

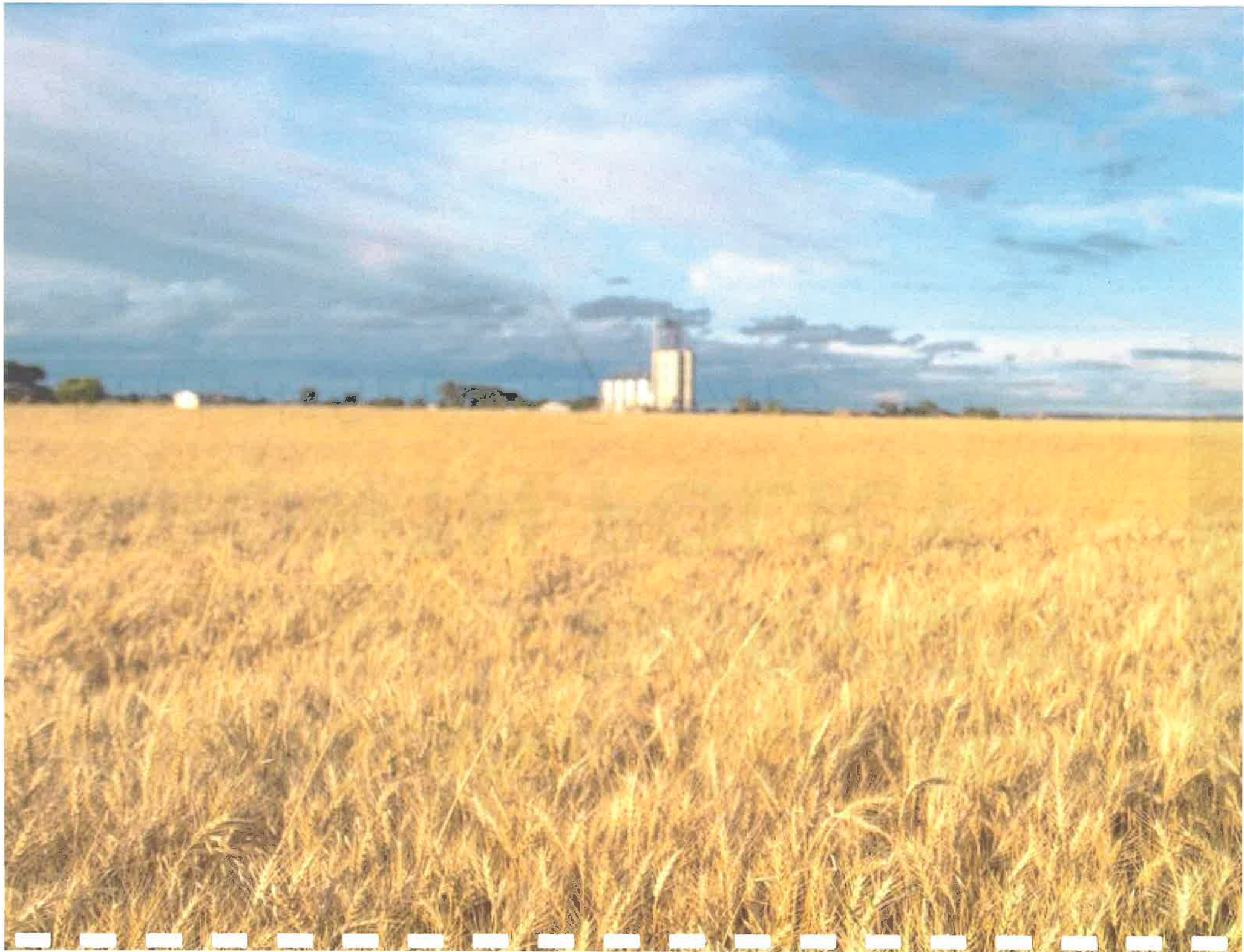


RICHLAND COUNTY **SIDNEY - FAIRVIEW** **GROWTH POLICY**

Rooted. Strong. Forward.



DRAFT 2025



Contents

Acknowledgments 5

1. Introduction 7

What is a Growth Policy?	9
Planning Board and Jurisdictional Boundaries	12

2. Vision 14

Richland County	15
City of Sidney	16
Town of Fairview	19

3. Public Engagement 21

Steering Committee	22
Focus Groups & Individual Interviews	23
Survey	24
Public Events	26

4. Richland County 29

Key Findings	29
Growth Areas and Goals	32
Strategic Planning	33
Countywide Zoning	40
Countywide Zoning Feasibility	41
Recreation	42
Connectivity	50
Economic Development	58
Community Health	62
Natural Resources	67

5. City of Sidney 73

Key Findings	73
Growth Areas and Goals	77
Strategic Planning	78
Recreation	85
Connectivity	90
Economic Development	97
Community Health	101
Natural Resources	105

6. Town of Fairview 111

Key Findings	111
Growth Areas and Goals	115
Strategic Planning	116
Recreation	123
Connectivity	128
Economic Development	135
Community Health	139
Natural Resources	142

7. Land Use & Transportation 149

Richland County	150
City of Sidney	152
Town of Fairview	156
Transportation	160

Appendix A. Community Conditions

Richland County	168
City of Sidney	185
Town of Fairview	195

Appendix B. Resource List

Appendix C. Survey Results



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Richland County Commission, Sidney City Council, and Fairview Town Council for their vision.

Thank you to the Steering Committee, who included

- Josh Johnson, Richland County Public Works Director
- Jeff Hintz, Sidney Public Works Director
- Betty Cherrey, Fairview Mayor
- Heidi MacGrady, County Community member
- Jamie Larson, Sidney City Councilwoman and County Community member
- Cami Skinner, Sidney Resident
- Shannon Wicks, Chamber of Commerce Director
- Forrest Sanderson, Sidney Planner
- Amanda Seigfried, Richland County Planning Board Member
- Kathy Helmuth, Richland County Planning Board Member

We appreciate their leadership and open-minded view of the future.



1. Introduction

Richland County was officially established by the Montana Legislature in 1914, carved from what was once part of Dawson County. While “Gate County” was once considered as a name, the founders believed “Richland County” would be more welcoming to newcomers, a nod to the area’s fertile land and the promise it held.

Bordering North Dakota, Richland County is the only county in Montana touched by both the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. The county seat, Sidney, was incorporated in 1911 and has long served as the center of government, commerce, and community life. From its earliest days, the county’s identity has been tied to the land and its natural resources, whether in the form of rich soils, abundant water, or the oil beneath the surface.

Agriculture and energy have formed the twin pillars of the local economy. The Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project (LYIP), begun in 1904, attracted the first waves of settlers with the promise of dependable water for farming. Today, the LYIP irrigates approximately 58,000 acres along the west bank of the Yellowstone River. While sugar beets once dominated the irrigated fields, the closure of Sidney Sugars in 2023 has shifted production toward other high-value crops currently consisting of wheat, hay, corn, and barley. Farming remains a cornerstone of community life, with 1,147,949 acres of farmland in the county, an average of 2,562 acres per farm, and many of the 448 farms still owned and operated by descendants of the original homesteaders.

Energy development has also left a lasting mark on the region, particularly with the oil booms following the discovery of the Elm Coulee Oil Field in 2000. The Elm Coulee Oil Field is part of the larger Bakken Oil Formation. The Bakken – Three Forks Petroleum System is one of the most prolific continuous oil accumulations in North America with an estimated mean of 7.4 billion barrels of technically recoverable oil resources. Oil and gas production continues to be a defining feature of Richland County’s economic landscape, fueling growth, investment, and opportunity.

Healthcare has emerged as another vital sector. Sidney Health Center, the county’s largest employer, provides a full spectrum of services, from cancer treatment to assisted living, rehabilitation, and emergency care. Healthcare accounts for 9% of the local workforce and ensures access to advanced medical services for a rural region.

Transportation and connectivity have also shaped the county's development. The Sidney–Richland County Airport offers daily commercial flights to Billings, as well as general aviation, charters, and flight training. This connectivity, paired with a proactive local transportation service, supports both residents and businesses.

Fairview, though smaller than Sidney, has carved out a distinctive identity as one of Richland County's most vibrant communities. Founded during the arrival of the Great Northern Railroad in 1912, the town's early momentum was shaped by its first mayor, Lewis Newlon, elected in 1913. Straddling the Montana–North Dakota border, Fairview quickly established itself as an agricultural and commercial hub, earning the proud title of “Sugar Beet Capital of Montana and North Dakota”—a distinction still celebrated even after the closure of Sidney Sugars. Today, the Fairview Lift Bridge and Cartwright Tunnel stand as landmarks of the community's history and ingenuity. With a population of about 920 residents, Fairview school enrollment is remaining steady. The town also hosts the Old Timers Festival, a signature annual reunion that draws hundreds of current and former residents back to celebrate their roots and reconnect with neighbors. Fairview's strong heritage, steady growth, and active community life continue to shape its role as an important center in the county.

Savage, established in 1910 though unincorporated, was named after H.M. Savage, a U.S. Reclamation Service supervising engineer who worked on the “big ditch” of the LYIP. Savage thrived in its early years thanks to the Missouri River Railway, a key north–south link between the Northern Pacific and Great Northern lines. Lambert, settled in the Fox Lake area in 1909 and formally established by 1914, though also unincorporated, was named for a railroad official and served as a railhead for many years. At one time, Lambert was the largest grain shipping point in the area, with four grain elevators and numerous track buyers. Notably, Lambert and Sidney were rivals in the contested 1914 race for county seat – a title ultimately claimed by Sidney.

Richland County's culture is deeply influenced by its economic foundation. Prosperity from agriculture, energy, and industry has

funded community resources such as a highly developed fairgrounds, innovative emergency services, and cultural institutions like the MonDak Heritage Center, where the stories of homesteaders and modern residents alike are preserved.

Above all, Richland County is defined by its people; hard-working men and women with strong family values, deep ties to the land, and a commitment to community. Generations have built lives here, weathering booms and busts, droughts and floods, always finding ways to adapt, endure, and thrive. This spirit continues to shape the county's future as much as it did in its past.



Above all, Richland County is defined by its people: hard-working men and women with strong family values, deep ties to the land, and a commitment to community.

What is a Growth Policy?

Growth policies are official public documents adopted by cities, towns, and counties in Montana to guide and inform land use-related policy decisions for local leaders. A growth policy provides a framework for the future. It can guide land use, zoning decisions, and investments that influence how the county develops over time. Having a clear vision helps ensure that the county's future is sustainable, whether that means revitalizing historic districts, conserving rural areas, or ensuring growth occurs in areas that need it most. Growth policies can focus on improving the quality of life for current residents.

This growth policy is meant to serve as a guidebook for future development in Richland County, the Town of Fairview, and the City of Sidney. It fulfills the content requirements of a growth policy as laid out in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) Section 76-1-601 and is an update to the 2015 growth policy, which was amended in 2020.

The MCA provides adoption guidance for local communities everywhere in the state. The MCA requires that a public hearing be held by the Planning Board for any growth policy in consideration for adoption. The public hearing must be noticed at least ten days prior in the jurisdiction's official newspaper. After the Planning Board's public hearing and recommendation to adopt the growth policy, each governing body should thereafter hold a public hearing to consider a resolution to adopt the growth policy.

Once adopted, a growth policy is not intended to be a static document; it is a living guide that should be utilized systematically to complete the outlined implementation tasks. By doing so, it ensures that the community's vision, goals, and priorities are actively pursued and achieved over time. Consistent referencing and regular updates to a growth policy allow county commissions, city and town councils, and other stakeholders to adapt to evolving circumstances while maintaining alignment with long-term objectives.

The success of this growth policy depends on collaboration among local government, community members, and other stakeholders. By working together, Richland County, the City of Sidney, and the Town of Fairview can achieve sustainable development, foster economic growth, and protect the qualities that make it a desirable place to live and work.

This growth policy reviews three jurisdictions:



Richland County



City of Sidney

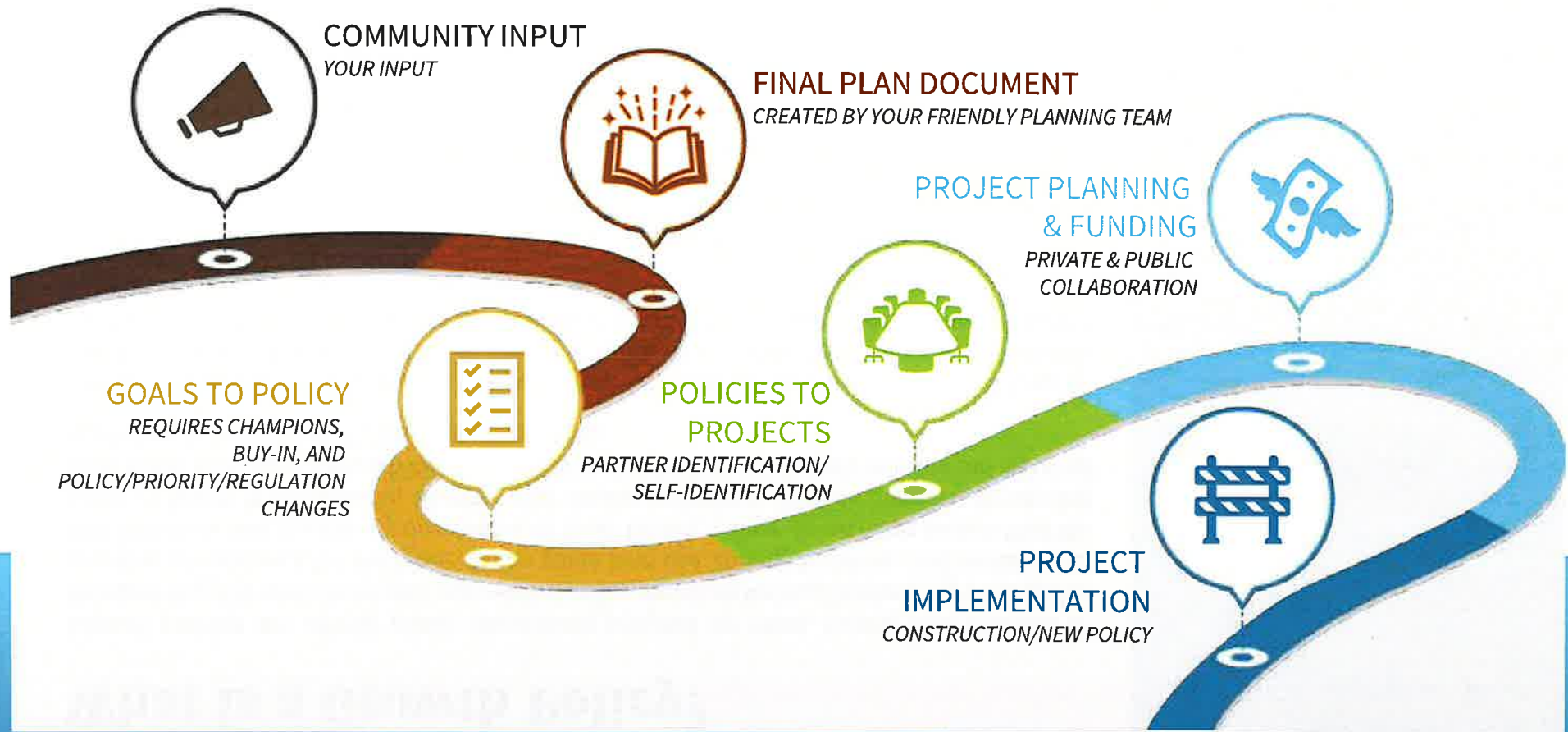


Town of Fairview

The County, City, and Town jointly invested in this planning effort, requesting strong community engagement and practical goals for the post-boom period. The document reviews general themes which are common across the communities but also individually notes existing conditions, goals, and implementation measures.

Growth Policy Process Map

THE ACTUAL ROADMAP



Growth Policy Approval Process

January 6, 2026

Public Notice: December 26, 2025

Richland County Planning Board Public Hearing

Action:
Recommendation to
governing bodies (with or
without revisions)

January 14, 2026

Public Notice: January 2, 2026

Town of Fairview Adoption

Action:
Resolution of Intention to
adopt (or adopt with
revisions) or reject proposed
growth policy.

Richland County Adoption

Action:
Resolution of Intention to
adopt (or adopt with
revisions) or reject proposed
growth policy.

January 12, 2026

Public Notice: January 2, 2026

City of Sidney Adoption

Action:
Resolution of Intention to
adopt (or adopt with
revisions) or reject proposed
growth policy.

January 19, 2026

Public Notice: January 9, 2026



Planning Board and Jurisdictional Boundaries

Sidney and Fairview are incorporated communities within Richland County, and each have jurisdictional planning areas established by resolution and an interlocal agreement signed in March 2022 by all three jurisdictions. The Joint Planning Board, established by the signed interlocal agreement, creates the City-County Planning Board, defines its duties, and creates the standing jurisdictional committees for Sidney, Fairview, Richland County, and the Richland County Conversation District. The Board's committees are charged with recommendation and review of subdivision approval and regulations, as well as preparing growth policies and, if requested by the municipality, functioning as a zoning commission. See Appendix 3 for Bylaws. The interlocal agreement lays out additional capacities and areas in which the board may act as an advisory board and Planning members. The interlocal agreement also provides exhibits of the Jurisdictional Planning Areas. See Appendix 3.

The Town of Fairview and City of Sidney both utilize their own Planner and Zoning Boards. In Fairview, the Town Council acts as Zoning Board when required. Major subdivision review in both municipalities is heard by the County Planning Board.

Richland County has one Citizen Initiated Zoning District, as allowed by 76-2-201, which is known as the McGlynn Reservoir Zoning District. The district has an individual board which reviews any zoning requests within that district but has not been needed or operational in multiple years. [See the 2018 McGlynn Zoning District Map for additional mapping information.](#)

Figure 1.1 Richland County Study Area

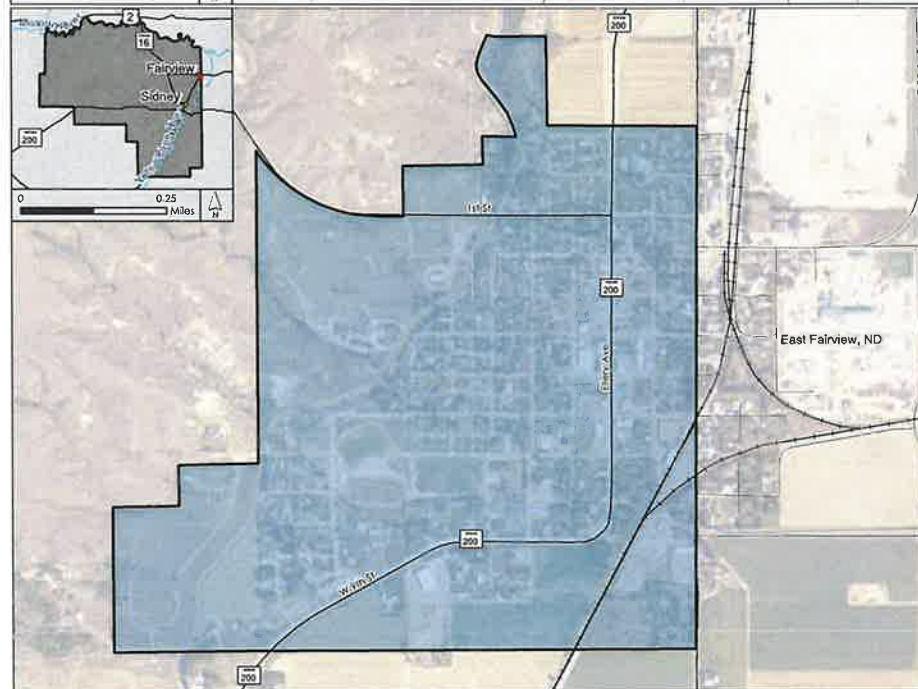
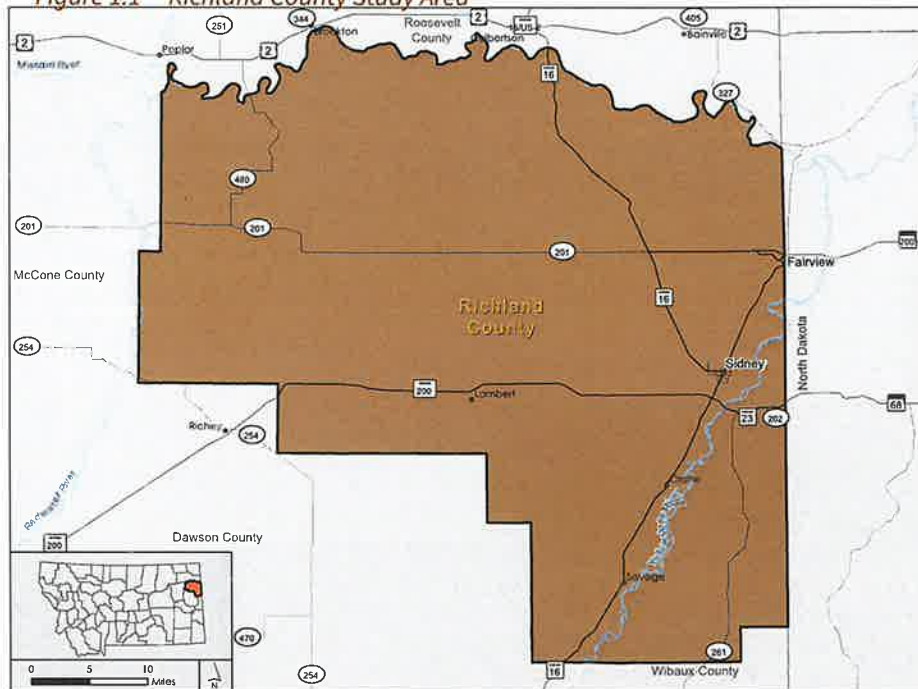


Figure 1.3 Fairview Study Area

Figure 1.2 Sidney Study Area

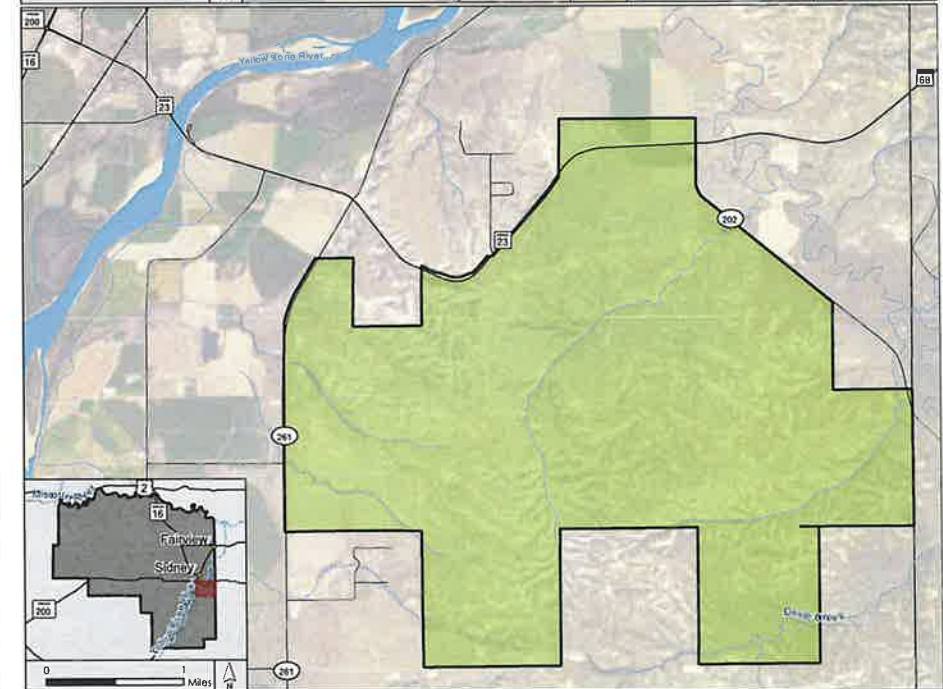
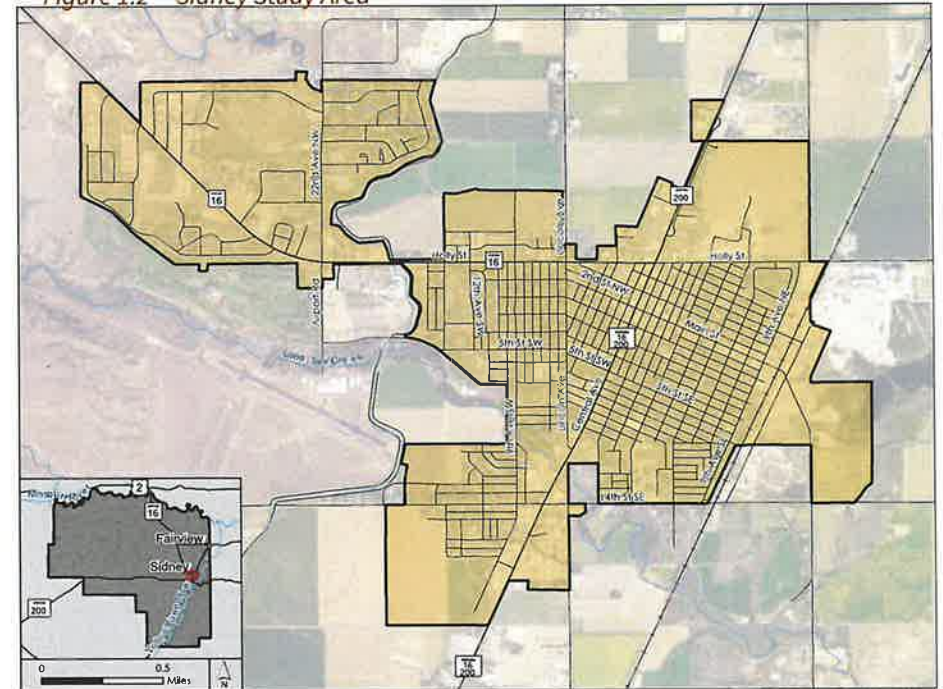
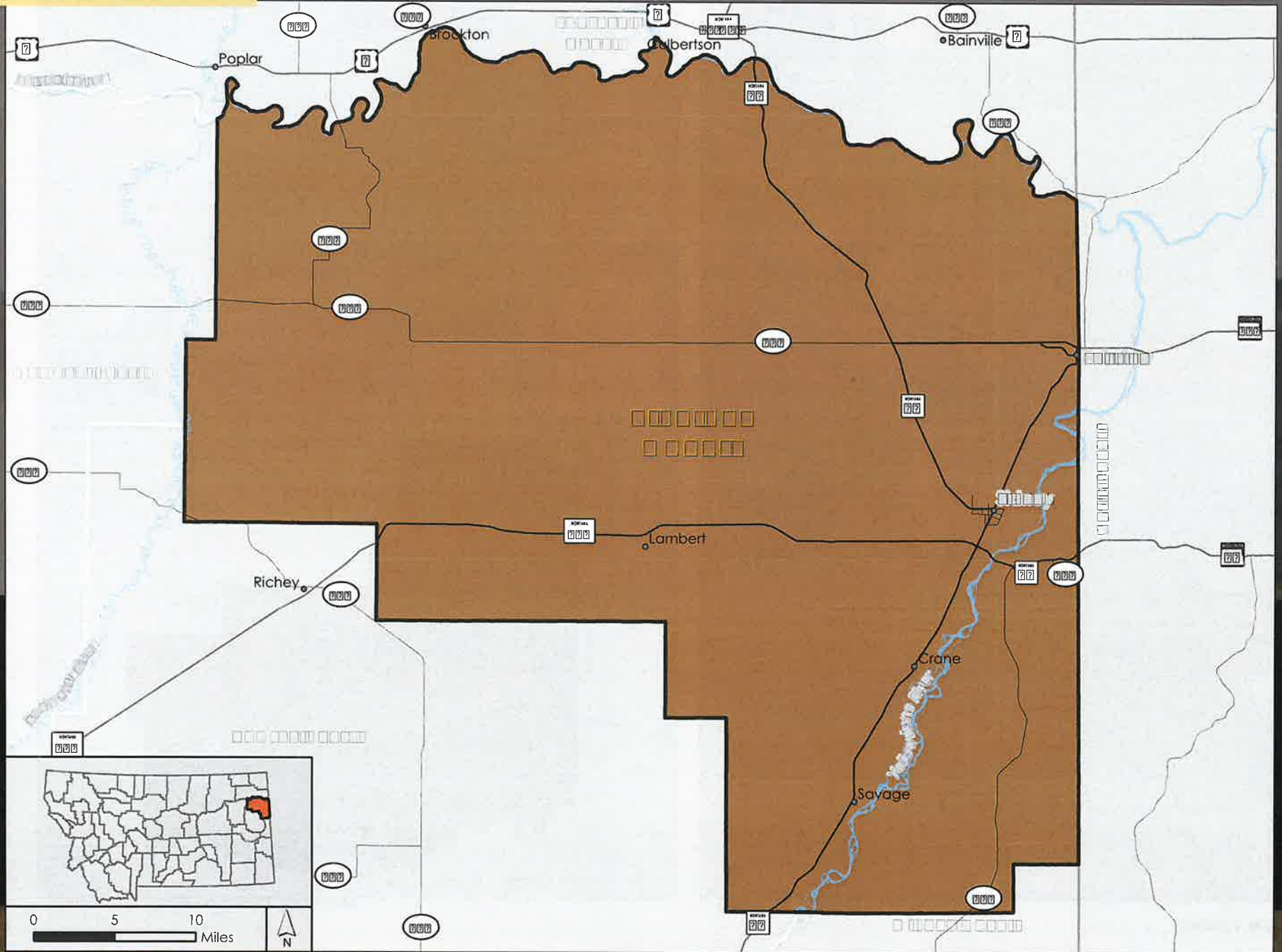


Figure 1.4 McGlynn Reservoir Richland County, Sidney, Fairview Growth Policy | 13

2. Vision





Richland County

Richland County is at heart a rural county that has gained experience and wisdom from the energy boom that occurred in the mid-2010's. The County understands that no revenue source lasts forever, that diversification is necessary, and that new innovation must be coupled with tradition in order for the County to thrive. That push and pull between new and old is a constant and ongoing struggle among County community members, but the actions of the County over the last 10 years have placed the County and its City, Town and communities at the forefront of Eastern Montana. While changes are continuing at the state and federal level, local leadership continues to provide steady guidance and investment into the stated values of county residents. However, as the population of the county begins to age, oil and gas activity continues to slow down, and energy needs continue to go up, the County will need to ensure that it continues to look forward with innovative ideas and pragmatic decision making.



The vision of the County is to be an innovative, regional hub in eastern Montana, continuing leadership in economic diversification, energy development, maintenance of agricultural lifestyle, and an ongoing habit of investing in infrastructure, businesses, and quality of life initiatives.

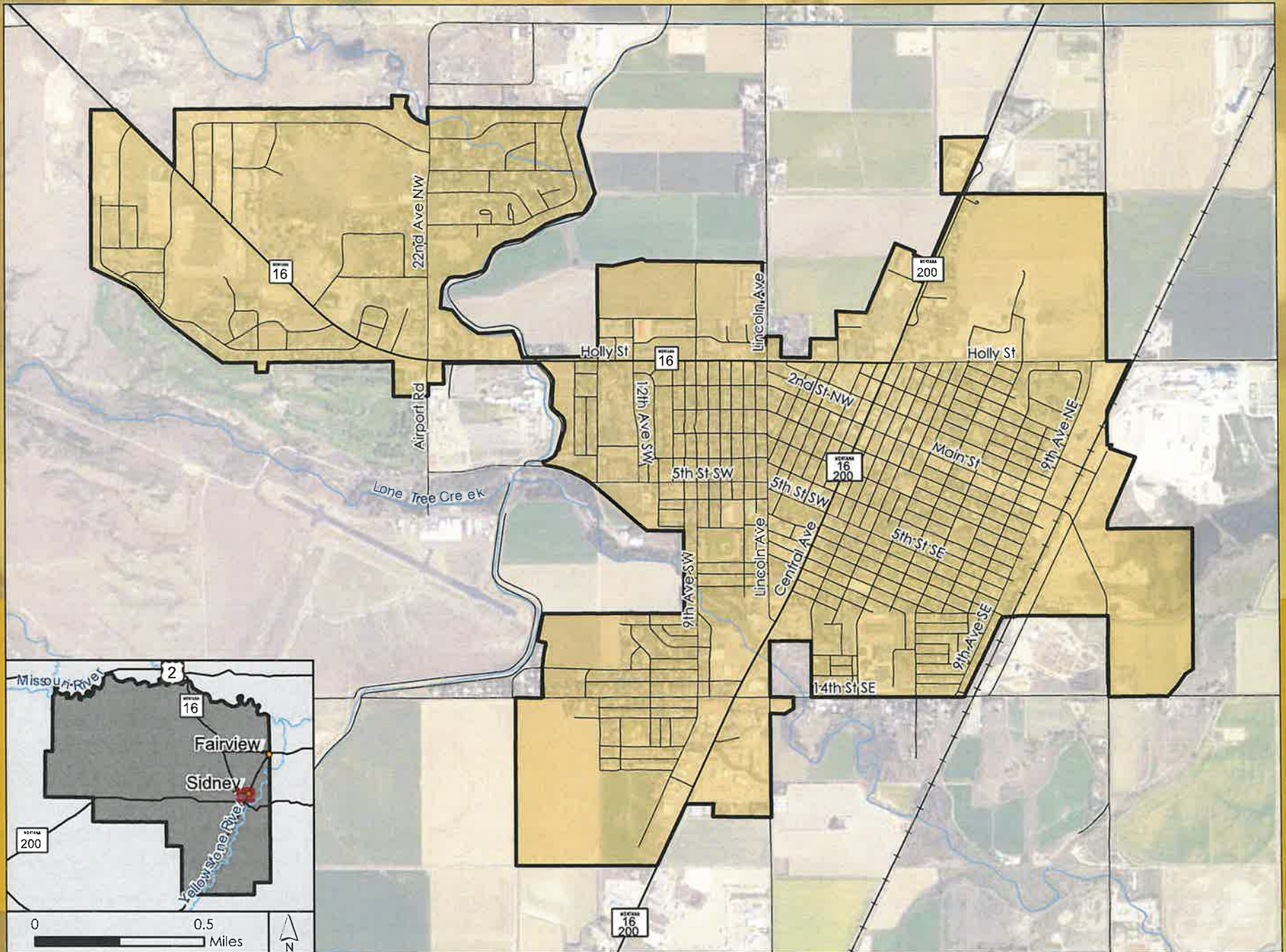


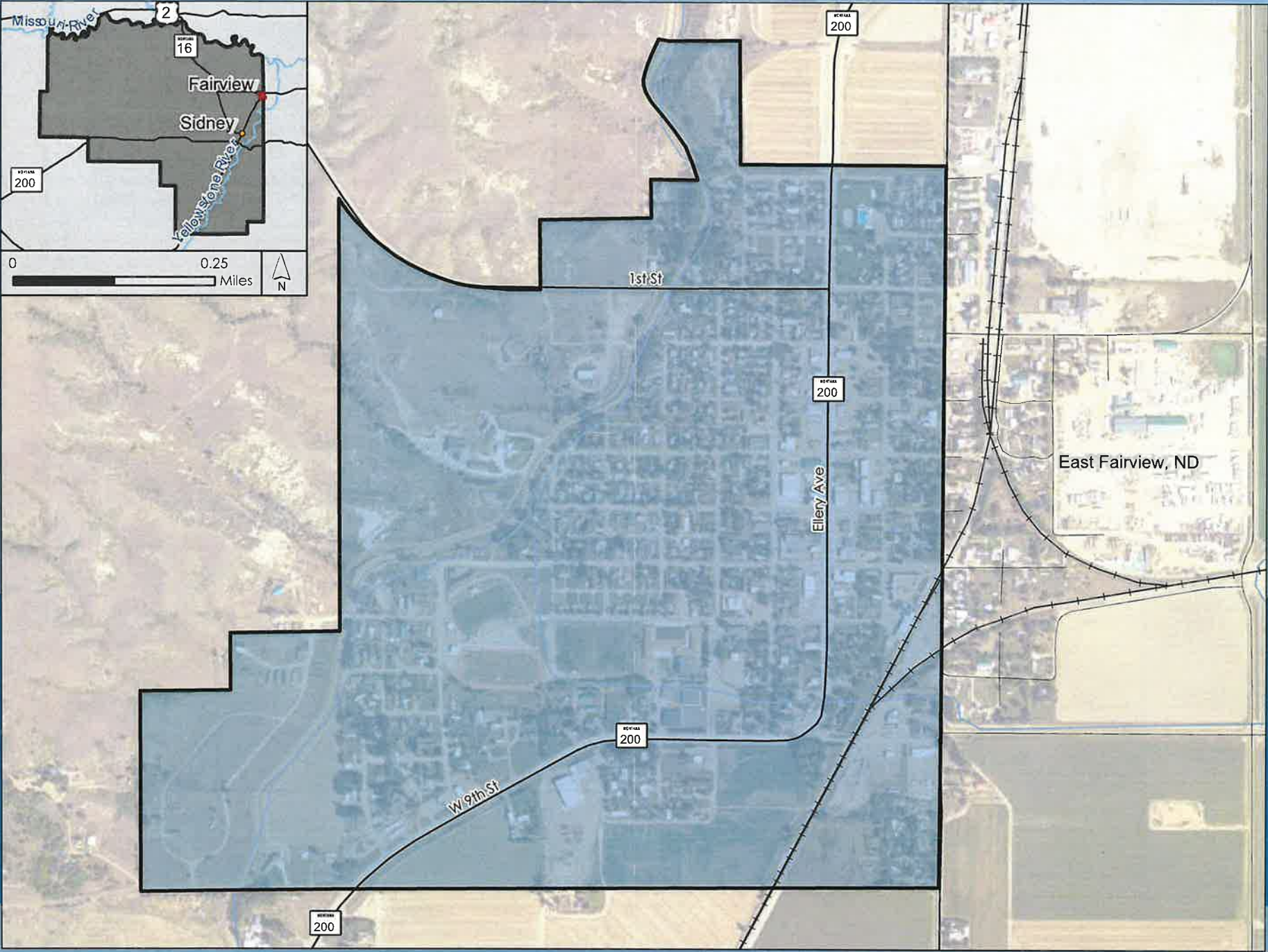
City of Sidney

Sidney is a small city with a steady population, moving into a regional hub as connections become both more vital and intermittent within eastern Montana. The City felt large impacts from the most recent oil boom but has largely settled back into a steady agricultural and energy based community, with strong roots and a big community presence. Local housing options and retail opportunities can be seen as downsides for individuals looking to relocate to Sidney, making it hard to recruit some members of the workforce. Sidney residents are often eager to solve problems, looking at a concern and determining how to implement solutions. This can lead to moving forward without proper planning, being reactive rather than proactive. However, this is for the most part an asset to the community, which is usually willing to invest in quality of life projects and prides itself on care for people and public infrastructure within the city. As surrounding counties and cities see aging populations and as local farms expand and small towns find it harder to maintain themselves, the services – both essential and recreational – that Sidney provides become a regional need.

The vision of Sidney is a small, growing City, with a well-rounded, diverse economic strategy, development-friendly policies, forward-thinking local governance and community members, a vibrant downtown, and infrastructure and amenities to support regional visitation.



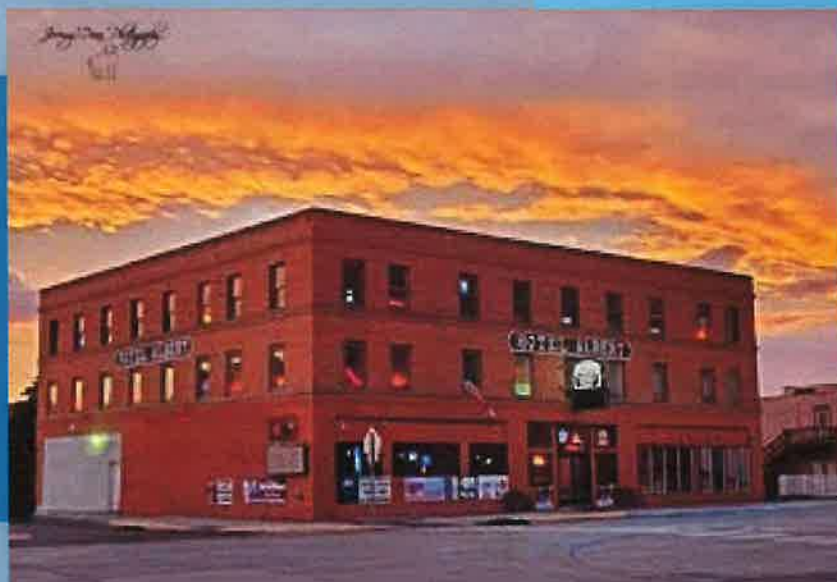






Town of Fairview

Fairview is a town looking to grow out of what is seen as a downturn in the community. Fairview council and community members have deep roots and community pride, but the town is commonly seen as not having benefitted from the economic impact of the recent oil boom of 2010-2016. Council members struggle with enforcing town codes and property maintenance requirements, and many commercial buildings are vacant or are falling into disrepair. Reduced budgets mean that provision of town services can be a struggle. However, the community places great importance on their annual events such as the Old-Timers Festival, the provision of public recreational amenities such as Sharbono Park and the community pool, and the success of Fairview School. In addition, there are business owners who are greatly invested in the success of the town, hosting events and working together to promote Fairview.

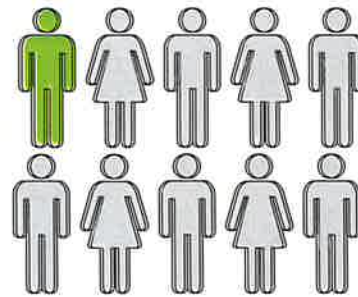


The vision of Fairview is of a thriving small town, with full storefronts along Ellery, a council and community that are empowered to enforce regulations and agree on what those community standards are, new residences, and confidence that the decisions they make as a community will lead to economic and social vibrancy.



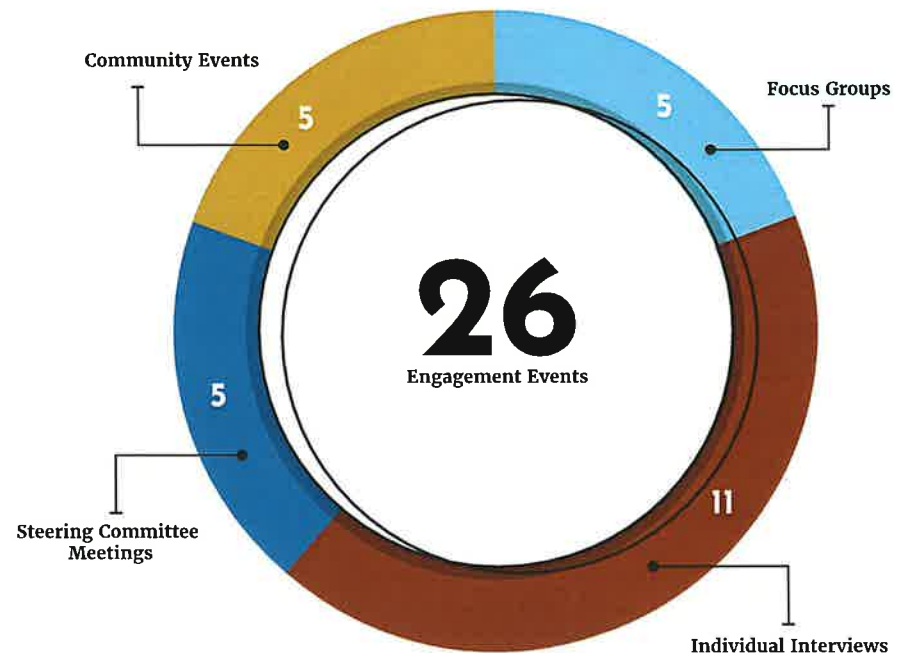
3. Public Engagement

The County, City and Town requested robust community engagement. In total, over 1,100 residents of Richland County interacted with this planning effort in a significant manner, which is 10% of the population and is considered to be a successful planning effort. Consultants held five focus group meetings, 11 individual interviews, and five steering committee meetings. Planning efforts were also brought to the community at five events, including a burger feed in Fairview, pie socials in Girard and Sidney, the Lambert 4th of July celebration, a Sidney Chamber of Commerce event, and three days at the Richland County Fair.



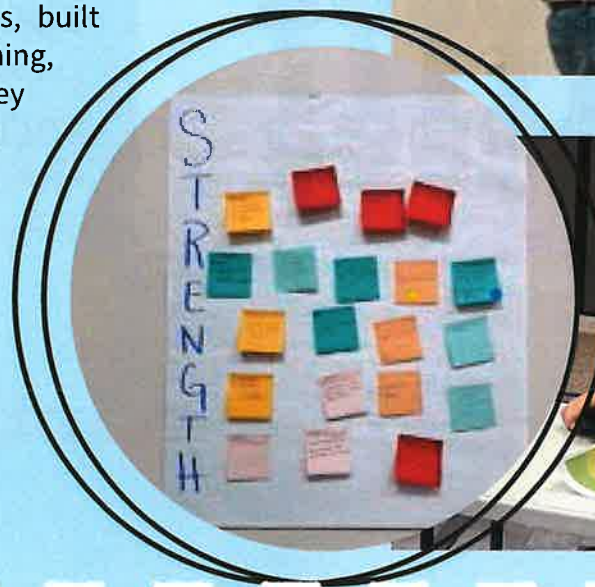
10%

of the Population Engaged
1100+ residents



Steering Committee

The City, Town and County designated individuals to participate in the Growth Policy Steering Committee Meeting. These individuals included: Josh Johnson, Richland County Public Works Director, Jeff Hintz, Sidney Public Works Director; Betty Cherrey, Fairview Mayor; Heidi MacGrady, County Community member; Jamie Larson, Sidney City Councilwoman and County Community member; Cami Skinner, Sidney Resident; Shannon Wicks, Chamber of Commerce Director; Forrest Sanderson, Sidney Planner; Amanda Seigfried, Richland County Planning Board Member; Kathy Helmuth, Richland County Planning Board Member. This group met every 6-8 weeks during the planning process, adding insight and information to the conversation around the growth policies. They served as champions and visionaries for the planning effort, and added their collective wisdom from their experience and professions. The group held vibrant, active conversations on energy, housing, recreation, mental health, economics, and zoning. They handed out survey fliers, built model cities while learning about zoning, and reviewed hours of in-depth survey results. Most of them also participated in other ongoing planning efforts in the county, including the recently finalized Richland Economic Development Corporation Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Diversification Plan, the Sidney Downtown Plan, and the Fairview Zoning and Subdivision Update



Focus Groups & Individual Interviews

Consultants held a series of focus groups and individual interviews, including focus groups with large local businesses, community resource groups, small business owners, and recreational advocates. Individual interviews included Sherrif John Dynneson; Loren Kutzler, Reynold's Market Manager; Jen Doty, CEO of Sidney Health Center; and Luke Kloker, Superintendent of Fairview Schools. These conversations provided invaluable insights into Richland County, Sidney and Fairview. They were far-ranging conversations, covering topics as diverse as the need for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) trained nurses and local mental health facilities, to the struggle of finding housing for teachers, to local trends in the energy industry. While these conversations are not directly quoted in this growth policy, they do inform the recommendations and findings contained within.



