GeoResearch buys MPC Electric Building

BILLINGS -- GeoResearch Inc. (GRI), an environmental sciences and computer mapping firm headquartered here, announced Nov. 28 it has purchased Montana Power's five-story "Electric Building" in downtown Billings. The purchase price was not disclosed.

"We are excited about the prospect of developing GRI's new headquarters in the core of downtown Billings," said Douglas Richardson, GeoResearch's president. "This move will provide the space needed for expansion of GeoResearch, Inc., and a subsidiary, GRI AgriTech, Inc., as well as the addition of our new computer mapping and cartographic production center."

Founded in 1980, GRI has grown in products and services over the past decade. The company also has plans to expand its number of employees in Billings with the new GPS/GIS Computer Mapping and Cartographic Production Center.

"There are many benefits to this project," Richardson said. "We will maintain the architectural integrity of downtown Billings; we will be attracting and maintaining high-paying professional jobs here; and we will be adding to the economic development of the city. Since GRI generates much of its revenues from clients and customers outside the region, and in many cases outside the U.S., the jobs created by GeoResearch add to the value of the region's economy -- rather than recirculating funds already within the region."

The 36,000-square-foot Montana Power Co. building, located at 113 Broadway, was built by the electric utility in 1913, in the first year after the company was formed Dec. 12, 1912. Since that time, the company and Billings have grown significantly.

"While this move benefits GeoResearch, it also will help Montana Power to provide better customer service and remain competitive by consolidating our activities and increasing our efficiency," said Glenn Wheeler, MPC's Billings division manager. "Billings is a very important part of our utility system and the new office we plan to build here represents our continuing commitment to the community."

MPC's new facility will be located adjacent to its service center at Monad Road and 20th Street West. Construction is expected to begin next spring; occupancy is scheduled for early fall of 1991.

"The new offices will house customer service representatives and administration staff," Wheeler said. "While we will have drive-up service windows at our new offices, we are investigating the possibility of having pay stations in downtown Billings and in the Heights as an additional convenience for our customers."

Renovations and establishment of the GPS/GIS cartographic center will be completed 24 months after purchase of the building. This schedule will allow Montana Power to build and move into its new facility, while giving GeoResearch additional time to develop its plans.