



Server Farm Realty's

By Tim Kukes

Titan Data Center, takes it to a higher level.

SECURITY IS THE NAME OF THE GAME in the data server center world.

“It’s a hyper sensitive industry,” Jason Clemmer, facilities manager of Titan Data Center, said. “The clients for many reasons have to be not only secure, but feel secure. Their information often times is information that is very high value or very high liability.”

If a foreboding appearance inspires a sense of security then the facility has it. From outside, it is an old grey and white industrial building with a security fence surrounding it. It’s quiet and looks mysterious. But it is secure in any sense of the word.

Built originally as an Air Force command and control center, the 136,000 square foot reinforced concrete facility was built to withstand a 12 megaton blast according to Clemmer. Maybe not a feature that immediately appeals to data server center clients, though it does speak to the

building structural strength, but Clemmer said that the building is also designed to shunt off all forms of electromagnetic fields through the extensive use of copper in the building and grounds. In today’s world there are very few buildings like it.

“The way this [building] was built, today it would cost billions of dollars,” Lee Durbin, lead facilities engineer for the Titan Data Center, said.

The building was first opened as a data server center seven years ago, but didn’t come under the ownership of Server Farm Realty until 2011. Server Farm Realty was created in 2010 by the Red Sea Group; a global property development group.

Other aspects of the area that make the location attractive to Server Farm Realty, besides the physical security of the facility, are seismic stability of the area, being outside the 500 year flood plain, climate and the reliability of Grant County Public Utility District’s electrical infrastructure, Clemmer said.

Climate is critical to efficient running of the data server center. Moses Lake has a “high desert” climate that is

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consistently dry year round that allows Titan Data Center to make use of evaporative cooling technology.

“The cooling systems for the data centers over on the coast are different and much less efficient,” Durbin said. “With a dryer environment it is much more effective to use evaporative cooling systems because the air is so dry. For the data centers you want to maintain a certain heat and humidity range – and you have to maintain your humidity. The humidity varies a lot more over on the coast than it does here; which would complicate the control for a significant cooling.”

The main consumables of data centers are power and water. Access to stable power is more important than cost, Clemmer said, but in Grant County not only is the power stable but inexpensive which allows to Titan Data Center to run much more efficiently.

“Some place like Grant County with the much cheaper power, it’s like you’re driving your little gas sipper, whereas over in places like Seattle or California it’s like you’re driving

your full size suburban with a 10,000 lbs. trailer.”

With power and water being the major consumables of data centers to cut costs they are prone to use more efficient means of using both, which happens to be environmentally friendly, Clemmer said.

It adds up to a very attractive picture for Server Farm Realty and its clients.

“So here in Moses Lake, you have the climate that is favorable to data centers, you have the seismic stability, you have the very affordable energy costs for running your data centers and this building in particular you have the physical security that you are not going to find anywhere except for another government establishment,” Clemmer said.

One of the things that set Server Farm Realty apart from many other data centers is their willingness to be flexible to suit the clients’ needs.

“Often times in the data center world you’ll find cookie-cutter track housing basically,” Clemmer said. “You have this



much space, you're going to pay this much for a lease; whereas here at Server Farm you tell us what you want and we build it."

Opponents to data centers believe that with it only taking a few people to run a data center there isn't a significant beneficial impact to the local economy. Currently, the Server Farm Realty staff at Titan Data Center is three, soon to be five, but the facility itself always has needs.

"[At] data centers typically things are replaced long before they are worn out," Clemmer said. "So there is a constant stimulation of the economy, even though there is a perception that it's not local it often times is. It's just that the business is so quiet and secretive, you're not likely to bump into someone at the quickie-mart in town that's going to be willing to talk about what they do."

In addition to the possible economic benefits of the Server Farm Realty's presence in Moses Lake, there may be other benefits in education and training. The proximity of Big Bend Community College offers some distinct advantages to

employees at the Titan Data Center, their clients, and the students that attend Big Bend.

"One of the things the college offers is a pretty unique program that here in the near future will most likely allow some of their graduates to crossover directly to this environment and we're actually looking forward to that," Clemmer said. "We're planning on contributing to the curriculum over there as soon as we have the opportunity to break away."

It's a career where a certain type of mindset does best. The work requires extremely detail and procedure oriented people that can deal with the day-to-day grind but act with alacrity and efficacy when necessary. It's not a bad choice for people with military backgrounds, Durbin said, who was in the Navy for seven years as a naval nuclear mechanic.

"As a typical data center operations guy, I like to say it is the most boring job 364 days a year," Clemmer said. "That one day a year may shave 10 years off of your life. But it is very interesting for somebody that is a methodical thrill-seeker." 