Survey by the numbers

1569

unique site visitors

2408 total views of the overall site

687

survey contributions

122 paper surveys

6%

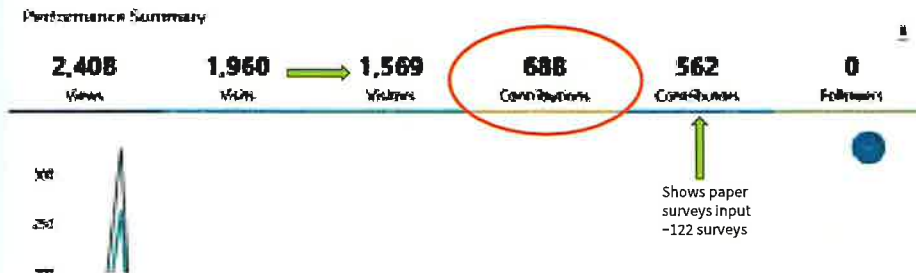
of population took the survey

good response for this type of survey

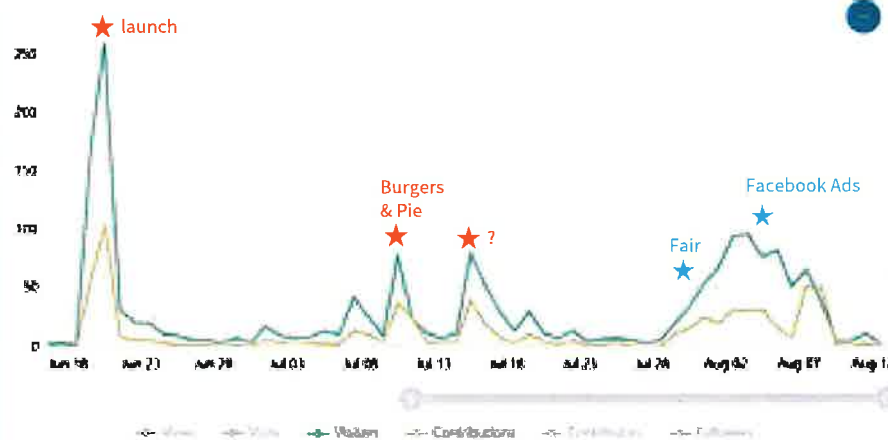
Survey

The Growth Policy site launched on June 19, 2025, and the included survey was live until August 19, 2025. The survey was advertised via traditional print and voice media, social media and paid social media ads, table tents at local restaurants and bars, flyers at local establishments, and yard signs placed throughout the various communities and population centers in Richland County. The survey was also heavily publicized at each of the in-person events held as part of this planning effort.

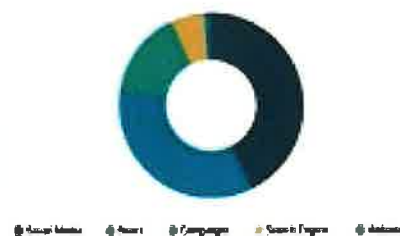




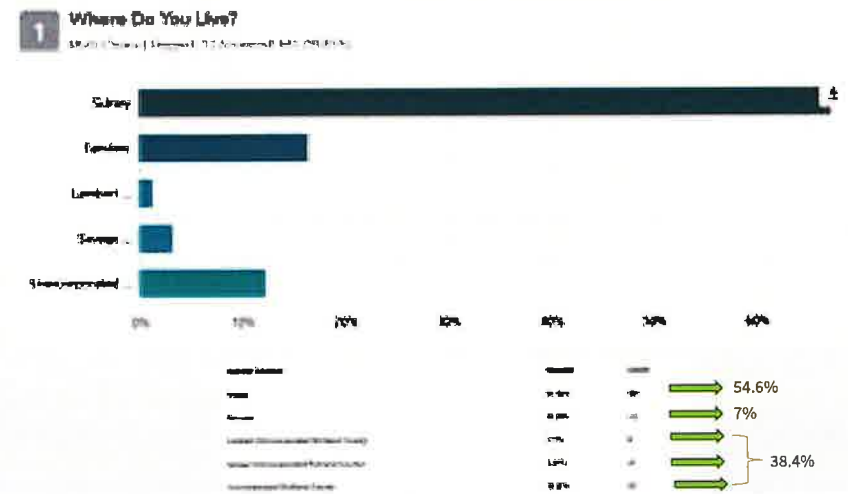
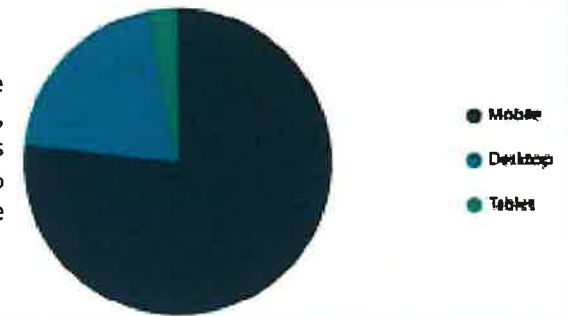
There were 687 contributions, about 122 of which were paper surveys filled out and input by staff for evaluation.



There were spikes in views and survey responses that can be associated with the in-person outreach events that were done as well as targeted Facebook ads.



Over 76.8% of the surveys were taken on mobile devices, which, if corrected for the paper surveys filled out, means about 94.5% of survey takers utilized mobile devices to take the survey.



67% of respondents were from Sidney, though they make up 54.6% of County residents. 16.35% of respondents were from Fairview, though they make up 7% of County residents. In total, 16.36% of respondents were from the County (identified as Lambert, Savage or Richland County), though rural County residents make up 38.4% of County residents.

These numbers are unsurprising and valid, as urban residents are more likely to be informed of ongoing efforts and see direct effect of planning efforts such as growth policies on their day-to-day lives, incentivizing involvement.

The age of survey participants was roughly proportional to the age groups of the overall County population.

Public Events

The steering committee, planning board, and County Commission indicated specific public events at which they felt that attendance would be beneficial for public awareness of the ongoing Growth Policy Planning effort. These events included: a booth at the Richland County Fair for the three weekdays of the fair, targeting county residents in town for 4H and other events; a burger feed in Fairview's Sharbono Park, targeting Fairview residents; a Sidney Sunrise Ambassador's event, targeting younger Sidney residents; a pie social at the Girard Community Hall targeting rural residents; a pie social at Veteran's Park in Sidney targeting Sidney residents; and the Lambert 4th of July celebration, targeting Lambert residents. The public events had varying levels of attendance, with 3 individuals attending the pie social in Girard (though many more participated in making the pies!), and over 45 attendees at the Fairview burger feed. The Sunrise Ambassadors meeting included over 40 attendees who did a walking tour of downtown Sidney and included individuals not otherwise involved in the planning process.

These events raised awareness of the planning effort, engendering good conversation and opportunities for education from steering committee members and consultant team. This awareness was shown in accompanying spikes in survey participation.

Sidney Sunrise Ambassador

Targeting Younger Sidney Residents

July 10, 2025



Girard Pie Social

Targeting Rural Residents

July 7, 2025

Lambert 4th of July Celebration

Targeting Lambert Residents

July 4, 2025



Richland County Fair

Three weekdays of the fair, targeting county residents in town for 4H and other events. Raising awareness and encouraging survey participation.

July 30 - August 1, 2025



Fairview Burger Feed

Targeting Fairview Residents

July 10, 2025

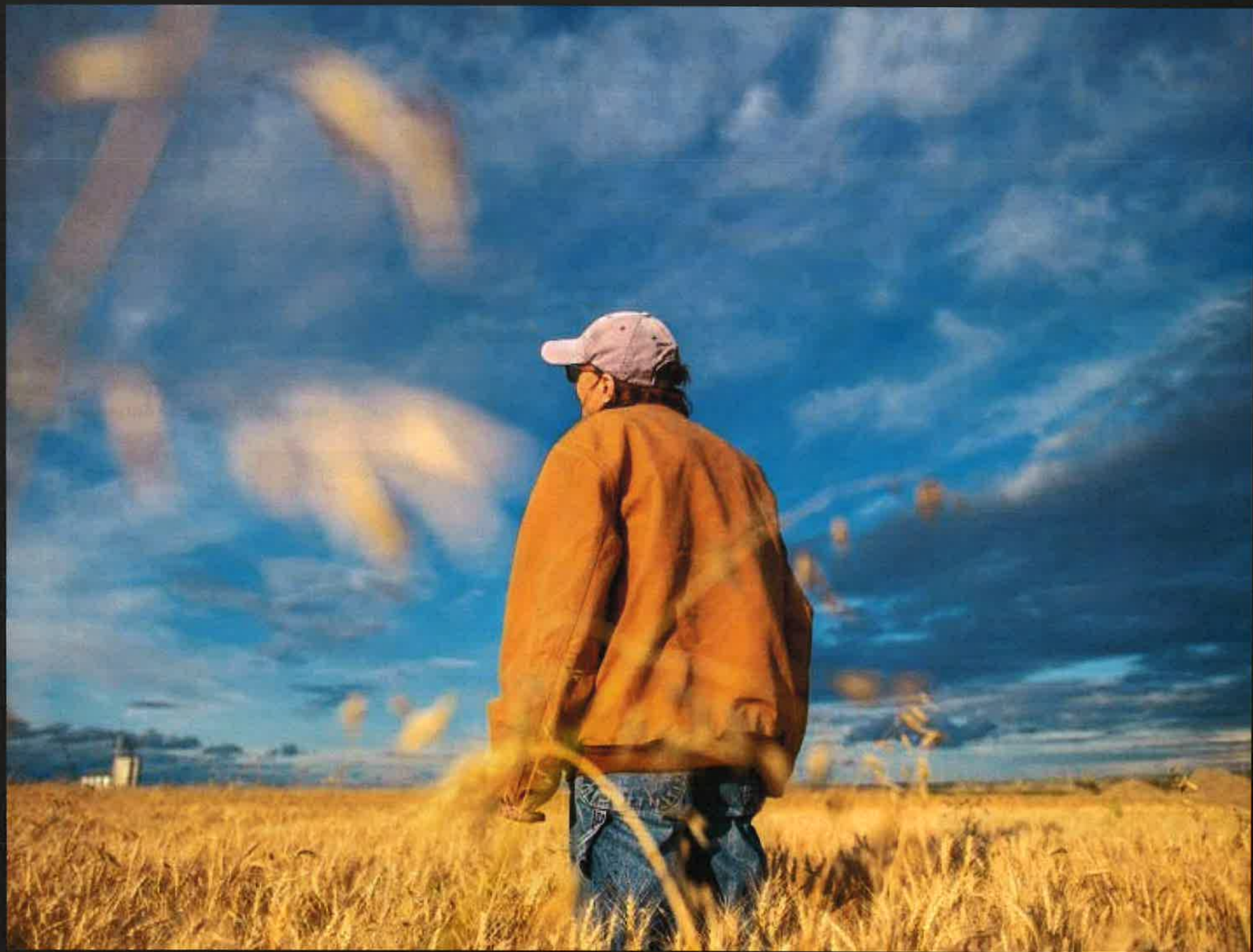


Sidney KIWANIS Pie Social

Targeting Sidney Residents

July 11 2025





4. Richland County

The vision of the County is an innovative, regional hub in eastern Montana, continuing leadership in economic diversification, energy development, maintenance of agricultural lifestyle, and an ongoing habit of investing in infrastructure, businesses, and quality of life initiatives.

Key Findings

Richland County residents greatly appreciate their rural way of life, noting that Richland County is a great place to raise a family and is safe. Many residents noted that if they moved away during their post-secondary education years, they returned to Richland County to raise a family. Many – over 80% - survey respondents (whose age ranges were roughly proportional to county resident age ranges) noted that they plan to stay in Richland County as they age. The fact that over 60% of respondents felt they could find physical healthcare options in the community most likely contributes to that fact.

Overall, County residents desire a business friendly environment built on affordable housing, good infrastructure, year-round recreation, few barriers to new business, focus on agricultural roots while supporting financial incentives and downtown revitalization, and clear, communicative leadership.

The top subjects raised during conversations, focus groups, and survey results were:

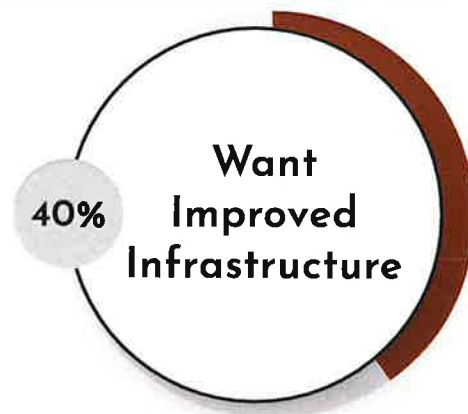
1. Additional recreational opportunities
2. Increased development of downtowns in Richland County
3. Improved infrastructure
4. Greater economic opportunities and job creation

Over 50% of respondents to the survey, as well as numerous in-person respondents noted that additional recreation options were extremely important to them. Recreation was the top issue of concern heard from Richland County residents. However, it is seen as an economic driver, workforce recruitment and retention tool, and quality of life necessity. Therefore, it is not simply the desire for recreation that is at the forefront of residents' minds but a vital piece of maintaining Richland County as a vibrant community. The needs mentioned were for both indoor and outdoor facilities as well as private and public facilities. These needs for facilities were for family friendly, year round recreation, including indoor courts and pools. In addition, requests were heard for more walking/biking trails, river access, shade/trees, dog parks, and improved playgrounds. All of these take infrastructure and capacity that the County does not have in place at the moment.



Over 40% of respondents felt that downtown development across the County was important. Downtown Development is seen by County residents as an economic driver, a retention tool, and an indicator of community pride. Improvements needed for a viable downtown include incentivizing building use, disincentivizing vacant storefronts, requiring building upkeep, provision of grants and assistance applying for them, sidewalk improvements, connections outward from downtowns, and more focus on "desirable" businesses. There are portions of these requested improvements that are outside the purview of the county as a government, but which could be supported. A "desirable" business is also a definition in dispute, but most conversations revolved around needing support for businesses that provide everyday goods and services.

Over 40% of respondents felt that improved infrastructure was a necessity. While the County does maintain 1,250 miles of road, utilizing a clear capital improvements plan, the notes on infrastructure ranged wider than road maintenance, including discussion on sewer and septic service, drainage, multimodal transportation, water, internet and cellular connectivity, and winter snow removal. Road related requests included requests to fix potholes, repave (versus patching), maintenance of gravel roads, adding passing/paving on side highways, and building a truck bypass. Interestingly, some of these projects are regular items of note in both the county and associated communities but are perceived as being undone or lacking priority to County government.



30% of respondents to the survey felt that they wished to see greater economic opportunities and job creation. In person focus groups highlighted workforce recruitment and retention concerns at various levels of employment. Service sector positions noted that they had trouble retaining hourly positions, while professional positions were difficult to fill because of recruitment. Housing can be difficult to find at all price points and quality of life was seen as lacking to be able to recruit professionals such as doctors at Sidney Health Center. Oilfield and financial sectors did not seem to have as many struggles, mostly because they recruit from existing or former residents of Richland County or the surrounding region.



Overall, quality of life is a focus, which ties into a nation-wide trend of choosing place over job. The majority of comments online and in person focused on quality of life issues as economic concerns, including affordability and availability of housing, affordable rental prices for both businesses and residences, community festivals, and afterschool and daycare for children. Issues such as vacant buildings and property upkeep, highlighted as concerns, are also seen as economic drivers, disincentivizing businesses from further investment.

The economy is an underlying issue throughout the planning process, heard in concerns about the amount of energy being generated in the County as energy usage keeps going up, concerns about the attitude of the County toward alternate energy sources to feed that energy usage, and in discussions of affordable housing and additional healthcare options for both urgent care access and mental healthcare. All of these are seen as economic inputs, allowing or disallowing workforce retention and recruitment.

Less mentioned but still important repeated findings include requests for increased transparency from the government, particularly around spending priorities of the County. There is much perception of waste, particularly regarding the Fairgrounds and recent investments there. The Fairgrounds is mostly seen as being overdeveloped and

underutilized, which may be a perception or communication issue as it appears the fairgrounds is utilized on a weekly or daily basis. There was also concern regarding public safety and law enforcement priorities, which again may be blamed on perception, as it is unclear if the public has a full understanding of the disproportionate law enforcement needs in Richland County.



Law enforcement indicated needs beyond the standard for a county the size and rurality of Richland County, mostly based on the proximity of the County to the Bakken and the status as a medical and regional hub of eastern Montana

Growth Areas and Goals

Strong growth happens when goals meet the wants and needs of County residents.

Multiple rounds of community engagement, Steering Committee review, and stakeholder discussion guided the identification of growth areas and goals. These reflect the County's overarching vision while balancing diverse interests and priorities. The Growth Policy is a living document, and its goals may be updated over time to align with changing economic conditions and to recognize the County's achievements.

This section is organized into seven themes, reflecting the vision presented in Chapter 2 and shaped by community feedback gathered throughout the engagement process:

- Strategic Planning
- Countywide Zoning
- Recreation
- Connectivity
- Economic Development
- Community Health
- Natural Resources

While this chapter focuses on Richland County, the growth areas and goals demonstrate the connection among the County, City, and Town. By identifying areas of overlap, the goals highlight where collaboration is both logical and essential to achieving lasting success.



Theme 1

Strategic Planning: Moving from Reactive to Proactive

Richland County is in a reactive pattern which was first a product of slow, steady, agricultural related growth and then a product of a fast moving oil boom where reaction was the only option. Now, however, the communities in Richland County are in a steady growth pattern divorced from the ups and downs of oil related activity. In fact, the communities are rapidly becoming the hub of Eastern Montana, due to the presence of expert medical care, abundant community services, and direct through traffic to the Bakken. This places both demand and opportunity on the County. That opportunity requires planning and foresight, looking at upcoming needs rather than reacting as those needs come up. The County has made a good start on this across all departments, from updating the growth policy and emergency management buildings, to Capital Improvement Plans for road projects. However, there are still areas of improvement, particularly outside of infrastructure improvements.

Three major areas:

- 1. Succession Planning for Staffing***
- 2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans***
- 3. Create Housing Opportunities***

1. Succession Planning for Staffing

County Commission and Department leadership are dedicated to their positions and believe deeply in Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview. However, for the most part, they do not have adequate back-up in case of retirement or resignation. There may be one or two individuals per department with leadership and technical expertise, but currently there is little emphasis placed on education of existing employees to develop internal talent. Hiring external candidates has proven to be a challenge due to housing, pay, and location. A dedicated Human Resources Department for Richland County and City of Sidney as well as coordination with the Town of Fairview will be able to assist in recruitment, hiring and retention, while also identifying and providing internal training opportunities.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. CREATE SUCCESSION PLAN FOR DEPARTMENTS

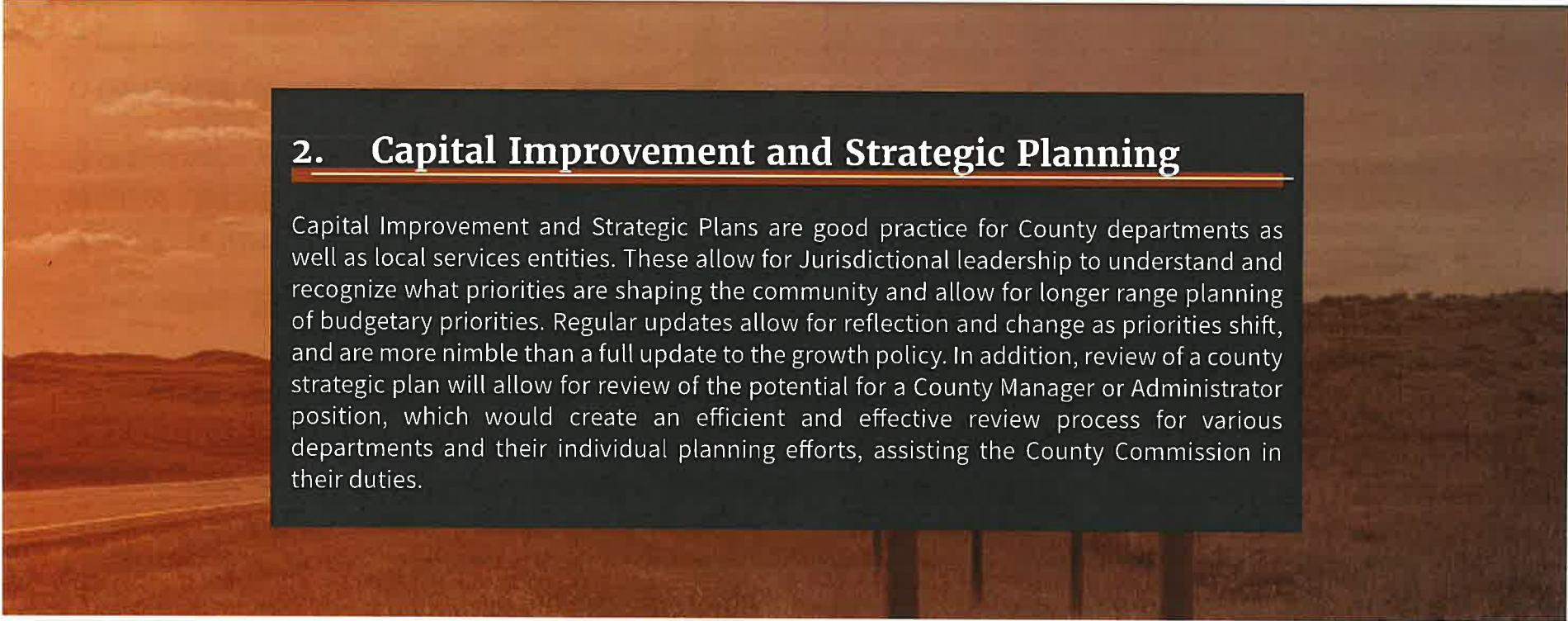


Objectives

- Hire Assistant Directors for Department Heads
- Support hiring search via communication, recruitment, and incentives
- Focus on hiring effective management with at least 10-15 years remaining in career
- Assess internal opportunities for advancement
- Create digital database for each department to store essential information for incoming employees

Utilize consultants such as Hire Resolve, Insight Global or Advanced Employment Services.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. INVEST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Budget yearly for conference attendance, continuing education courses, and certifications for employees identified for advancement or leadership roles ○ Encourage employees to attend conferences, complete continuing education and gain additional certifications ○ Coordinate training and education opportunities between communities in order to ensure efficiency		
C. CREATE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Work with REDC, Chamber of Commerce, Health Department, and County to create a recruitment incentive package for all jurisdictional employees, which may include housing allowances, provision of housing units at reduced cost, additional training and education assistance, and sign-on bonuses ○ Create retention program focused on talent development and building long-term employees ○ Focus on modern work practices that include options for flexible and remote work where possible ○ Coordinate efforts between communities so that opportunities are comparable		
<i>City of Pinole Recruitment Incentive Program: https://www.pinole.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Recruitment-Incentive-Program-FINAL.pdf</i>		
D. CREATE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT	  	 
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Oversee and coordinate recruitment, interview, hiring and retention efforts as well as to create effective policies for employee conflict		
<i>Wadena County Organizational Study: https://www.co.wadena.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/2317/-Wadena-County-DDA-Final-Report</i>		
○ Create a work and staffing plan to ensure appropriate staffing levels are maintained		
<i>Huron-Kinloss Staff Development Plan: https://huronkinloss-002-ca.govstack.com/media/zpva1vao/staffing-plan-development-project-final-report.pdf</i>		



2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning

Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans are good practice for County departments as well as local services entities. These allow for Jurisdictional leadership to understand and recognize what priorities are shaping the community and allow for longer range planning of budgetary priorities. Regular updates allow for reflection and change as priorities shift, and are more nimble than a full update to the growth policy. In addition, review of a county strategic plan will allow for review of the potential for a County Manager or Administrator position, which would create an efficient and effective review process for various departments and their individual planning efforts, assisting the County Commission in their duties.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. REQUIRE ALL DEPARTMENTS TO CREATE A 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT & STRATEGIC PLAN		  

- Objectives
- Review and update on a yearly basis to reflect minor changes
 - Include equipment, infrastructure, buildings, staff, and large upcoming projects
 - Publish on jurisdictional website to increase transparency and communication with public
 - Provide support for goals and needs from individual departments

Livingston County, Michigan, Capital Improvement Plan: <https://milivcounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025-2030-CIP-APPROVED-BY-COUNTY-PLANNING-COMMISSION-FINAL-DOCUMENT.pdf>

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. SUPPORT AND INVEST IN CAPITAL AND STRATEGIC PLANS FROM LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS	  	
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide financial and technical support to high-impact community groups such as the Housing Authority, Richland Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce, and Communities in Action to help them complete their own strategic planning and grow their community impact, just as the Sidney Health Center and Foundation for Community Care came together with Richland County to invest in the Air Ambulance Service ○ Utilize completed planning efforts when supporting projects and determining County financial priorities		
https://www.sidneyhealth.org/News/Sidney-Health-Center-Announces-Air-Ambulance-Service		
C. REGULARLY UPDATE GROWTH POLICY	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Maintain Growth Policy by updating every 5 years in keeping with Montana requirements in order to maintain high eligibility for state funding opportunities		
D. CREATE COUNTYWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN	  	
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Work to create a county-wide strategic plan which reviews capital plans and staffing at the general county level. This includes reviewing potential for positions such as a Human Resources Department and County Manager or Administrator.		

3. Creation of Housing Opportunities

Housing was an issue of major note during community engagement sessions. While it was not something identified as an immediate need - as in, few people said “We need more housing” - the topic consistently came up as an underlying concern to different issues. Schools, banks, agricultural industries, government and medical employers all noted that housing availability is a main concern for recruitment and retention of employees. Quality of available housing was brought up as well as quantity of available housing. The goals in this section focus on providing support for low income housing while also working with private and public parties to create opportunities for new or renovated housing in all jurisdictions. These goals and objectives are visionary, pulling in inspiration from communities to the east which have seen success with direct cash incentives for building housing, as well as other communities which incentivize reuse of older housing. Ignoring existing housing stock in favor of new housing stock only ensures that the existing stock falls further into disrepair and maintains the existing disruption of the housing cycle and diversification of housing that is available. A well rounded approach to housing is necessary in Richland County, where large housing developments are rare. Richland County has the ability to pull together these approaches and coordinate with the Housing Authority and other jurisdictions to ensure a coordinated approach.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT OBJECTIVES OF HOUSING AUTHORITY	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide financial and other support of the Housing Authority, including staff time if needed as they move forward with redevelopment and updating of properties ○ Assist where possible with maintenance and operations support ○ Partner with Housing Authority on jurisdictional employee housing to create and maintain housing for county, city and town employees ○ Partner with Housing Authority on essential employee housing opportunities		

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. MAINTAIN JURISDICTION-SUPPORTED HOUSING		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Utilize existing jurisdictional housing for all Richland County, Sidney and Fairview employees ○ Review and update existing regulations on length of stay and type of employee		
C. UTILIZE LAND USE PLAN TO IDENTIFY DEVELOPABLE, SERVICEABLE AREAS AND PRIORITIZE INCENTIVES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ In areas identified as developable and serviceable, work with willing landowners and developers to develop partnerships on housing projects. ○ Create incentives for development, which may include incentives such as partnering on utilities and streets extensions, waiving of permit or hookup fees, or cash buy downs. ○ Focus and further incentivize mid-priced, well built structures with opportunities for sweat equity through creation of economic development grants and opportunities		
<i>TIF Programs or Housing Trust Fund: https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/65445/Appendix-C---Implementation-Actions-Update</i>		

Theme 2

Countywide Zoning

County residents were polled during the public engagement phase of development of this growth policy on whether they were in support of the concept of County-wide zoning. The question was posed in a clear, basic manner, and the response was a resounding yes, that the County should look further into County-wide zoning, particularly for protection for residential uses from large-scale industrial uses. Both energy generation uses and trucking uses were quoted during the process, and numerous conflict points were mapped on the digital community map that was available. Comments in person and within the survey have added to the objectives for a county-wide zoning code, which would focus on conflict points particularly around populated areas whether incorporated cities or unincorporated communities, and which would maintain the rural, independent nature of the majority of the county. This policy also recommends widespread engagement and education effort while writing and adopting a code.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

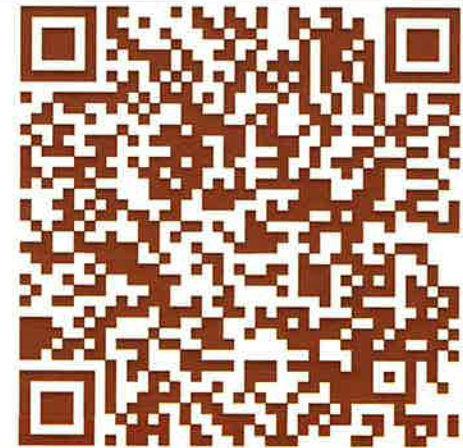
A. CREATE A COUNTY WIDE ZONING CODE



Objectives

- Utilize a public, community engagement process to educate the public on why county-wide zoning is being put into place and to create a consistent feedback opportunity during the code creation process
- Keep values of county residents at the forefront of any county-wide zoning code
- Focus on conflict areas such as large-scale industrial uses that are within close distance to residential areas, and uses which create widespread impacts on surrounding areas
- Consider application of City and Town zoning codes to a limited area outside of City and Town limits within the county or utilize specific zoning districts which protect conflict points near City and Town limits in the areas around Sidney, Fairview
- Consider application of zoning districts that would typically be applied to incorporated communities to unincorporated Savage and Lambert, if those communities are interested.

The complete zoning process is defined in **Montana Code Annotated Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 2**, along with the specific requirements outlined in **Section 76-2-202. Establishment of zoning districts — regulations.** These references provide the statutory framework that governs the creation of zoning districts and the adoption of zoning regulations.



archive.legmt.gov/bills/mca/title_0760/chapter_0020/part_0020/section_0020/0760-0020-0020-0020.html

Countywide Zoning Feasibility

County residents were polled online and in person regarding their desire for county-wide zoning. This review came from several requests from County residents for zoning within the County. Typically, Richland County requests for county-wide zoning have come during times of conflict between neighboring uses, such as lagoons associated with slaughterhouses near residential properties. Currently there is a large 600-acre commercial solar farm in the environmental permitting process just west of Fairview. As a county, Richland County residents would typically shy away from additional governmental processes and regulations. During the environmental permit public hearings for the proposed commercial solar farm, requests for zoning from the county were heard loudly. County Commissioners tasked the growth policy planning effort with simultaneously conducting a county-wide zoning feasibility study, with the intended outcome that they knew whether or not county residents were interested in county-wide zoning of some type.

County residents were polled during the online survey as well as during in person events. The question was neutrally worded, saying *“Thinking about Richland County, would you support zoning that would designate commercial and industrial areas as separate from agricultural and residential areas?”* Interaction with the zoning specific question was limited, with 102 individuals answering the online survey question and 17 individuals answering in person at the Richland County Fair. However, the response was clearly a request to look into county-wide

zoning – with several caveats. In total, 65 individuals online– over 60% on online respondents - and five in person individuals requested county wide zoning be put in place, while in total 31 respondents “voted” against county zoning. Results of the online survey were generally in favor of zoning while the Fair results, where individuals dropped marbles in a jar to vote, were not in favor of zoning.

Generally, the associated discussion around zoning revolved around conflicts between uses. The majority of concerns that were noted on the associated survey map centered around use of truck traffic on gravel roads, feedlots near residential, trucking companies near residential land, outdoor storage and outdoor junk complaints. There were some mentions of energy uses – oil and gas, solar, and wind— near residential in person, but none in the online survey.

The conversation around the types of zoning that would be acceptable was expected – that zoning should be minimal, have little to no impact on agricultural uses, should be practical, or just around cities, or specifically, *“if my neighbors can’t do xyz, I’m in”*. Individuals who had specific examples or experiences of something a neighboring property had done that had intruded on what they felt was their enjoyment of their land were most likely to say “yes” to the question of whether the County should implement County-wide zoning. There were some strong feelings in the opposite direction, with one individual noting that zoning was the worst idea they had ever heard.

The overall opinion toward zoning, and the associated goals below, reflect these desires for minimal, practical zoning regulations that focus on mitigating conflict between uses rather than regulating overall property uses.

Recreation

Key areas are:

1. Consolidated Parks District
2. Public Indoor Recreation
3. Private Recreation
4. Fairgrounds

In Sidney, the parks are maintained by one full time employee of the Public Works staff, who is a licensed arborist, and several part time support staff. There are seasonal pool employees and all funds for the parks and pools come from the general fund. Updates to parks are made -and made well- on an ad-hoc basis, but do not allow for quick response to community requests such as pickleball courts or new playground equipment, as there is not a dedicated revolving maintenance or capital improvements fund in place. All recreational sports programming occurs within individual private programs, which creates a barrier in several ways.

1. Those programs pay a minimal fee to use the public infrastructure such as the pool or baseball diamonds for the season, meaning the City is not recouping maintenance fees or general upkeep fees.
2. Coordination of tournaments, indoor space, outdoor space usage and programming, etc. falls to a variety of organizations including the Chamber of Commerce. This leads to a system that only works as long as someone at those organizations is willing to maintain that duty.
3. The private groups mean that there is no common clearinghouse of information for individuals who may have just moved to town or are looking to move to town on how to sign their children up for local sports. While this may not seem like a large barrier in a small town, it can assist in leading to the perception that was seen in survey results that it can be hard to integrate into the community as a new member.

In Fairview, the public park and swimming pool are maintained and operated by the Public Works director and seasonal staff. Each year the Town Council reviews pool day rates and makes hiring decisions for the pool manager and lifeguards. There is no reserve maintenance fund for repairs to the park or pool. This places the existence of a very valued service and gathering place into a precarious position.

The County parks are maintained by public works and are mostly outdoor gathering spaces and fishing/boating locales. The majority of what is perceived as County Recreation is provided by the Richland County Fairgrounds, though there are additional County provided recreation areas. The topics below are focused on creating opportunities for County-wide recreation that is efficient and is an asset to the quality of life and economic outlook of the County.



Creating a Special District

First, Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview create interlocal agreement (MCA 7-11-1022).

Under Montana law, a special district is a unit of local government created to carry out a single function or a limited number of specific public services. These districts are separate from cities and counties and are typically formed to manage focused services such as parks, cemeteries, solid waste, mosquito control, or similar functions.

There are three ways to create a special district (MCA 7-11-1003):

1. Via resolution
2. Via referendum
3. Via petition

Resolution (MCA 7-11-1008):

- The resolution method begins with local government creating and adopting a resolution that intends to create a special district.
- The resolution would list the reasons and details for why it's being proposed and what purpose it serves, who is affected and how much they would be assessed.
- Public notice would be given to ALL property owners within Richland County that a resolution was adopted and that there will be a public hearing.
- From the date of publication of resolution, landowners have 60 days to submit written protest.
- Richland County Commission holds a joint public hearing with City of Sidney and Town of Fairview regarding the proposed special district.
 - If 50% or more protest (as measured by value of property), resolution fails
 - If more than 10% but less than 50% protest, a referendum must be held (see below)
 - If 10% or less protest, resolution succeeds

Referendum (MCA 7-11-1011):

- The referendum method begins with local government adopting a resolution which calls for a referendum
- The resolution would list the reasons and details for why it's being proposed and what purpose it serves, who is affected and how much they would be assessed.
- An election is held: "Shall the proposition to organize [Richland County Consolidated Park District] be adopted?"
 - Voting for members of the board of the proposed special district can occur at the same time as the referendum election
 - If the referendum passes, the district is created

Petition (MCA 7-11-1003):

- At least 40% of the registered voters or the owners of at least 40% of the real property within the proposed special district sign and submit a petition
- Within 60 days of the petition being submitted, it must be certified as being sufficient and presented to the Richland County Commission at its next meeting, where it can be voted on

Other places that have created a special district for parks:

- Great Falls
- Bozeman
- Big Sky Meadow (Madison County, Gallatin County)

1. Consolidated Parks Department

Because there is a need for overall management, oversight, and planning related to the full City, Town and County Parks system, a County-wide parks department that incorporates Sidney and Fairview parks will allow for efficient levying of mills and create an entity that can provide long-range planning, needs assessment, and potentially even programming in the future.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT		  
Objectives ○ Utilizing Section 7-11-1000 of Montana Code Annotated, create a special district via an interlocal agreement to consolidate parks operations and maintenance ○ If there is no support for a special district, create a consolidated, coordinated plan supported by all three jurisdictions for Parks growth and maintenance in the County Great Parks Levy: www.greatparks.org/about/levy Richland County Property Tax: revenuefiles.mt.gov/files/Annual-Property-Tax-Changes-by-County/Richland.pdf		

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. CREATE A PARKS MAINTENANCE, OPERATION, AND REPAIR FUND		
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Build support for parks district with dedicated mill levy via education and promotion campaign ○ Utilize a property mill levy for the created special district to create a consolidated fund for maintenance, operations, and repair of county-wide parks, including City and Town parks ○ If there is no support for a property mill levy, create a consolidated fund from county and city general and reserve funds dedicated to maintenance, operations and repair of county-wide parks, including City and Town parks <i>Teton County Parks & Recreation Joint Powers Agreement: www.tetoncountywy.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32759/Parks-and-Recreation-Joint-Powers-Agreement</i>		
C. DEDICATE STAFF TO PARKS		  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Create recruitment program among local high schools for part-time/seasonal staff ○ Regardless of type of formation of consolidated Parks Department, the county should dedicate an appropriate number of staff to the Parks system, including maintenance and operations staff. These staff will create efficiencies within parks maintenance of all jurisdictional parks, and operations staff will be able to provide coordinated review of Parks operations and facilities.		
D. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS PLAN		  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Coordinate on a Sidney-Fairview-Richland County Parks Plan that creates a formal needs assessment, property and facilities review, and replacement cost analysis for all existing equipment. This plan will create Parks goals. ○ Coordinate with chamber (or relevant private organization) to create a brochure to welcome new residents and list recreation opportunities and contact info		

2. Public Indoor Recreation

Indoor recreation was one of the top requests received during community engagement. While there has been much discussion over the years over what an indoor public recreation center could look like, it is clear that something that is similar to the most commonly referenced locations (the Williston Area Recreation Center and the Watford City Roughrider Center) are most likely infeasible, given their very high costs of construction and operation. In addition, the community requests of an indoor recreation center vary greatly, from a basic structure high enough for cheer and gymnastics competitions to an indoor track and swimming pool to a space capable of hosting a basketball tournament. A feasibility study and design process that has lengthy community engagement is a first step toward an indoor recreation center, but a larger hurdle is operations and maintenance of such a facility. A consolidated Parks Department could accomplish that goal.

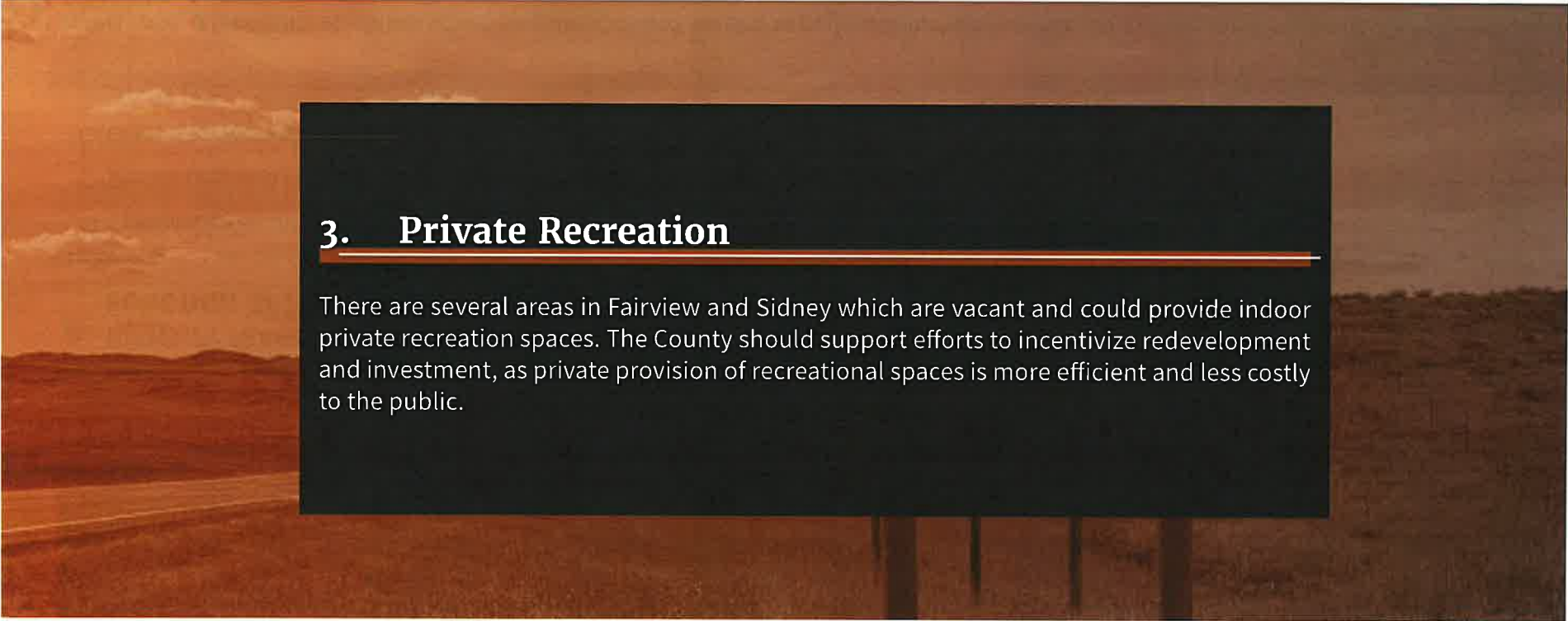
Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. IDENTIFY FEASIBILITY OF PUBLIC INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY AND FUNCTION OF POTENTIAL FACILITY	★☆☆	●●●

Objectives

- Commission study with widespread community engagement
- Review potential of payment for a facility via a balloted bond or private fundraising
- Determine construction, maintenance, operations, and location of facility.

In this case, a feasibility study would review potential and needed uses, location, maintenance, operations, and is specifically targeted toward the usage of an indoor recreation facility with a view toward moving to construction.

Williston Ice Facility Feasibility Study: drive.google.com/file/d/1YGsgoBfe-gPnvdqVKMuK7KL44uJ1b6ng/view



3. Private Recreation

There are several areas in Fairview and Sidney which are vacant and could provide indoor private recreation spaces. The County should support efforts to incentivize redevelopment and investment, as private provision of recreational spaces is more efficient and less costly to the public.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE PRIVATE RECREATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	★ ★ ★	● ● ●

Objectives

- Provide support for funding applications for private recreation businesses applying for grants and funding through regional, local and state entities
- Ensure that zoning in City, Town and County allow for private recreation - indoor and outdoor- uses in appropriate areas
- Identify and connect vacant commercial properties with potential business owners

Example Opportunities: Vacant building in Downtown Fairview into Arcade; old Shopko into indoor go-kart track

4. Fairgrounds

The Richland County Fairgrounds are seen as a huge value to the community and simultaneously a source of distraction and discontent with County government. Many of the comments received during the public engagement period mentioned concern about the amount of money being spent on the Fairgrounds for “a three-day event once a year”, as it was called more than once. Other commentators noted that the general community does not see an uptick in revenue during the Fair, leading to further discontent. Simultaneously, respondents recognized the value that the Fairgrounds provides the agricultural and ranching community, as well as the more urban community. The goals for the Fairgrounds focus on communication, creating multi-use functions, and increasing transparency around the Fairgrounds operations.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. RIGHT SIZE FAIRGROUNDS PLANS	★ ★ ☆	●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Ensure that Fairgrounds development is meeting needs of whole community, including allowing for multi-use buildings and increasing rental allowances		
○ Create specialized Fairgrounds maintenance and operations department, allowing for use throughout the year with adequate staffing and management capacity		
○ Ensure that Fairgrounds investments are providing a return, whether in increased tax revenue or quality of life		
○ Review existing plans for improvements to ensure ADA compliance at all community connection points, general maintenance needs, and inclusion of innovative technologies		
B. INCREASE COMMUNICATION REGARDING ACTIVITIES AT FAIRGROUNDS	★ ★ ★	●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Increase transparency and public awareness around activities occurring at the Fairgrounds		
○ Increase transparency and public awareness around potential buildings and public comment periods on potential new improvements		
○ Work to provide public utilization of Fairgrounds outside of fair week		



Theme 4

Connectivity

This growth area is wide ranging but discusses vital connectivity points between the County and County residents, and between County residents themselves. From cell service and trails to essential infrastructure, these are the ties that bind communities together, enabling the County to be a community instead of just a governmental boundary.

Key areas are:

- 1. Cell Service***
- 2. Trails***
- 3. Infrastructure***
- 4. Communications***

1. Cell Service

As the world increasingly relies on internet and cellular service for communication, standard forms of communication such as landlines have fallen by the wayside. They are expensive to maintain for individuals through their local service providers and are increasingly irrelevant. However, rural areas of Richland County have large pockets of land which have no cellular or internet service. The old forms of communication between neighbors who may need assistance during medical emergencies, weather events, or wildfires no longer suffice, as many individuals have given up their land lines. This leaves particularly newer and younger residents without ways to contact neighbors, as well as places a heavy burden on families who may require days of remote work or schooling. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a major concern, as schools needed to make the decision to purchase internet power packs for county residents who needed to do education remotely and did not have standard internet or cellular access.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT CELLULAR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	★ ★ ★	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Incentivize and support location of large and local cellular communications towers ○ Incentivize and support expansion of broadband and wireless services to rural areas ○ Map locations without cellular or wireless services in order to assist private development of communications towers		
B. CREATE ALTERNATE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS FOR RESIDENTS	★ ★ ★	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide incentives and support for maintenance of land-line communication or other communications systems for residents, including grant programs for private communication devices for rural residents ○ Support grants for and grant applications from local fire, police and EMS departments for communication devices and upgrades, particularly in areas where communication will be stifled without (for example, in Fairview, the rural fire district operates into North Dakota, which is switching emergency communication onto broadband) ○ Create clearinghouse of contact information for neighboring areas without cellular or wireless services for new residents		



2. Trails

Trail connectivity was brought up multiple times during public engagement as well as during downtown planning sessions in Sidney and in the 2015 growth policy. While this is a long-anticipated goal with many barriers, the increase in quality of life means that the County, City and Town should take potential for development into consideration with upcoming projects and developments.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE RURAL TRAIL SYSTEM THROUGH COUNTY	  	

- Objectives
- Identify trail locations along major highways such as 200, 16 and 201 and create a future trails map
 - Identify tourist destinations such as river access points, fishing spots, and historical sites, and utilize as trailheads and connection points.
 - Identify and partner with local, regional and state advocacy groups that would assist with designating a trail system and provide expertise for assistance with funding and obtainment of easements for trail system
 - Support trail advocacy groups

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. CREATE TRAIL AND PARK SYSTEM IN SAVAGE AND LAMBERT <i>Objectives</i> ○ Identify existing park locations and add to county-wide parks system ○ Review potential in-town trail system to connect points of interest within communities, such as connecting schools to parks ○ Create long-range trail and parks improvement plan for Savage and Lambert		
C. CREATE COUNTY-WIDE TRAIL WAYFINDING SYSTEM <i>Objectives</i> ○ Provide support for funding applications for private recreation businesses applying for grants and funding through regional, local and state entities ○ Ensure that zoning in City, Town and County allow for private recreation - indoor and outdoor- uses in appropriate areas ○ Identify and connect vacant commercial properties with potential business owners <i>Jordan River Parkway Wayfinding Signage Plan : jordanrivercommission.gov/jordan-river-parkway-wayfinding-signage-plan-update/</i> <i>City of Issaquah WAYfinding and Facility Signage Master Plan: www.issaquahwa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8928/Wayfinding-Signage-Plan</i>		
D. ENSURE ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS CAN UTILIZE TRAILS <i>Objectives</i> ○ Identify locations where ADA accessible trails and features can be incorporated and support design and construction		

3. Infrastructure

Infrastructure was one of the top concerns of citizens of Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview. In some cases, there appears to be a perception issue, and in others, there is a true lack of maintenance and the capacity to plan for maintenance. The recommendations that follow are unique to the County, recognizing that each community within the County has their own distinct capabilities, budgets, and capacity for public infrastructure projects. In all departments, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) should be created or maintained to ensure that the communities are able to look into the future. These recommendations are made with an emphasis on creating efficiencies, routines, and inventories, moving public works departments toward proactive planning and budgeting.

