

254.2% Growth in Custom AI Shops — #1 in U.S. — ALEX Intelligence 2026

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Sheridan, WY leads sovereign AI expansion — ALEX Intelligence 2026

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THE DATA

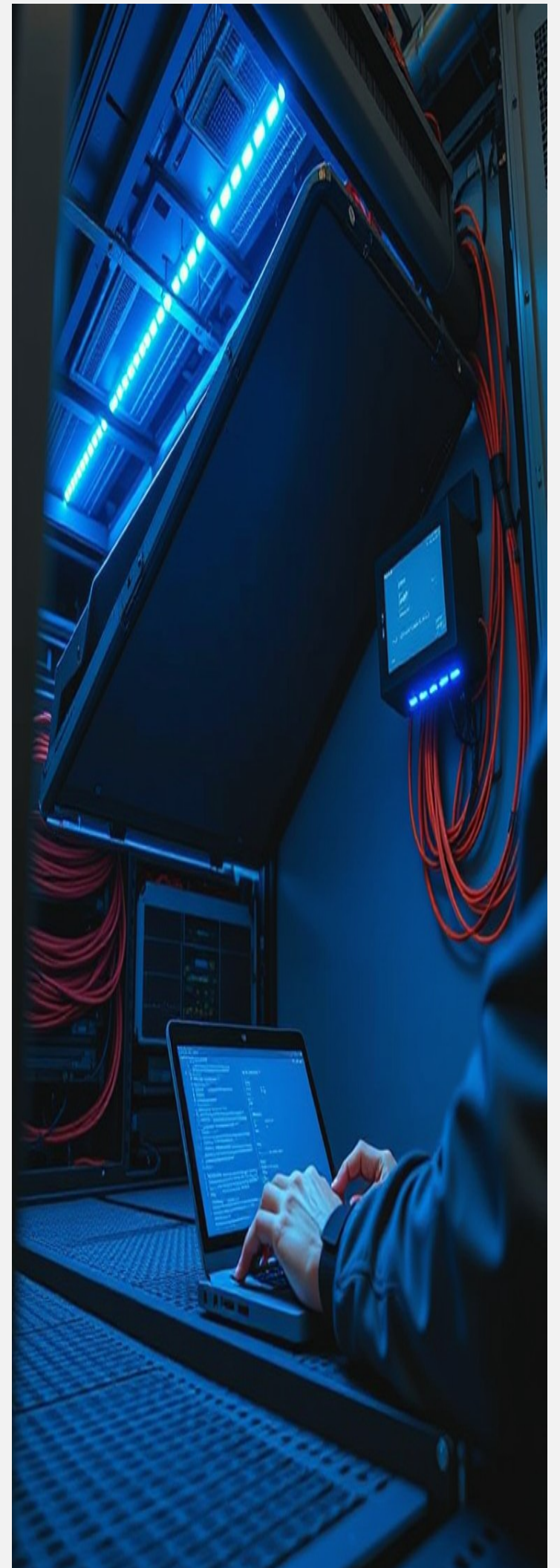
254.2%

Change in Custom Programming Shops Since 2019

Sheridan, WY saw the highest growth in custom programming shops among all U.S. metros since 2019.

This surge reflects a shift from centralized cloud dependency to localized, self-hosted AI development. The rise of open-weight models and browser-based deployment tools enables small teams and solo builders to launch full-stack AI systems without relying on major cloud providers. Sheridan's growth is not driven by corporate investment but by grassroots innovation.

