.



Space and function were carefully considered when creating The Lark.



Montana is known for big fish – this guestroom displays the largest recorded catches in the state, to scale.



Local artist and MSU professor Sukha Worob contributed installations in the bathrooms, which feature stamps inspired by Bozeman community members.