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
A. ROADS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Maintain existing CIP process , including a conducting a road conditions survey every 3 years		★ ★ ☆
○ Maintain a 5-year maintenance plan for asphalt surface roads		★ ★ ★
○ Create GIS database of roads with past maintenance history and planned future maintenance		★ ★ ☆
○ Review safety of all county roads by starting and finalizing Safe Streets for All (SS4A) plan which has been granted funding		★ ★ ★
○ Identify cost-effective and innovate methods to maintain gravel roads		★ ★ ☆
○ Maintain existing road maintenance schedule in order to maintain existing level of service		★ ★ ★
○ Identify highly impacted roads, which are hard to maintain as gravel, and hard surface those roads (asphalt, soil cement)		★ ☆ ☆
○ Continue to identify hazardous road areas		★ ☆ ☆
○ Review funding opportunities to apply for once SS4A plan is completed		★ ★ ☆

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
B. SIDEWALKS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Support infrastructure redevelopment that is recommended and suggested in the ongoing Downtown Planning process, as Downtown Redevelopment is a county-wide economic development concern		★ ★ ★
○ As part of parks planning process recommended above, add perimeter sidewalks and interior park sidewalks where needed to allow for accessibility throughout park		★ ☆ ☆
C. WATER		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Support work of rural water systems including Dry Red Water and East Yellowstone Rural Water		★ ★ ★
○ Support and review ongoing Fox Hills Aquifer Study, implementing recommendations where possible		★ ★ ☆
D. SEWER		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Maintain and support Dry Red Water Association sewer service		★ ★ ★

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
E. BRIDGES		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Continue to maintain and replace lowest rated bridges		★ ★ ★
☐ Leverage state and federal funding if it becomes available		★ ★ ★
F. SOLID WASTE FACILITIES		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Develop a solid waste plan to review current operations and future capital improvements, and to set maintenance standards.		★ ★ ☆
☐ Develop a rate study for the land fill that includes Review of operations of private haulers to ensure the landfill is operating in an enterprise status		★ ★ ☆
☐ Improve public awareness of and inspire responsible canister site use		★ ★ ☆
☐ Improve general operations of canister sites		★ ☆ ☆
G. SIGNAGE		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Create a GIS database of roadway signage.		★ ★ ☆
H. CULVERTS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Create a GIS database of culverts and drainage structures.		★ ★ ☆

4. Communications

Many of the items of concern noted in public engagement clearly note a lack of communication from local entities to the general public. There is a perceived lack of transparency and a fundamental disconnect between jurisdictional activities and the understanding among the public of what those activities are. The recommendations below are geared toward taking the County beyond a standard governmental update communication procedure and into a fully transparent communications department which works with other local entities. While some issues brought up during public engagement are not the jurisdictions' concern to solve, the jurisdictions, by creating a general communications hub, can alleviate. An example is that there were several times when it was brought up that there are multiple economic development agencies which all have grants for new and upcoming businesses, but that the general public is neither aware of these nor are those entities advertising in such a way that the general public in Richland County knows about even the existence of those entities. While this is not directly a concern of the jurisdictions', it can greatly affect the economic opportunities within Richland County. A communications hub that is excited about a contest to name the County's newest road grader brings awareness to road maintenance efforts. A communications hub that reminds residents to apply for the statewide property tax rebate is helpful. A communications hub that posts and shares information about upcoming grants may help get the next powerhouse business off the ground.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE CLEAR, CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITH COUNTY AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS	  	  

Objectives

- Hire County-wide Communications Officer to develop communications program
- Create or utilize existing channels of communication with each jurisdictional entity
- Require consistent communication that clearly notes importance of type of communication- i.e. emergency; marketing; public meeting notice; etc.
- Incorporate IT department into communications planning to provide additional assistance and coordination with County, City and Town websites.

B. PROVIDE TIMELY, HELPFUL INFORMATION COORDINATED ACROSS LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY GROUPS



Objectives

- Coordinate with local advocacy programs to create a common location for information, or to create a sharing operating procedure between groups
- Inform residents of economic development opportunities, upcoming public meetings, local grant openings, and general community events
- Increase usage of CODE RED program, which provides notifications for emergencies and out civic notification, and continue to support and update program

Montana Property Tax Rebate: revenue.mt.gov/taxes/property-tax-rebate/

City of Whitefish Alerts & Notifications: www.cityofwhitefish.gov/703/Alerts-Notifications



Theme 5

Economic Development

The County has numerous economic development organizations which assist in all of the topic areas below. The County should support these organizations and ensure that the citizens of the County are being served in the best way possible. The County should also support those businesses which contribute to the economic well-being of the County and its residents.

Key areas are:

- 1. Business Support***
- 2. Grant Support***
- 3. Downtown Redevelopment***

1. Business Support

Confusion about local economic development opportunities and strategies is widespread. There are multiple organizations providing economic development services to the area, including Great Northern Economic Development, the Richland Economic Development Corporation, and the local Chamber of Commerce. The County, City and Town should aim to reduce barriers to utilizing the programs, grants and incentives through those entities wherever possible, including proactively advertising on behalf of those groups. The jurisdictions' priorities are clear through this growth policy, and economic development proposals in line with these priorities should be considered for active support by the jurisdictions.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Where possible, fund grant opportunities, tax abatements, and other incentive programs ○ Utilize housing assistance, jurisdiction property, and permitting fees to reduce barriers to programs, workforce development, and investment		
B. PROVIDE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND INTERESTED CITIZENS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Create hub of contact information and upcoming grant information ○ Encourage economic development agencies to provide local workshops		
C. PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Identify local businesses with whom to partner on public projects, such as local pre-cast companies providing box culverts to bridge projects		

2. Grant Support

The County has a healthy budget, thanks to oil and gas revenues over the previous decades. At the moment, the county is facing a crux where economic development that occurs without incentives is beginning to stagnate. The county, via grants to local businesses, advocacy groups, and citizens, has the ability to influence the future direction of growth.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE LOCAL GRANT PROGRAMS FROM THE COUNTY TO RESIDENTS	★☆☆	●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Through Richland County or through partnering entities, create grant programs for local citizens attempting to renovate and reuse structures, purchase and maintain businesses, creating startups within needed industries which align with the County's goals, and other valued activities that further economic development.		
B. ASSIST IN FUNDING FOR LOCAL GRANTS FROM OTHER ENTITIES WHEN THOSE GRANTS ALIGN WITH COUNTY GOALS	★☆☆	●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ In partnership with Communities in Action or Sidney Health Center, fund a local health grant, providing funds to private entities providing needed health services such as SANE exams or preventative mental health treatments. ○ Work with 4H and other organizations to fund grants for prior Sidney residents returning to the family or other farming and ranching operations. ○ Assist Richland Housing Authority with creation and maintenance of housing authority projects, while creating partnerships for housing essential jurisdictional employees.		

3. Downtown Redevelopment

Downtown Redevelopment was one of the top three needs identified during public input during this planning process. In the City of Sidney and Town of Fairview, downtown as an area is seen as dated, tired, and, importantly, an opportunity spot. Downtown reinvestment is still one of the best locations for private returns on public dollars, with public dollars leveraging multitudes in increased tax revenue as downtown business owners fix up buildings and facades. Both communities have their own unique challenges. The County's support of these planning and redevelopment efforts is necessary to create spaces that contribute to the County's overall quality of life and economic outlook.

Goal _____ Urgency _____ Applies To _____

A. LEVERAGE PUBLIC DOLLARS INTO PRIVATE INVESTMENT



Objectives

- Support Advocacy Group and Downtown goals by providing expertise and functional capacity where necessary
- Search out and support public-private partnerships which further downtown goals, such as funding and grant assistance for catalyst projects like infill buildings and façade renovations and for private passion projects such as public art and demonstration projects
- Focus on visible public projects in the downtown, showing support for the downtown as an economic driver



Theme 6

Community Health

Many organizations inside Richland County focus on the health and support of the community. The County should support these organizations wherever possible, as these partnerships allow for residents of the County to remain healthy, happy and productive.

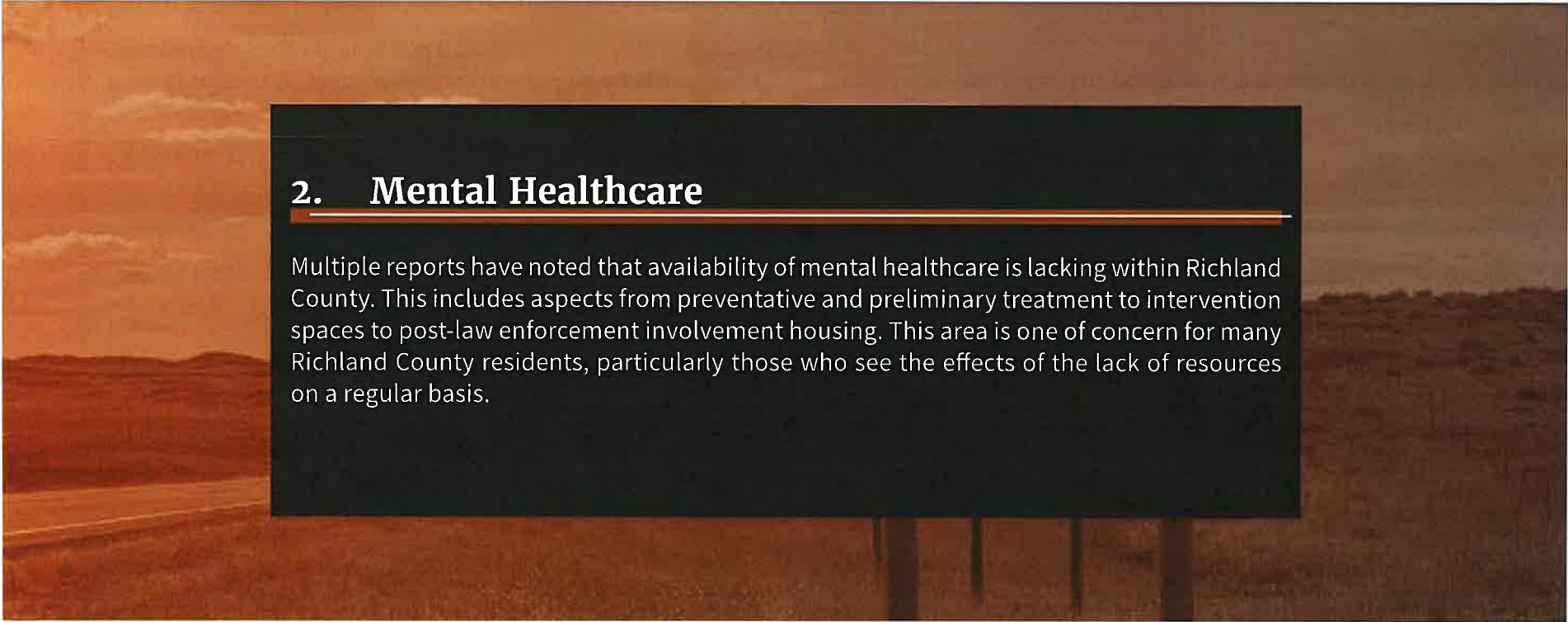
Key areas are:

- 1. Sidney Health Center***
- 2. Mental health Care***
- 3. Public Safety and Community Assistance***

1. Sidney Health Center

Sidney Health Center, as an independent healthcare system, is a unique and vital part of the Sidney and Richland County community. In addition to being the largest employer in the County, Sidney Health Center provides a regional medical hub, drawing patients from across eastern Montana and western North Dakota. The hospital has numerous studies every year and collaborates with the local community, and those partnerships should be preserved.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS		 
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Maintain existing partnerships with County Health Departments and City entities ○ Provide support for hiring and retention programs from Sidney Health Center ○ Provide support at legislative level for initiatives which are important to the continued operation of Sidney Health Center in the Community.		
B. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR BUILDING EXPANSION		 
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide support for Sidney Health Center during expansion processes, looking at private public partnerships for provision of parking in remote areas, reviews of building permits, and general infrastructure improvements ○ Review expansion plans with Sidney Health Center as a collaborative partner, reviewing where City or County infrastructure may be utilized to ensure continued success of Sidney Health		



2. Mental Healthcare

Multiple reports have noted that availability of mental healthcare is lacking within Richland County. This includes aspects from preventative and preliminary treatment to intervention spaces to post-law enforcement involvement housing. This area is one of concern for many Richland County residents, particularly those who see the effects of the lack of resources on a regular basis.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. ADVOCATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH		  
Objectives		
○ Provide support and financial incentives to public and private initiatives to increase mental healthcare resources in the community <i>Behavioral Health - Richland County, Montana: www.richland.org/behavioral-health.html</i>		
○ Provide support and training to emergency response and public safety teams focused on mental health response <i>Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): www.nami.org/advocacy/crisis-intervention/crisis-intervention-team-cit-programs/</i>		

3. Public Safety and Community Assistance

Richland County residents feel very safe. There are, however, concerns about the succession planning within departments and ability of rapid responses from volunteer departments. These have and continue to function well. The major initiatives that the Sheriff's department and other law enforcement agencies are looking at will be addressed by their individual capital improvement plans as recommended above, but targeted training overall should be a priority for all departments.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. INCENTIVIZE VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT ON PUBLIC SAFETY TEAMS



Objectives

- Support recruitment and training for volunteer fire and other public safety teams
- Work with existing public information officers to advertise and create awareness around volunteer opportunities for public safety
- Create high school program with EMT/paramedic teams to train high schoolers to become EMTs

Miles City, Montana EMS Training: www.milescityfirerescue.com/emt-class.html

Lewiston, Montana EMS Training: fhs.lewistown.k12.mt.us/courses/08-cte-alternate-offerings/emt-training

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. PROVIDE FUNDING AND CAPACITY FOR TRAINING	★ ★ ☆	●

Objectives

- Fund and support a yearly training budget for all public safety staff, ensuring certifications and qualifications are kept up to date
- Provide training on community support in addition to mental health resources and response strategies for all law enforcement officers

C. INCENTIVIZE VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT ON PUBLIC SAFETY TEAMS	★ ★ ★	●
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Objectives

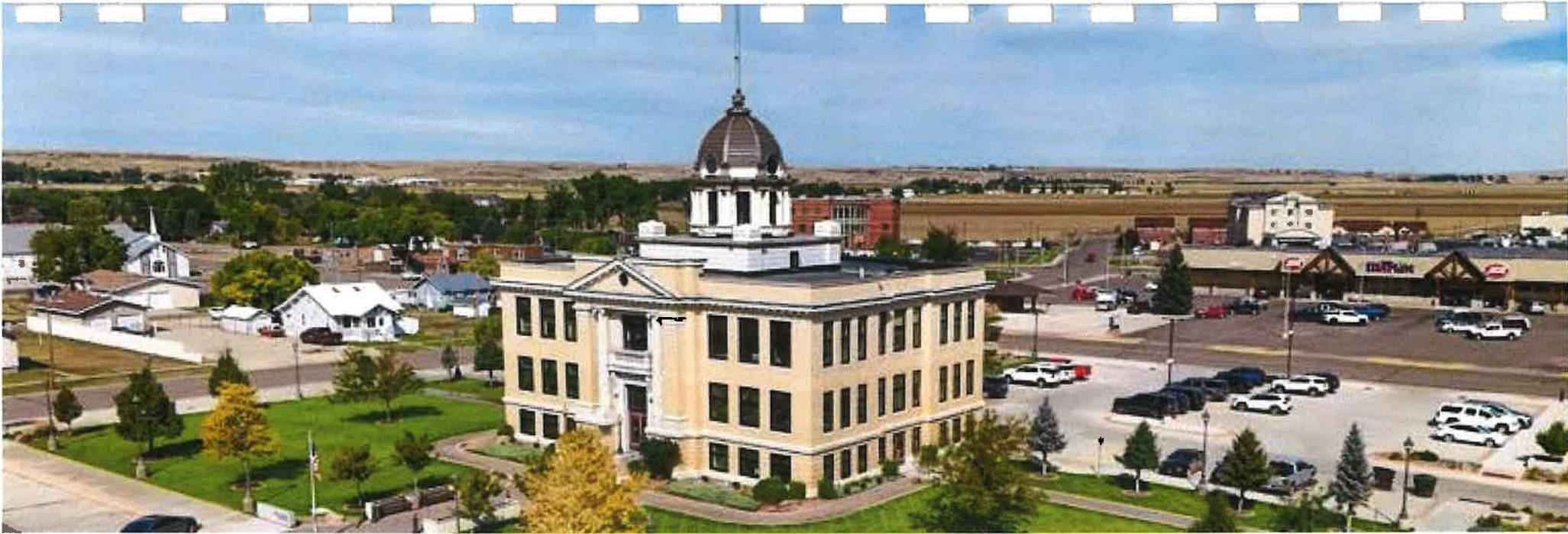
- Maintain support of Communities in Action, providing staff and funding for initiatives

D. SUPPORT SAVAGE AND LAMBERT PUBLIC SAFETY TEAMS	★ ★ ★	●
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Objectives

- Support requests from Savage and Lambert to review Public Safety team needs, including updates to fire departments





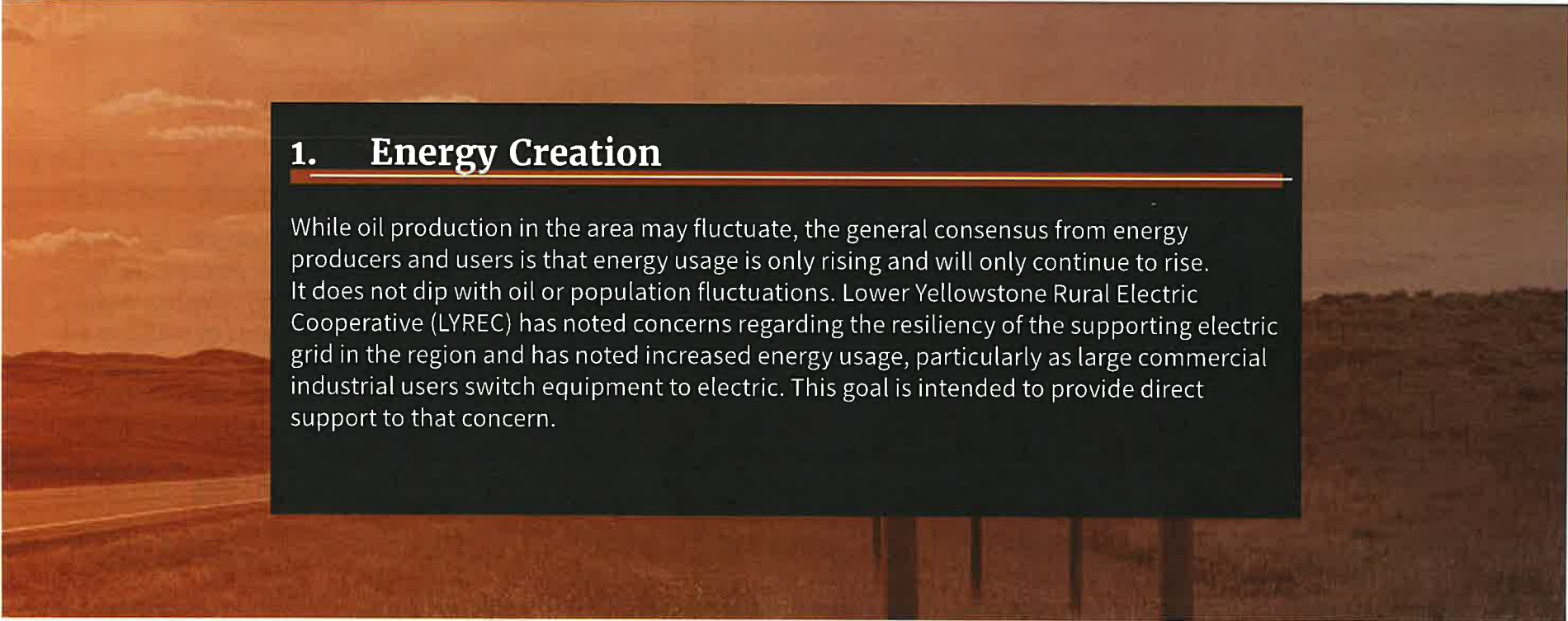
Theme 7

Natural Resources

Natural resources in Richland County are abundant. From agriculture to energy, Richland County is rich and blessed with the ground it sits on. However, those resources are commodities and as the County well knows, they have downturns and upswings. The topics and goals below are outlined to create as steady a state as possible for Richland County despite those hills and valleys. Richland County is well located for new energy creation initiatives, including wind and solar, and should not dismiss them in favor of oil – all of these are commodities and resources that Richland County can use to assist County residents toward a rich, diversified future.

Key areas are:

- 1. Energy Creation***
- 2. Energy Agnostic Mentality***
- 3. Agriculture***
- 4. Tourism***



1. Energy Creation

While oil production in the area may fluctuate, the general consensus from energy producers and users is that energy usage is only rising and will only continue to rise. It does not dip with oil or population fluctuations. Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) has noted concerns regarding the resiliency of the supporting electric grid in the region and has noted increased energy usage, particularly as large commercial industrial users switch equipment to electric. This goal is intended to provide direct support to that concern.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT ENERGY CREATION AND INVESTMENT	★ ★ ★	●

- Objectives
- Partner with LYREC and surrounding power suppliers on development and resiliency goals
 - Provide support to energy creation initiatives through funding or potential incentives
 - Work with EMS and local energy suppliers on a local resiliency planning effort

2. Energy Agnostic Mentality

While Richland County is traditionally an agricultural and oil based economy and culture, there should be no preference placed on type of energy creation. The recent Richland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Diversification Plan espoused an “energy agnostic attitude” and this plan reiterates and supports that goal. There has been much discussion in surrounding counties about the value of oil, wind and solar energy, and Richland County should view these all as economically responsible opportunities to create and maintain the energy grid within the County. This is not to say there should not be some level of regulation on all of these, as they are all large rural industrial uses, but to say that they should not be simply rejected out of hand because one may be seen as less valuable than another.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN, SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE AN ENERGY AGNOSTIC MENTALITY	  	  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Partner with LYREC, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Montana-Dakota Utilities, and REDC as local partners to evaluate energy creation proposals for development review and consideration for tax incentives. ○ Create and maintain a clear energy agnostic policy, making Richland County a unique and stable hub on the eastern side of the state for energy creation ○ Create clear development standards for all types of energy creation, allowing for a predictable development environment		

3. Agriculture

Richland County, Sidney and Fairview have consistently maintained clear support of their agricultural roots through energy production ups and downs. This should continue as it is a major identity for the County and even the more urban dwellers of the county. As commodity prices fluctuate, the County, City and Town can provide support for value added agricultural business ventures and other economic development initiatives that stay true to the roots of Richland County while diversifying.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. MAINTAIN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURAL ROOTS



Objectives

- Partner with REDC on agriculture-related business initiatives
- Maintain support of County Fair
- Partner with REDC and other organizations to provide support and incentives for new and emerging agricultural industry workers, whether those are programs targeting high schoolers or returning children taking over the family farm.
- Support cultural activities and events which underscore the importance of agriculture in the community, such as public art and rodeos
- Support statewide efforts to urge the Bureau of Land Management to disallow the American Prairie Reserve from purchasing or leasing productive farmland.

4. Tourism

While Tourism is not a major industry for Richland County, there are numerous attractions for a more regional audience, including recreational opportunities along the Yellowstone River, historical sites, and downtown shopping. There are also numerous sports tourism events held in Sidney every year, including hockey and basketball tournaments. These should be capitalized on and supported.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT TOURISM AS A REVENUE GENERATOR	★ ☆ ☆	  

Objectives

- Provide support to Chamber of Commerce and other organizing entities to support sports tourism and incentivize visitors to recreate, shop and dine in Sidney and Fairview
- Create a County-wide wayfinding plan to assist visitors in finding recreational and other destinations points
- Support local destinations such as parks, trails, river access points, community events, retail and restaurant locations, encouraging visitors to spend time in the communities of Richland County
- Support tourism-related initiatives from the Chamber of Commerce, REDC, and other entities.

Ingham County, Michigan: www.spicergroup.com/news/ingham-county-wayfinding

Utah's Canyon Country: www.utahscanyoncountry.com/navigation/

State and National Parks in Minnesota Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8dXssLMTu0



5. City of Sidney

The vision of Sidney is a small, growing City, with a well-rounded, diverse economic strategy, development-friendly policies, forward-thinking local governance and community members, a vibrant downtown, and infrastructure and amenities to support regional visitation.

Key Findings

Sidney residents greatly appreciate their rural way of life, noting that Sidney is a great place to raise a family and is safe. Many residents noted that if they moved away during their post-secondary education years, they returned to Sidney to raise a family. Many – over 80% - survey respondents (whose age ranges were roughly proportional to county resident age ranges) noted that they plan to stay in Sidney as they age. The fact that over 60% of respondents felt they could find physical healthcare options in the community most likely contributes to that fact.

Overall, Sidney residents want a business-friendly environment built on affordable housing, good infrastructure, financial incentives, downtown revitalization, year-round recreation, and few barriers to new businesses – plus clear, community-focused leadership.

The top subjects raised during conversations, focus groups, and survey results were:

- 1. Additional recreational opportunities***
- 2. Increased development of downtown***
- 3. Greater economic opportunities and job creation***

Almost 55% of respondents to the survey, as well as numerous in-person respondents noted that additional recreation options were extremely important to them. Recreation was the top issue of concern heard from Sidney residents, and 80% of Sidney residents felt that there were nowhere near enough or not enough recreation opportunities. However, it is seen as an economic driver, workforce recruitment and retention tool, and quality of life necessity. Therefore, it is not simply the desire for recreation that is at the forefront of residents' minds but a vital piece of maintaining Sidney as a modern community where they want to live. The needs mentioned were for both indoor and outdoor facilities as well as private and public facilities. These needs for facilities were for family friendly, year round recreation, including indoor courts and pools. Public requests included more walking/biking trails, and multimodal connections, river and camping access, shade/trees, dog parks, and improved playground equipment, benches, and splashpads. All of these take infrastructure, funds, planning and capacity that Sidney does not have in place at the moment. Other requests included private business "third space" entertainment such as arcades, go carts, trampoline parks, batting cages, etc.



Over 40% of respondents felt that downtown development in Sidney is important. Downtown Development is seen by Sidney residents as an economic driver, a retention tool, and an indicator of community pride. Improvements needed to downtown include incentivizing building use, disincentivizing vacant storefronts, requiring building upkeep, provision of grants and assistance applying for them, sidewalk improvements, connections outward from downtowns, and more focus on “desirable” businesses. A “desirable” business is a definition in dispute, but most conversations revolved around needing support for businesses that provide everyday goods and services. There are portions of these requested improvements that are outside the purview of the City as a government, but which could be supported. In particular, a way to support these requests is through public infrastructure upgrades, which occasionally take additional funds or upkeep and require political will to maintain. An example of this is street trees, hanging flower baskets or curb bulb-outs, all of which take additional time and workforce to care for. In addition, the City can support grant applications for the downtown, similarly to the support for funding for the ongoing Downtown Plan, or support infrastructure changes to provide multimodal connections from downtown to the existing bike path.

Over 30% of respondents to the survey felt that they wished to see greater economic opportunities and job creation. In person focus groups highlighted workforce recruitment and retention concerns at various levels of employment. Service sector positions noted that they had trouble retaining hourly positions, while professional positions were difficult to fill because of recruitment. Housing can be difficult to find at all price points and quality of life was seen as lacking to be able to recruit professionals, such as doctors at Sidney Health Center. Oilfield and financial sectors did not seem to have as many struggles, mostly because they recruit from existing or former residents of Richland County or the surrounding region.

Within this discussion of economic development, it is worth noting that overall, quality of life is a focus, which ties into a nation-wide trend of choosing place over job. The majority of comments online and in person focused on quality of life issues as economic concerns, including affordability and availability of housing, affordable rental prices for both businesses and residences, community festivals, and afterschool and daycare for children. Issues such as vacant buildings and property upkeep, highlighted as concerns, are also seen as economic drivers, disincentivizing businesses from further investment.

The economy is an underlying issue throughout the planning process, heard in discussions of affordable housing and additional healthcare options for both urgent care access and mental healthcare. All of these are seen as economic inputs, allowing or disallowing workforce retention and recruitment.



**There were
several comments
requesting
backyard chickens**

Less mentioned but still important to almost 30% of respondents – and of mentioned in freeform comments online and in person – was concerns regarding infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure concerns centered around sewer upgrades and extensions, potholes and repaving, ensuring that utilities had the capacity to keep pace with any upcoming growth, internet and cell connectivity, managing energy related growth, creating multimodal transportation routes, and improving and incentivizing use of the truck route around Sidney. This last item ties clearly into the importance of downtown, as trucks often ignore the truck route in favor of traveling down Central Ave as it is the shortest route through town, though it disrupts the downtown atmosphere.

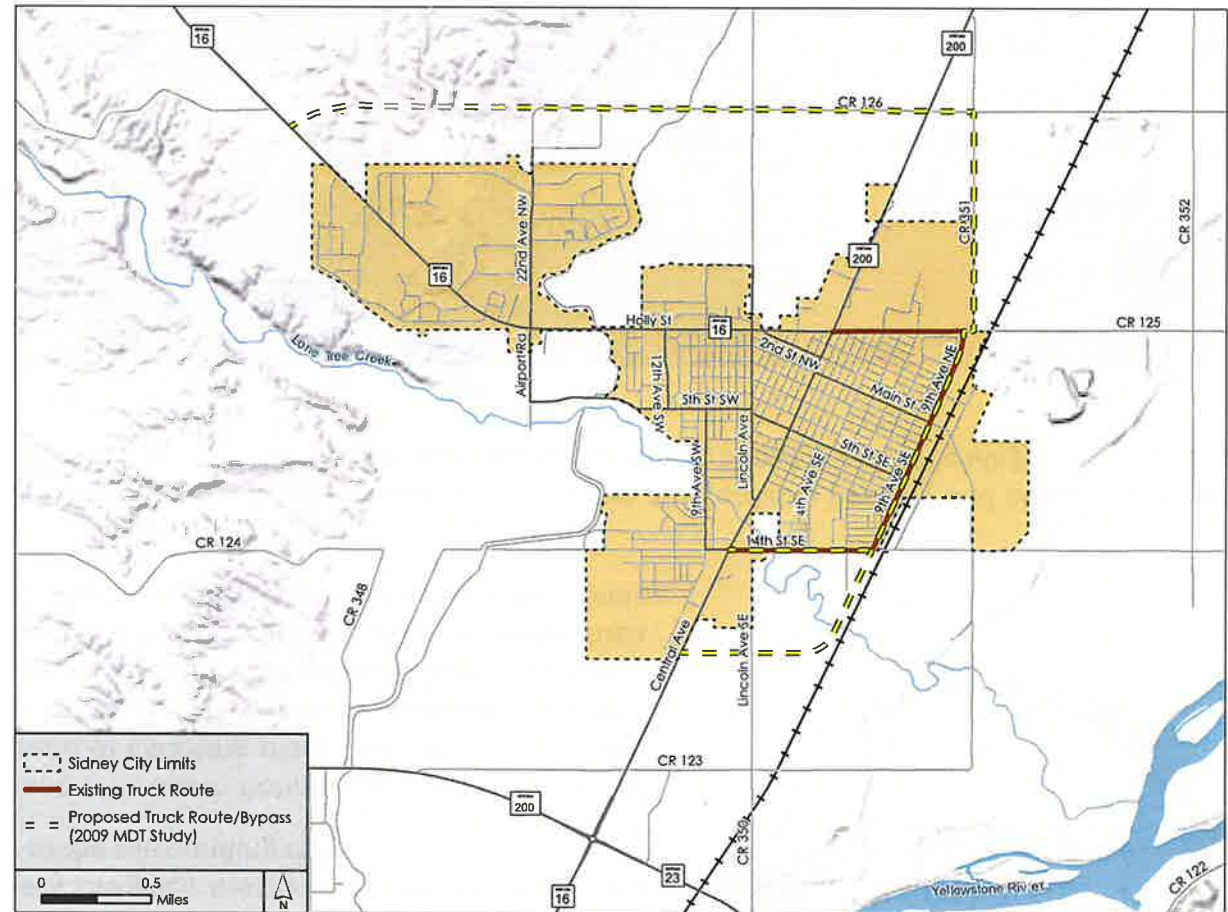


Figure 5.1 Truck Route

Growth Areas and Goals

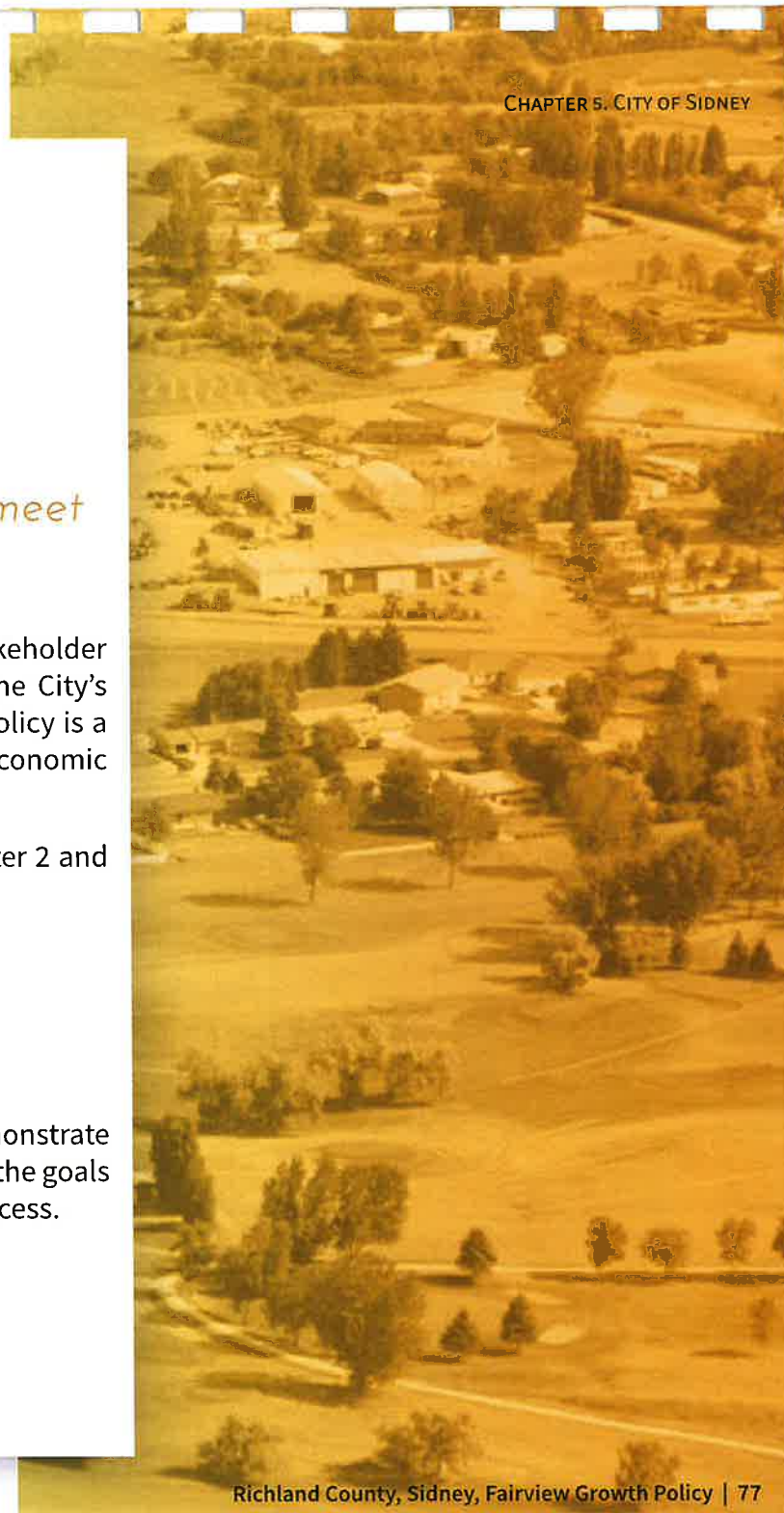
Strong growth happens when goals are outlined to meet the wants and needs of City residents.

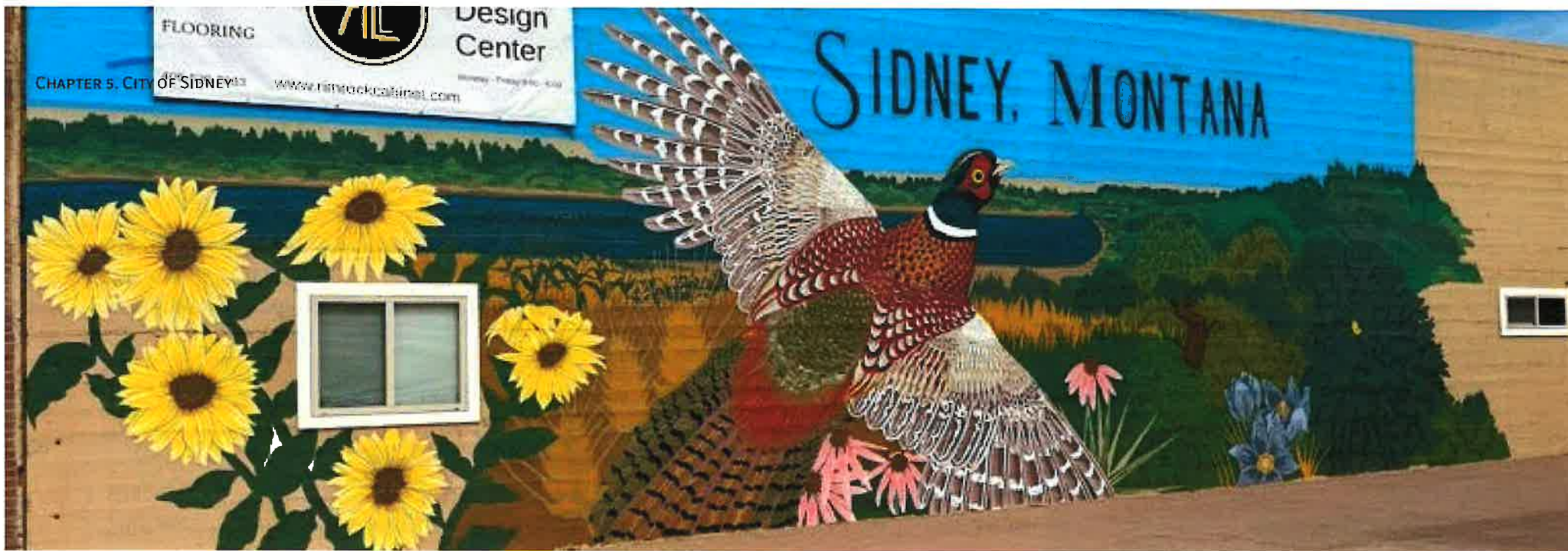
Multiple rounds of community engagement, Steering Committee review, and stakeholder discussion guided the identification of growth areas and goals. These reflect the City's overarching vision while balancing diverse interests and priorities. The Growth Policy is a living document, and its goals may be updated over time to align with changing economic conditions and to recognize the City's achievements.

This section is organized into six themes, reflecting the vision presented in Chapter 2 and shaped by community feedback gathered throughout the engagement process:

- Strategic Planning
- Economic Development
- Recreation
- Community Health
- Connectivity
- Natural Resources

While this chapter focuses on the City of Sidney, the growth areas and goals demonstrate the connection among the County, City, and Town. By identifying areas of overlap, the goals highlight where collaboration is both logical and essential to achieving lasting success.





Theme 1

Strategic Planning: Moving from Reactive to Proactive

Richland County and Sidney are in a reactive pattern which was first a product of slow, steady, agricultural related growth and then a product of a fast moving oil boom where reaction was the only option. Now, however, the communities in Richland County are in a steady growth pattern divorced from the ups and downs of oil related activity. In fact Sidney is rapidly becoming the hub of Eastern Montana, due to the presence of expert medical care, abundant community services, and direct through traffic to the Bakken. This places both demand and opportunity on the City of Sidney. That opportunity requires planning and foresight, looking at upcoming needs rather than reacting as those needs come up. The City has made a good start on this across all departments, from updating the growth policy and maintaining Preliminary Engineering Reports and Capital Improvements Plans. However, there are still areas of improvement, particularly outside of infrastructure improvements.

Key areas are:

- 1. Succession Planning for Staffing**
- 2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans**
- 3. Create Housing Opportunities**
- 4. Code Enforcement**

1. Succession Planning for Staffing

City Council and Department leadership are dedicated to their positions, and they deeply believe in Sidney’s success. However, for the most part, they do not have adequate back-up in case of retirement or resignation. There may be one or two individuals per department with leadership and technical expertise, but currently there is little emphasis placed on education of existing employees to develop internal talent. Hiring external candidates has proven to be a challenge due to housing, pay, and location. A dedicated Human Resources Department for Richland County and City of Sidney as well as coordination with the Town of Fairview will be able to assist in recruitment, hiring and retention, while also identifying and providing internal training opportunities.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. CREATE SUCCESSION PLAN FOR DEPARTMENTS



Objectives

- Hire Assistant Directors for Department Heads
- Support hiring search via communication, recruitment, and incentives
- Focus on hiring effective management with at least 10-15 years remaining in career
- Assess internal opportunities for advancement
- Create digital database for each department to store essential information for incoming employees

Utilize consultants such as Hire Resolve, Insight Global or Advanced Employment Services.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. INVEST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Budget yearly for conference attendance, continuing education courses, and certifications for employees identified for advancement or leadership roles ○ Encourage employees to attend conferences, complete continuing education and gain additional certifications ○ Coordinate training and education opportunities between communities in order to ensure efficiency		
C. CREATE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Work with REDC, Health Department, and County to create a recruitment incentive package for all jurisdictional employees, which may include housing allowances, provision of housing units at reduced cost, additional training and education assistance, and sign-on bonuses ○ Create retention program focused on talent development and building long-term employees ○ Focus on modern work practices that include options for flexible and remote work where possible ○ Coordinate efforts between communities so that opportunities are comparable		
<i>City of Pinole Recruitment Incentive Program: https://www.pinole.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Recruitment-Incentive-Program-FINAL.pdf</i>		
D. CREATE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT	  	 
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Oversee and coordinate recruitment, interview, hiring and retention efforts as well as to create effective policies for employee conflict		
<i>Wadena County Organizational Study: https://www.co.wadena.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/2317/-Wadena-County-DDA-Final-Report</i>		
○ Create a work and staffing plan to ensure appropriate staffing levels are maintained		
<i>Huron-Kinloss Staff Development Plan: https://huronkinloss-002-ca.govstack.com/media/zpva1vao/staffing-plan-development-project-final-report.pdf</i>		

2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning

Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans are good practice for City departments as well as local services entities. These allow for jurisdictional leadership to understand and recognize what priorities are shaping the community and allow for longer range planning of budgetary priorities. Regular updates allow for reflection and change as priorities shift and are more nimble than a full update to the growth policy. In addition, review of a city strategic plan will allow for review of the potential for a City Manager or Administrator position, which would create an efficient and effective review process for various departments and their individual planning efforts, assisting the City Council in their duties.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. REQUIRE ALL DEPARTMENTS TO CREATE A 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT & STRATEGIC PLAN		

Objectives

- Review and update on a yearly basis to reflect minor changes
- Include equipment, infrastructure, buildings, staff, and large upcoming projects
- Publish on jurisdictional website to increase transparency and communication with public
- Provide support for goals and needs from individual departments

Livingston County, Michigan. Capital Improvement Plan: <https://milivcounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025-2030-CIP-APPROVED-BY-COUNTY-PLANNING-COMMISSION-FINAL-DOCUMENT.pdf>

B. REGULARLY UPDATE GROWTH POLICY		
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Objectives

- Maintain Growth Policy by updating every 5 years in keeping with Montana requirements in order to maintain high eligibility for state funding opportunities

3. Creation of Housing Opportunities

Housing was an issue of major note during community engagement sessions. While it was not something identified as an immediate need - as in, few people said “We need more housing” - the topic consistently came up as an underlying concern to different issues. Schools, banks, agricultural industries, government and medical employers all noted that housing availability is a main concern for recruitment and retention of employees. Quality of available housing was brought up as well as quantity of available housing. The goals in this section focus on providing support for low income housing while also working with private and public parties to create opportunities for new or renovated housing in all jurisdictions. These goals and objectives are visionary, pulling in inspiration from communities to the east which have seen success with direct cash incentives for building housing, as well as other communities which incentivize reuse of older housing. Ignoring existing housing stock in favor of new housing stock only ensures that the existing stock falls further into disrepair and maintains the existing disruption of the housing cycle and diversification of housing that is available. A well rounded approach to housing is necessary in Sidney, where large housing developments are rare. Sidney, working with Richland County, has the ability to pull together these approaches and coordinate with the Richland County Housing Authority (RCHA) and other jurisdictions to ensure a coordinated approach.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

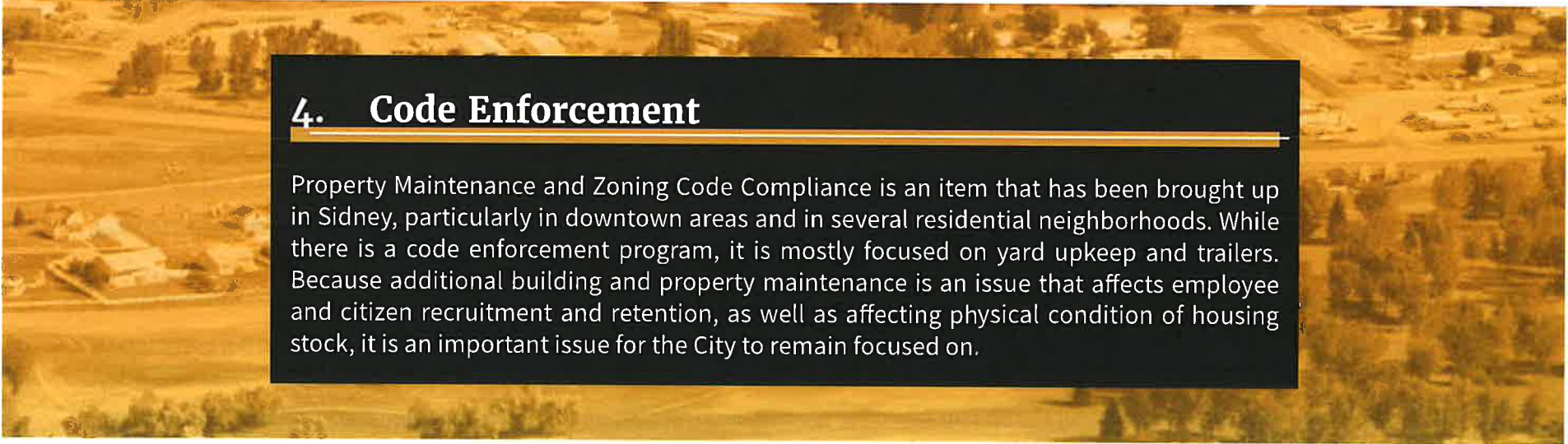
A. SUPPORT OBJECTIVES OF HOUSING AUTHORITY



Objectives

- Integrate city personnel with RCHA board leadership to ensure cooperation
- Assist where possible with maintenance and operations support
- Partner with Housing Authority on jurisdictional employee housing to create and maintain housing for county, city and town employees
- Partner with Housing Authority on essential employee housing opportunities

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. UTILIZE LAND USE PLAN TO IDENTIFY DEVELOPABLE, SERVICEABLE AREAS AND PRIORITIZE INCENTIVES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT		
<i>Objectives</i> ○ In areas identified as developable and serviceable, work with willing landowners and developers to develop partnerships on housing projects. ○ Investigate incentives for private renovation and development of housing, which might include ideas such as partnering on utilities and street extensions, waiving of permit or hookup fees, or cash buydowns. ○ Focus and further incentivize mid-priced, well built structures with opportunities for sweat equity through creation of economic development grants and opportunities ○ Maintain existing allowance for wide varieties of housing types within zoning districts <i>PIF Programs or Housing Trust Fund: https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/65445/Appendix-C---Implementation-Actions-Update</i>		
C. CREATE INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE REUSE AND UPDATING OF OLDER HOMES AND VACANT LOTS		
<i>Objectives</i> zoning conformance and grant ○ Work with Planning Department to create policies and updates to zoning code that incentivize infill development rather than discouraging it (i.e. creating different sets of setback requirements for older subdivided lots in original townsites that do not fit modern homes within existing setbacks) ○ Work with Richland Economic Development Corp, Chamber of Commerce or other entity to offer cash incentives for homes older than 30 years or rated in condition 0-6 based on the Montana State Assessor Data ○ Create incentives to sell vacant or underutilized residential properties to buyers looking to build or place a home on the property within 2 years <i>Appendix Deer Lodge County Ordinance: www.adlc.us/DocumentCenter/View/620/Ordinance-No-255-VGR</i> ○ Promote development of vacant or undeveloped properties particularly in areas with existing urban services such as water, sewer, and roads ○ Ensure codes are in compliance with MLUPA (Montana Land Use and Planning Act) requirements where possible in order to alleviate future tension between state and local codes		



4. Code Enforcement

Property Maintenance and Zoning Code Compliance is an item that has been brought up in Sidney, particularly in downtown areas and in several residential neighborhoods. While there is a code enforcement program, it is mostly focused on yard upkeep and trailers. Because additional building and property maintenance is an issue that affects employee and citizen recruitment and retention, as well as affecting physical condition of housing stock, it is an important issue for the City to remain focused on.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN A CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM FOCUSED ON PROPERTY MAINTENANCE		 
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Review regulations and focus of program to ensure they are clear, enforceable, and focused on. public safety, health and welfare, which uphold community values, with support of legal team ○ Clearly communicate origination of enforcement actions with communities via social media and paper flyers ○ Create education campaign to inform property owners and residents about local codes to encourage compliance without enforcement action		

Theme 2

Recreation

The top item of concern in Richland County and Sidney was seeing more recreation opportunities. It was the third most “would like to see” item in Fairview. At the moment, recreation in the County, City and Town is provided via a mesh of private club sports and several public parks and pools that are maintained by city, town and county staff. While the general sentiment is that the parks, trails and pools are well maintained and much valued, and there is priority put on maintaining clean, well-cared-for parks across the board from all jurisdictional entities, there is a lack of continuity and future planning that can be seen in all three jurisdictions.