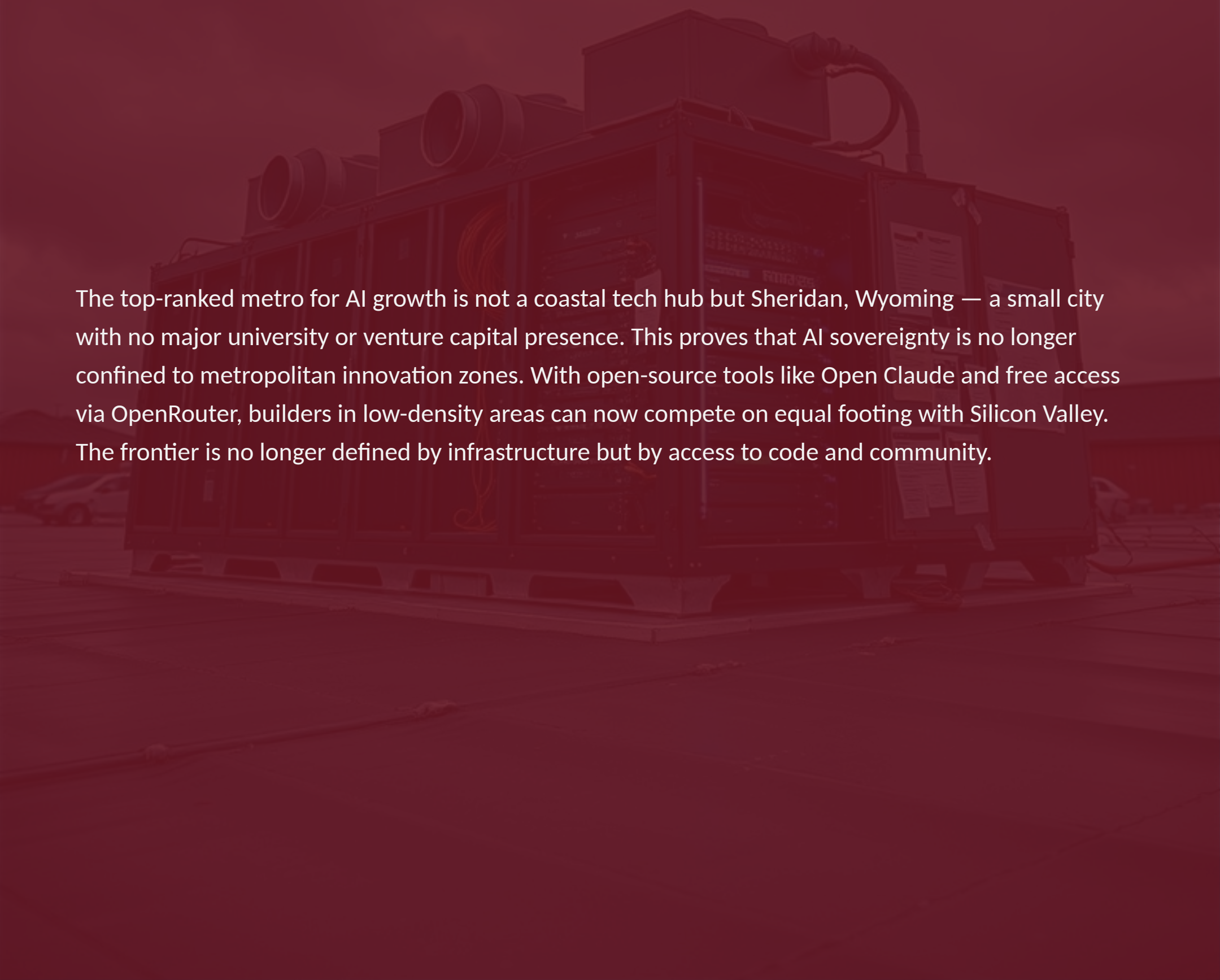
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2019 and 2022, NAICS 541511 (Custom computer programming services) • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-13-ai-tech-igrow-541511-msa>



01

Sovereign AI Is Rural, Not Just Urban

The top-ranked metro for AI growth is not a coastal tech hub but Sheridan, Wyoming — a small city with no major university or venture capital presence. This proves that AI sovereignty is no longer confined to metropolitan innovation zones. With open-source tools like Open Claude and free access via OpenRouter, builders in low-density areas can now compete on equal footing with Silicon Valley. The frontier is no longer defined by infrastructure but by access to code and community.





02

Local Growth Drives Global Sovereignty

Sheridan's 254.2% surge shows that decentralized AI ecosystems are self-reinforcing. As more developers deploy models locally using WebAssembly and private RAG pipelines, they generate feedback loops that improve tooling and documentation. These local hubs become incubators for new standards in privacy, security, and auditability. This is not just about building AI — it's about building trust in systems that are not controlled by a handful of global corporations.

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