In Sidney, the parks are maintained by a superintendent who is a licensed arborist, supported by two full-time employees and several part-time staff. There are seasonal pool employees and all funds for the parks and pools come from the general fund. Updates to parks are made -and made well- on an ad-hoc basis, but do not allow for quick response to community requests such as pickleball courts or new playground equipment, as there is not a dedicated revolving maintenance or capital improvements fund in place. All recreational sports programming occurs within individual private programs, which creates a barrier in several ways.

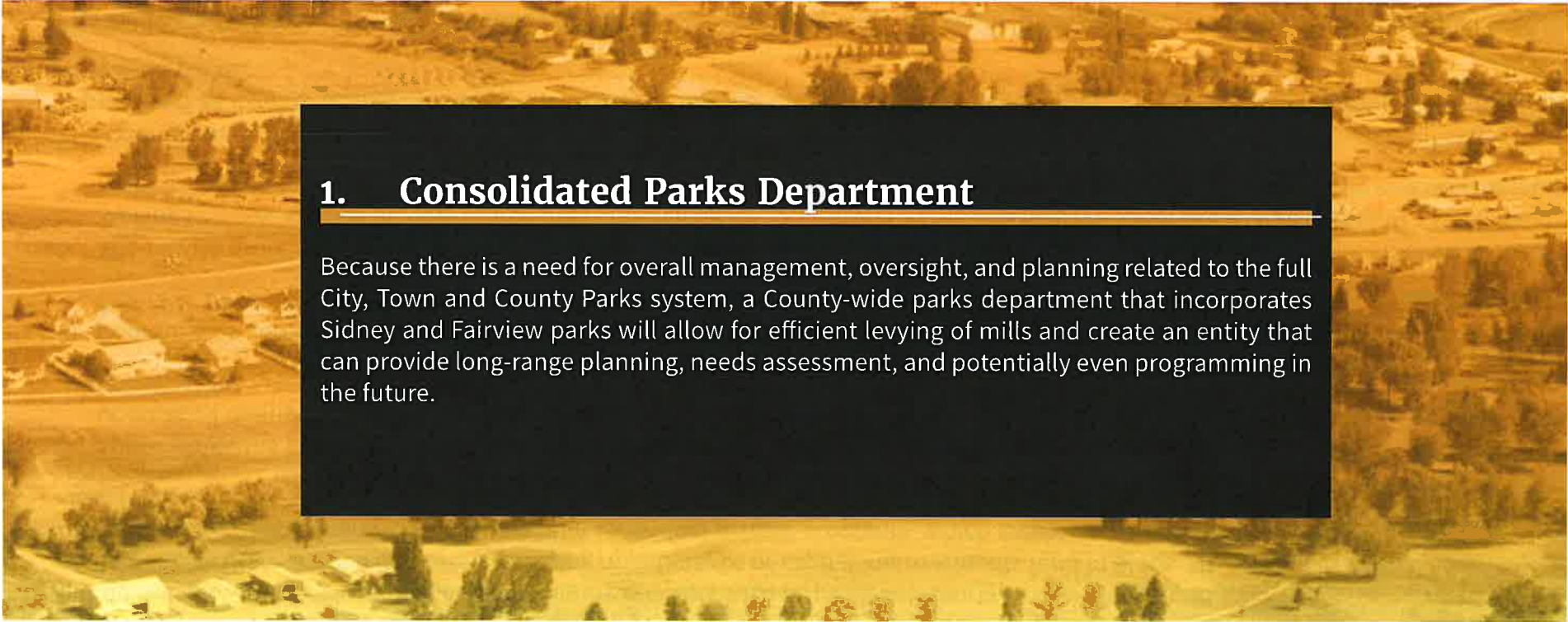
1. Those programs pay either no fee or a minimal fee to use the public infrastructure such as the pool or baseball diamonds for the season, meaning the City is not recouping maintenance fees or general upkeep fees.
2. Coordination of tournaments, indoor space, outdoor space usage and programming, etc. falls to a variety of organizations including the Chamber of Commerce. This leads to a system that only works as long as someone at those organizations is willing to maintain that duty.
3. The private groups mean that there is no common clearinghouse of information for individuals who may have just moved to town or are looking to move to town on how to sign their children up for local sports. While this may not seem like a large barrier in a small town, it can assist in leading to the perception that was seen in survey results that it can be hard to integrate into the community as a new member.

The County parks are maintained by public works and are mostly outdoor gathering spaces and fishing/boating locales. The majority of what is perceived as County Recreation is provided by the Richland County Fairgrounds in Sidney, though there are additional County provided recreation areas.

The following topics are focused on creating opportunities for County-wide recreation that is efficient and is an asset to the quality of life and economic outlook of the County, City of Sidney and Town of Fairview.

Key areas are:

- 1. Consolidated Parks Department**
- 2. Public Indoor Recreation**
- 3. Private Recreation Opportunities**

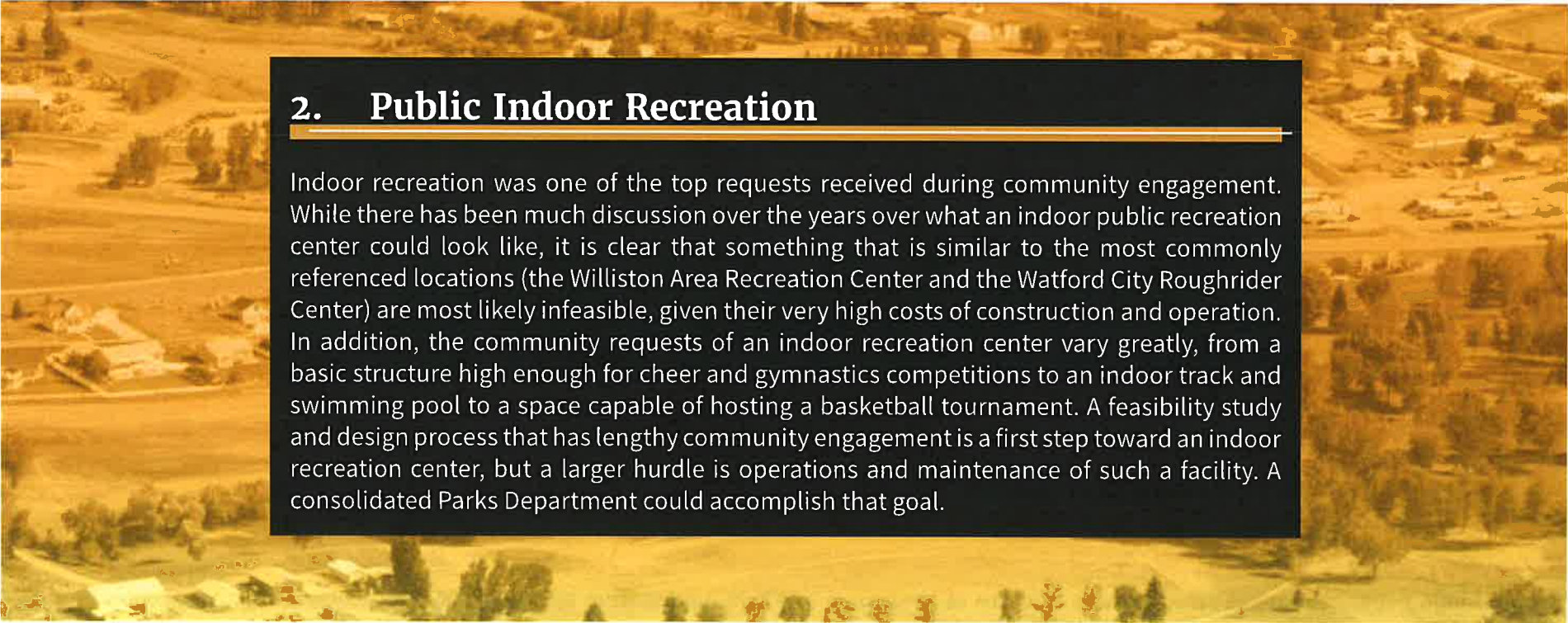


Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT		

- Objectives
- Utilizing Section 7-11-1000 of Montana Code Annotated, create a special district via an interlocal agreement to consolidate parks operations and maintenance
 - If there is no support for a special district, create a consolidated, coordinated plan supported by all three jurisdictions for Parks growth and maintenance in the County

Richland County Property Tax: revenuefiles.mt.gov/files/Annual-Property-Tax-Changes-by-County/Richland.pdf

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. DEDICATE STAFF TO PARKS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Create recruitment program among local high schools for part-time/seasonal staff		
C. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS PLAN	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Coordinate on a Sidney-Fairview-Richland County Parks Plan that creates a formal needs assessment, property and facilities review, and replacement cost analysis for all existing equipment. This plan will create Parks goals. ○ Coordinate with chamber (or relevant private organization) to create a brochure to welcome new residents and list recreation opportunities and contact info		



2. Public Indoor Recreation

Indoor recreation was one of the top requests received during community engagement. While there has been much discussion over the years over what an indoor public recreation center could look like, it is clear that something that is similar to the most commonly referenced locations (the Williston Area Recreation Center and the Watford City Roughrider Center) are most likely infeasible, given their very high costs of construction and operation. In addition, the community requests of an indoor recreation center vary greatly, from a basic structure high enough for cheer and gymnastics competitions to an indoor track and swimming pool to a space capable of hosting a basketball tournament. A feasibility study and design process that has lengthy community engagement is a first step toward an indoor recreation center, but a larger hurdle is operations and maintenance of such a facility. A consolidated Parks Department could accomplish that goal.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. IDENTIFY FEASIBILITY OF PUBLIC INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY AND FUNCTION OF POTENTIAL FACILITY	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Commission study with widespread community engagement ○ Review potential of payment for a facility via a balloted bond or private fundraising ○ Determine construction, maintenance, operations, and location of facility.		

3. Private Recreation

There are several areas in Sidney which are vacant and could provide indoor private recreation spaces. The City should support efforts to incentivize redevelopment and investment, as private provision of recreational spaces is more efficient and less costly to the public.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE PRIVATE RECREATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Objectives

- Provide support for funding applications for private recreation businesses applying for grants and funding through regional, local and state entities
- Ensure that zoning in City allows for private recreation - indoor and outdoor- uses in appropriate areas
- Identify and connect vacant commercial properties with potential business owners

Example Opportunities: Vacant building in Downtown Fairview into Arcade; old Shopko into indoor go-kart track



Theme 3

Connectivity

This growth area is wide ranging but discusses vital connectivity points between the City and City residents, between the County and the City, and between City residents themselves. From cell service and trails to essential infrastructure, these are the ties that bind communities together, enabling the City to be a community instead of just a governmental boundary.

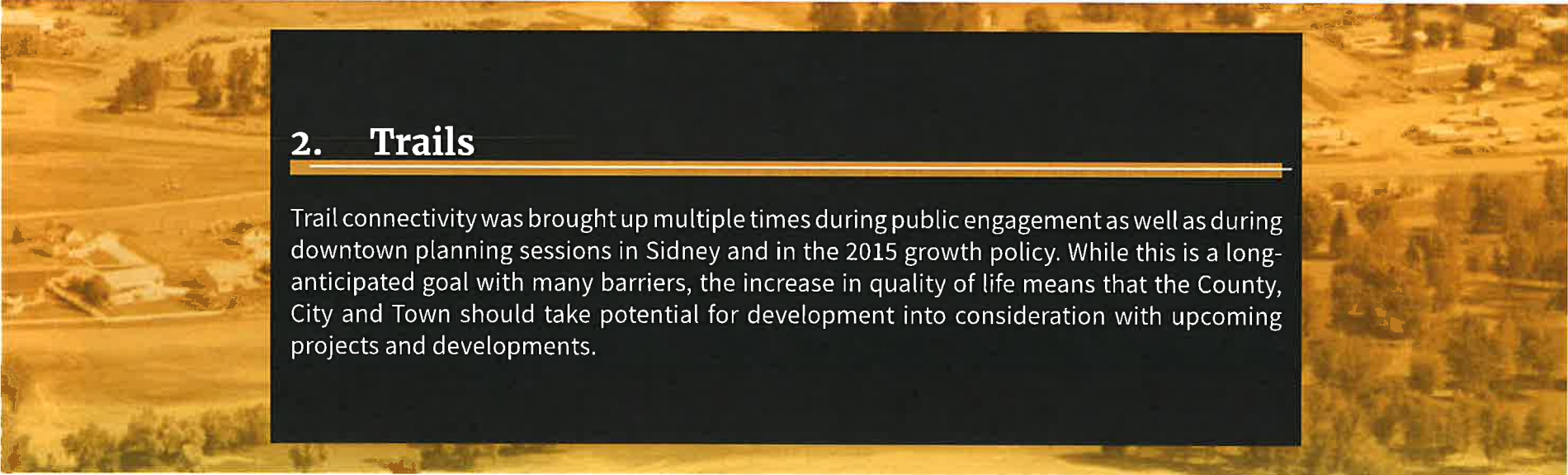
Key areas are:

- 1. Cell Service**
- 2. Trails**
- 3. Infrastructure**
- 4. Communications**

1. Cell Service

As the world increasingly relies on internet and cellular service for communication, standard forms of communication such as landlines have fallen by the wayside. They are expensive to maintain for individuals through their local service providers and are increasingly irrelevant. However, rural areas of Richland County have large pockets of land which have no cellular or internet service. The old forms of communication between neighbors who may need assistance during medical emergencies, weather events, or wildfires no longer suffice, as many individuals have given up their land lines. This leaves particularly newer and younger residents without ways to contact neighbors, as well as places a heavy burden on families who may require days of remote work or schooling. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a major concern, as schools needed to make the decision to purchase internet power packs for county residents who needed to do education remotely and did not have standard internet or cellular access.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT CELLULAR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	★ ★ ★	● ● ●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Incentivize and support location of large and local cellular communications towers ○ Incentivize and support expansion of broadband and wireless services to rural areas ○ Map locations without cellular or wireless services in order to assist private development of communications towers		
B. CREATE ALTERNATE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS FOR RESIDENTS	★ ★ ★	● ● ●
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Support grants for and grant applications from local fire, police and EMS departments for communication devices and upgrades, particularly in areas where communication will be stifled without (for example, in Fairview, the rural fire district operates into North Dakota, which is switching emergency communication onto broadband)		



Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. LINK BIKE PATH TO DESTINATIONS	  	

- Objectives
- Identify local destinations in Sidney, including schools, downtown area, and local services using a public input process that identifies and prioritizes locations
 - Utilize destination map to create a planned trail system map that can be used in grant applications, development decisions, and required infrastructure upgrades
 - Use public feedback process to ensure the planned on-and off-street system map is one citizens feel comfortable using and are in support of
 - Include lighting plans in trails planning and updates

B. ENSURE ALL RESIDENTS CAN UTILIZE TRAILS	  	  
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- Objectives
- Identify locations where ADA accessible trails and features can be incorporated and support design and construction

3. Infrastructure

Infrastructure was one of the top concerns of citizens of Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview. In some cases, there appears to be a perception issue, and in others, there is a true lack of maintenance and the capacity to plan for maintenance. The recommendations that follow are unique to the City, recognizing that each community within the County has their own distinct capabilities, budgets, and capacity for public infrastructure projects. In all departments, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) should be created or maintained to ensure that the communities are able to look into the future. These recommendations are made with an emphasis on creating efficiencies, routines, and inventories, moving public works departments toward proactive planning and budgeting.

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
A. ROADS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Work with MDT to update ^{truck} bypass study		  
☐ Incentivize and encourage use of bypass, potentially by utilizing signage, repairs, or route shifts		  
☐ Create a resurfacing maintenance program using established CIP priorities		  
☐ Replace and update curb and gutter as identified in need of replacement		  
☐ Identify locations which are in need of additional street lighting and create budget schedule for lighting installation within CIP		  
☐ Create an equipment maintenance, repair and replacement schedule for City owned equipment		  

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
B. SIDEWALKS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Conduct inventory to identify sidewalk gaps, deficient sidewalks, missing ADA facilities, and create a sidewalk maintenance and replacement program for City sidewalks as part of overall CIP		★ ★ ☆
○ As part of parks planning process recommended above, add perimeter sidewalks and interior park sidewalks where needed to allow for accessibility throughout park		★ ☆ ☆
○ Create sidewalk improvement district where homeowners can add and asses their individual sidewalks to larger city projects		★ ☆ ☆
○ Include sidewalk updates with street improvement projects ← on city properties		★ ★ ☆
○ Create enforcement and compliance plan for snow removal from sidewalks		★ ★ ☆
C. WATER		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Support replacement of water tank on 16th St ← Highway 16		★ ★ ★
○ Establish northwest water looping improvement district in order to increase developable land west of town as well as improve hydraulics and reliability of the overall water system. and water movement.		★ ★ ☆
○ Utilize and update established CIP on a regular basis		★ ★ ★
○ Review plans for and incorporate into upcoming budgets Water and Storage Improvements planning in the Anderson area		★ ★ ☆
○ Continue ongoing work to replace cast iron water mains		★ ☆ ☆
○ Ensure planning continues and is supported for future updates to water treatment plant		★ ☆ ☆

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
D. SEWER		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Replace CCIP lining as outlined in existing plans		★ ★ ★
○ Complete sewage lagoon sludge removal as described in Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) phase 4		★ ★ ☆
E. STORM SEWER		
<i>Objectives</i>		
← Add OBJECTIVE: Make improvements to BNSF Railroad Right of way Storm Drainage Detention and Waterway		
○ Update maintenance model to accommodate new funds		★ ★ ☆
○ Construct retention pond on C/S 27-732 to serve Phase 1 of Wagon Wheel Subdivision		★ ★ ☆
○ Relocate storm drainpipe in Nielson Halverson Subdivision on 9th Ave. that currently runs underneath an existing structure.		★ ★ ☆
○ Install drainage piping within Petersons Second Addition along 11th St. SW and up to 9th Ave. SW		★ ★ ☆
○ Create replacement program for manhole covers		★ ★ ☆
○ Based on existing stormwater study, prepare old ponds at lagoon for the possibility of treating stormwater in the future		★ ☆ ☆
F. SOLID WASTE FACILITIES		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Review City Operations as part of CIP, including updating replacement schedule for garbage cans and expanding into fabricating wind racks due to the loss of the local fabrication company		★ ★ ☆

4. Communications

Many of the items of concern noted in public engagement clearly note a lack of communication from local entities to the general public. There is a perceived lack of transparency and a fundamental disconnect between jurisdictional activities and the understanding among the public of what those activities are. The goals herein are geared toward taking the County, City and Town beyond a standard governmental update communication procedure and into a fully transparent communications department which works with other local entities. While some issues brought up during public engagement are not the jurisdictions' concern to solve, the jurisdictions, by creating a general communications hub, can alleviate. An example is that there were several times when it was brought up that there are multiple economic development agencies which all have grants for new and upcoming businesses, but that the general public is neither aware of these nor are those entities advertising in such a way that the general public in Richland County, Sidney and Fairview knows about even the existence of those entities. While this is not directly a concern of the jurisdictions', it can greatly affect the economic opportunities within Richland County. A communications hub that is excited about a contest to name the County's newest road grader brings awareness to road maintenance efforts. A communications hub that reminds residents to apply for the statewide property tax rebate is helpful. A communications hub that posts and shares information about upcoming grants may help get the next powerhouse business off the ground.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE CLEAR, CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITH COUNTY AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS	  	  

Objectives

- Hire County-wide Communications Officer to develop communications program
- Create or utilize existing channels of communication with each jurisdictional entity
- Require consistent communication that clearly notes importance of type of communication- i.e. emergency; marketing; public meeting notice; etc.
- Incorporate IT department into communications planning to provide additional assistance and coordination with County, City and Town websites.

B. PROVIDE TIMELY, HELPFUL INFORMATION COORDINATED ACROSS LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY GROUPS	  	  
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Objectives

- Coordinate with local advocacy programs to create a common location for information, or to create a sharing operating procedure between groups
- Inform residents of economic development opportunities, upcoming public meetings, local grant openings, and general community events
- Set up email and/or text notifications for emergencies and other civic notifications

Montana Property Tax Rebate: revenue.mt.gov/taxes/property-tax-rebate/

City of Whitefish Alerts & Notifications: www.cityofwhitefish.gov/703/Alerts-Notifications



Theme 4

Economic Development

The County has numerous economic development organizations which assist the topic areas below. The City should support these organizations and ensure that the citizens of the City are being served in the best way possible. The City should also support those businesses which contribute to the economic well-being of the City and its residents.

Key areas are:

- 1. Business Support***
- 2. Downtown Redevelopment***

1. Business Support

Confusion about local economic development opportunities and strategies is widespread. There are multiple organizations providing economic development services to the area, including Great Northern Economic Development, the Richland Economic Development Corporation, and the local Chambers of Commerce. The County, City and Town should aim to reduce barriers to utilizing the programs, grants and incentives through those entities wherever possible, including proactively advertising on behalf of those groups. The jurisdictions' priorities are clear through this growth policy, and economic development proposals in line with these priorities should be considered for active support by the jurisdictions.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Where possible, fund ^{support} grant opportunities, tax abatements, and other incentive programs ○ Utilize housing assistance, jurisdiction property, and permitting fees to reduce barriers to programs, workforce development, and investment		
B. PROVIDE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND INTERESTED CITIZENS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Create hub of contact information and upcoming grant information ○ Encourage economic development agencies to provide local workshops		
C. PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Identify local businesses with whom to partner on public projects, such as local pre-cast companies providing box culverts to bridge projects		

2. Downtown Redevelopment

Downtown Redevelopment was one of the top three needs identified during public input during this planning process. In the City of Sidney, downtown as an area is seen as dated, tired, and, importantly, an opportunity spot. Downtown reinvestment is still one of the best locations for private returns on public dollars, with public dollars leveraging multitudes in increased tax revenue as downtown business owners fix up buildings and facades.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. CREATE A DOWNTOWN CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM



Objectives

- Utilize public input processes to review and update City codes for commercial building upkeep, creating a downtown district with standards that reflect the community desires
- Work with attorney to create a program of yearly reminder letters to property owners about required upkeep and ensure that fines are easily understood and levied
- Focus code compliance on vacancy, general blight, and zoning for appropriate uses

Code Compliance: Difficulties and Ideas for Small Towns — *The Western Planner*: www.westernplanner.org/2017/published/features/2018/5/27/code-compliance-difficulties-and-ideas-for-small-towns

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. CREATE DOWNTOWN ADVOCACY GROUP <i>Objectives</i> ○ Create a downtown advocacy group housed under the Chamber of Commerce consisting of downtown business owners and champions ○ Utilize downtown advocacy group to organize volunteers for community downtown clean up days, downtown events, and championing downtown causes with larger governmental entities ○ Work with advocacy group to create clear downtown district distinguishable by signage, street furniture, plantings, and lighting, and assist downtown advocacy group with upkeep		
C. CREATE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT <i>Objectives</i> ○ Utilize TBID or other funding mechanism to create a business improvement district whose funds can be utilized by the downtown advocacy group to fund streetscape improvements, holiday décor, and general maintenance.		
D. LEVERAGE PUBLIC DOLLARS INTO PRIVATE INVESTMENT <i>Objectives</i> ○ Support Advocacy Group and Downtown goals by providing expertise and functional capacity where necessary ○ Search out and Support public-private partnerships which further downtown goals, such as funding and grant assistance and provide grant application for catalyst projects like infill buildings and façade renovations and for private passion projects such as public art and demonstration projects ○ Focus on visible public projects in the downtown, showing support for the downtown as an economic driver		
E. SUPPORT DOWNTOWN PLANNING STRATEGIES FROM 2025 SIDNEY DOWNTOWN PLAN <i>Objectives</i> ○ Support implementation of recommended funding mechanisms and any formalized advocacy group or projects that are utilizing the strategies laid out in said plan		



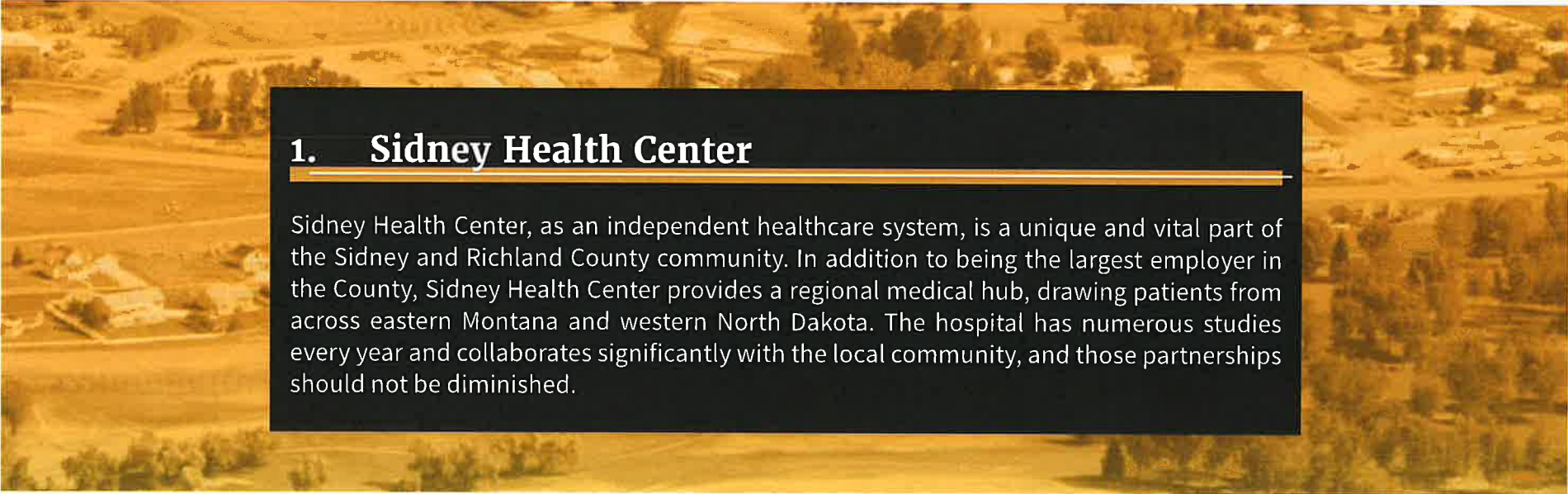
Theme 5

Community Health

Many organizations inside Richland County focus on the health and support of the community. The City should support these organizations wherever possible, as these partnerships allow for residents of the City to remain healthy, happy and productive.

Key areas are:

- 1. Sidney Health Center***
- 2. Mental Healthcare***
- 3. Public Safety and Community Assistance***



1. Sidney Health Center

Sidney Health Center, as an independent healthcare system, is a unique and vital part of the Sidney and Richland County community. In addition to being the largest employer in the County, Sidney Health Center provides a regional medical hub, drawing patients from across eastern Montana and western North Dakota. The hospital has numerous studies every year and collaborates significantly with the local community, and those partnerships should not be diminished.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Maintain existing partnerships with County Health Departments and City entities ○ Provide support for hiring and retention programs from Sidney Health Center ○ Provide support at legislative level for initiatives which are important to the continued operation of Sidney Health Center in the Community.		
B. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR BUILDING EXPANSION		
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide support for Sidney Health Center during expansion processes, looking at private-public partnerships for provision of creative parking solutions, reviews of building permits, and general infrastructure improvements ○ Review expansion plans with Sidney Health Center as a collaborative partner, reviewing where City or County infrastructure may be utilized to ensure continued success of Sidney Health		

2. Mental Healthcare

Multiple reports have noted that availability of mental healthcare is lacking within Sidney. This includes aspects from preventative and preliminary treatment to intervention spaces to post-law enforcement involvement housing. This area is one of concern for many Sidney residents, particularly those who see the effects of the lack of resources on a regular basis.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. ADVOCATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH



Objectives

- Provide support ~~and financial incentives~~ to public and private initiatives to increase mental healthcare resources in the community
Behavioral Health - Richland County, Montana: www.richland.org/behavioral-health.html
- Provide support and training to emergency response and public safety teams focused on mental health response
Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs | National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): www.nami.org/advocacy/crisis-intervention/crisis-intervention-team-cit-programs/



3. Public Safety and Community Assistance

Sidney residents feel very safe. There are, however, concerns about the succession planning within departments and ability of rapid responses from volunteer departments. These have and continue to function well. The major initiatives that law enforcement agencies are looking at will be addressed by their individual capital improvement plans as recommended above, but targeted training overall should be a priority for all departments.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. INCENTIVIZE VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT ON PUBLIC SAFETY TEAMS



Objectives

- Support recruitment and training for volunteer fire and other public safety teams
- Work with existing public information officers to advertise and create awareness around volunteer opportunities for public safety
- Create high school program with EMT/paramedic teams to train high schoolers to become EMTs

Miles City, Montana EMS Training: www.milescityfirerescue.com/emt-class.html

Lewiston, Montana EMS Training: lms.lewistown.k12.mt.us/courses/08-cte-alternate-offerings/emt-training



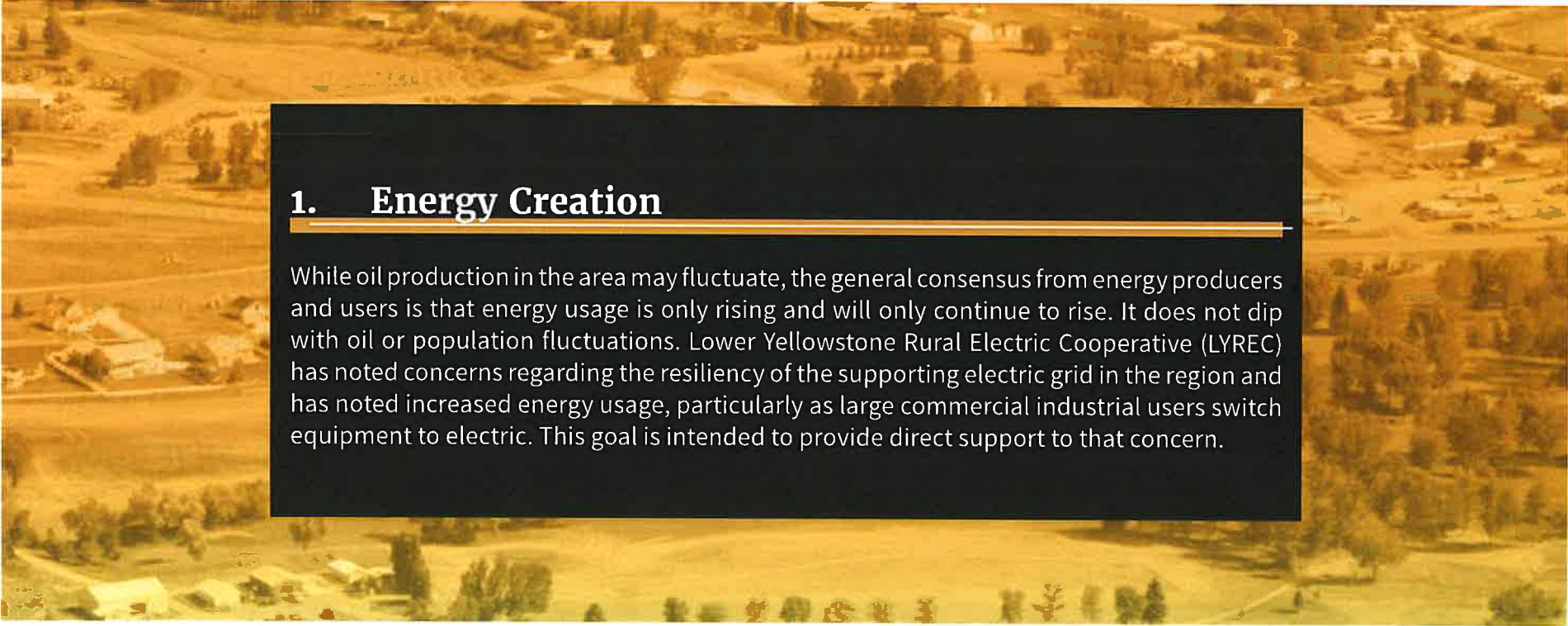
Theme 7

Natural Resources

Natural resources in Richland County are abundant. From agriculture to energy, Richland County is rich and blessed with the ground it sits on. However, those resources are commodities and as the County well knows, they have downturns and upswings. The topics and goals below are outlined to create as steady a state as possible for Richland County despite those hills and valleys. Richland County is well located for new energy creation initiatives, including wind and solar, and should not dismiss them in favor of oil – all of these are commodities and resources that Richland County can use to assist County residents toward a rich, diversified future. The City should support the County in these goals.

Key areas are:

- 1. Energy Creation***
- 2. Energy Agnostic Mentality***
- 3. Agriculture***
- 4. Tourism***



1. Energy Creation

While oil production in the area may fluctuate, the general consensus from energy producers and users is that energy usage is only rising and will only continue to rise. It does not dip with oil or population fluctuations. Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) has noted concerns regarding the resiliency of the supporting electric grid in the region and has noted increased energy usage, particularly as large commercial industrial users switch equipment to electric. This goal is intended to provide direct support to that concern.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT ENERGY CREATION AND INVESTMENT		 
Objectives		
○ Ensure codes allow for small-scale energy creation such as solar panels and personal windmills in appropriate locations		

2. Energy Agnostic Mentality

While Richland County is traditionally an agricultural and oil based economy and culture, there should be no preference placed on type of energy creation. The recent Richland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Diversification Plan espoused an “energy agnostic attitude” and this plan reiterates and supports that goal. There has been much discussion in surrounding counties about the value of oil, wind and solar energy, and Richland County should view these all as economically responsible opportunities to create and maintain the energy grid within the County. This is not to say there should not be some level of regulation on all of these, as they are all large rural industrial uses, but to say that they should not be simply rejected out of hand because one may be seen as less valuable than another.

Goal

Urgency

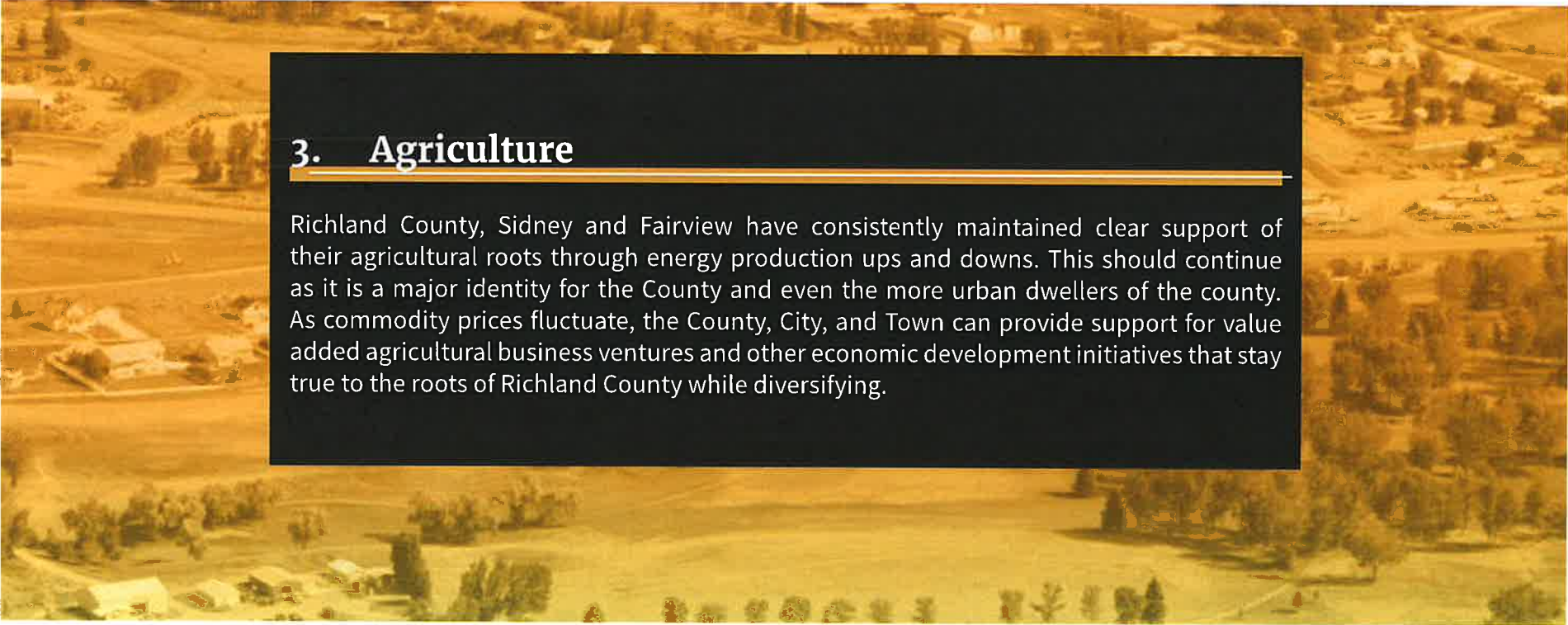
Applies To

A. MAINTAIN, SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE AN ENERGY AGNOSTIC MENTALITY



Objectives

- Partner with LYREC, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Montana-Dakota Utilities, and REDC as local partners to evaluate energy creation proposals for development review ~~and consideration for tax incentives~~
- Create and maintain a clear energy agnostic policy, making Richland County a unique and stable hub on the eastern side of the state for energy creation
- Create clear development standards for all types of energy creation, allowing for a predictable development environment



3. Agriculture

Richland County, Sidney and Fairview have consistently maintained clear support of their agricultural roots through energy production ups and downs. This should continue as it is a major identity for the County and even the more urban dwellers of the county. As commodity prices fluctuate, the County, City, and Town can provide support for value added agricultural business ventures and other economic development initiatives that stay true to the roots of Richland County while diversifying.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURAL ROOTS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Partner with REDC on agriculture-related business initiatives ○ Maintain support of County Fair ○ Partner with REDC and other organizations to provide support and incentives for new and emerging agricultural industry workers, whether those are programs targeting high schoolers or returning children taking over the family farm ○ Support cultural activities and events which underscore the importance of agriculture in the community, such as public art and rodeos		

4. Tourism

While Tourism is not a major industry for Sidney, there are numerous attractions for a more regional audience, including recreational opportunities along the Yellowstone River, historical sites, and downtown shopping. There are also numerous sports tourism events held in Sidney every year, including hockey and basketball tournaments. These should be capitalized on and supported.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. SUPPORT TOURISM AS A REVENUE GENERATOR



Objectives

- Provide support to Chamber of Commerce and other organizing entities to support sports tourism and incentivize visitors to recreate, shop and dine in Sidney
- Support a County-wide wayfinding plan to assist visitors in finding recreational and other destinations points
- Support local destinations such as parks, trails, river access points, community events, retail and restaurant locations, encouraging visitors to spend time in the communities of Richland County
- Support tourism-related initiatives from the Chamber of Commerce, REDC, and other entities.

Ingham County, Michigan: www.spicergroup.com/news/ingham-county-wayfinding

Utah's Canyon Country: www.utahscanyoncountry.com/navigation/

State and National Parks in Minnesota Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8dXssLMTu0



6. Town of Fairview

The vision of Fairview is of a thriving small town, with full storefronts along Ellery, a council and community that are empowered to enforce regulations and agree on what those community standards are, new residences, and confidence that the decisions they make as a community will lead to economic and social vibrancy.

Key Findings

Fairview residents greatly appreciate their rural way of life, noting that Fairview is a great place to raise a family with great schools. Some residents noted that if they moved away during their post-secondary education years, they returned to Fairview to raise a family. However, almost half of the respondents on the online survey noted that they do not intend to age in Fairview, with most answers indicating that they have always intended to be short-term residents or that the cost of living and low opportunity for growth is a concern. This is consistent with the general views of Fairview residents, who are concerned about their community's ability to grow and react to changing economic conditions.

Overall, Fairview residents want a thriving, business-friendly small town, with a council and community that enforce Town codes and property maintenance standards, affordable housing, and year round recreation.

The top subjects raised during conversations, focus groups, and survey results were

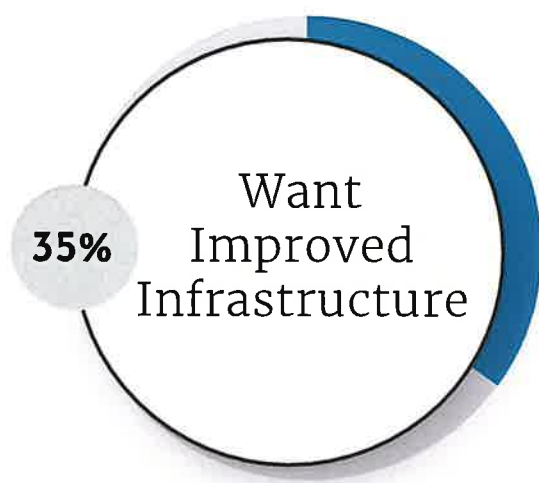
1. Increased development of downtown
2. Improved infrastructure
3. Additional recreational opportunities
4. Greater economic opportunities and job creation

Over 40% of respondents felt that downtown development in Fairview is important. Downtown Development is seen by Fairview residents as an economic driver, a retention tool, and an indicator of community pride. Improvements needed to downtown include incentivizing building use, disincentivizing vacant storefronts, requiring building upkeep, provision of grants and assistance applying for them, and general maintenance of the public space. There are numerous storefronts, bars and marijuana locations along Ellery Ave, but there are also vacant storefronts that are commonly acknowledged as being used for personal storage. There are portions of these requested improvements that are outside the purview of the Town as a government, but others are within that purview, including increasing code enforcement activities and incentivizing building use for business activity. In addition, the Town can support grant applications for the downtown or support infrastructure changes to update what one respondent termed the “tired” downtown. The requests for retail were limited to concern regarding the local dispensaries and requests for additional everyday-style businesses, including groceries and hardware stores.



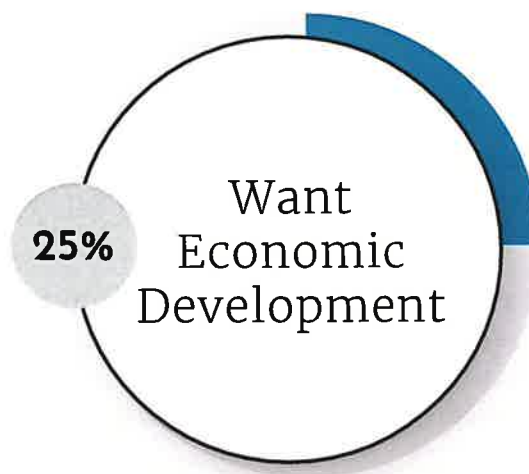
Almost 30% of respondents noted the need for more recreational opportunities in Fairview. 50% of Fairview residents felt there were nowhere near enough opportunities and an additional 25% felt like there were not enough opportunities. Less than 10% felt like there were plenty of recreation opportunities. The focus in Fairview was on additional youth and family programming and events, including after-school programs. Recreation is seen as an economic driver, workforce recruitment and retention tool, and quality of life necessity. Therefore, it is not simply the desire for recreation that is at the forefront of residents’ minds but a vital piece of creating Fairview as a modern community where they want to live. The needs mentioned were for both indoor and outdoor facilities as well as private and public facilities. These needs for facilities were for family-friendly, year-round recreation, including indoor courts and pools. Public requests included more walking/biking trails, and multimodal connections, and improved playground equipment, benches, and splashpads. All of these involve infrastructure, funds, planning and capacity that Fairview does not have in place at the moment.





Almost 35% of respondents indicated that improved infrastructure is a major need. The associated responses range from requests to fix potholes and repave streets to updates to sewer and storm sewer, fire hydrants, and alleys, as well as for spending to be kept current with needs so that general upkeep was completed on a regular basis. The Town has kept a minimal street maintenance district in its budget of \$50,000 per year, which is not typically enough to cover the general annual maintenance needs for the street system in Fairview. The Town does have an existing preliminary engineering report for water and is finalizing a wastewater preliminary engineering report. The Town should also ensure coordination between infrastructure projects.

Over 25% of individuals wanted to see greater economic opportunities and job creation. This item was also pervasive through conversations with Fairview residents. There are very few local job opportunities, with most community members commuting to jobs in North Dakota or Sidney. This tied into the need for additional housing. In response to a question on what Fairview could do to keep residents as long-term residents, 33% of respondents noted that they needed to create and retain good jobs, and 26% noted they needed to provide more quality housing, above the 18% who responded regarding a need to create more opportunities for recreation. These job creation opportunities are also tied, in residents' minds, to code enforcement and "cleaning up the town". While residents like the school, and generally support of the community, they do not typically see Fairview as a viable business or long-term residential location.



In person focus groups highlighted workforce recruitment and retention concerns at various levels of employment. Service sector positions noted that they had trouble retaining hourly positions, while professional positions were difficult to fill because of recruitment. The school noted difficulty hiring local teachers, mostly due to housing in the area. Housing can be difficult to find at all price points and quality of life was seen as lacking to be able to recruit professionals.

Within this discussion of the economic outlook is worth noting that overall, quality of life is a focus, which ties into a nation-wide trend of choosing place over job. The majority of comments online and in person focused on quality of life issues as economic concerns, including affordability and availability of housing, affordable rental prices for businesses and residences, community festivals, and afterschool and daycare for children. Issues such as vacant buildings and property upkeep, highlighted as concerns, are also seen as economic drivers, disincentivizing businesses from further investment.

The economy is an underlying issue throughout the planning process, heard in discussions of affordable housing and additional healthcare options for both urgent care access and mental healthcare. All of these are seen as economic inputs, allowing or disallowing workforce retention and recruitment.



Within this discussion of the economic outlook, it is worth noting that overall quality of life is a focus, which ties into a nation-wide trend of choosing place over job.

Growth Areas and Goals

Strong growth happens when goals are outlined to meet the wants and needs of town residents.

Multiple rounds of community engagement, Steering Committee review, and stakeholder discussion guided the identification of growth areas and goals. These reflect the Town's overarching vision while balancing diverse interests and priorities. The Growth Policy is a living document, and its goals may be updated over time to align with changing economic conditions and to recognize the Town's achievements.

This section is organized into six themes, reflecting the vision presented in Chapter 2 and shaped by community feedback gathered throughout the engagement process:

- Strategic Planning
- Economic Development
- Recreation
- Community Health
- Connectivity
- Natural Resources

While this chapter focuses on the Town of Fairview, the growth areas and goals demonstrate the connection among the County, City, and Town. By identifying areas of overlap, the goals highlight where collaboration is both logical and essential to achieving lasting success.



Theme 1

Strategic Planning: Moving from Reactive to Proactive

Fairview is in a reactive pattern which was first a product of slow, steady, agricultural related growth and then a product of a fast moving oil boom where reaction was the only option. Now, however, the communities in Richland County are in a steady growth pattern divorced from the ups and downs of oil related activity. In fact, the communities are rapidly becoming the hub of Eastern Montana, due to the presence of expert medical care, abundant community services, and direct through traffic to the Bakken. Particularly in Fairview, this places both demand and opportunity on the Town, as it typically functions at the moment as a support community for North Dakota and Sidney. That opportunity, to reclaim residents who live and work in Fairview, requires planning and foresight, looking at upcoming needs rather than reacting as those needs come up. The Town has made a good start on this across all departments, from updating the growth policy and Preliminary Engineering Reports. However, there are still areas of improvement.

Key areas are:

- 1. Succession Planning for Staffing**
- 2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans**
- 3. Create Housing Opportunities**
- 4. Code Enforcement**

1. Succession Planning for Staffing

Town Council and Department leadership are dedicated to their positions and believe deeply in Fairview. However, for the most part, they do not have adequate back-up in case of retirement or resignation. Hiring external candidates has proven to be a challenge due to housing, pay, and location. A dedicated Human Resources Department for Richland County and City of Sidney as well as coordination with the Town of Fairview will be able to assist in recruitment, hiring and retention, while also identifying and providing internal training opportunities.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. CREATE SUCCESSION PLAN FOR DEPARTMENTS



Objectives

- Hire Assistant Directors for Department Heads
- Support hiring search via communication, recruitment, and incentives
- Focus on hiring effective management with at least 10-15 years remaining in career
- Assess internal opportunities for advancement
- Create digital database for each department to store essential information for incoming employees

Utilize consultants such as Hire Resolve, Insight Global or Advanced Employment Services.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. INVEST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Budget yearly for conference attendance, continuing education courses, and certifications for employees identified for advancement or leadership roles ○ Encourage employees to attend conferences, complete continuing education and gain additional certifications ○ Coordinate training and education opportunities between communities in order to ensure efficiency		
C. CREATE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Work with REDC, Chamber of Commerce, Health Department, and County to create a recruitment incentive package for all jurisdictional employees, which may include housing allowances, provision of housing units at reduced cost, additional training and education assistance, and sign-on bonuses ○ Create retention program focused on talent development and building long-term employees ○ Focus on modern work practices that include options for flexible and remote work where possible ○ Coordinate efforts between communities so that opportunities are comparable		
<i>City of Pinole Recruitment Incentive Program: https://www.pinole.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Recruitment-Incentive-Program-FINAL.pdf</i>		
D. DESIGNATE A HUMAN RESOURCES COMMISSIONER	  	
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Designate a Commissioner to provide assistance in recruitment and retention efforts as well as to create effective policies for employee conflict		
<i>Dickinson uses Boostpoint through Facebook for marketing, says it's been very successful. For HR Consultants in Montana with public sector experience you have Communications & Management Services (CMS), GMP Consultants, Align HR, Vensure HR</i>		

2. Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning

Capital Improvement and Strategic Plans are good practice for Town departments as well as local services entities. These allow for Jurisdictional leadership to understand and recognize what priorities are shaping the community and allow for longer range planning of budgetary priorities. Regular updates allow for reflection and change as priorities shift and are more nimble than a full update to the growth policy.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. REQUIRE ALL DEPARTMENTS TO CREATE A 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT & STRATEGIC PLAN	★ ★ ★	  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Review and update on a yearly basis to reflect minor changes ○ Include equipment, infrastructure, buildings, staff, and large upcoming projects ○ Publish on jurisdictional website to increase transparency and communication with public ○ Provide support for goals and needs from individual departments <i>Livingston County, Michigan, Capital Improvement Plan: https://milivcounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025-2030-CIP-APPROVED-BY-COUNTY-PLANNING-COMMISSION-FINAL-DOCUMENT.pdf</i>		
B. REGULARLY UPDATE GROWTH POLICY	★ ☆ ☆	  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Maintain Growth Policy by updating every 5 years in keeping with Montana requirements in order to maintain high eligibility for state funding opportunities		

3. Creation of Housing Opportunities

Housing was an issue of major note during community engagement sessions. While it was not something identified as an immediate need - as in, few people said “We need more housing” - the topic consistently came up as an underlying concern to different issues. Schools, banks, agricultural industries, government and medical employers all noted that housing availability is a main concern for recruitment and retention of employees. Quality of available housing was brought up as well as quantity of available housing. The goals in this section focus on providing support for low income housing while also working with private and public parties to create opportunities for new or renovated housing in all jurisdictions. These goals and objectives are visionary, pulling in inspiration from communities to the east which have seen success with direct cash incentives for building housing, as well as other communities which incentivize reuse of older housing. Ignoring existing housing stock in favor of new housing stock only ensures that the existing stock falls further into disrepair and maintains the existing disruption of the housing cycle and diversification of housing that is available. Fairview should coordinate with the Housing Authority and other jurisdictions to ensure a coordinated approach. In addition, Fairview has a unique opportunity with a platted subdivision with existing infrastructure and should capitalize on that to create housing opportunities on available land.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT OBJECTIVES OF HOUSING AUTHORITY	  	  

Objectives

- Provide financial and other support of the Housing Authority, including staff time if needed as they move forward with redevelopment and updating of properties
- Assist where possible with maintenance and operations support
- Partner with Housing Authority on jurisdictional employee housing to create and maintain housing for county, city and town employees
- Partner with Housing Authority on essential employee housing opportunities

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. UTILIZE LAND USE PLAN TO IDENTIFY DEVELOPABLE, SERVICEABLE AREAS AND PRIORITIZE INCENTIVES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	  	  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Focus and further incentivize mid-priced, well built structures with opportunities for sweat equity through creation of economic development grants and opportunities <i>TIF Programs or Housing Trust Fund: www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/65445/Appendix-C---Implementation-Actions-Update</i>		
C. SUPPORT REUSE OF EXISTING SUBDIVIDED BUT VACANT LAND INTO DESIRABLE AND NEEDED HOUSING	  	
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Work with the owner of M&R Mobile Home Village to transition lots from mobile home lots to single family home lots, including updating water, sewer and streets to modern standards ○ Support the development of the Kringen Subdivision, which together with the M&R Mobile Home Village accounts for about 124 inactive water connections in town <i>Affordable Housing Trust Fund Missoula, MT: www.missoulaparks.org/3065/Affordable-Housing-Trust-Fund</i>		
D. CREATE INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE REUSE AND UPDATING OF OLDER HOMES AND VACANT LOTS	  	 
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Work with Planning Department to create policies and updates to zoning code that incentivize infill development rather than discouraging it (i.e. creating different sets of setback requirements for older subdivided lots in original townsites that do not fit modern homes within existing setbacks) ○ Work with Richland Economic Development Corp, Chamber of Commerce or other entity to offer cash incentives for homes older than 30 years or rated in condition 0-6 based on the Montana State Assessor Data ○ Create incentives to sell vacant or underutilized residential properties to buyers looking to build or place a home on the property within 2 years <i>Anaconda Deer Lodge County Ordinance: www.adlc.us/DocumentCenter/View/820/Ordinance-No-256-VSR</i> ○ Promote development of vacant or undeveloped properties particularly in areas with existing urban services such as water, sewer, and roads ○ Ensure codes are in compliance with MLUPA (Montana Land Use and Planning Act) requirements where possible in order to alleviate future tension between state and local codes		

4. Code Enforcement

Property Maintenance and Zoning Code Compliance is a major issue in Fairview. The community does not have an operational code enforcement program with clear communication and regularly enforced codes. Because this is an issue that affects employee and citizen recruitment and retention, as well as affecting physical condition of housing stock, it is an important issue for the community to tackle moving forward.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE AND MAINTAIN A CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM FOCUSED ON PROPERTY MAINTENANCE		
Objectives ○ Create clear, enforceable regulations, focused on public safety, health and welfare, which uphold community values, with support of legal team ○ Designate enforcement team and procedure for warnings, tickets, legal actions, appeals and compliance requirements and acceptance - if needed, this could be a joint venture between all three jurisdictions ○ Clearly communicate origination of enforcement actions with communities via social media and paper flyers ○ Create education campaign to inform property owners and residents about local codes to encourage compliance without enforcement action		

Theme 2

Recreation

The top item of concern in Richland County and Sidney was seeing more recreation opportunities. **It was the third most “would like to see” item in Fairview.** At the moment, recreation in the County, City and Town is provided via a mesh of private club sports and several public parks and pools that are maintained by city, town and county staff. While the general sentiment is that the parks, trails and pools are well maintained and much valued, and there is priority put on maintaining clean, well-cared-for parks across the board from all jurisdictional entities, there is a lack of continuity and future planning that can be seen in all three jurisdictions.

In Fairview, the public park and swimming pool are maintained and operated by the Public Works director and seasonal staff. Each year the Town Council reviews pool day rates and makes hiring decisions for the pool manager and lifeguards. There is no reserve maintenance fund for repairs to the park or pool. This places the existence of a very valued service and gathering place into a precarious position. The County parks are maintained by public works and are mostly outdoor gathering spaces and fishing/boating locales. The majority of what is perceived as County Recreation is provided by the Richland County Fairgrounds, though there are additional County provided recreation areas.

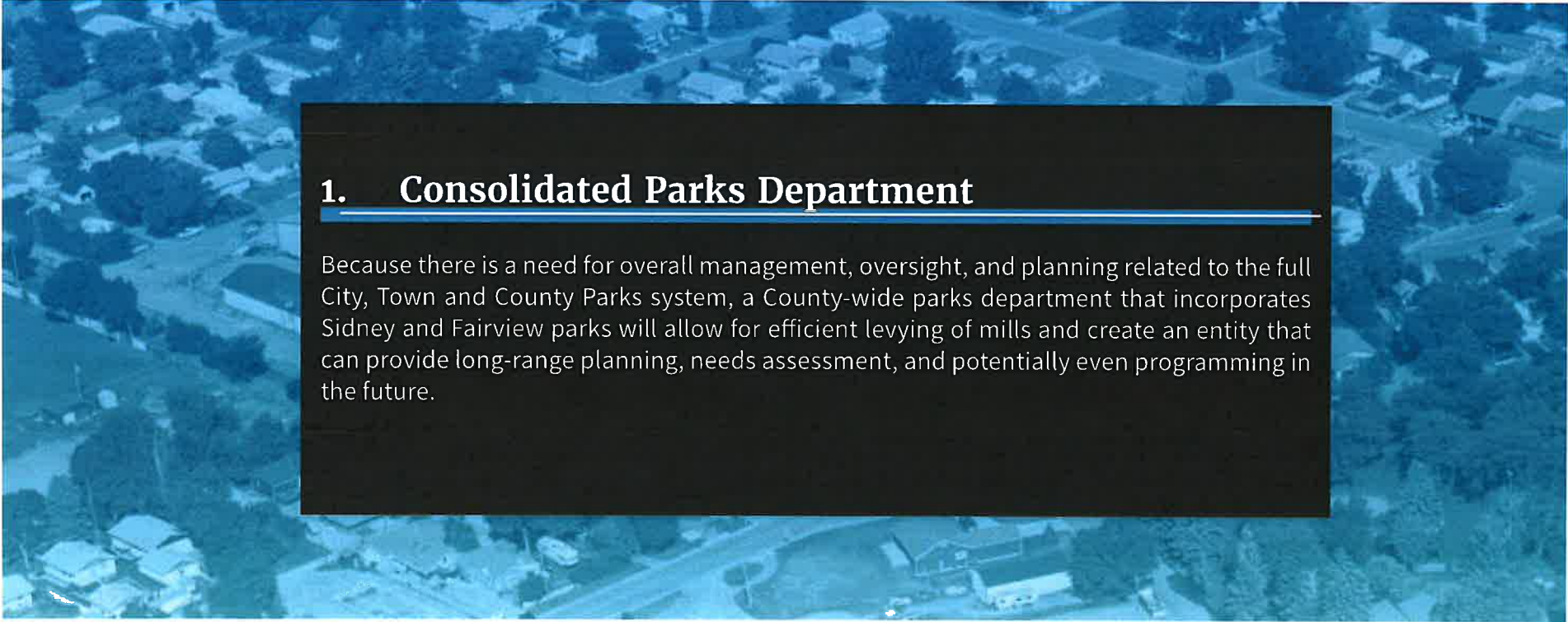
The following topics are focused on creating opportunities for County-wide recreation that is efficient and is an asset to the quality of life and economic outlook of the County, City of Sidney and Town of Fairview.

In Sidney, the parks are maintained by one full time employee of the Public Works staff, who is a licensed arborist, and several part time support staff. There are seasonal pool employees and all funds for the parks and pools come from the general fund. Updates to parks are made -and made well- on an ad-hoc basis, but do not allow for quick response to community requests such as pickleball courts or new playground equipment, as there is not a dedicated revolving maintenance or capital improvements fund in place. All recreational sports programming occurs within individual private programs, which creates a barrier in several ways.

1. Those programs pay a minimal fee to use the public infrastructure such as the pool or baseball diamonds for the season, meaning the City is not recouping maintenance fees or general upkeep fees.
2. Coordination of tournaments, indoor space, outdoor space usage and programming, etc. falls to a variety of organizations including the Chamber of Commerce. This leads to a system that only works as long as someone at those organizations is willing to maintain that duty.
3. The private groups mean that there is no common clearinghouse of information for individuals who may have just moved to town or are looking to move to town on how to sign their children up for local sports. While this may not seem like a large barrier in a small town, it can assist in leading to the perception that was seen in survey results that it can be hard to integrate into the community as a new member.

Key areas are:

1. **Consolidated Parks Department**
2. **Public Indoor Recreation**
3. **Private Recreation Opportunities**



1. Consolidated Parks Department

Because there is a need for overall management, oversight, and planning related to the full City, Town and County Parks system, a County-wide parks department that incorporates Sidney and Fairview parks will allow for efficient levying of mills and create an entity that can provide long-range planning, needs assessment, and potentially even programming in the future.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT		  
Objectives		
○ Utilizing Section 7-11-1000 of Montana Code Annotated, create a special district via an interlocal agreement to consolidate parks operations and maintenance ○ If there is no support for a special district, create a consolidated, coordinated plan supported by all three jurisdictions for Parks growth and maintenance in the County		
<i>Richland County Property Tax: revenuefiles.mt.gov/files/Annual-Property-Tax-Changes-by-County/Richland.pdf</i>		

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. DEDICATE STAFF TO PARKS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Create recruitment program among local high schools for part-time/seasonal staff		
C. CREATE A SIDNEY-FAIRVIEW-RICHLAND COUNTY PARKS PLAN	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Coordinate on a Sidney-Fairview-Richland County Parks Plan that creates a formal needs assessment, property and facilities review, and replacement cost analysis for all existing equipment. This plan will create Parks goals.		
○ Coordinate with chamber (or relevant private organization) to create a brochure to welcome new residents and list recreation opportunities and contact info		

2. Public Indoor Recreation

Indoor recreation was one of the top requests received during community engagement. While there has been much discussion over the years over what an indoor public recreation center could look like, it is clear that something that is similar to the most commonly referenced locations (the Williston Area Recreation Center and the Watford City Roughrider Center) are most likely infeasible, given their very high costs of construction and operation. In addition, the community requests of an indoor recreation center vary greatly, from a basic structure high enough for cheer and gymnastics competitions to an indoor track and swimming pool to a space capable of hosting a basketball tournament. A feasibility study and design process that has lengthy community engagement is a first step toward an indoor recreation center, but a larger hurdle is operations and maintenance of such a facility. A consolidated Parks Department could accomplish that goal.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. IDENTIFY FEASIBILITY OF PUBLIC INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY AND FUNCTION OF POTENTIAL FACILITY	★ ☆ ☆	
Objectives		
○ Commission study with widespread community engagement ○ Review potential of payment for a facility via a balloted bond or private fundraising ○ Determine construction, maintenance, operations, and location of facility.		

3. Private Recreation

There are several buildings in Fairview which are vacant and could provide private indoor recreation spaces. The Town should support efforts to incentivize redevelopment and investment, as private provision of recreational spaces is more efficient and less costly to the public.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE PRIVATE RECREATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	★ ★ ★	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Provide support for funding applications for private recreation businesses applying for grants and funding through regional, local and state entities ○ Ensure that zoning in Town allows for private recreation - indoor and outdoor- uses in appropriate areas ○ Identify and connect vacant commercial properties with potential business owners		
<i>Example Opportunity: Vacant building in Downtown Fairview into Arcade; old Shopko into indoor go-kart track</i>		



Theme 3

Connectivity

This growth area is wide ranging but discusses vital connectivity points between the Town and Town residents, between the County and the Town, and between Town residents themselves. From cell service and trails to essential infrastructure, these are the ties that bind communities together, enabling the Town to be a community instead of just a governmental boundary.

Key areas are:

- 1. Cell Service***
- 2. Trails***
- 3. Infrastructure***
- 4. Communications***

1. Cell Service

As the world increasingly relies on internet and cellular service for communication, standard forms of communication such as landlines have fallen by the wayside. They are expensive to maintain for individuals through their local service providers and are increasingly irrelevant. However, rural areas of Richland County have large pockets of land which have no cellular or internet service. The old forms of communication between neighbors who may need assistance during medical emergencies, weather events, or wildfires no longer suffice, as many individuals have given up their land lines. This leaves particularly newer and younger residents without ways to contact neighbors, as well as places a heavy burden on families who may require days of remote work or schooling. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a major concern, as schools needed to make the decision to purchase internet power packs for county residents who needed to do education remotely and did not have standard internet or cellular access.

Goal

Urgency

Applies To

A. SUPPORT CELLULAR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT



Objectives

- Incentivize and support location of large and local cellular communications towers
- Incentivize and support expansion of broadband and wireless services to rural areas
- Map locations without cellular or wireless services in order to assist private development of communications towers

B. CREATE ALTERNATE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS FOR RESIDENTS



Objectives

- Support grants for and grant applications from local fire, police and EMS departments for communication devices and upgrades, particularly in areas where communication will be stifled without (for example, in Fairview, the rural fire district operates into North Dakota, which is switching emergency communication onto broadband)

2. Trails

Trail connectivity was brought up multiple times during public engagement as well as during the 2015 growth policy. While this is a long-anticipated goal with many barriers, the increase in quality of life means that the County, City and Town should take potential for development into consideration with upcoming projects and developments.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. LINK ON STREET BIKE LANE TO DESTINATIONS	★ ★ ☆	

- Objectives
- Identify local destinations in Fairview, including schools, downtown area, and local services using a public input process that identifies and prioritizes locations
 - Utilize destination map to create a planned trail system map that can be used in grant applications, development decisions, and required infrastructure upgrades
 - Use public feedback process to ensure the planned on-and off-street system map is one citizens feel comfortable using and are in support of

B. ENSURE ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS CAN UTILIZE TRAILS	★ ★ ☆	
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- Objectives
- Identify locations where ADA accessible trails and features can be incorporated and support design and construction

3. Infrastructure

Infrastructure was one of the top concerns of citizens of Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview. In some cases, there appears to be a perception issue, and in others, there is a true lack of maintenance and the capacity to plan for maintenance. Prior to 2019, limited rate increases were completed and the Town is significantly underfunded in regards to sewer upkeep. The recommendations that follow are unique to the Town, recognizing that each community within the County has its own distinct capabilities, budgets, and capacity for public infrastructure projects. In all departments, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) should be created or maintained to ensure that the communities are able to look into the future. In Fairview, a generalized assumption is that the Town should update all infrastructure codes to ensure modern standards are complied with during new development projects. These recommendations are made with an emphasis on creating efficiencies, routines, and inventories, moving public works departments toward proactive planning and budgeting.

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
A. ROADS		
<i>Objectives</i>		
☐ Create overall CIP which specifically coordinates street replacement projects with sewer replacement projects		  
☐ Review Street Maintenance District to ensure that maintenance funds are sufficient to do needed improvements to complete maintenance		  
☐ If not, update Street Maintenance District budget and assessment based on prioritized maintenance needs		  
☐ Utilize Street Improvement District to improve all roads on a pre-determined project schedule ensuring coordination between street, sewer, and water improvement projects		  
☐ Create overall inventory of streets, curbs, gutter, condition, and expected maintenance and replacement schedule		  
☐ Require developers to construct project-needed infrastructure when they request a subdivision or building permit		  

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
B. SIDEWALKS <i>Objectives</i> ○ Conduct inventory to identify sidewalk gaps, deficient sidewalks, missing ADA facilities, and create a sidewalk maintenance and replacement program as part of overall CIP ○ As part of parks planning process recommended above, add perimeter sidewalks and interior park sidewalks where needed to allow for accessibility throughout park ○ Review Connectivity to local destinations including City Hall, Sharbono Park, and School ○ Create walkable environment along Ellery where possible to support downtown redevelopment work ○ Create sidewalk improvement district where homeowners can add and asses their individual sidewalks to larger city projects ○ Include sidewalk updates with street improvement projects		★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ★ ☆ ☆ ★ ★ ☆ ★ ☆ ☆ ★ ★ ☆
C. WATER <i>Objectives</i> ○ Verify and replace unknown and/or lead service lines ○ Support and encourage private developer to update water system through M&R Mobile Home Village by participating in costs and grants applications as well as by accepting dedication of infrastructure if it can become a residential development that Fairview can market ○ Monitor water treatment plant, making minor updates based on the existing water system PER and continue to support budget for maintenance ○ Support replacement of Fairview Water Tank based on existing water system PER		★ ★ ☆ ★ ★ ☆ ★ ☆ ☆ ★ ★ ★

Goal	Applies To	Urgency
D. SEWER <i>Objectives</i> ○ Finalize, approve and support Wastewater system Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) ○ Develop CIP for system wide maintenance ○ Determine locations to support additional upgrades when sewer infrastructure is improved ○ Update individual sewer service lines and work with county to create a grant system for homeowners who are unable to afford needed updates or create a service replacement program similar to one currently operating in Sidney ○ Within CIP, create and support yearly maintenance plan to clean mains once per year, or, if budget won't support full cleaning, create a rotating schedule of main cleaning and maintenance.		    
E. STORM SEWER <i>Objectives</i> ○ Create maintenance plan for local and Ellery drains, televising and cleaning once per year on rolling basis ○ Create stormwater ditch maintenance schedule		 
F. SOLID WASTE FACILITIES <i>Objectives</i> ○ As part of CIP, review potential for outsourcing or additional staffing as garbage collection is a large drain on local capacity ○ Review collection vehicle replacement and maintenance schedule as part of CIP		 

4. Communications

Many of the items of concern noted in public engagement clearly note a lack of communication from local entities to the general public. There is a perceived lack of transparency and a fundamental disconnect between jurisdictional activities and the understanding among the public of what those activities are. The recommendations below are geared toward taking the County, City, and Town beyond a standard governmental update communication procedure and into a fully transparent communications department that works with other local entities. While some issues brought up during public engagement are not the jurisdictions' concern to solve, the jurisdictions, by creating a general communications hub, can alleviate. An example is that there were several times when it was brought up that there are multiple economic development agencies which all have grants for new and upcoming businesses, but that the general public is neither aware of these nor are those entities advertising in such a way that the general public in Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview knows about even the existence of those entities. While this is not directly a concern of the jurisdictions', it can greatly affect the economic opportunities within Richland County. A communications hub that is excited about a contest to name the County's newest road grader brings awareness to road maintenance efforts. A communications hub that reminds residents to apply for the statewide property tax rebate is helpful. A communications hub that posts and shares information about upcoming grants may help get the next powerhouse business off the ground.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. CREATE CLEAR, CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITH COUNTY AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS	  	  

Objectives

- Hire County-wide Communications Officer to develop communications program
- Create or utilize existing channels of communication with each jurisdictional entity
- Require consistent communication that clearly notes importance of type of communication- i.e. emergency; marketing; public meeting notice; etc.
- Incorporate IT department into communications planning to provide additional assistance and coordination with County, City and Town websites.

B. PROVIDE TIMELY, HELPFUL INFORMATION COORDINATED ACROSS LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY GROUPS	  	  
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Objectives

- Coordinate with local advocacy programs to create a common location for information, or to create a sharing operating procedure between groups
- Inform residents of economic development opportunities, upcoming public meetings, local grant openings, and general community events
- Set up email and/or text notifications for emergencies and other civic notifications

Montana Property Tax Rebate: revenue.mt.gov/taxes/property-tax-rebate/

City of Whitefish Alerts & Notifications: www.cityofwhitefish.gov/703/Alerts-Notifications



Theme 4

Economic Development

The County has numerous economic development organizations which assist in all of the topic areas below. The Town should support these organizations and ensure that the citizens of the Town are being served in the best way possible. The Town should also support those businesses which contribute to the economic well-being of the Town and its residents.

Key areas are:

- 1. Business Support***
- 2. Downtown Redevelopment***

1. Business Support

Confusion about local economic development opportunities and strategies is widespread. There are multiple organizations providing economic development services to the area, including Great Northern Economic Development, the Richland Economic Development Corporation, and the local Chambers of Commerce. The County, City and Town should aim to reduce barriers to utilizing the programs, grants and incentives through those entities wherever possible, including proactively advertising on behalf of those groups. The jurisdictions' priorities are clear through this growth policy, and economic development proposals in line with these priorities should be considered for active support by the jurisdictions.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Where possible, fund grant opportunities, tax abatements, and other incentive programs ○ Utilize housing assistance, jurisdiction property, and permitting fees to reduce barriers to programs, workforce development, and investment		
B. PROVIDE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND INTERESTED CITIZENS	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Create hub of contact information and upcoming grant information ○ Encourage economic development agencies to provide local workshops		
C. PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES	  	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Identify local businesses with whom to partner on public projects, such as local pre-cast companies providing box culverts to bridge projects		

2. Downtown Redevelopment

Downtown Redevelopment was one of the top three needs identified during public input during this planning process. In the Town of Fairview, downtown as an area is seen as dated, tired, and, importantly, an opportunity spot. Downtown reinvestment is still one of the best locations for private returns on public dollars, with public dollars leveraging multitudes in increased tax revenue as downtown business owners fix up buildings and facades.

Goal _____ Urgency _____ Applies To _____

A. CREATE A DOWNTOWN CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM



Objectives

- Utilize public input processes to review and update City codes for commercial building upkeep, creating a downtown district with standards that reflect the community desires
- Work with attorney to create a program of yearly reminder letters to property owners about required upkeep and ensure that fines are easily understood and levied
- Focus code compliance on vacancy, general blight, and zoning for appropriate uses

Code Compliance: Difficulties and Ideas for Small Towns — The Western Planner: www.westernplanner.org/2017/publishedfeatures/2018/6/27/code-compliance-difficulties-and-ideas-for-small-towns

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
B. CREATE DOWNTOWN ADVOCACY GROUP		 
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Create a downtown advocacy group housed under the Chamber of Commerce consisting of downtown business owners and champions ○ Utilize downtown advocacy group to organize volunteers for community downtown clean up days, downtown events, and championing downtown causes with larger governmental entities ○ Work with advocacy group to create clear downtown district distinguishable by signage, street furniture, plantings, and lighting, and assist downtown advocacy group with upkeep		
C. LEVERAGE PUBLIC DOLLARS INTO PRIVATE INVESTMENT		  
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Support Advocacy Group and Downtown goals by providing expertise and functional capacity where necessary ○ Search out and support public-private partnerships which further downtown goals, such as funding and grant assistance for catalyst projects like infill buildings and façade renovations and for private passion projects such as public art and demonstration projects ○ Focus on visible public projects in the downtown, showing support for the downtown as an economic driver		
D. COMMISSION A DOWNTOWN PLAN		
<i>Objectives</i> ○ Utilize State funding resources such as the Montana Main Street Program and the Community Development Block Grant to commission a Downtown Plan for the Commercial area of Ellery, giving the Town direction and community focus on long-range vision and goals		



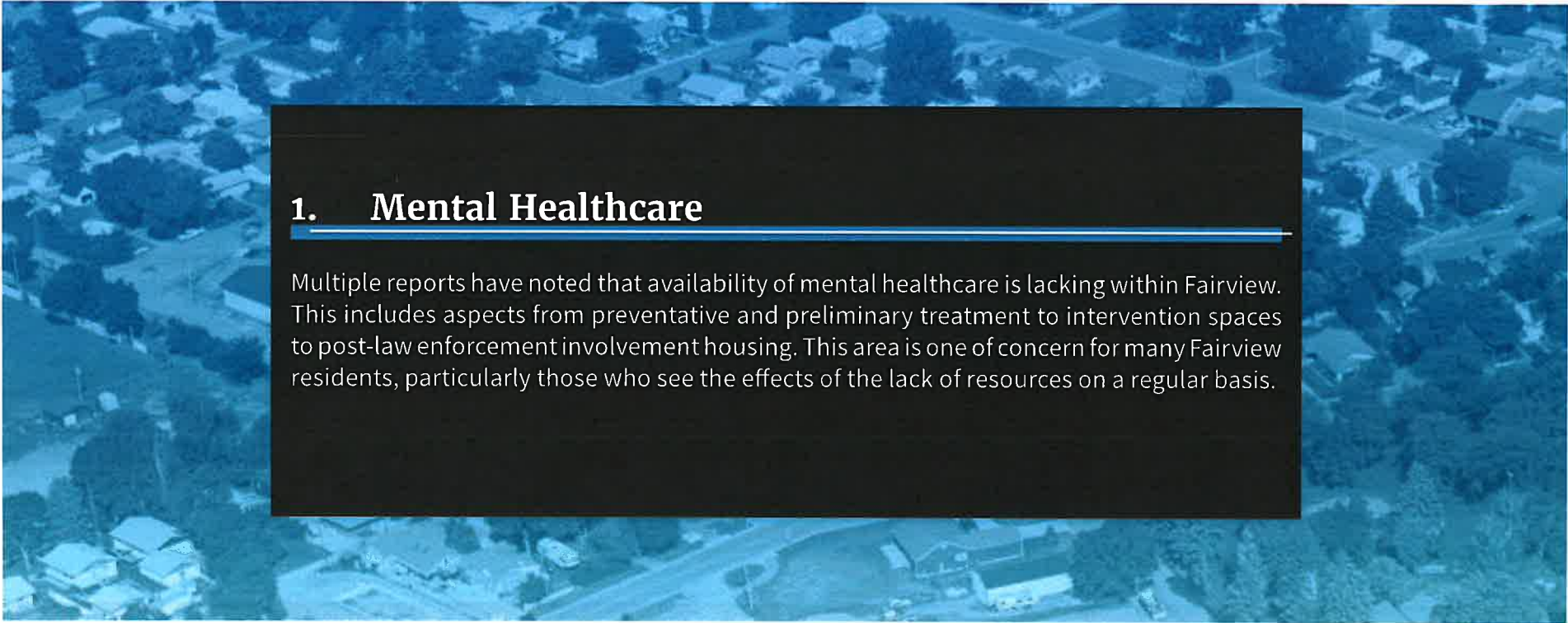
Theme 5

Community Health

Many organizations inside Richland County focus on the health and support of the community. The Town should support these organizations wherever possible, as these partnerships allow residents of the Town to remain healthy, happy and productive.

Key areas are:

- 1. Mental Healthcare***
- 2. Public Safety and Community Assistance***



Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. ADVOCATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH		

Objectives

- Provide support and financial incentives to public and private initiatives to increase mental healthcare resources in the community
Behavioral Health – Richland County, Montana: www.richland.org/behavioral-health.html
- Provide support and training to emergency response and public safety teams focused on mental health response
Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs | National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): www.nami.org/advocacy/crisis-intervention/crisis-intervention-team-cit-programs/

2. Public Safety and Community Assistance

Fairview residents feel mostly safe. There are, however, concerns about the succession planning within departments and ability of rapid responses from volunteer departments. These have and continue to function well. Targeted training overall should be a priority for all departments.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. INCENTIVIZE VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT ON PUBLIC SAFETY TEAMS	★ ★ ☆	  
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Support recruitment and training for volunteer fire and other public safety teams ○ Work with existing public information officers to advertise and create awareness around volunteer opportunities for public safety ○ Create high school program with EMT/paramedic teams to train high schoolers to become EMTs		
<i>Miles City, Montana EMS Training: www.milescityfirerescue.com/emt-class.html</i>		
<i>Lewiston, Montana EMS Training: fhs.lewistown.k12.mt.us/courses/08-cte-alternate-offerings/emt-training</i>		



Theme 7

Natural Resources

Natural resources in Richland County are abundant. From agriculture to energy, Richland County is rich and blessed with the ground it sits on. However, those resources are commodities and as the County well knows, they have downturns and upswings. The topics and goals below are outlined to create as steady a state as possible for Richland County despite those hills and valleys. Richland County is well located for new energy creation initiatives, including wind and solar, and should not dismiss them in favor of oil – all of these are commodities and resources that Richland County can use to assist County residents toward a rich, diversified future. The Town should support the County in these goals.

Key areas are:

- 1. Energy Creation***
- 2. Energy Agnostic Mentality***
- 3. Agriculture***
- 4. Tourism***

1. Energy Creation

While oil production in the area may fluctuate, the general consensus from energy producers and users is that energy usage is only rising and will only continue to rise. It does not dip with oil or population fluctuations. Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) has noted concerns regarding the resiliency of the supporting electric grid in the region and has noted increased energy usage, particularly as large commercial industrial users switch equipment to electric. This goal is intended to provide direct support to that concern.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT ENERGY CREATION AND INVESTMENT	★ ★ ★	 
<i>Objectives</i>		
○ Ensure codes allow for small-scale energy creation such as solar panels and personal windmills in appropriate locations		

2. Energy Agnostic Mentality

While Richland County is traditionally an agricultural and oil based economy and culture, there should be no preference placed on type of energy creation. The recent Richland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Diversification Plan espoused an “energy agnostic attitude” and this plan reiterates and supports that goal. There has been much discussion in surrounding counties about the value of oil, wind and solar energy, and Richland County should view these all as economically responsible opportunities to create and maintain the energy grid within the County. This is not to say there should not be some level of regulation on all of these, as they are all large rural industrial uses, but to say that they should not be simply rejected out of hand because one may be seen as less valuable than another.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN, SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE AN ENERGY AGNOSTIC MENTALITY		
Objectives		
○ Partner with LYREC, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Montana-Dakota Utilities, and REDC as local partners to evaluate energy creation proposals for development review and consideration for tax incentives. ○ Create and maintain a clear energy agnostic policy, making Richland County a unique and stable hub on the eastern side of the state for energy creation ○ Create clear development standards for all types of energy creation, allowing for a predictable development environment		

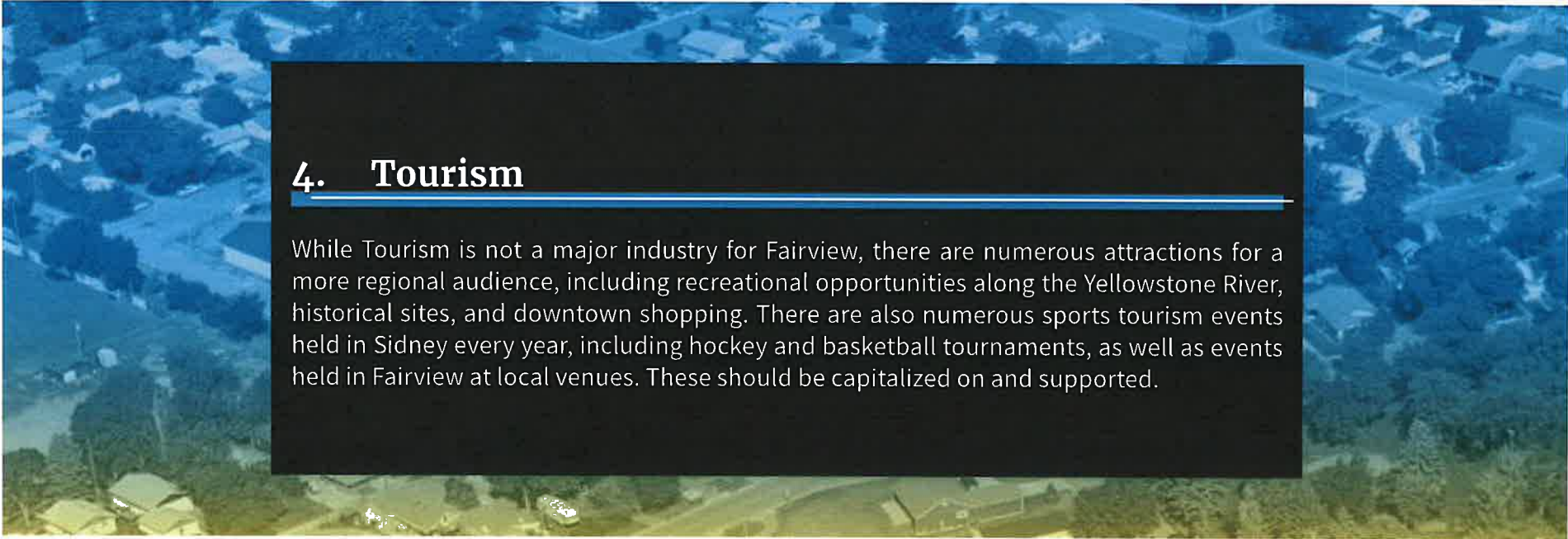
3. Agriculture

Richland County, Sidney and Fairview have consistently maintained clear support of their agricultural roots through energy production ups and downs. This should continue as it is a major identity for the County and even the more urban dwellers of the county. As commodity prices fluctuate, the County, City and Town can provide support for value added agricultural business ventures and other economic development initiatives that stay true to the roots of Richland County while diversifying.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. MAINTAIN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURAL ROOTS	★ ★ ★	  

Objectives

- Partner with REDC on agriculture-related business initiatives
- Maintain support of County Fair
- Partner with REDC and other organizations to provide support and incentives for new and emerging agricultural industry workers, whether those are programs targeting high schoolers or returning children taking over the family farm.
- Support cultural activities and events which underscore the importance of agriculture in the community, such as public art and rodeos



4. Tourism

While Tourism is not a major industry for Fairview, there are numerous attractions for a more regional audience, including recreational opportunities along the Yellowstone River, historical sites, and downtown shopping. There are also numerous sports tourism events held in Sidney every year, including hockey and basketball tournaments, as well as events held in Fairview at local venues. These should be capitalized on and supported.

Goal	Urgency	Applies To
A. SUPPORT TOURISM AS A REVENUE GENERATOR	  	  

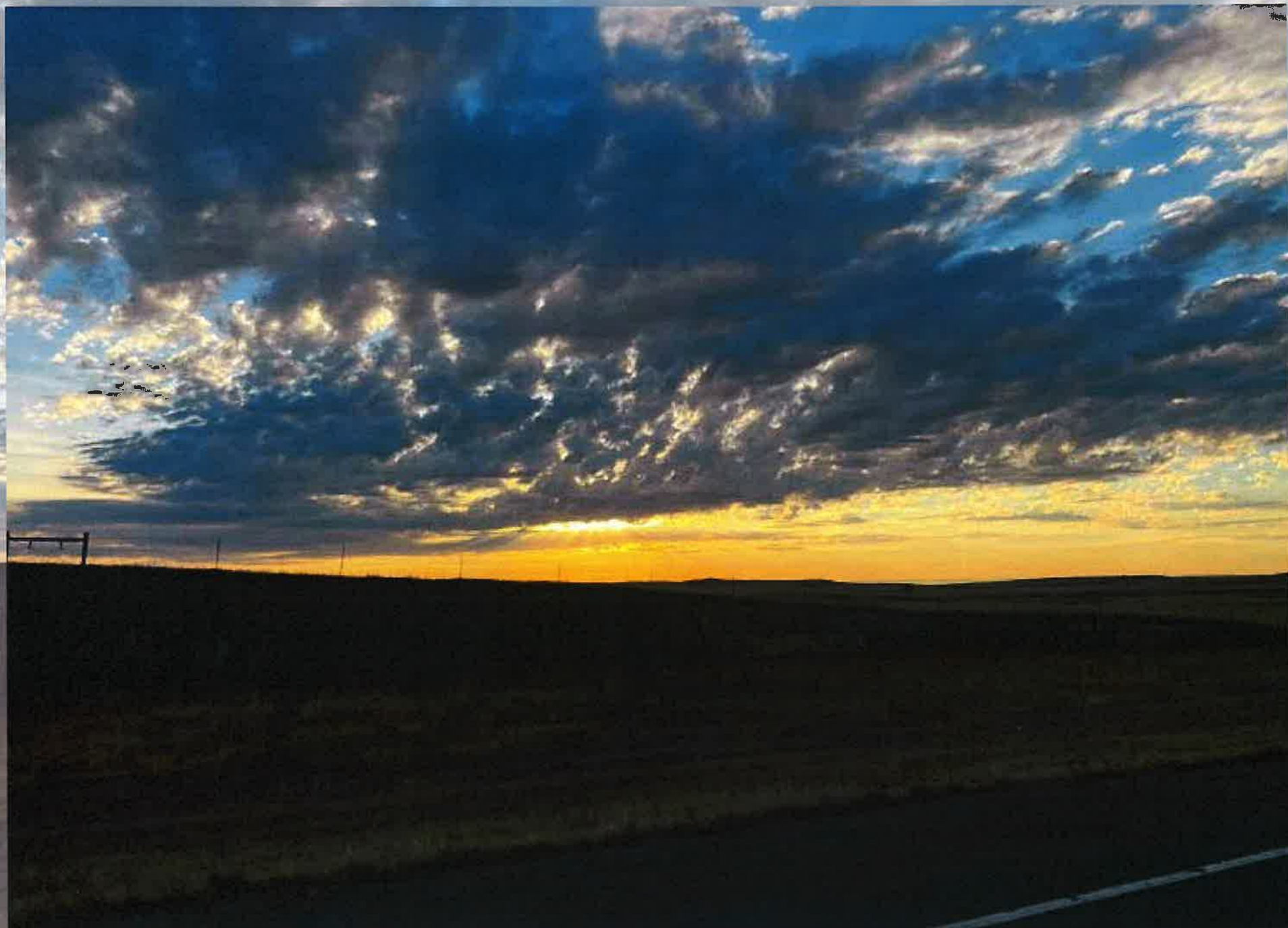
Objectives

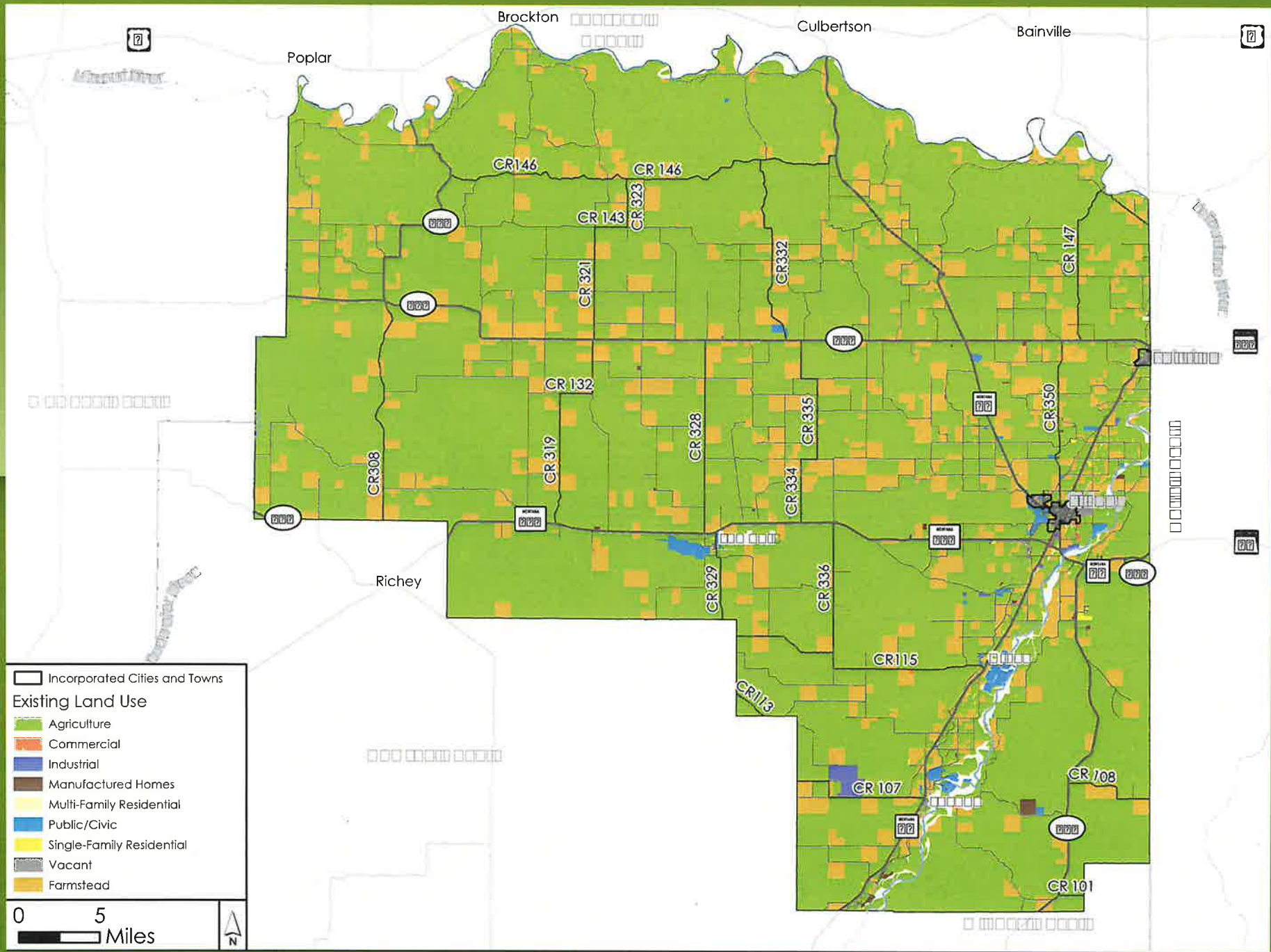
- Provide support to Chamber of Commerce and other organizing entities to support sports tourism and incentivize visitors to recreate, shop and dine in Fairview
- Support a County-wide wayfinding plan to assist visitors in finding recreational and other destinations points
- Support local destinations such as parks, trails, river access points, community events, retail and restaurant locations, encouraging visitors to spend time in the communities of Richland County
- Support tourism-related initiatives from the Chamber of Commerce, REDC, and other entities.

Ingham County, Michigan: www.spicergroup.com/news/ingham-county-wayfinding

Utah's Canyon Country: www.utahscanyoncountry.com/navigation/

State and National Parks in Minnesota Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8dXssLMTu0





7. Land Use & Transportation



Land use across Richland County, Sidney, and Fairview is closely interconnected, with agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas shaping one another's growth. Coordinated planning among jurisdictions ensures that future development supports long-term goals.

This section provides an overview of existing land use patterns within Richland County and its incorporated communities of Sidney and Fairview. It summarizes the results of the countywide land use analysis and identifies major land use types and distribution. The following pages describe current conditions and relationships between land use and infrastructure, as well as the opportunities and challenges these patterns present for future development and long-range planning.

Each subsection includes a review of existing and future land use conditions. Together, these summaries illustrate how land is currently utilized, where future growth may occur, and how the resulting patterns align with the County, City, and Town long-term goals.



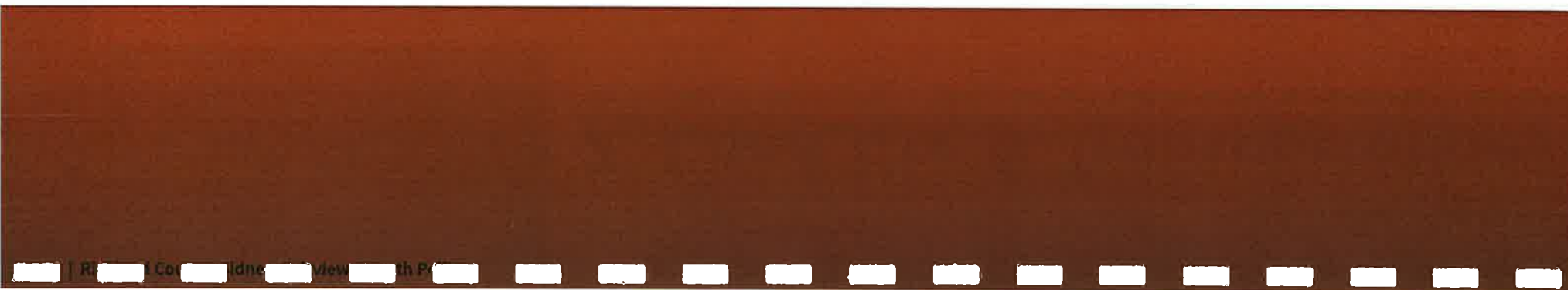
Existing & Future Land Use – Richland County

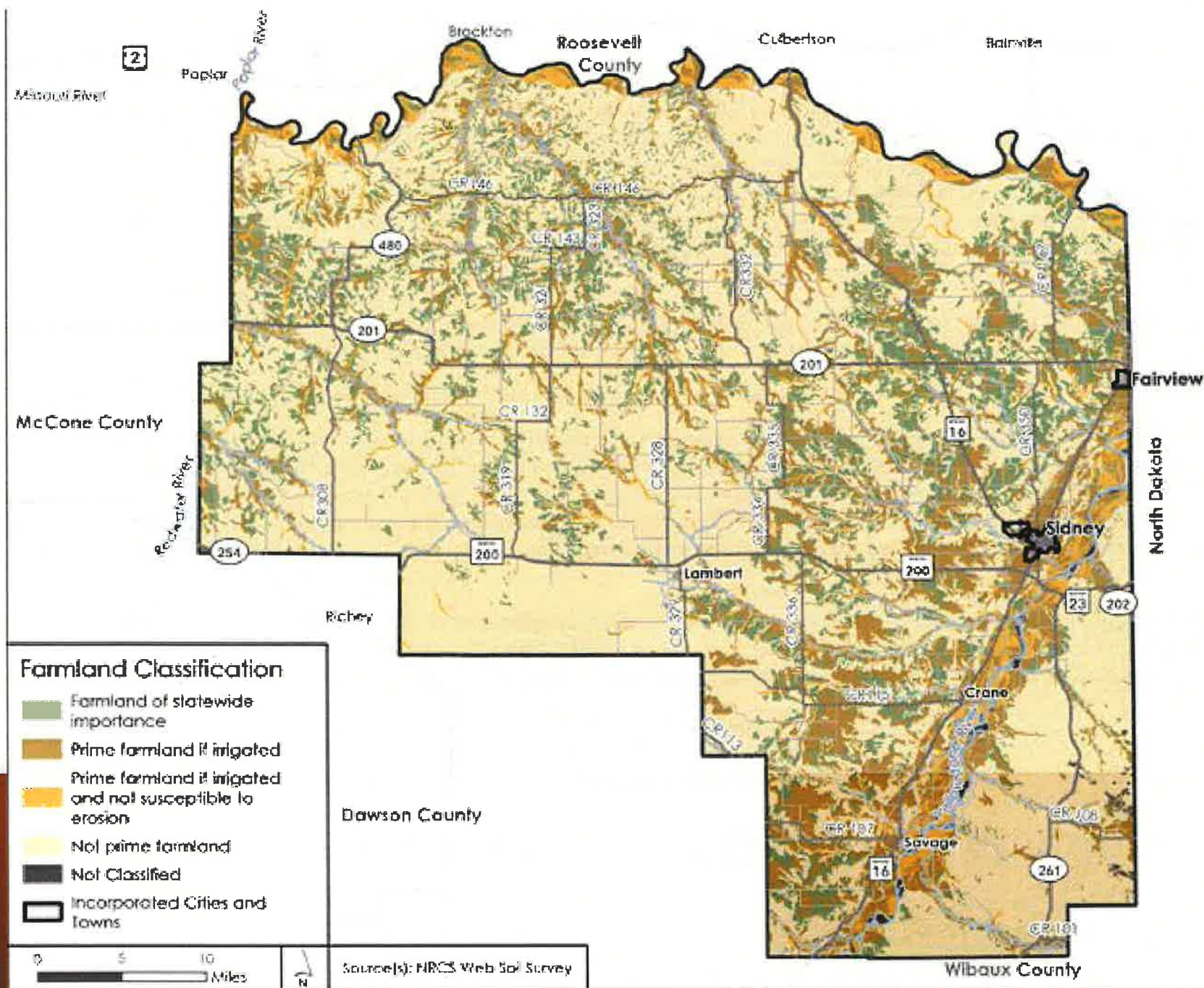
Land Use Analysis was conducted by analyzing the Montana Cadastral Parcel data and Montana Department of Revenue data. Results were spot checked using aerial imagery. Land use classification was based on a variety of factors including property type, property description, and number of living units.

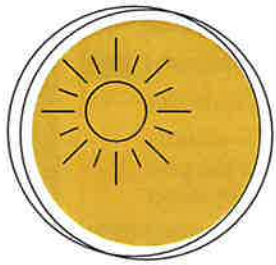
The existing land use in Richland County is mainly agricultural, with farmsteads throughout the County. There are numerous public sites, particularly along rivers and near developed communities and highway junctions, along with some pockets of industrial and manufactured homes. This is an expected development pattern in eastern Montana. The existing land use likely does not fully incorporate existing commercial or industrial uses that are in coordination with farmland or farmsteads. Most conflict between existing land uses is centered around population centers and incorporated cities and towns.

Much of the land around Sidney and Fairview that would be eligible for development is considered to be prime farmland with irrigation, and much of it is irrigated. Development will need to be carefully calibrated to ensure that it is working with surrounding land and existing irrigation systems, and will need to take into account existing soil conditions. Development may also be difficult to incentivize in these irrigated areas, unless farmland is changing hands through death or movement of owners.

There is not a future land use map for the County as a whole, as development in undeveloped areas is not anticipated. There may be some availability of development along rural water lines, and those proposals should be reviewed for impact on existing roadways, water and septic systems through the standard DEQ, Subdivision Review, and Public Works processes. Typically, any industrial or commercial uses are well contained and unlikely to be influenced by creation of a designated industrial or commercial future land use area. For larger rural industrial uses, as the county moves forward with the process of countywide zoning, review of future land uses will naturally be layered with natural resources, water lines, water table information, and other impacts in order to fully review acceptable and proposed areas of development.







Existing & Future Land Use – City of Sidney

Land Use Analysis was conducted by analyzing the Montana Cadastral Parcel data and Montana Department of Revenue data. Results were spot checked using aerial imagery. Land use classification was based on a variety of factors including property type, property description, and number of living units.

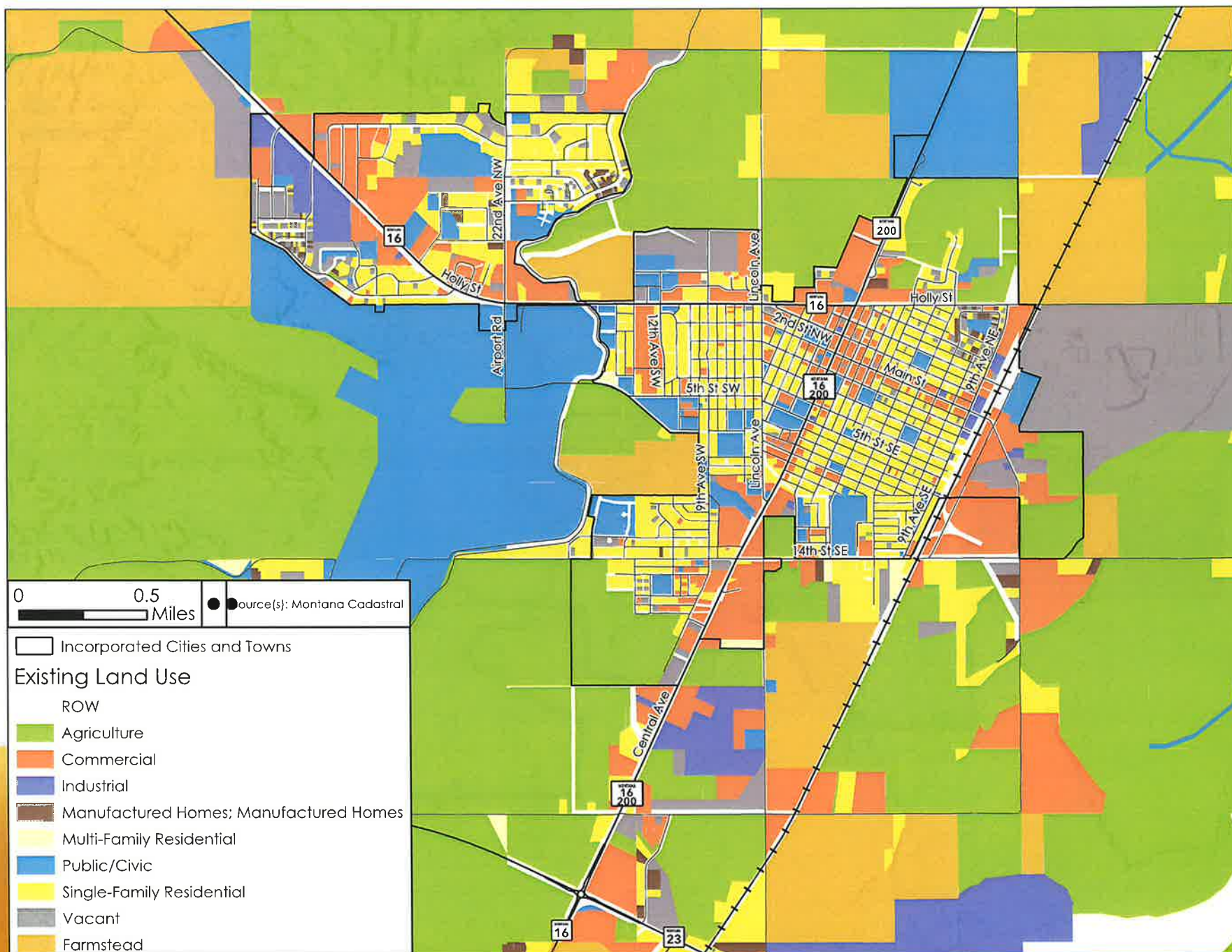
Existing land use in Sidney features concentrated commercial uses along Highways 16 and Highway 200, as well as within the downtown area. Industrial uses cluster on the outside of the City to the south, with another pocket to the northwest inside City Limits and one pocket along the railroad line east of the City. Residential development is tightly clustered in the more historical sections of the City, and along 22nd Ave NW..

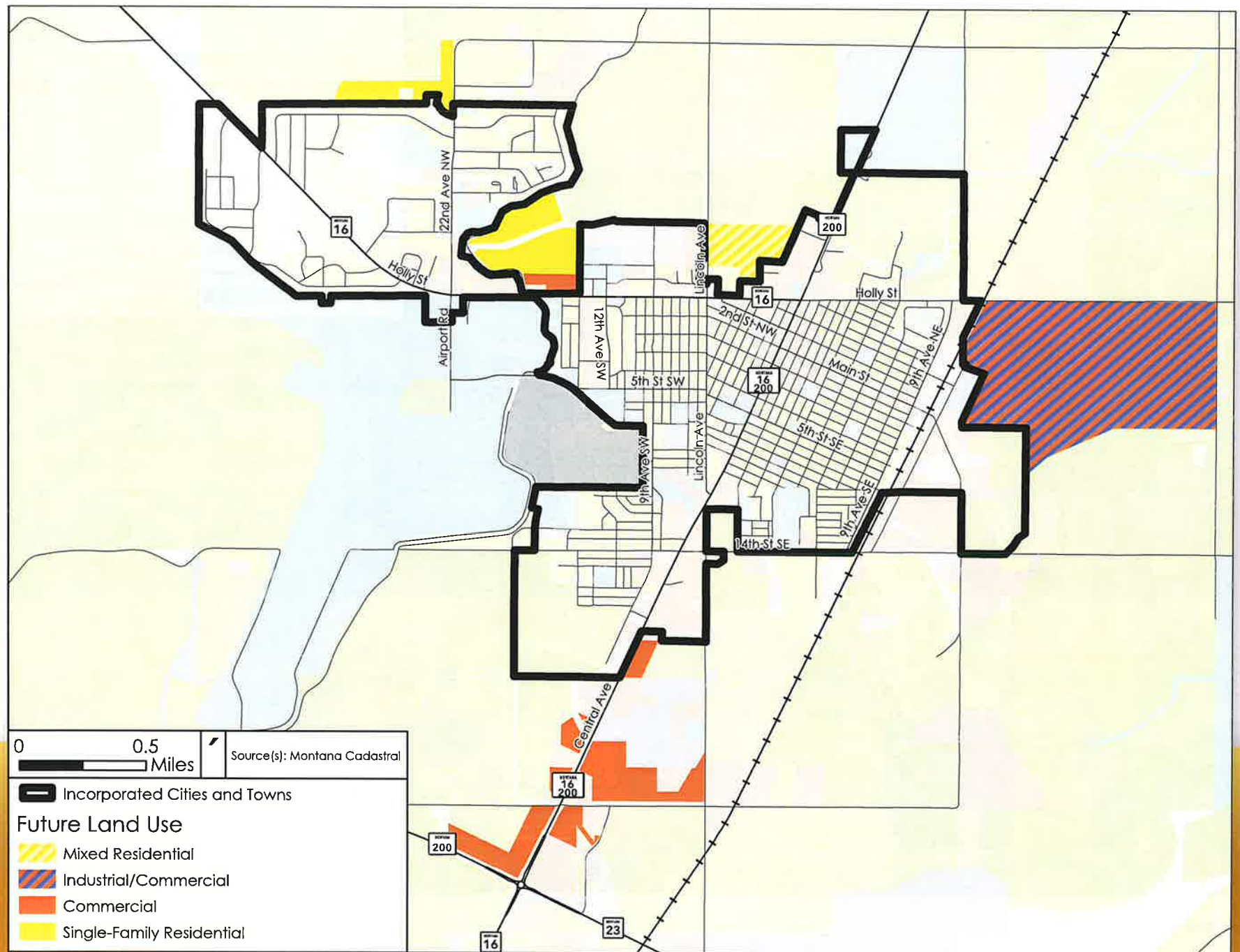
There are numerous potential conflict points around Sidney, particularly in the northwest part of the City. In this area, commercial and industrial land uses abut farmland. Additionally, farmland exists within irregular pockets along the City's northern, eastern, and western boundaries. These conflict points have the potential to disrupt orderly growth of the City if that farmland were to be developed, as the County lacks zoning designations and regulations. Directly north of Sidney's 22nd Ave NW, there is existing residential and commercial uses. This development pattern could lead to future conflicts due to the difficulty of extending services outside City boundaries

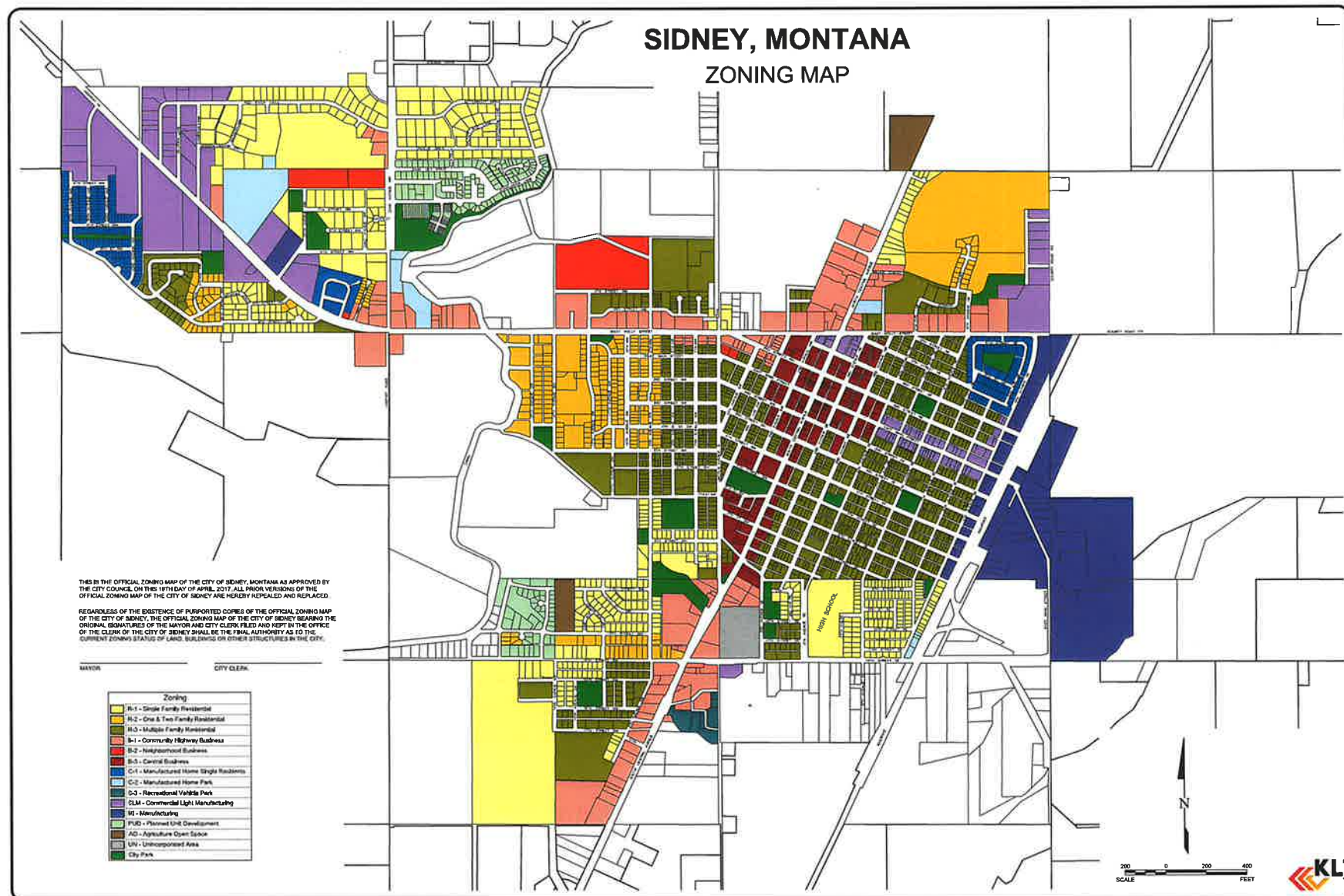
There is little vacant land within the City, though there are some infill opportunities.

The City does have zoning, maintained by the City zoning board. [That zoning map can be found here: P:\City\MT\Sidney\2412107 Planning Services\Zoning\CADD\Sidney Zoning 24 x 36 \(1\).](P:\City\MT\Sidney\2412107 Planning Services\Zoning\CADD\Sidney Zoning 24 x 36 (1).) There are discrepancies between the existing land use and the zoning map in places, which is normal and to be expected.

Sidney's Future Land Use Map shows land uses entirely within Richland County, which would require County review and approval or annexation. To the far northwest side of the city is a portion of residential future land use shown located along 22nd Ave NW. There are additional areas of potential development shown north of Holly St, including some mixed residential types located north and west of the intersection of Highway 16 and Highway 200. This proposed future residential growth is in line with the existing use types in the area. To the east, there is an area of mixed industrial and commercial, encompassing the previous Sidney Sugars property. To the south of the City is shown areas of commercial development which are again in line with the existing land uses in the area. Land uses in the County surrounding the City are well-established, with agricultural land bordering most of the city limits. As discussed above, potential land use conflicts could occur with these county lands. For the most problematic locations, future land uses have been identified.







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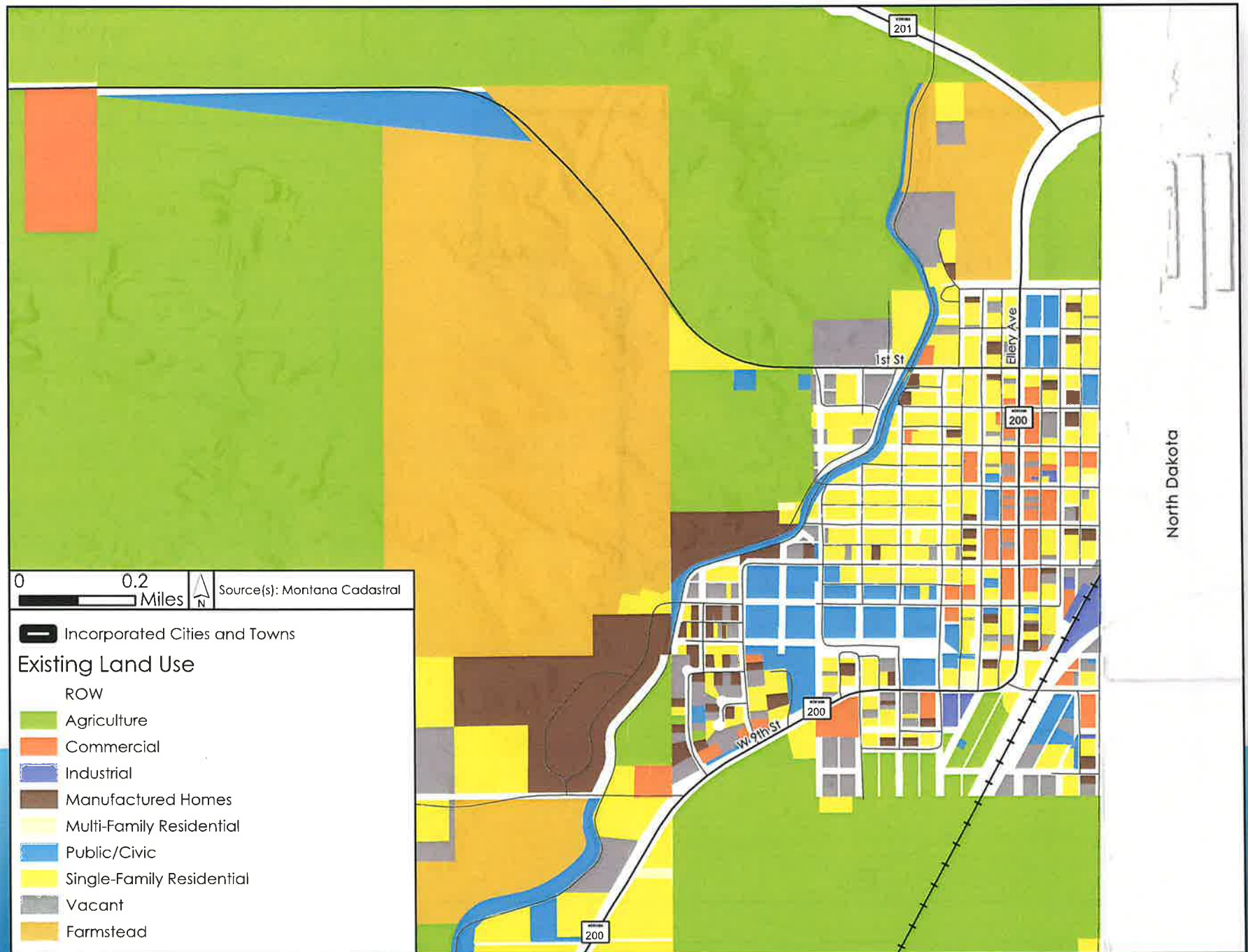
Existing & Future Land Use – Town of Fairview

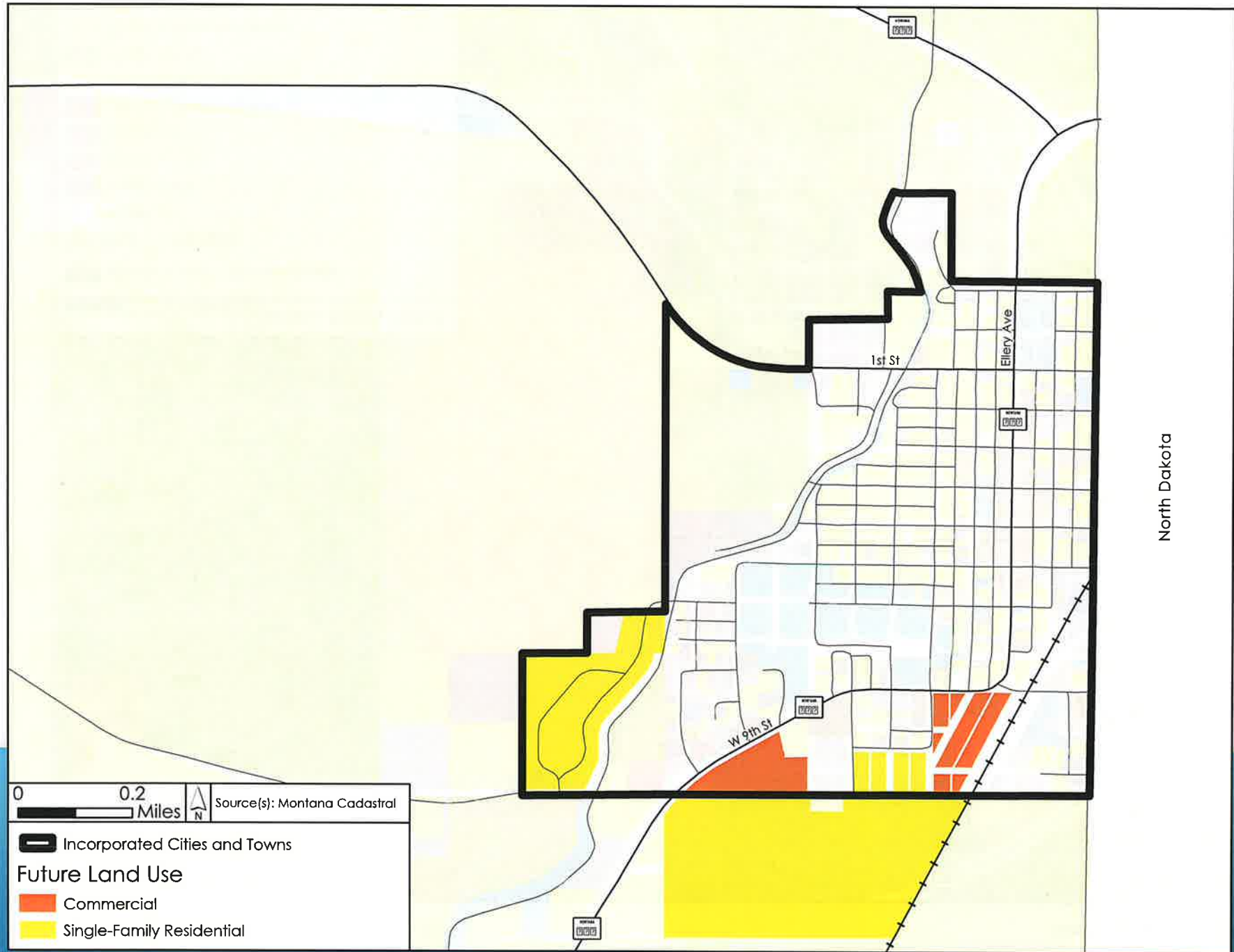
Land Use Analysis was conducted by analyzing the Montana Cadastral Parcel data and Montana Department of Revenue data. Results were spot checked using aerial imagery. Land use classification was based on a variety of factors including property type, property description, and number of living units.

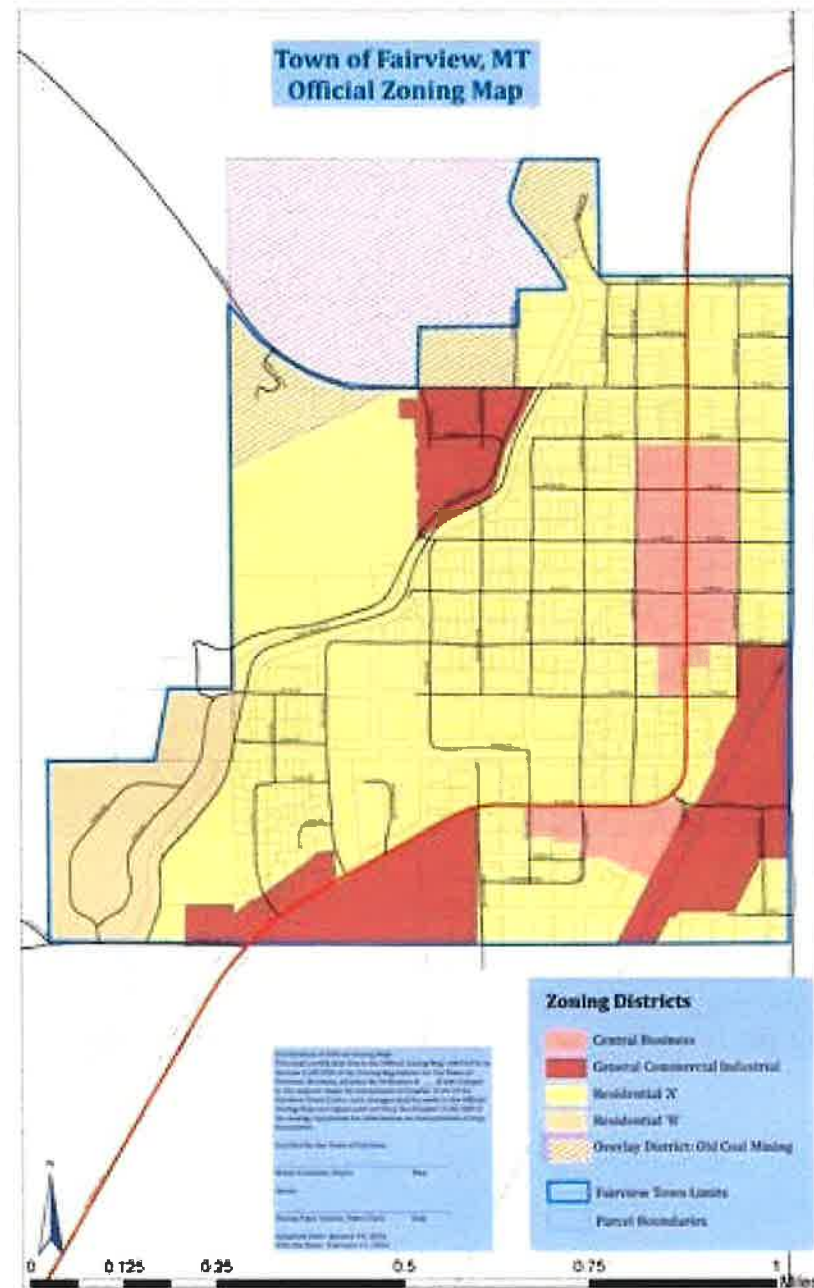
The existing land use in Fairview shows a large amount of public land, centered around the school, Housing Authority residences, Sharbono Park, and Town offices. Residential units make up the majority of the community, with a number of manufactured home units scattered throughout the general single and multifamily residential neighborhoods. There are numerous vacant spaces along Highway 200 (Ellery Ave) downtown, as well as south of Highway 200 within town limits. Particularly west of Ashland Ave, there are many vacant lots that are zoned residential. In some cases, they are utilized as additional yard space for existing residences. An existing large mobile home park, located west of the canal and south of 7th Street, is mostly vacant. These infill spaces present development opportunities for the Town of Fairview, whether for commercial or residential purposes.

The existing land use map largely reflects the existing zoning map.

The Fairview Future Land Use Map, shown on page 159, identifies potential development for these areas. It shows commercial uses along the south side of Highway 200, and single-family residential development in the largely vacant mobile home park west of the canal. In adjacent Richland County land, south of Fairview, there is a large area of residential future land use. This area has been added to the Fairview future land use map due to topography and the projected natural expansion area, although it would require additional work through annexation and the extension of services. Buildout of county land would most likely be in the 20-30 year horizon, as retrofitting the existing developed but vacant land in the existing mobile home park would be the most cost-effective and efficient way to provide new housing to future Fairview residents.



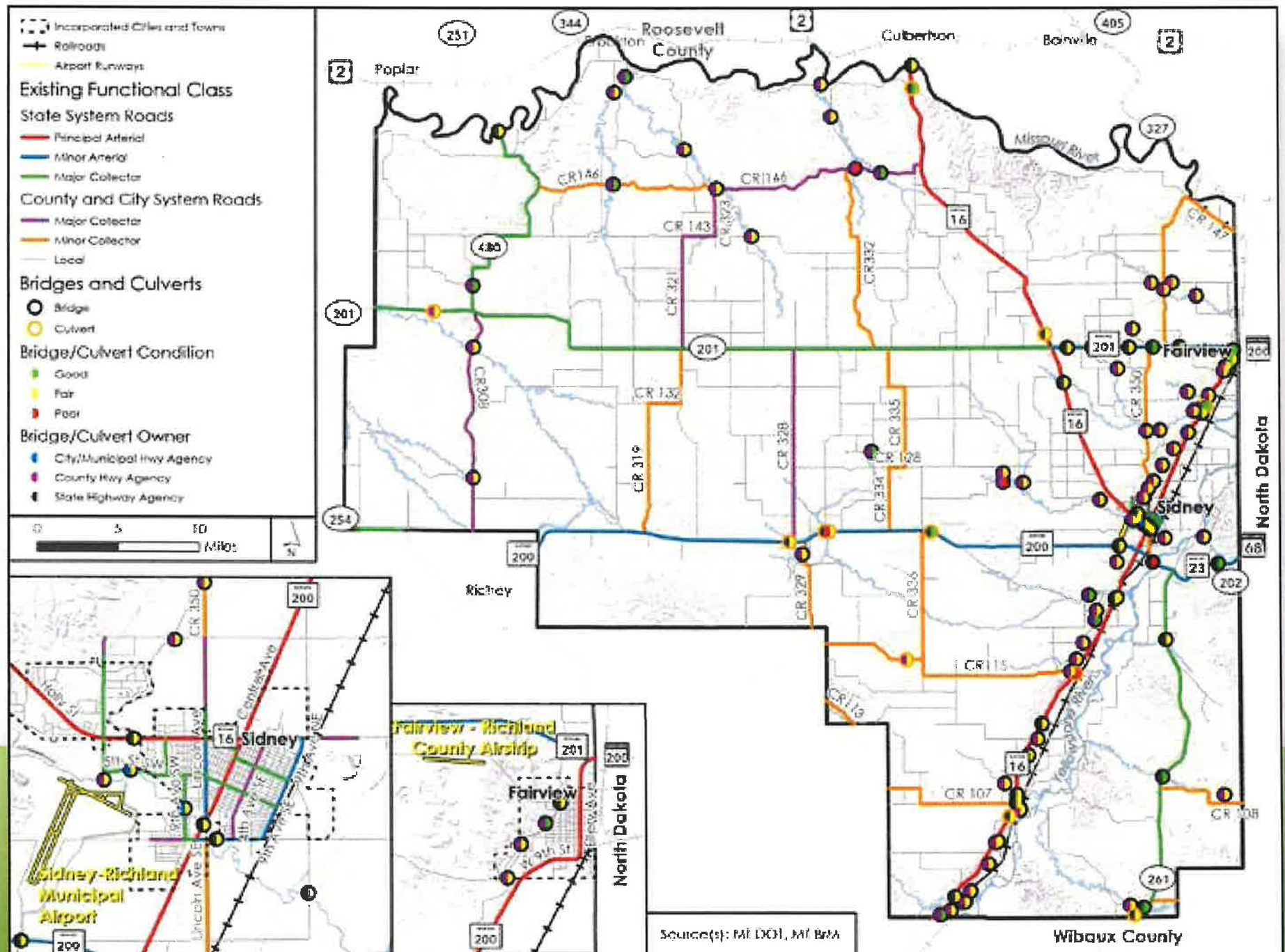




Transportation

The County's existing Functional Classification of Roadways are shown on the associated map. There are no anticipated changes to this, though the growth policy does recommend changes to the truck route to encourage its use. The County will be undertaking a Safe Streets for All planning effort in 2026, which will more closely review the transportation system and the truck route.





Transportation

**HWY 16, 23,
200, 201**
primary & secondary
highways in the County

1240 Miles
of County Road

134 Bridges
in the County

Transportation

Richland County's roads are classified as principal arterial, minor arterial, local, and city roads. Most are considered rural. The county maintains approximately 1,250 miles of roads, with 40 miles that are paved and 50 miles that are surfaced with soil cement and chip seal. In 2024, the county recorded approximately 275,025 Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (DVMT) on-system and 249,025 DVMT off-system. Of these, 226,762 DVMT were rural on-system miles and 103,857 were rural off-system miles. Urban travel was significantly lower, with 48,263 on-system miles DVMT and 45,168 off-system DVMT. A total of 1,435,731 DVMT was recorded across all road systems. Overall, rural roads saw significantly higher traffic than urban roads, and on-system roads carried more traffic than off-system roads. These trends highlight the importance of maintaining both on-system and off-system roads to support regional travel. Richland County Public Works maintains all county roads and bridges, while the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is responsible for state highways. The City of Sidney maintains and replaces all city roads, including road striping projects and ongoing annual maintenance. Sidney also underwent a Truck Route Study in 2009.

Currently, there are several active projects in the county. In Fairview, a road project is realigning six miles of Montana Highway 201 to help alleviate truck traffic, including the construction of a new bridge at Second Hay Creek. In Sidney, small road striping projects are underway, while the main development focuses on potential improvements to the pedestrian and bike path, since Sidney successfully passed the first round of grant applications.

Three main highways run through Richland County: Montana Highway 16 follows the Yellowstone River and connects to I-94. Montana Highway 23 begins at the intersection of Highways 16 and 200 and runs east of Sidney to the North Dakota border. Montana Highway 16 extends from Sidney to the Northeastern part of the state. Additionally, North Dakota 200 (ND 200) runs through Fairview and continues to Sidney and west to Central Montana.

Bridges: According to MDT's Bridge Management System, Richland County has a total of 105 bridges, with three bridges needing repairs or replacement. A bridge replacement project is currently in progress on CR 340 near Savage.

Public Transportation: Richland County operates the Richland County Transportation Service (RCTS) which provides free transportation for residents aged 8 and older in Sidney, Fairview, Lambert, and Savage. RCTS runs Monday through Friday, with varying hours depending on the location. The Sidney service area operates from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Rides can be scheduled online, through the RCTS mobile app, or by calling (406) 433-RIDE. Reservations must be made at least 24 hours in advance. RCTS also prides itself on accessibility and full ADA compliance for all residents.

Air Travel: The Sidney-Richland Regional Airport is the only airport in Richland County. Cape Air provides five daily flights between Sidney and Billings, with service starting at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m. The airport also features two private aircraft rental companies: Richland Aviation and Sidney Air Service. Richland Aviation offers heated hangars for aircraft ranging from small single-engine aircraft to large jets. Sidney Air Service provides hangar rentals, aviation fuel, and aircraft rentals. There is also an unattended airstrip in Fairview, located one mile NW of the town which is open to the public. It is a turf surface and is owned and managed by the Sidney Richland Airport Authority who is also the entity which regulates zoning and usage in areas immediately within the airport protection district.





This report was produced for Richland County, Montana; the City of Sidney, Montana; and the Town of Fairview, Montana

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Appendix A. Community Conditions



Community Conditions provides an overview of the current social, economic, and physical landscape of Richland County, the City of Sidney, and the Town of Fairview. It compiles key data and observations related to demographics, housing, land use, infrastructure, services, and the natural environment. This information establishes a baseline for understanding how the region functions today and highlights trends that will influence future growth and development. The appendix serves as both a reference and a foundation for the goals and strategies outlined throughout the Growth Policy.

This section contains demographic information on:

- 1. Richland County***
- 2. City of Sidney***
- 3. Town of Fairview***

Richland County

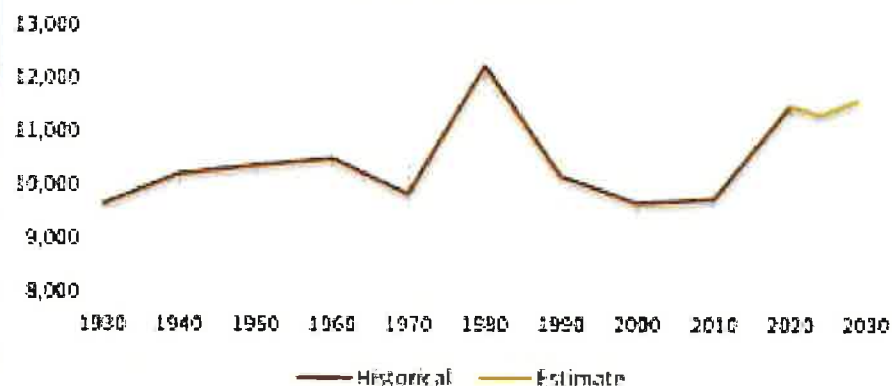
Demographics

The population of Richland County has been relatively consistent from 1930 to 1970 staying close in range to 10,000 people. In 1980, the population spiked to 12,243 people due to a shift in the Richland County economy focusing more on labor intensive jobs including coal mining, oil drilling, and agriculture. However, this boom was short lived as Richland County saw a decline in population from 1990 to 2010 as Montana's economic focus shift to more service-based jobs pulling many out of rural regions. The oil and gas industry saw growth in the 2010s within the Richland County community which led to an increase population once again. By 2020, Richland County had a total population of 11,491 people. As oil and gas production trends do not show signs of slowing, ***Richland County's population is estimated to be 11,603 people within the next five years.***

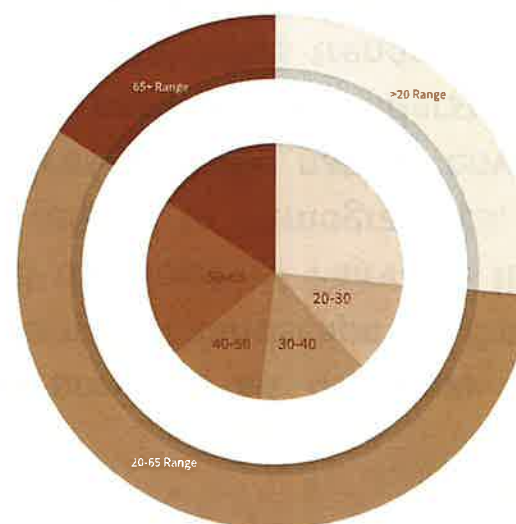
In 2020, 58.0% of the population was between the ages of 20 years old and 65 years old. Furthermore, 11.8% of the population was in the 20-30 year old range, 13.7% of the population was in the 30-40 year old range, 12.3% of the population was in the 40-50 year old range, and 20.1% of the population was in the 50-65 year old range. While this is not a large portion of the population, this does indicate that the population is not "aging out" like many other rural areas. Having many young individuals and young families is a promising indicator of potential for social and economic growth. 26.4% of the population is under the age of 20 years old, which can indicate the need for childcare and 15.6% of the population is above the age of 65 years old, which can indicate the need for assisted living or senior living in the area.

POPULATION OVER TIME

Richland County

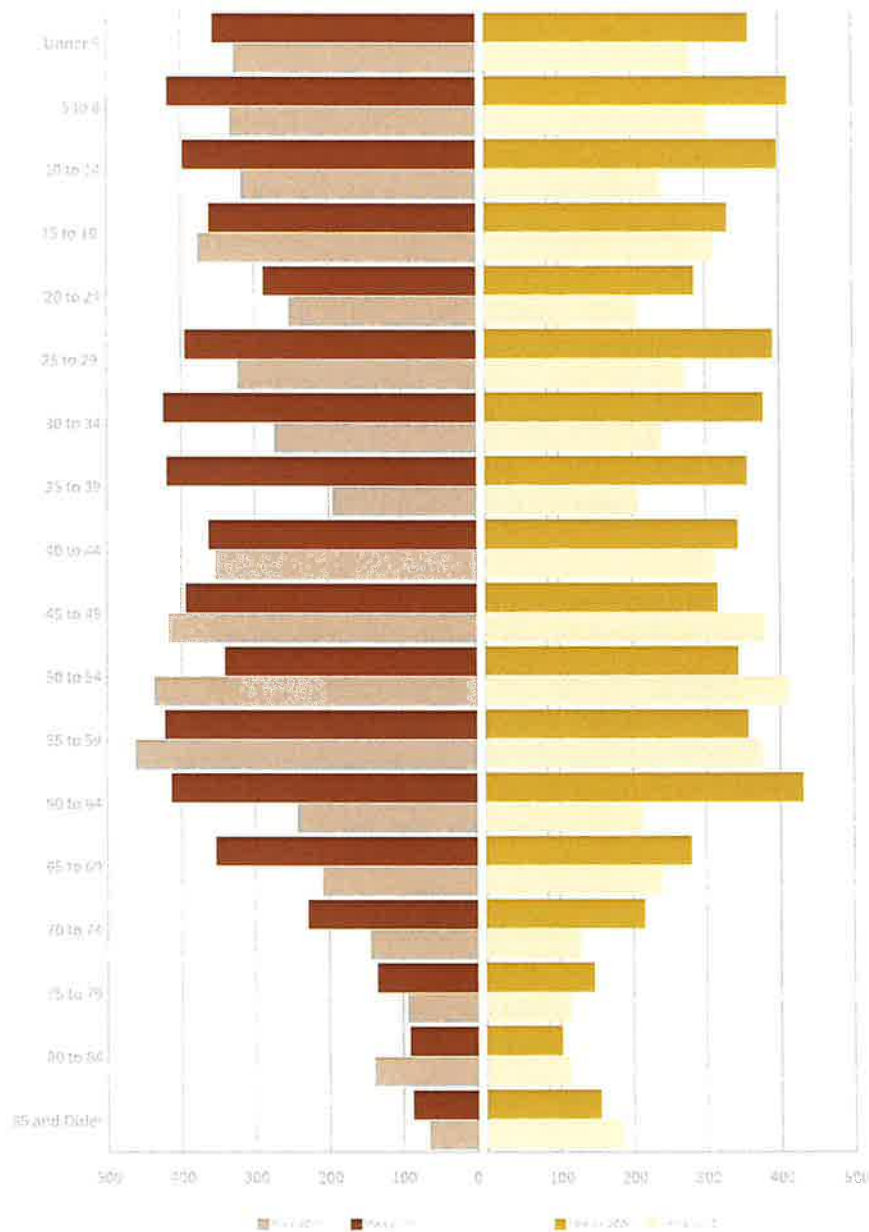


POPULATION BY AGE



Richland County consists of five cities and towns including the county seat, Sidney (population of 6,346), Fairview (population of 896), which are both incorporated, and the rural communities of Lambert (population of 475), and Savage-Crane, (population of 1,134).

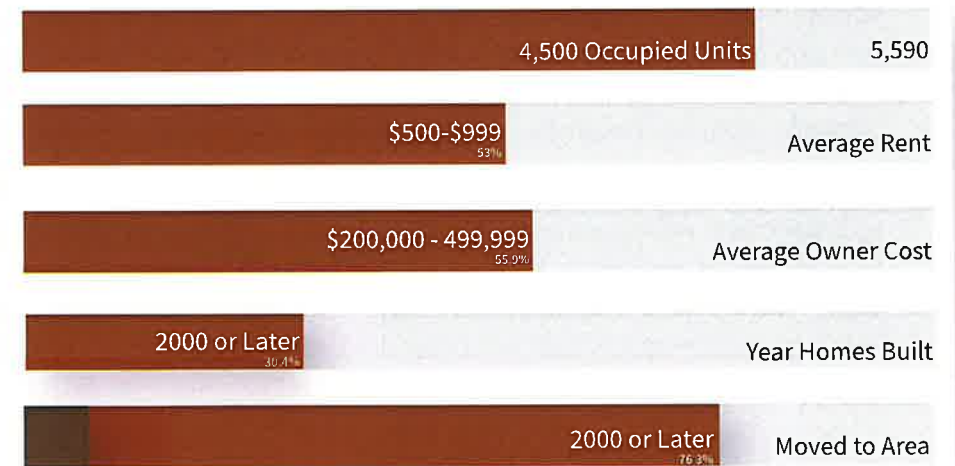
POPULATION BY AGE & SEX



Housing

As of 2023, there are 5,590 total housing units in Richland County. 4,500 of the 5,590 housing units in Richland County are occupied with 69.8% of the occupants holding ownership. Average rent ranges from \$500 to \$999 a month (53.1% of units) and the average owner-occupied units range from \$200,000 to \$499,999 (55.9% of units).

Demographics show that 7.0% of the occupants moved into the area in 2021 or later. Furthermore, 76.3% of Richland County residents moved into the area in 2000 or later. Of the housing units available within Richland County, roughly 15.1% of the units fall within the range of unsound to poor condition, 81.0% falls within the range of fair to average condition, and 3.9% falls within the range of good to excellent. With rates of renting and ownership increasing and only 30.4% of the housing units being built in 2000 or later, it may be wise to look into the development of new and affordable housing for the predicted growth of the county.



Economic Development

Richland County boasts a labor force of 6,021 workers, with an unemployment rate of 2.4%, lower than both Montana's average of 3.0% and the national rate of 4.0%. The county's workforce earns an average annual wage of \$63,127, reflecting a strong mix of high-wage energy and infrastructure sectors alongside essential service industries.

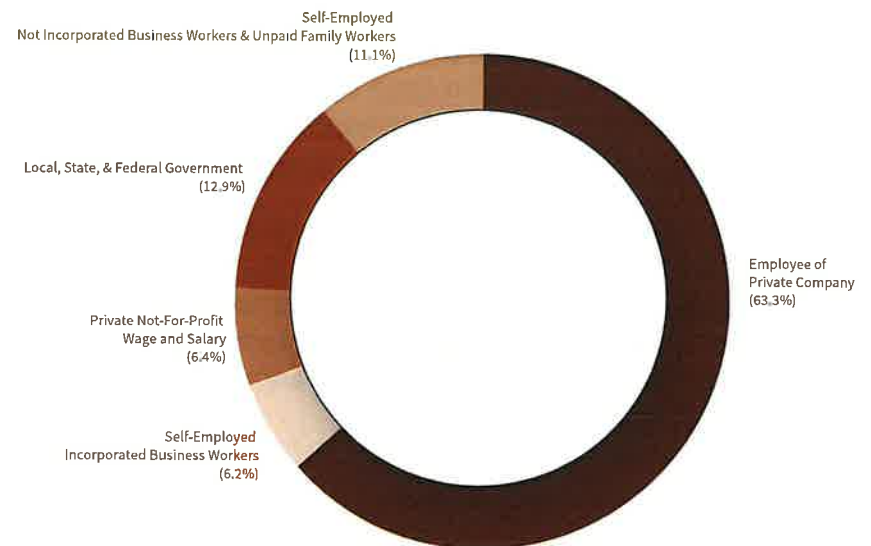
As of 2024, Richland County supports 647 business establishments employing 5,234 payroll workers and generating over \$330 million in annual wages. The largest industries by number of jobs include local government, retail trade, construction, accommodations and food services, and mining. The top three employers, Sidney Health Center, Bear Paw Energy, and Reynolds Warehouse Grocery, anchor the local economy by providing a diverse range of healthcare, energy, and retail employment opportunities.

In terms of overall industry share, the top two sectors of employment in Richland County are educational services and health care and social assistance, which together account for 16.8% of the workforce. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining follow closely at 16.2%. The remaining 67.0% of employment is distributed among a variety of industries, including retail trade, construction, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, transportation, warehousing and utilities, professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services, finance, insurance and real estate, manufacturing, and other services not including public administration.

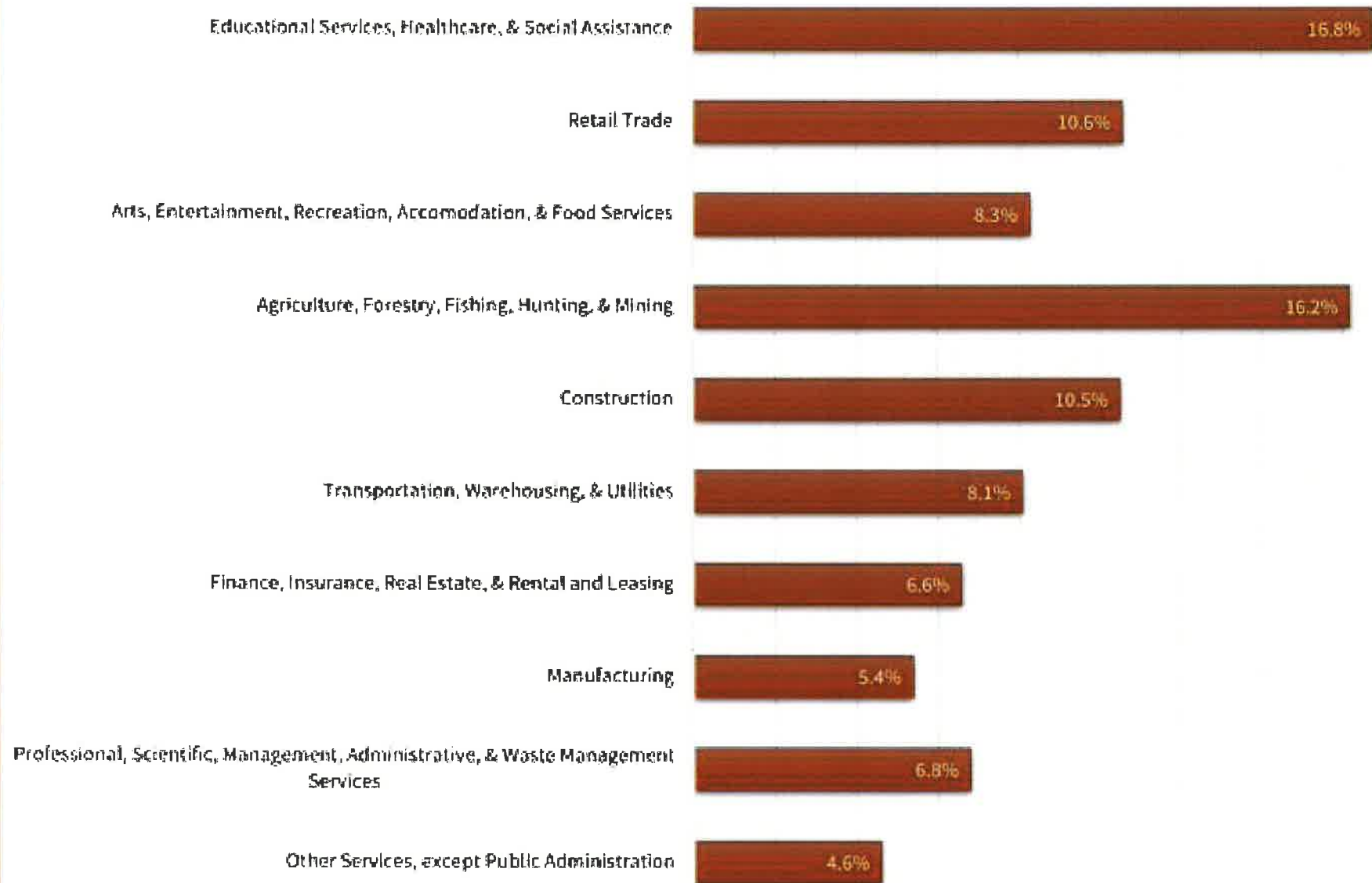
According to the 2023 American Community Survey five-year estimates, Richland County's employment rate sits at 65.4%. Of those in the workforce, 63.3% are employees of private companies, 12.9% work for local, state, or federal government, 11.1% are self-employed in their own unincorporated business, 6.4% work for private nonprofit organizations, and 6.2% are self-employed in an incorporated business.

In terms of wages, the highest-paying industries include utilities, transportation and warehousing, management of companies, and mining, each offering average annual salaries between \$100,000 and \$118,000. Conversely, sectors such as retail trade, accommodations and food services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation fall on the lower end of the wage spectrum, with average annual earnings between \$19,000 and \$40,000.

EMPLOYMENT BY CLASS



EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Natural Resources

Prime Farmland/Ag

The 2019 Richland County Long Range Plan was developed by the USDA NRCS Sidney Field Office in partnership with the USDA Farm Agency Richland County Committee, Richland County Weed District, MSU Extension, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, the Richland County Conservation District, and local landowners, farmers, and ranchers. The purpose is to identify and address natural resource concerns through local stewardship and conservation. The plan focuses on issues affecting land use and agriculture, including soil health, irrigation water supply, erosion, and noxious weeds. The plan prioritizes livestock production, soil quality and erosion control, plant condition restoration, and water quality protection. These factors are critical to the county's agricultural productivity and long-term environmental health. It also emphasizes moving expired Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands back to healthy grazing. The County's commitment to this plan helps ensure future growth supports Richland County's commitment to its farmers and ranchers.



www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/RichlandCounty-Montana-LongRangePlan-2019.pdf

Sand & Gravel

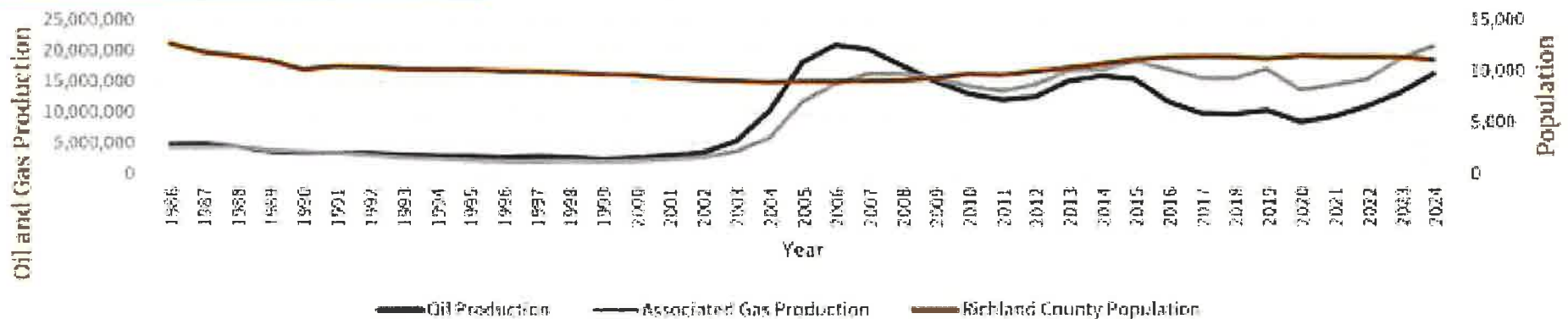
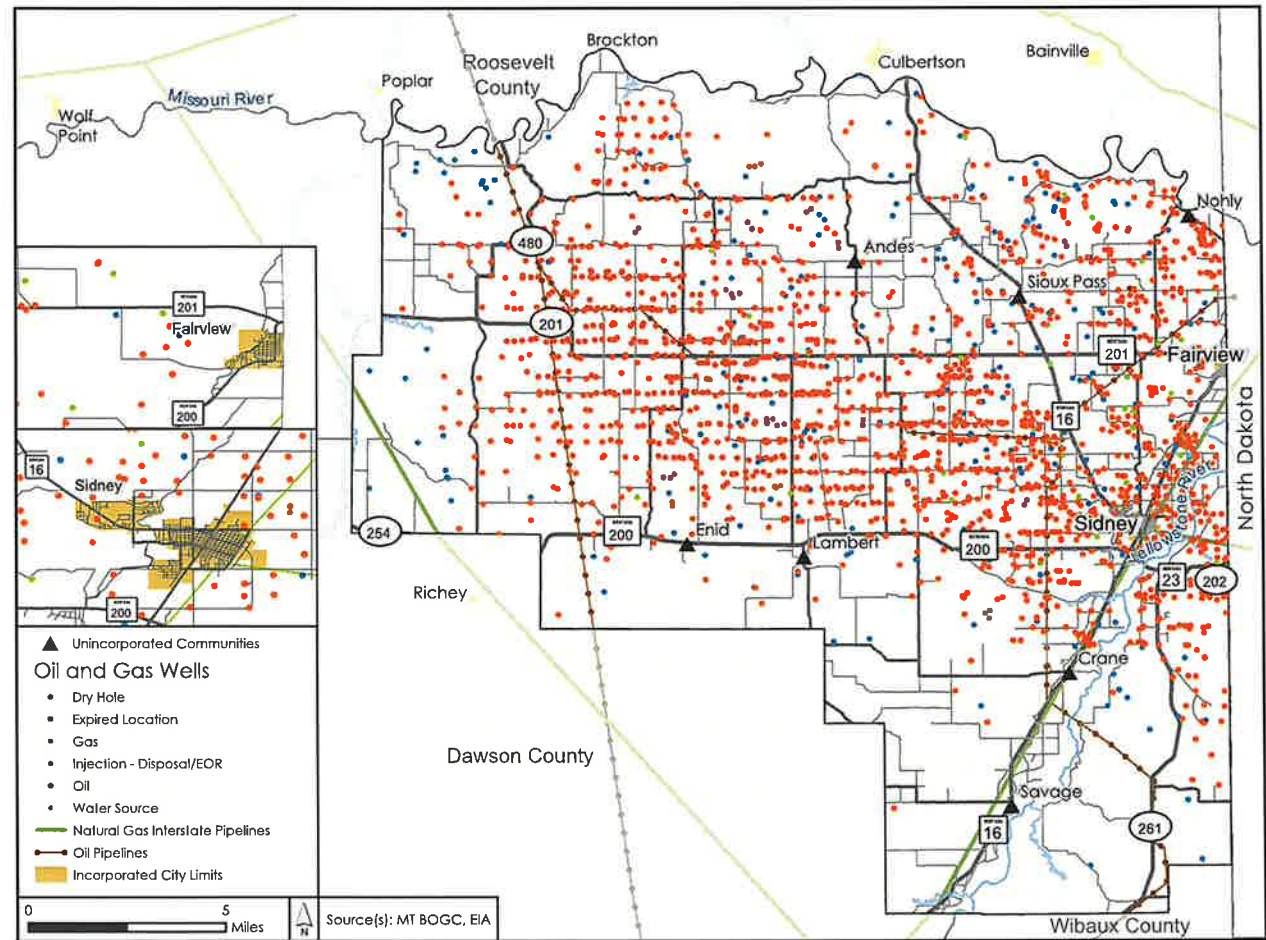
The county's soil is mostly fine to medium texture and clay-heavy, which makes them favorable for gravel deposits. According to Montana DEQ's Opencut Mining Web Mapping Application, there are 90 permitted gravel pits in Richland County, all privately owned. The average gravel pit size is 25 acres, and the largest pit is approximately 160 acres, with most gravel used for construction and maintenance.

Gravel Layout

According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, 96% of the county rates "poor" for gravel resources, and 89.5% rates "poor" for sand. Even with these low ratings, local gravel can still be used effectively for construction projects. Using local resources helps reduce construction costs and support regional infrastructure needs.

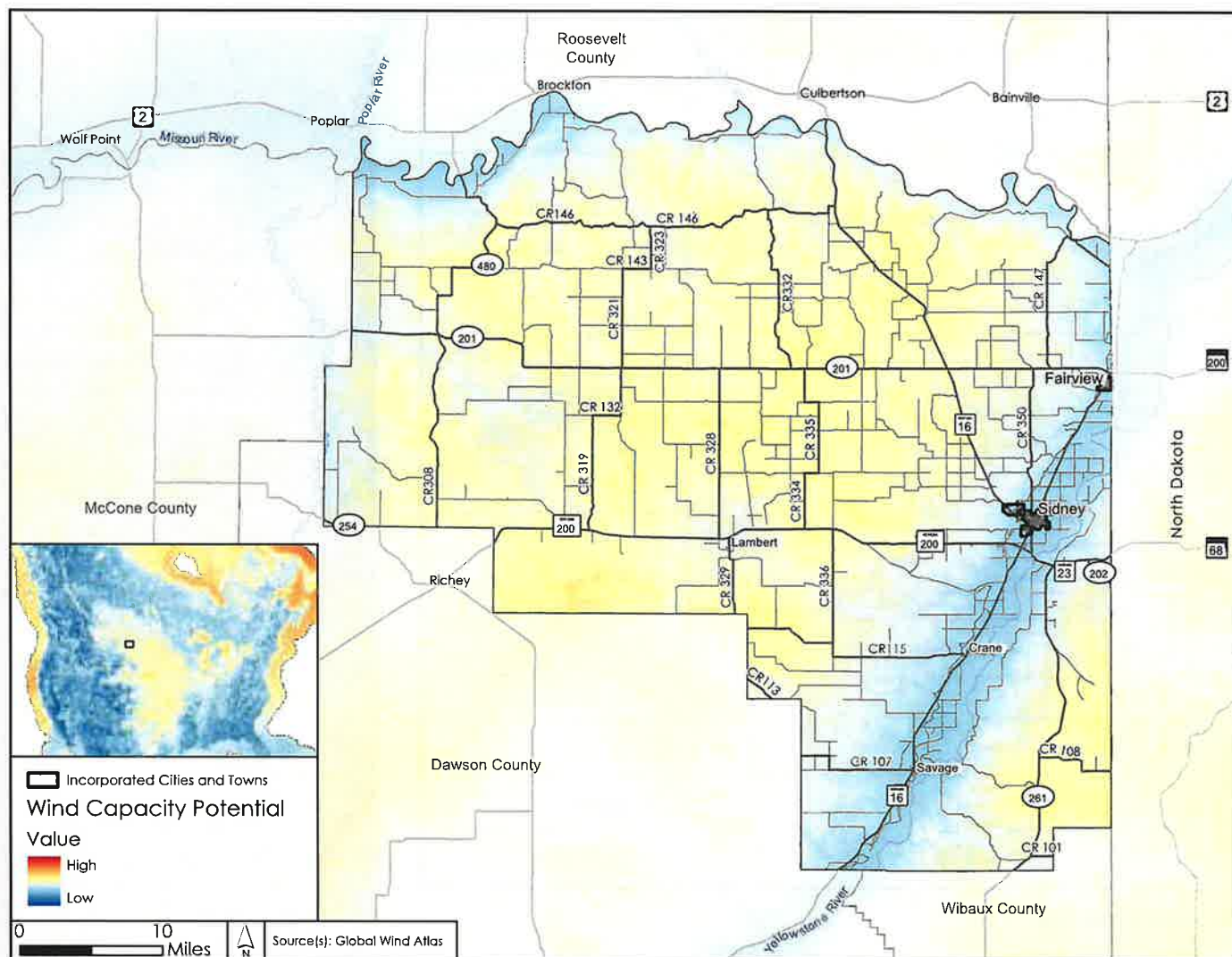
Oil and Gas Production:

Richland County is located within the Bakken Shale Formation, which produces substantial amounts of oil and gas deposits. The county is ranked #1 for oil production and #2 for gas production in Montana. There are approximately 1,368 producing oil wells in Richland County, a steady increase from 1,122 reported in 2014 for the previous growth policy. Overall, oil and gas production has increased since 2020, with the population holding steady. Market fluctuations and increasing efficiencies in other markets may lead to the same cycle of ups & downs seen in the past, but population trends seem to be relatively divorced from oil and gas production

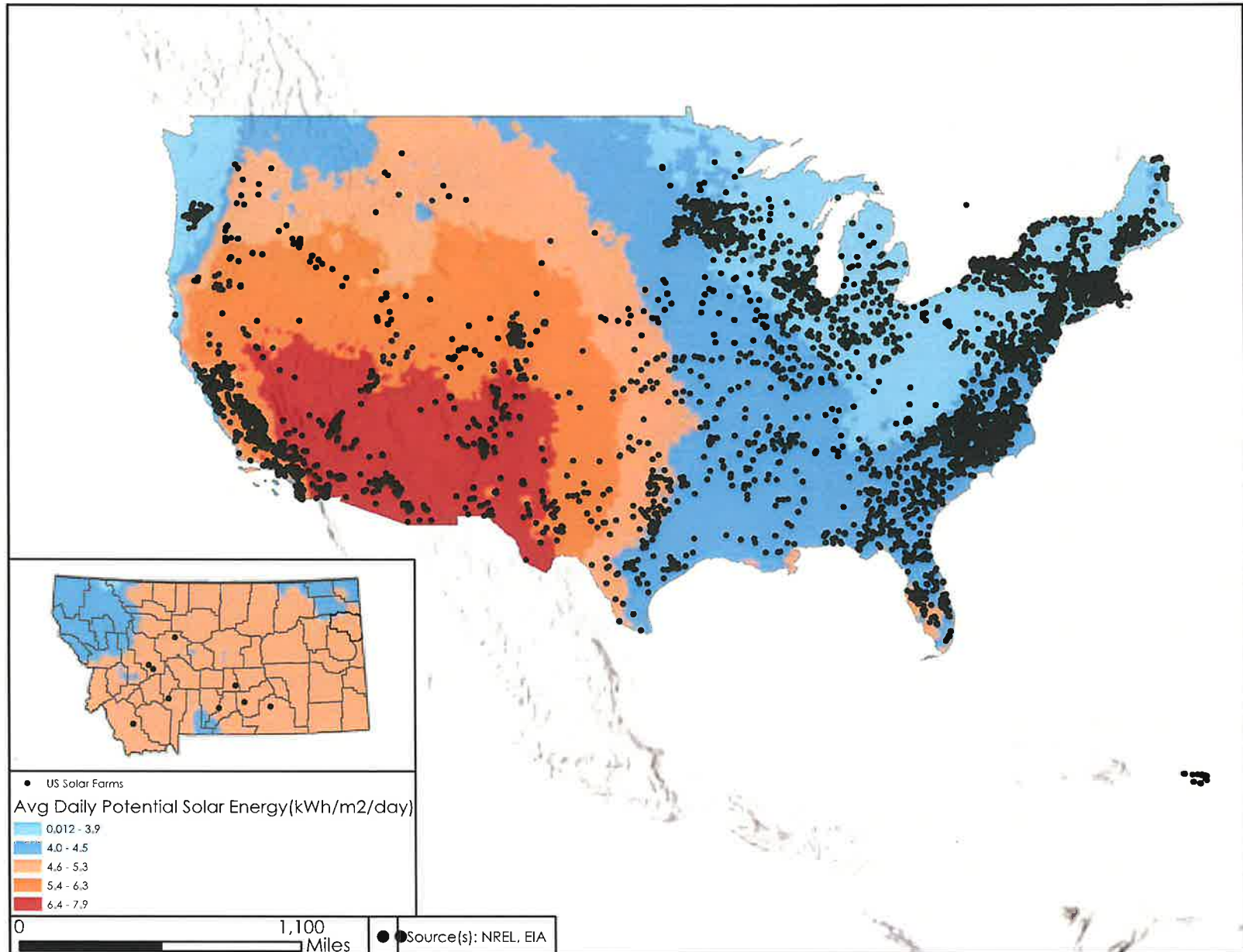


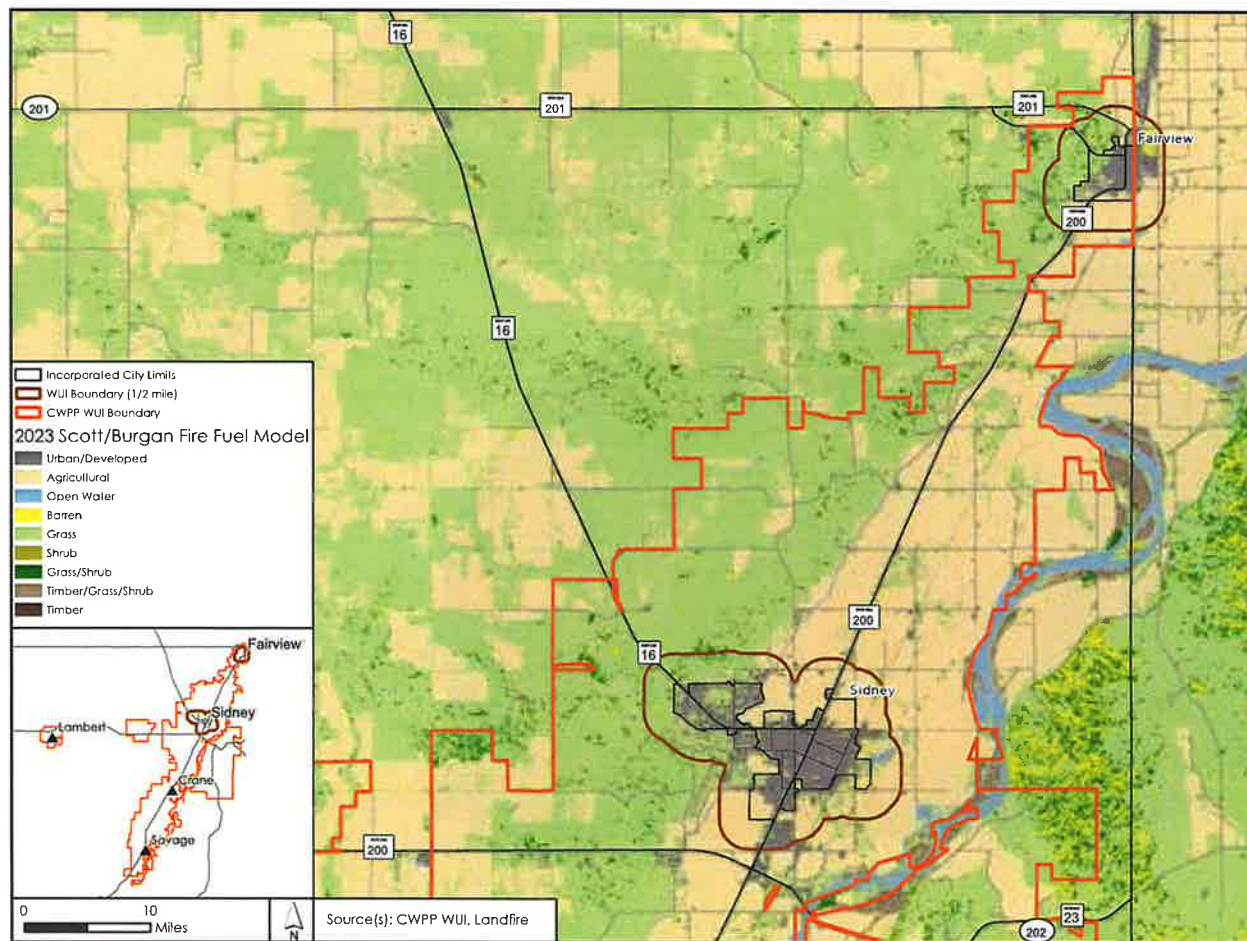
Wind & Solar Power Potential

Wind: Richland County has high wind potential due to its fierce winds and favorable landscape along the eastern plains of Montana. According to NREL, Montana has the second highest wind potential in the nation, with 679,000 MW, making Richland County an excellent location for developing wind energy infrastructure. While there are no current wind energy developments in Richland County, the Glendive Wind Project, located in Dawson, Prairie, and McCone counties, is slated to be the largest wind production facility in the state. This shows that the Eastern Montana region including Richland County has strong capacity and interest for wind development.



Solar: Richland County has high solar potential due to its strong solar irradiance and abundant direct sunlight. In Fairview, there is a 74.5 MW solar project being developed by Stellar Renewable Power (Stellar) called Fairview I. The project is expected to provide over 350,000 Mwh of clean energy to the area each year for the next 35 years.



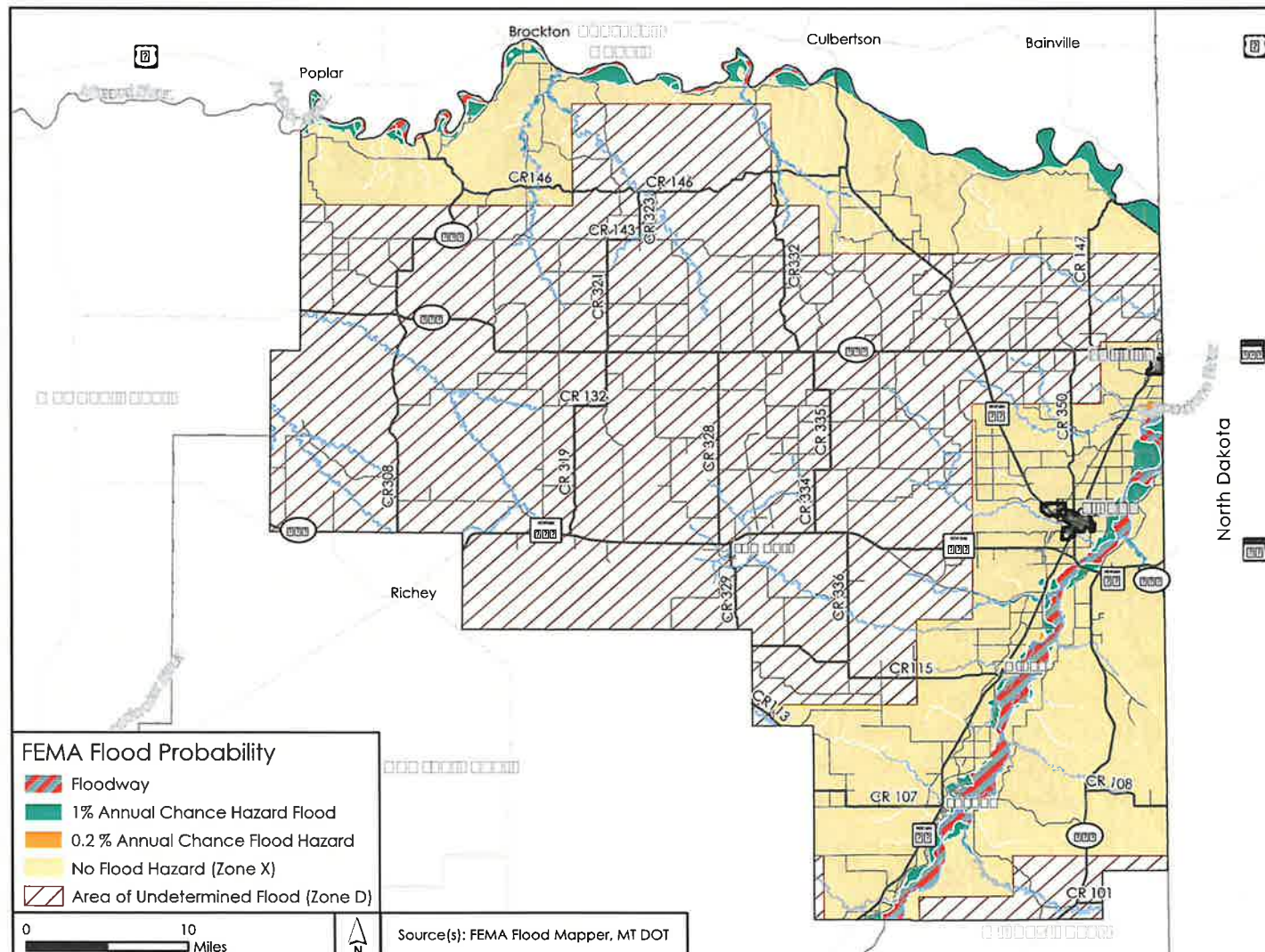


Wildland Urban Interface

Richland County faces a moderate risk of wildfire. The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary shown on the map is defined using parcel data and the standards outlined in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Two distinct WUI boundaries are represented: the half-mile buffer around the City of Sidney and the Town of Fairview, which represents the general WUI area, and the CWPP boundary, which highlights parcels specifically susceptible to wildfire. The WUI is the transitional zone where residential areas meet undeveloped wildland space. In Richland County, the dominant fuels are grasslands, with additional risk from agriculture residues such as crops and hay fields. These fuels are highly susceptible to ignition and can spread rapidly during drought, extreme heat, and shifting wind patterns. To address wildfire risk, Richland County follows state-level Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and updated its Multi-hazard Mitigation Plan in 2022.

Floodplain

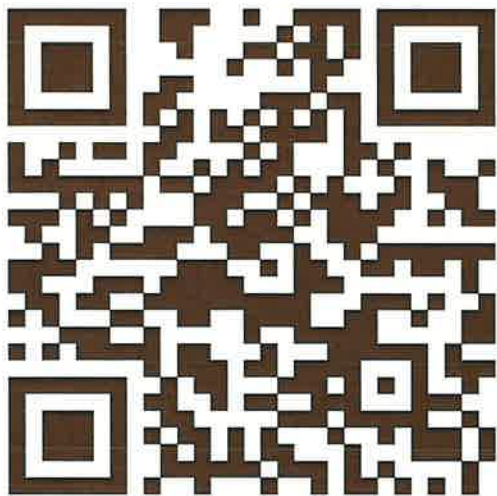
In 1951, Lone Tree Creek and the Vaux Dam in Sidney experienced severe flooding due to ice and high flows. In 2019, Richland County updated its Floodplain regulations in 2019 to align with Montana DNRC and FEMA guidelines, with further updates in 2024 during the larger subdivision regulation update that took place. State law prohibits development in the 100-year floodplain without a permit. The permit process requires a signed Floodplain Permit Application, a review fee, a detailed project plan, and any additional permits needed for the project. Richland County also participates in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which provides flood insurance to local property owners.



Infrastructure and Community Facilities

County Government

Richland County is led by a three-member board of commissioners: Loren Young (District 1), Shane Gorder (District 2), and Duane Mitchell (District 3). There are several active committees and boards, including the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Commission on Aging, Board of Health, and the Conservation District. Emergency preparedness and cultural resources are supported by the Local Emergency Planning Committee, the Sidney-Richland County Library Board, the MonDak Heritage Board, and the Richland County Fair and Rodeo Board. The County files budgetary audits with the state every year, available online through the Montana Department of Education (mtlgsb.my.site.com)



mtlgsb.my.site.com

Educational Services

Richland County has nine schools in 10 public school districts, including Savage, Lambert, Fairview, Rau, Brorson and Sidney. These schools serve students from Pre-K through 12th grade. Portions of western Richland County fall within the Richey School District (Dawson County) and the Culbertson School District (Roosevelt County). The largest enrollments are found in the Fairview and Sidney school districts. Homeschool enrollment has doubled since the 2022-2023 school year, rising from 63 to 126 students. The 2022-2023 graduation rate was 94.26%, which was higher than the statewide rate of 85.52% and has gradually increased since 2020-2021. Student dropouts decreased from 17 in 2022-2023 to 12 in 2023-2024. According to the US Census Bureau, 96.2% of residents age 25 and older are high school graduates, and 19.4% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Overall, in Richland County, school enrollment has declined due to alternative schooling options.

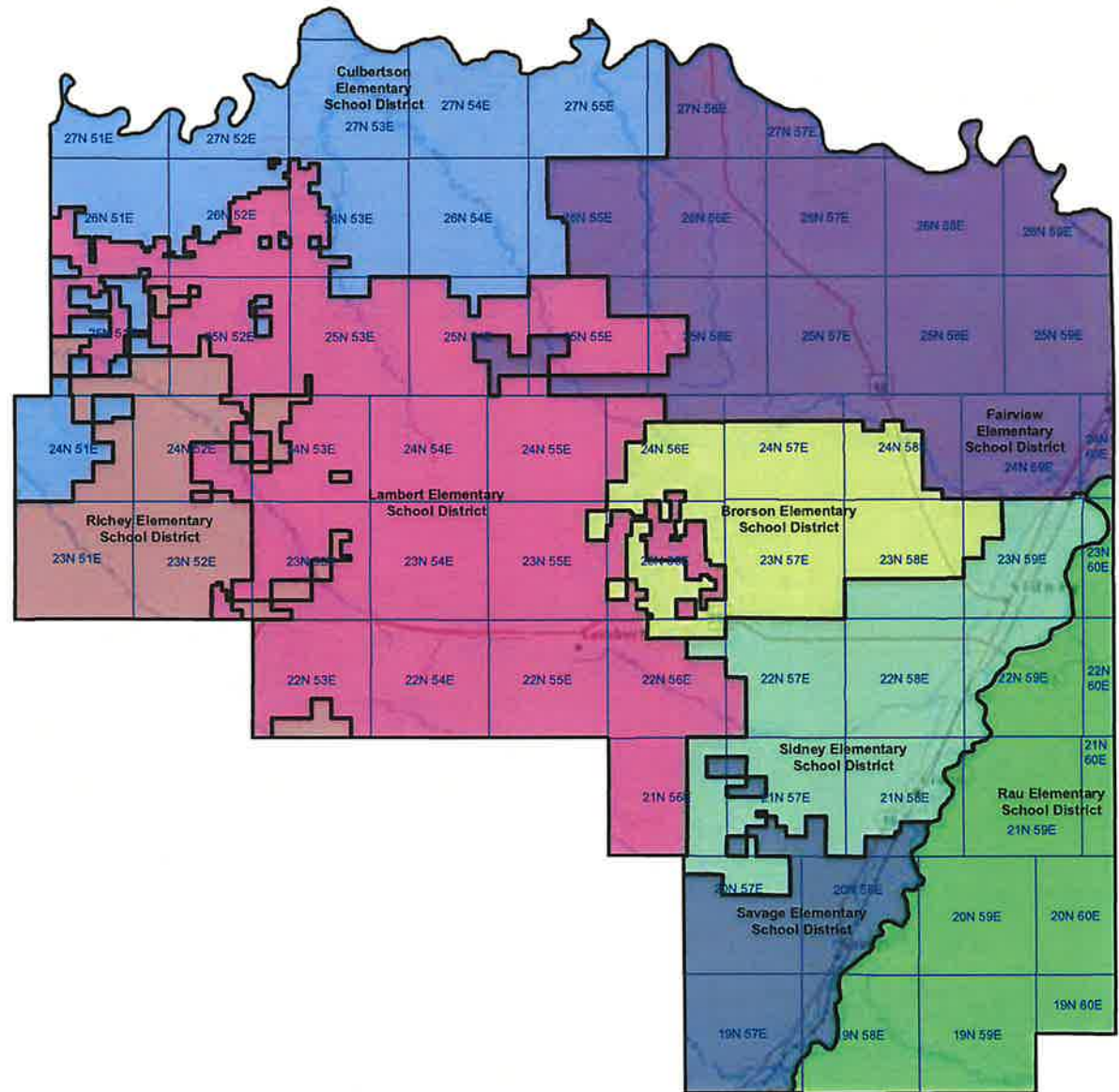
Richland County School Enrollment

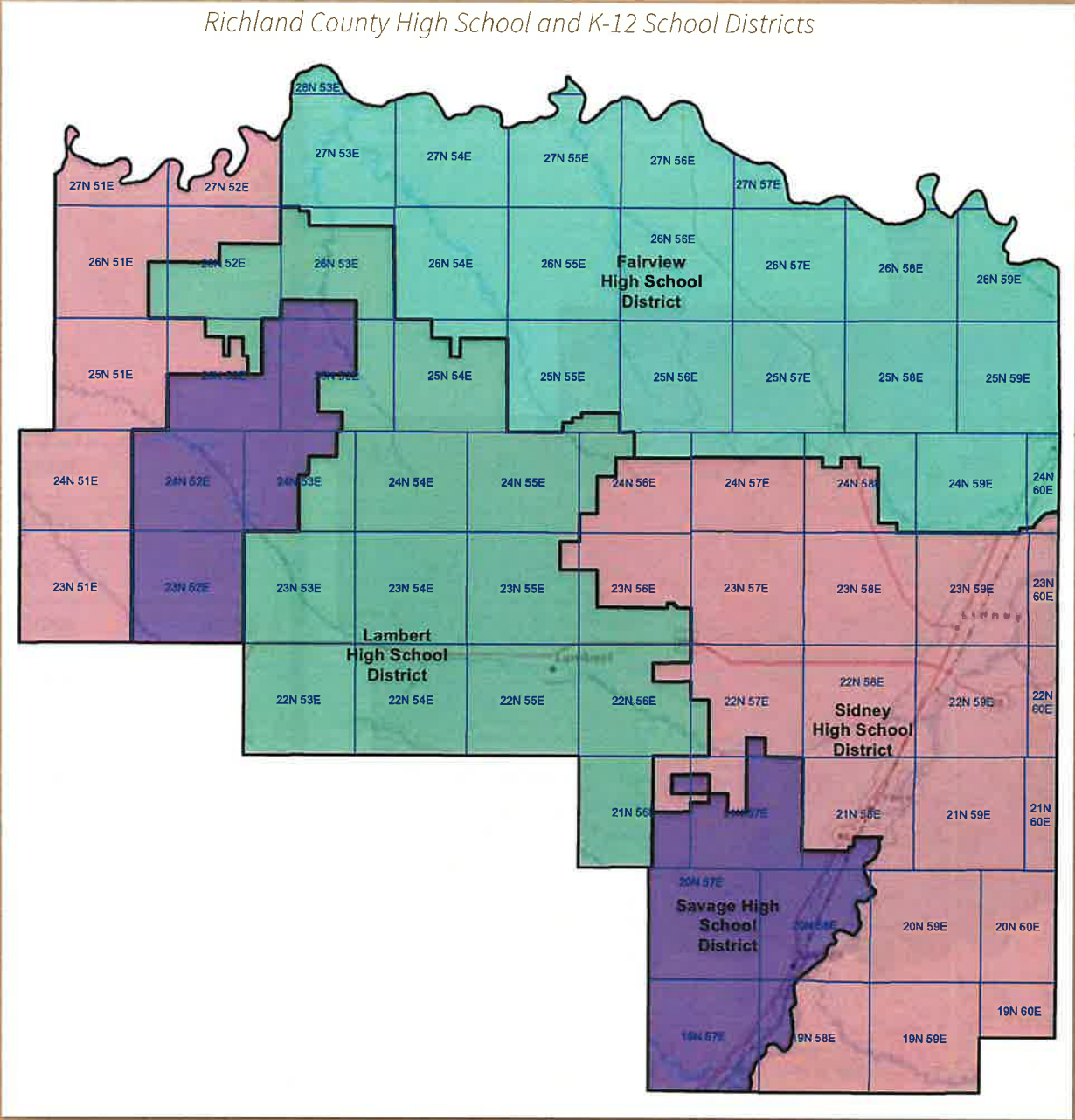


School Districts in Richland County

<i>District</i>	<i>District Name</i>	<i>2024-2025 Enrollment</i>
745	Sidney Elementary	823
746	Sidney High School	355
747	Savage Elementary	87
748	Savage High School	40
749	Brorson Elementary	5
750	Fairview Elementary	180
751	Fairview High School	92
754	Rau Elementary	70
768	Lambert Elementary	73
769	Lambert High School	33
TOTAL		1758

Richland County Elementary and K-12 School Districts





Law Enforcement

The Richland County Sheriff's Office, along with the Sidney Police Department, and the Fairview Police Department, provide law enforcement services throughout Richland County.

The law enforcement center in Sidney, built in 2008, houses the Richland County Sheriff's Office, 911 Dispatch, and the Richland County Jail, which can hold up to 40 inmates. A recent approval was granted for construction of an additional building for storage of equipment. The youth detention center, located at 1401 Holly Street in Sidney, Montana, partners with the Sheriff's Department and houses some individuals awaiting trial due to overcrowding at the main jail. The Sheriff's Office patrols the towns of Savage, Lambert, and Crane, covering over 1,200 miles of county roads and state highways. In 2024, the most common crimes in Richland County were assault, intimidation, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. Richland County had a total of 691 reported offenses in 2024, 616 in 2023, 805 in 2022, 755 in 2021, and 1015 in 2020.

The Sheriff's office occasionally provides additional assistance to the cities, particularly to Fairview, which typically only has 1-2 officers in the police department staff at any given time.

Fire Services: The Sidney Volunteer Fire Department, Lambert Fire District, Savage Fire Department, and Fairview Fire Department provide fire protection across Richland County. All departments are volunteer based.

The County operates an online county-wide burn permit system that approves permits for a full calendar year, allowing for notification if they need to be shut down due to wind or other weather conditions. Kale Rasmussen serves as the County Fire Marshall. Adam Smith is Chief for the Sidney Dept, Leroy Schmeier is Chief for Savage, Kenny Hill serves as Chief for Lambert, and Ryan Taylor as the Fairview Chief. Multiple satellite trucks are stationed throughout the county, including in Sidney, in coordination with the closest volunteer department. Departments are required to fill out fire reports for the State for every call they respond to, in addition to grassland fire reports to the Department of Natural Resources noting the number of acres burned.

Emergency Services: Emergency services in Richland County are provided by Sidney Health Center and Richland County Ambulance Services (RCAS). RCAS operates a total of five ambulances, two in Sidney, and one each in Fairview, Lambert, and Savage with a team of 21 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Sidney Health Center, located at 214 14th Ave SW, in Sidney, Montana, offers ground medical transport services and operates a fully staffed Emergency Room.

EMS responses across the County have consistently increased year by year, with 1038 calls in 2021, 1100 in 2022, 1155 in 2023, 1184 in 2024, and 922 in the first 9 months of 2025.

At the county level, emergency planning and management is coordinated by the local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and Disaster & Emergency Services (DES). Richland County also utilizes an emergency alert system called CodeRED, which notifies residents of emergencies via text message or email.

Disaster and Emergency Services (DES)

Richland County Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) operates on a large scale level, coordinating with Richland County Sheriff on Emergency Management items and planning processes within the state. The department is in the midst of an update to the local emergency operations plan, and anticipates it being updated in 2026. There is also a statewide Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan update ongoing. The draft version and Richland County Addendum can be found on the Richland County website, with the final version anticipated for release in 2026. Richland County has reviewed and approved of this plan.

The DES department also responds in coordination with the Sheriff's department, with two major goals in upcoming years, including building a storage equipment building and updating the emergency operations center, which is currently located in the county break room. They did work in coordination with the Sheriff's department to update search and rescue policy and equipment in 2025. In addition, the DES department responds to HazMat and other unusual situations in eastern Montana counties.



www.richland.org/multi-hazard-mitigation-plan.html

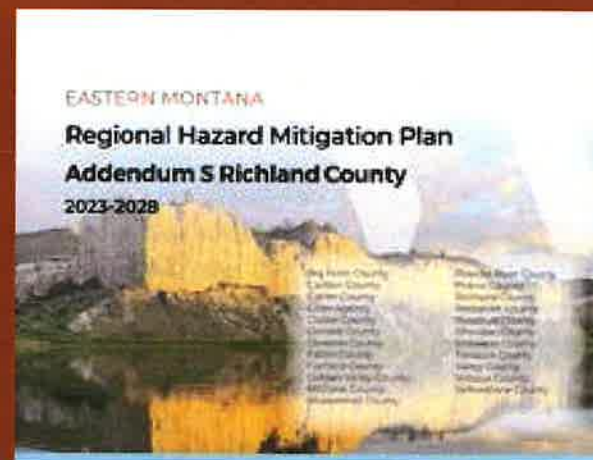
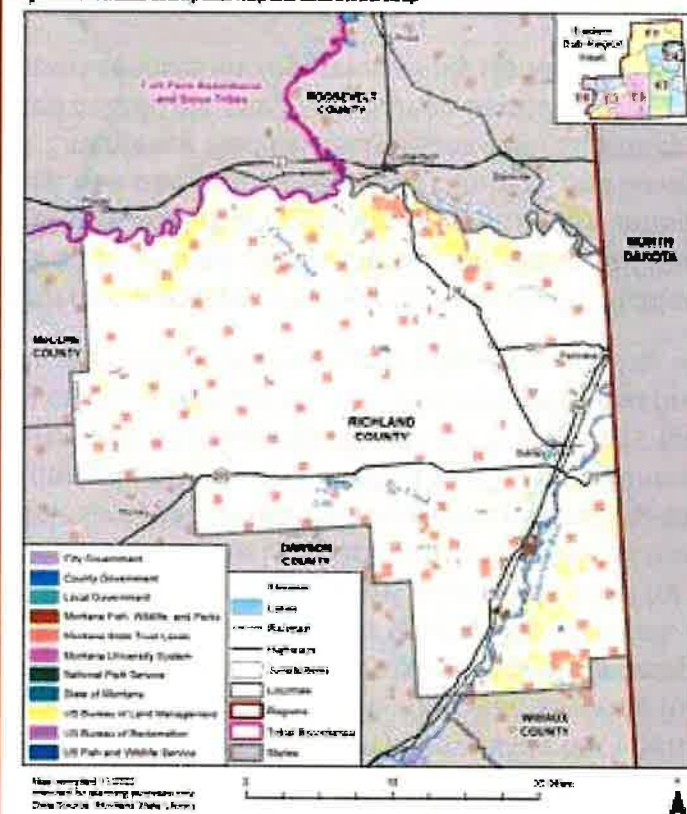


Figure S-1 Richland County Base Map and Land Stewardship



Potable Water

Richland County has two main water systems. The Richland County Valley View WUA, used for municipal water supply, and the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA). The DRWA is a larger regional system covering parts of Richland, McCone, Dawson, Garfield, and McKenzie counties, covering over 11,791 miles. DRWA mostly provides water for homes and livestock. The City of Sidney runs its own municipal system, using local groundwater and a wastewater treatment facility. Lambert has a central water distribution system, while Savage and Crane rely on individual wells.

Wastewater Facilities

Septic systems are reviewed and approved by the Richland County Health Department, Environmental Office. Septic permits are required prior to installing a septic system and are subject to inspection during the installation process. Permit acceptance may be impacted by groundwater depth, lot size, or location of floodplain boundaries. Sidney, Fairview, and Savage utilize sewer systems and have their own wastewater facilities located outside city limits.

Solid Waste Facilities

The main solid waste facility in Richland County is about 10 miles north of Sidney, MT at the Richland County Solid Waste Landfill. This landfill also serves nearby counties like Roosevelt, McKenzie (ND), and Williams (ND) counties. Rural residents can self-drop their waste at the Richland County Solid Waste Landfill, or alternatively at the household garbage canister sites in Lambert, Savage, or Elmdale. The Richland County Solid Waste Landfill is located at 13436 MT-16, in Sidney, Montana and is open Monday through Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. and the canister sites are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Richland County Community Facilities

Savage Senior Center: The Savage Senior Center is located at 178 E Main Street in Savage, Montana. It is open on Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for socializing and events.

Richland County Fairgrounds: The Richland County Fairgrounds are located at 2118 W. Holly Street in Sidney Montana. The fairgrounds feature new facilities and rental spaces for events of all sizes. The annual Richland County Fair and Rodeo takes place from July 30th to August 2nd and includes a PRCA Rodeo along with live entertainment.



Sidney Richland County Library: The Sidney-Richland County Library is located at 121 3rd Ave NW in Sidney, Montana. The library is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Richland County Zoning District - McGlynn Reservoir: Richland County has one existing zoning district, the McGlynn Reservoir, created in October of 2018, with bylaws of the Planning and Zoning Board created in June of 2018. The board consists of the County Commission, Clerk & Recorder, Public Works Director, and two Citizen members.

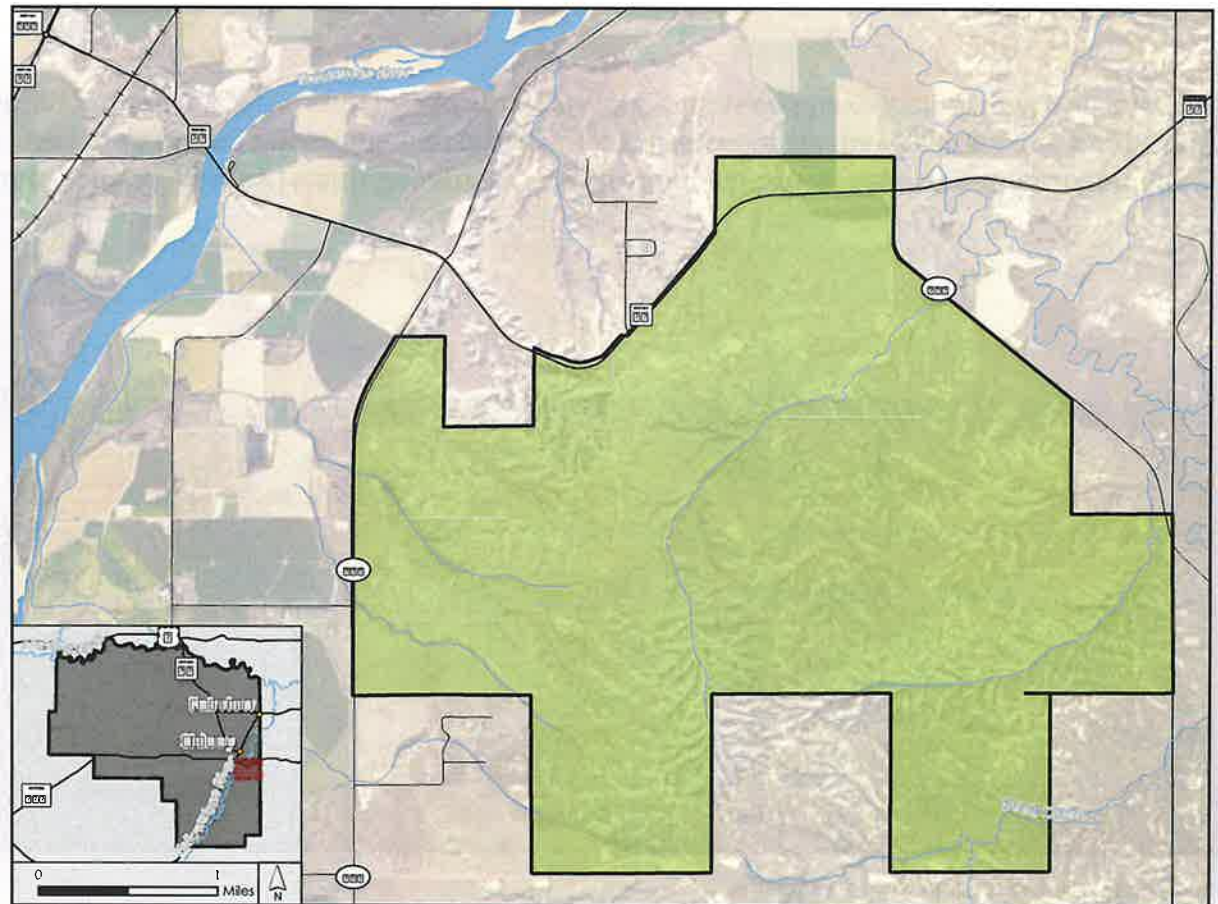


Figure A.1 McGlynn Reservoir

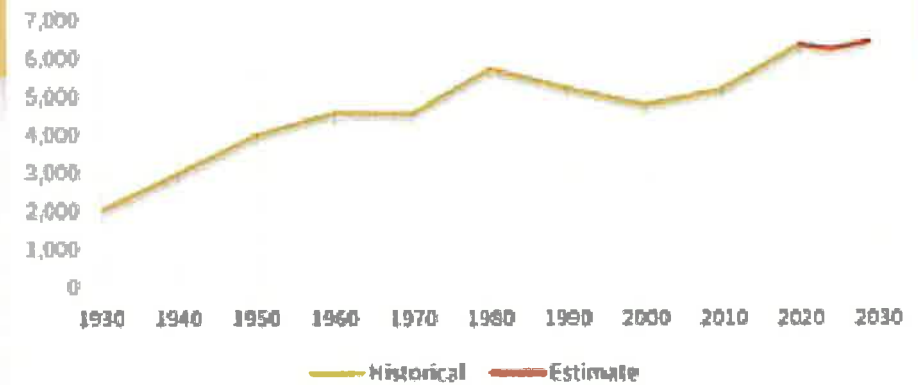
City of Sidney

Demographics

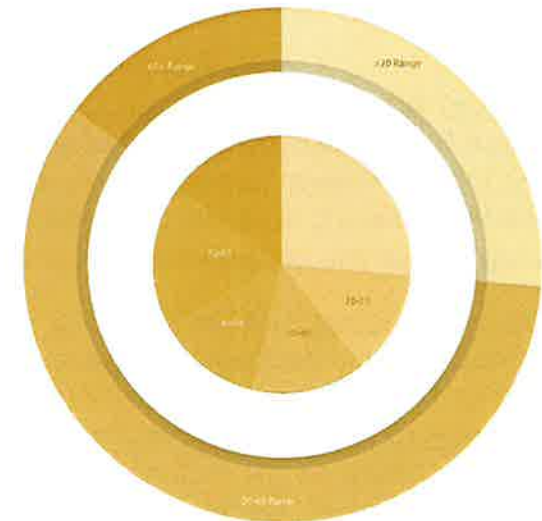
The population of Sidney, MT has been on a steady incline since 1930. In 1980, Sidney saw a spike in population from 4,543 people to 5,726 people as industry in Montana shifted more towards coal mining and oil drilling. Following a slight decrease after the initial boom through 2000, Sidney's population resumed its steady increase in population. Sidney's 2020 census saw yet another influx in population from 5,191 people to 6,346 people as trends in oil and gas production began to increase once again. As the trend of increasing oil and gas production is predicted to continue, Sidney's population is estimated to continue a steady growth pace once again hitting 7,974 people by 2029.

In 2020, 58.9% of Sidney's population was between the ages of 20 years old and 65 years old which indicates the population is not aging out. Furthermore, 13.1% of the population was in the 20-30 year old range, 14.4% of the population was in the 30-40 year old range, 13.4% of the population was in the 40-50 year old range, and 18.1% of the population was in the 50-65 year old range. Having over 50% of the population within this age range can be a positive indication for social and economic growth. In 2020, Sidney's population also showed indication that both childcare and assisted living are needed as 26.6% of the population was under the age of 20 years old and 14.5% of the population was 65 years old.

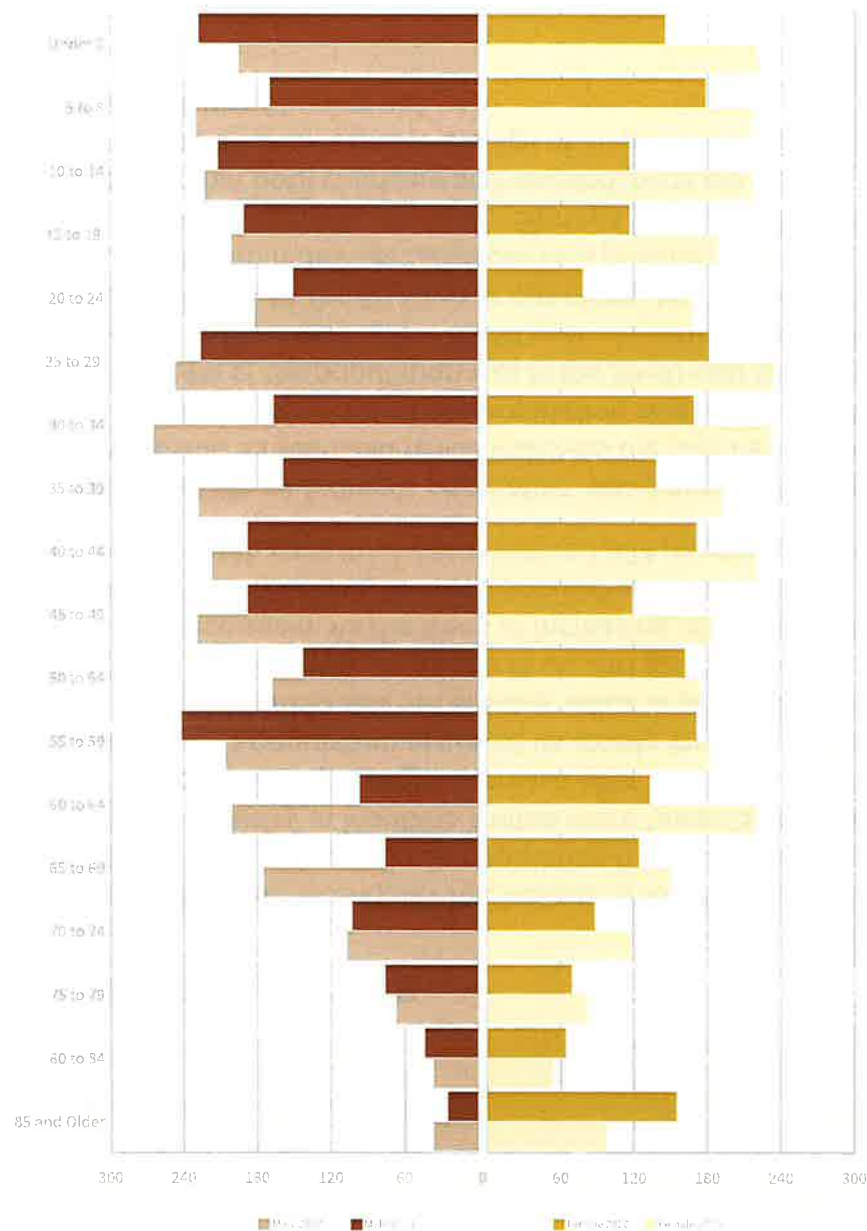
POPULATION OVER TIME
City of Sidney



POPULATION BY AGE



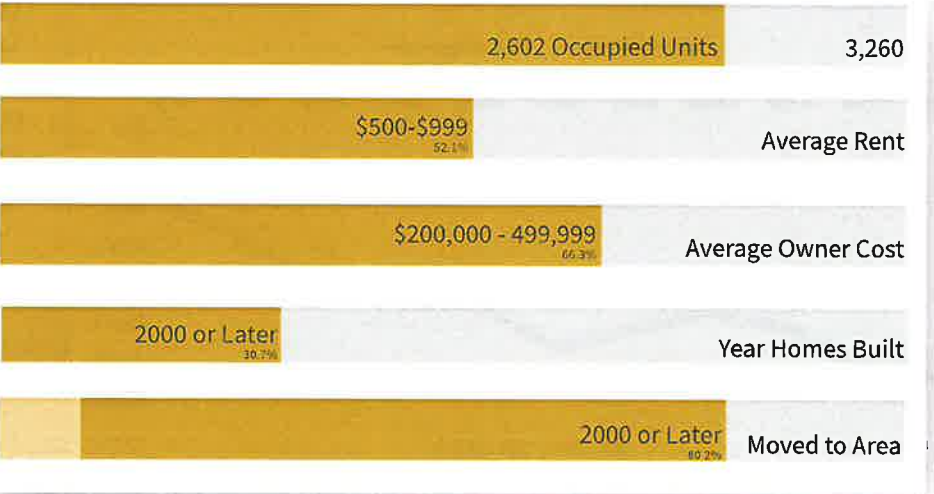
POPULATION BY AGE & SEX



Housing

As of 2023, it was estimated that Sidney had a total of 3,260 housing units. Of those 3,260 housing units, 2,602 housing units were occupied with 61.8% of the occupants holding ownership. In Sidney, the average renter (52.1% of renters) will spend between \$500 to \$999 a month on housing. If one chooses to own a housing unit, the average housing unit (66.3%) in Sidney is valued between \$200,000 to \$499,000.

In 2021 or later, 9.0% of Sidney's residents moved into the area. Since 2000, 80.2% of the occupants in moved to Sidney. Given only 30.7% of the housing units were built in the 21st century and prices of housing units are continuing to increase globally, affordability and updates for the Sidney's housing units should be a goal of the City as the as the population is project to continue to grow.

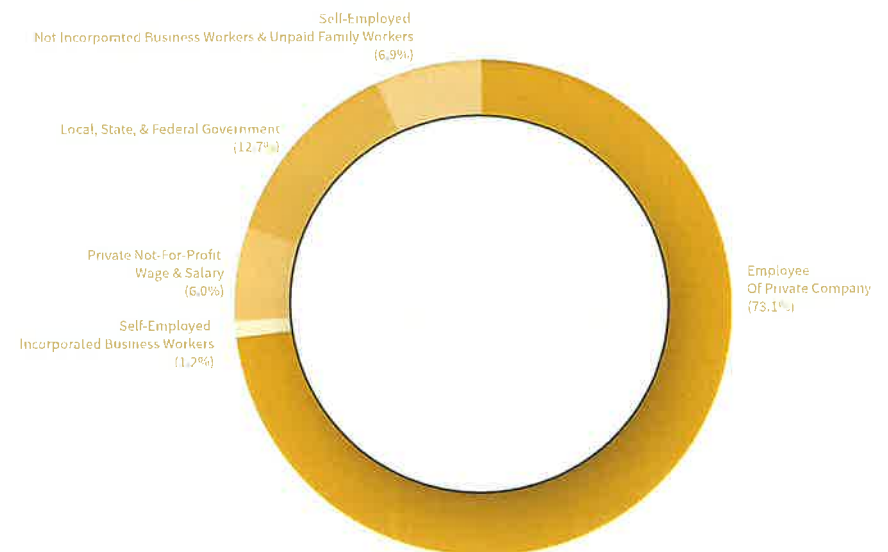


Economic Development

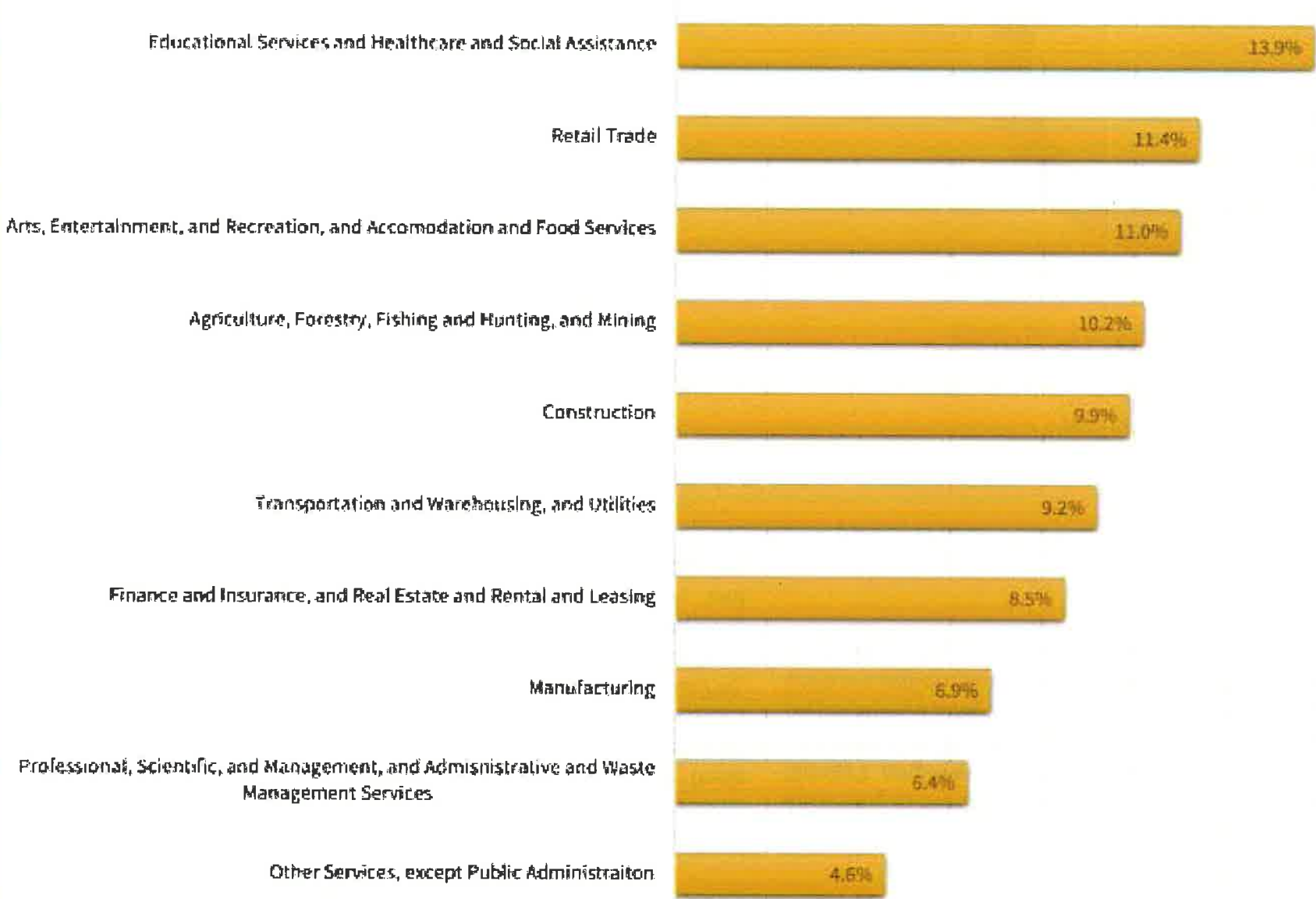
In the town of Sidney, the top three industry sectors include Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance (13.9%), Retail Trade (11.4%), and Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services (11.0%). The other 63.7% of town's industry includes Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining (10.2%), Construction (9.9%), Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (9.2%), Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (8.5%), Manufacturing (6.9%), Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services (6.4%), and all other services excluding public administration (4.6%).

According to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Sidney's employment rate is roughly 69.3%. Of the 69.3% of the population in the labor force, 73.1% are employees for a private corporation, 12.7% work for the local, state, and federal government, 6.9% are self-employed in business not incorporated, 6.0% work for a nonprofit, and 1.2% are self-employed in their own incorporation.

EMPLOYMENT BY CLASS



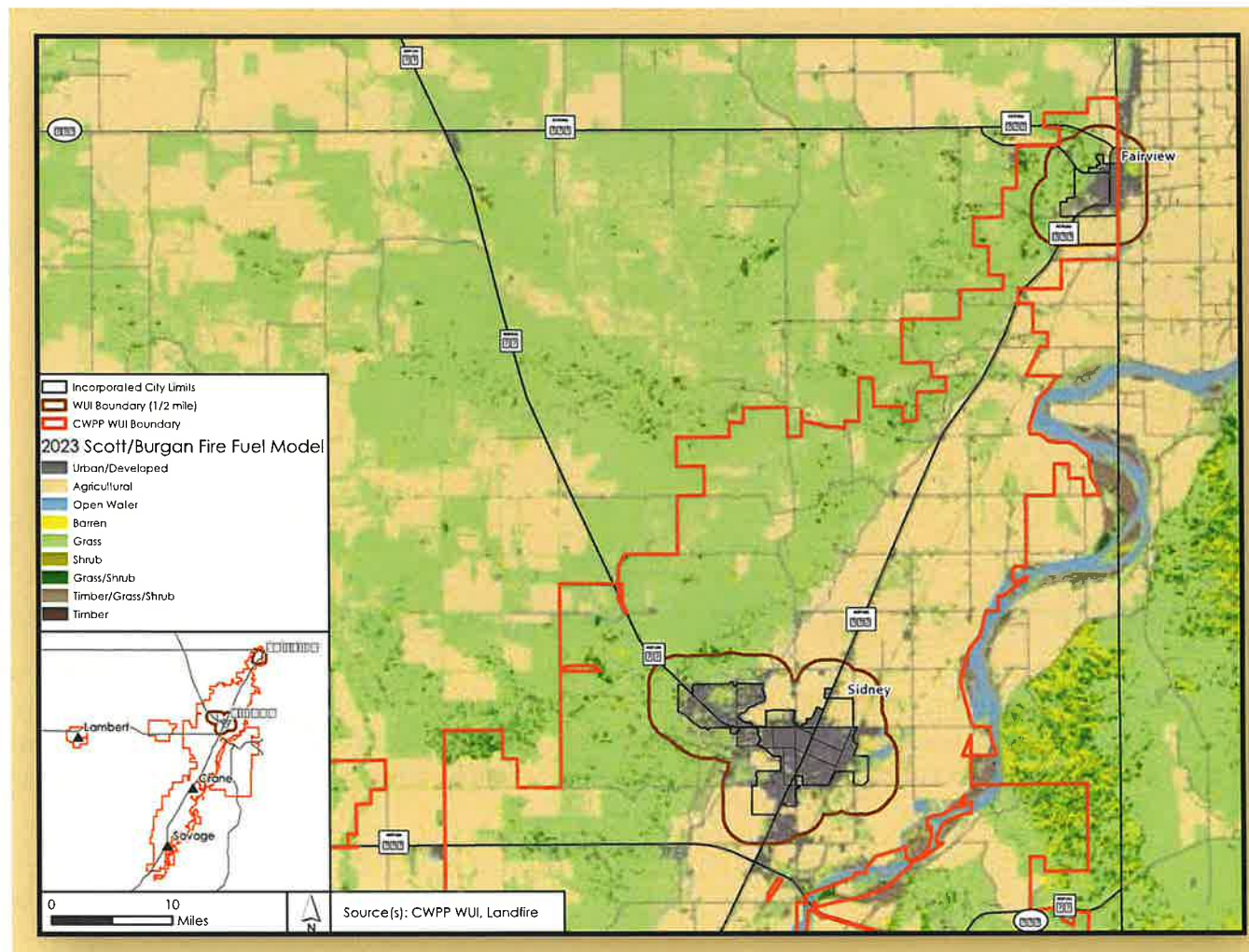
EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Natural Resources

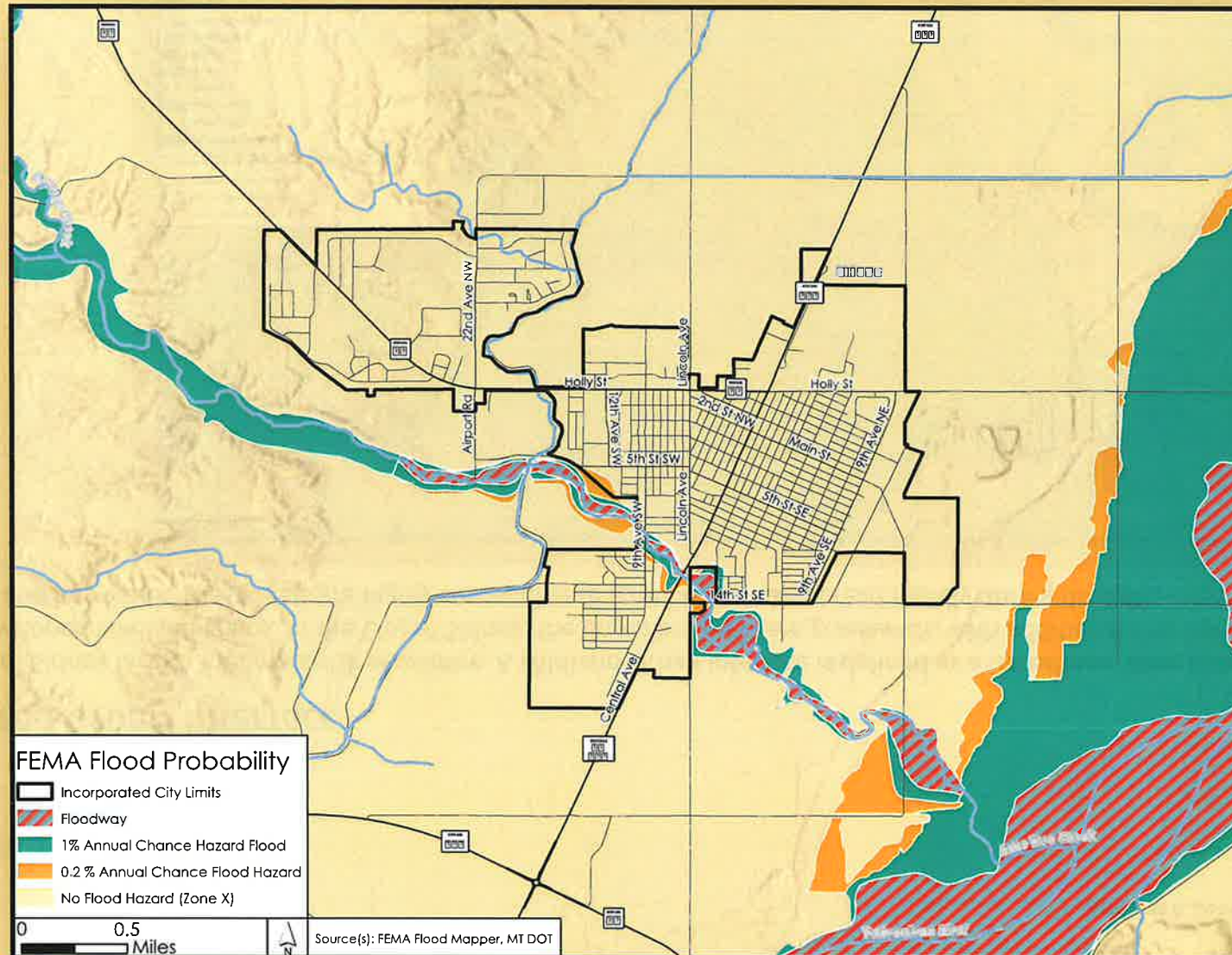
Wildland Urban Interface

The City of Sidney faces a moderate risk of wildfire. A Wildland-Urban Interface is defined as a transitional zone between residential areas and underdeveloped wildland space. In the City of Sidney, the dominant fuels are grasslands, with additional risk from agriculture residues such as crops and hay fields. These fuels are highly susceptible to ignition and can spread rapidly during drought, extreme heat, and shifting wind patterns.



Floodplain

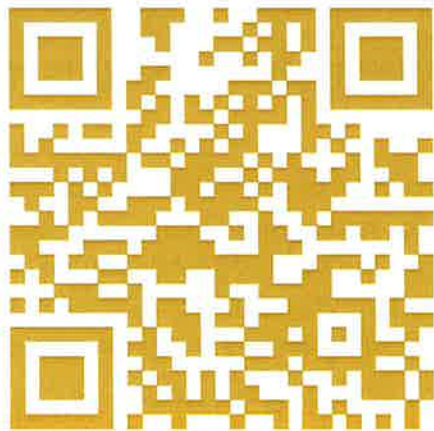
The City of Sidney Montana faces a minor risk of flooding. While no historic flood events have occurred in the area, the risk could increase with heavy rainfall. To build in the 100-year floodplain, developers must comply with the city's Flood Control Ordinance, which follows FEMA floodplain regulations. FEMA requires a permit for any construction or development within a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). The floodplain administrator for Sidney is Jeff Hintz.



Infrastructure and Community Facilities

City Government

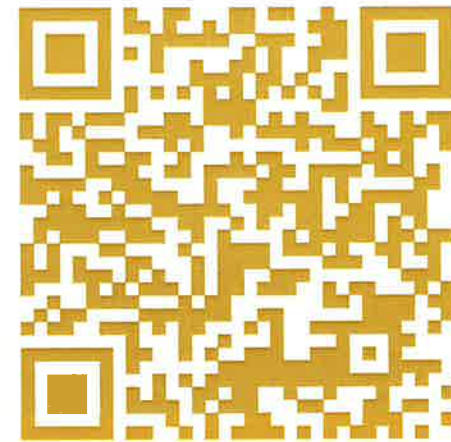
The City of Sidney is governed by Mayor Rick Norby, and a 6-member City Council, with two representatives from each ward: Ken Koffler and Jamie Larson (Ward 1), Kysa Rasmussen and Kali Buxbaum (Ward 2), and Frank DiFonzo and Tami Christensen (Ward 3). The city has several formal committees with specific public functions, including the Nuisance Committee, Parking Commission, and Zoning/ Board of Adjustments. In addition, the council occasionally organizes internal working groups-such as Budget and Finance, Water and Sewer, City Buildings and Street Lighting, Police and Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Sanitation- to address complex topics in greater detail. These committees are not open to the public and convene as needed. Sidney files a budgetary audit with the state every year which can be found here.



mtlgsb.mty.site.com

Law Enforcement

The Sidney Police Department is located at 300 12th Avenue NW, Suite 5, in Sidney, Montana, and has 13 full- time certified police officers dedicated to crime investigation and patrol duties. In 2024, the main crimes in Sidney were assault, vandalism, and larceny. The police department also handles code enforcement related activity. [Its yearly report can be found here.](#)



cityofsidneymt.com/police/page/crime-statistics

Fire Services: Sidney Volunteer Fire Department

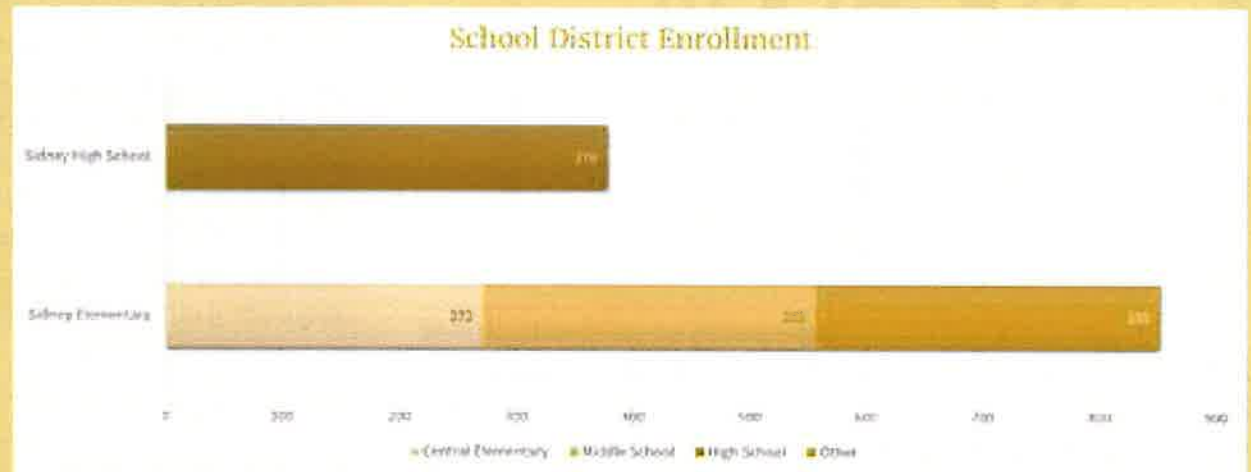
Sidney's Volunteer Fire Department has 28 members and responds to both wildland and structural fires in Sidney and the surrounding area. All personnel are volunteers, except for the Fire Marshall and Building Inspector. The Department issues burn permits and operates several tanks, brush trucks and engines, including a 2020 Freightliner M2/Pierce 1,500-gallon engine. The department maintains a list of volunteers with the City for insurance coverage. They also maintain files for each truck, noting maintenance, refurbishment, and any other notes. They maintain a fund with the City for purchase of a new truck as well as maintenance.

Medical Services: Sidney Health Center and EMS

The Sidney Health Center, located at 214 14th Ave SW, in Sidney Montana, provides a full-service hospital and extended care facility and Emergency Medical Services. There are two ambulances at the hospital.

Education

Sidney has two districts: Sidney Elementary and Sidney High School. Sidney Elementary has three elementary schools in their district, with 852 total students. Sidney Middle School has an enrollment of 285 and serves sixth through eighth grade, while Central Elementary has 272 students. Sidney High School, the second district, has a total enrollment of 378 students. Sidney has no post-secondary education institutions. However, Dawson Community College, in Glendive, is a short drive from Sidney.



Community Facilities

MonDak Heritage Center: The MonDak Heritage Center, located at 120 3rd Avenue SE, in Sidney, serves as a hub for art, history, and cultural exhibits. The center is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sidney Country Club: The Sidney Country Club is located at 2250 W Holly St, in Sidney. It is a semi-private golf course and is open Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Peterson Memorial Senior Center: The center is located at 813 3rd Street NE in Sidney. It is open on Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Boys & Girls Club of the MonDak: The Boys & Girls Club is located at 205 3rd Avenue SE in Sidney Montana.

HealthWorks: A full-service health club sponsored by the Sidney Health Center. The center provides exercise classes and personal training. Healthworks is located at 216 14th Avenue SW, in Sidney.

The Lodge at Lone Tree Creek: An assisted living facility that houses up to 30 individuals.



Water

The Sidney Water Department supplies water to residents and businesses from seven underground wells located west of the city. According to the City of Sidney's 2021 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, residents consume an average of 1,131,000 gallons of water per day. Water is currently stored in a 300,000-gallon steel reservoir, contributing to a total storage capacity of 1.5 million gallons. This reservoir is scheduled to be replaced with a 750,000-gallon reservoir in 2025-2026.

Sidney's Water Treatment Plant includes iron and manganese removal and has a treatment capacity of 5,400 gallons per minute (gpm). Water is distributed by the city and by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA), which purchases up to 500 gpm from the city. Current projects include the Highway 200W Water Main Extension in partnership with DWRA and park upgrades, with the overall goal of improving water pressure and system hydraulics.

Stormwater

The City of Sidney's stormwater system is designed to collect, convey, and manage runoff from rainfall and snowmelt to prevent flooding and protect water quality. The system includes a network of storm sewers, culverts, ditches, and outfalls that direct water safely away from streets, homes, and businesses. Like many communities, Sidney's system faces ongoing challenges with aging infrastructure and increasing demands due to growth.

A recent stormwater study identified several areas of concern throughout Sidney, including the Meadows Subdivision, where localized flooding and drainage issues have been documented. Construction to address the problems in the Meadows area is already underway, representing the City's first step in a broader strategy to modernize its stormwater infrastructure. The city's Capital Improvement Plan lays out a prioritization structure for additional improvements to the system. Recognizing the need for a sustainable funding source, the City has begun the process of establishing a dedicated storm sewer account. While Sidney does not currently have a specific tax levy tied to stormwater improvements, this new account would provide a mechanism to maintain, upgrade, and expand the system over time.

In addition, Sidney has planned for a potential lagoon expansion project that could increase treatment capacity for both sanitary and stormwater flows. However, this expansion would only be necessary if the community experiences a substantial and sustained population increase.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities

The City of Sidney's Water Treatment Facility includes multi-cell wastewater lagoons southeast of town, along with UV treatment for discharge. The plant has a total capacity of 5,400 gpm. All planned updates are contained within the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

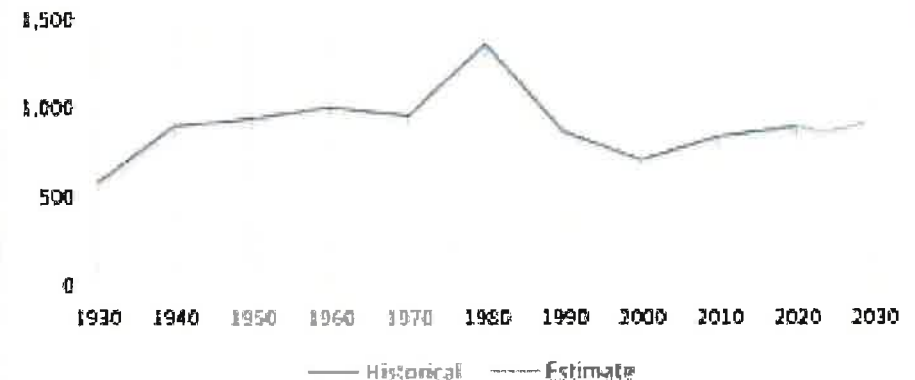
Town of Fairview

Demographics

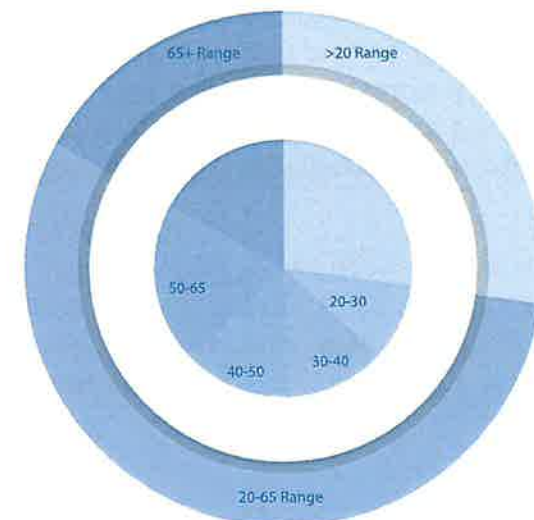
The population of Fairview remained within a range of 900 people to 1,000 people from 1940 to 1970. Fairview's population saw a quick increase in 1980 as Montana focused more on the industry of coal mining, oil drilling and agriculture. The population then quickly declined through 2000 to 709 people as the industry focus in Montana began to sway towards service-based careers driving individuals out of rural areas and into more populated regions. Fairview's population started to steadily increase through the 2000's as oil and gas production began to rise once again. As trends of Fairview's population tended to fluctuate with the fluctuation of gas and oil production historically, the population of Fairview saw a steady increase from 2010 to 2020 as the oil boom occurred within this timeframe. Fairview's population reached 896 in 2020 but is projected to reach 915 by 2030.

In 2020, 56% of Fairview's population was between the ages of 20 years old and 65 years old. Furthermore, 9.8% of the population was in the 20-30 year old range, 12.5% of the population was in the 30-40 year old range, 13.4% of the population was in the 40-50 year old range, and 20.3% of the population was in the 50-65 year old range. Having over 50% of the population within this age range is a promising indicator of social and economic growth potential. Indications of need for childcare and senior citizen care are also present as 27.2% of the population is under the age of 20 years old and 16.7% of the population is over the age of 65 years old.

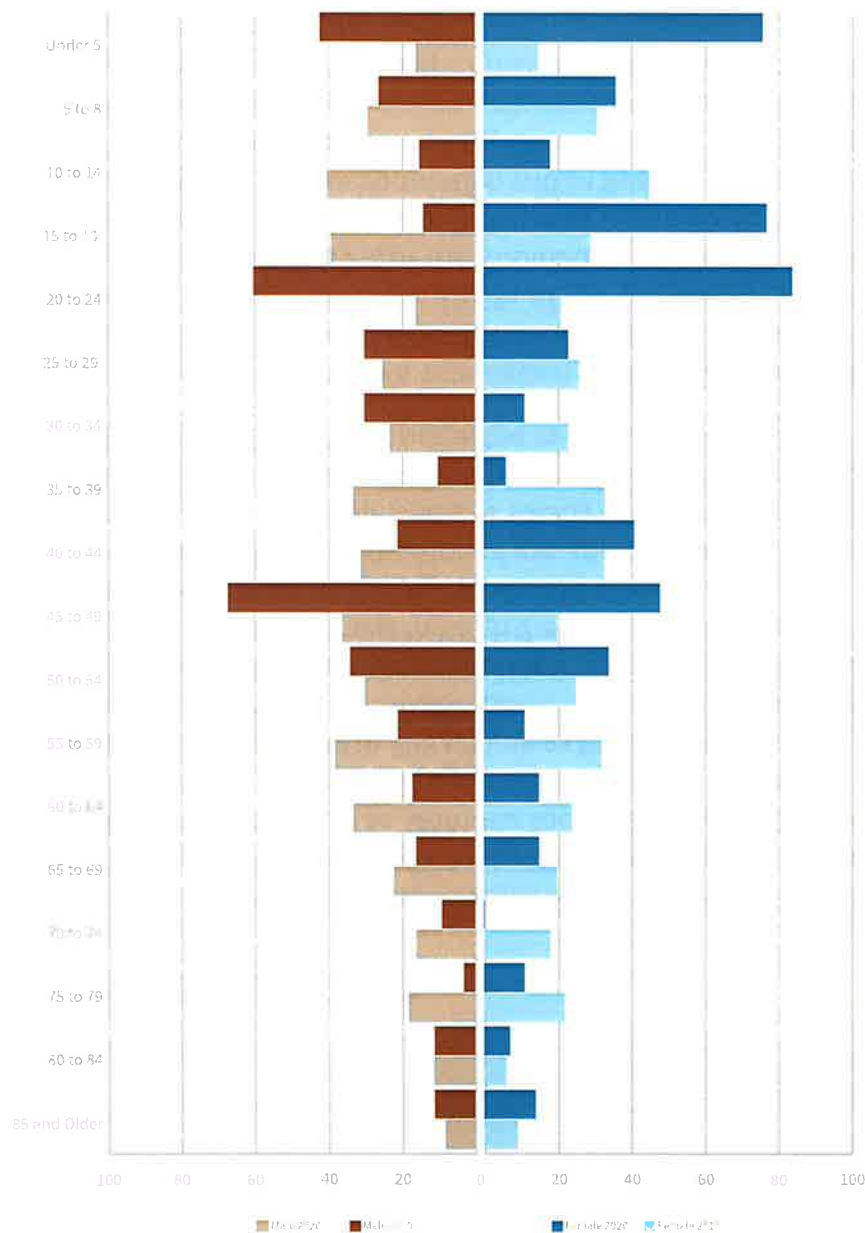
POPULATION OVER TIME
Town of Fairview



POPULATION BY AGE



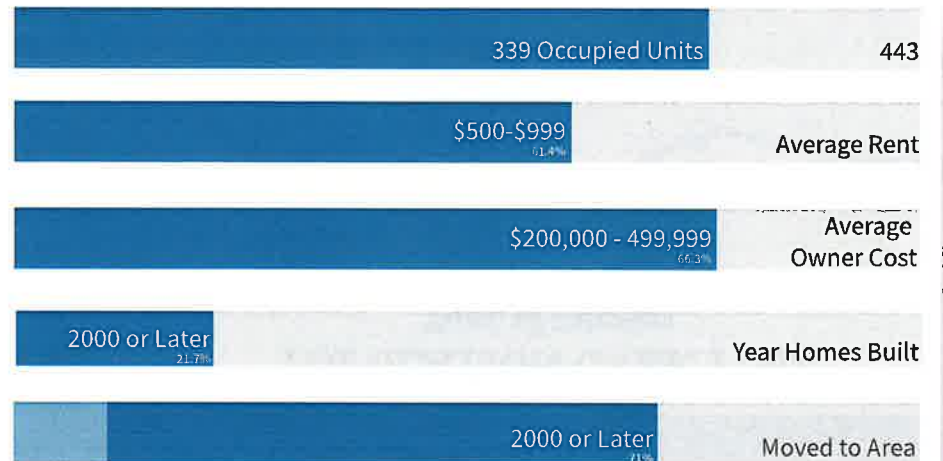
POPULATION BY AGE & SEX



Housing

As of 2023, Fairview reported a total of 443 housing units with 339 units being occupied and 104 units being vacant. Of the 339 occupied units, 16.8% are rental units. The average month rate for rent (61.4% of units) ranged from \$500 to \$900. The average value owner-occupied units (77.4% of units) is \$316,981.

Demographics show that 71.0% of occupants moved into their housing units in 2000 or later; of the 71% of occupants, 10.3% of occupants moved into their units in 2021 or later. With much of the population choosing to own their housing units and only 21.7% of housing units were built in 2000 or later, it is important to keep all housing units in compliance and update while focusing new development on the demographic needs of those moving into the area.

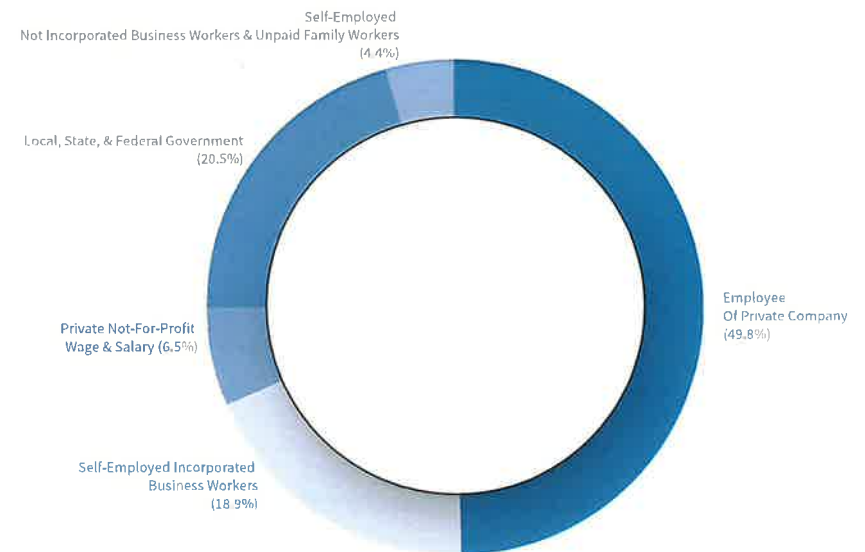


Economic Development

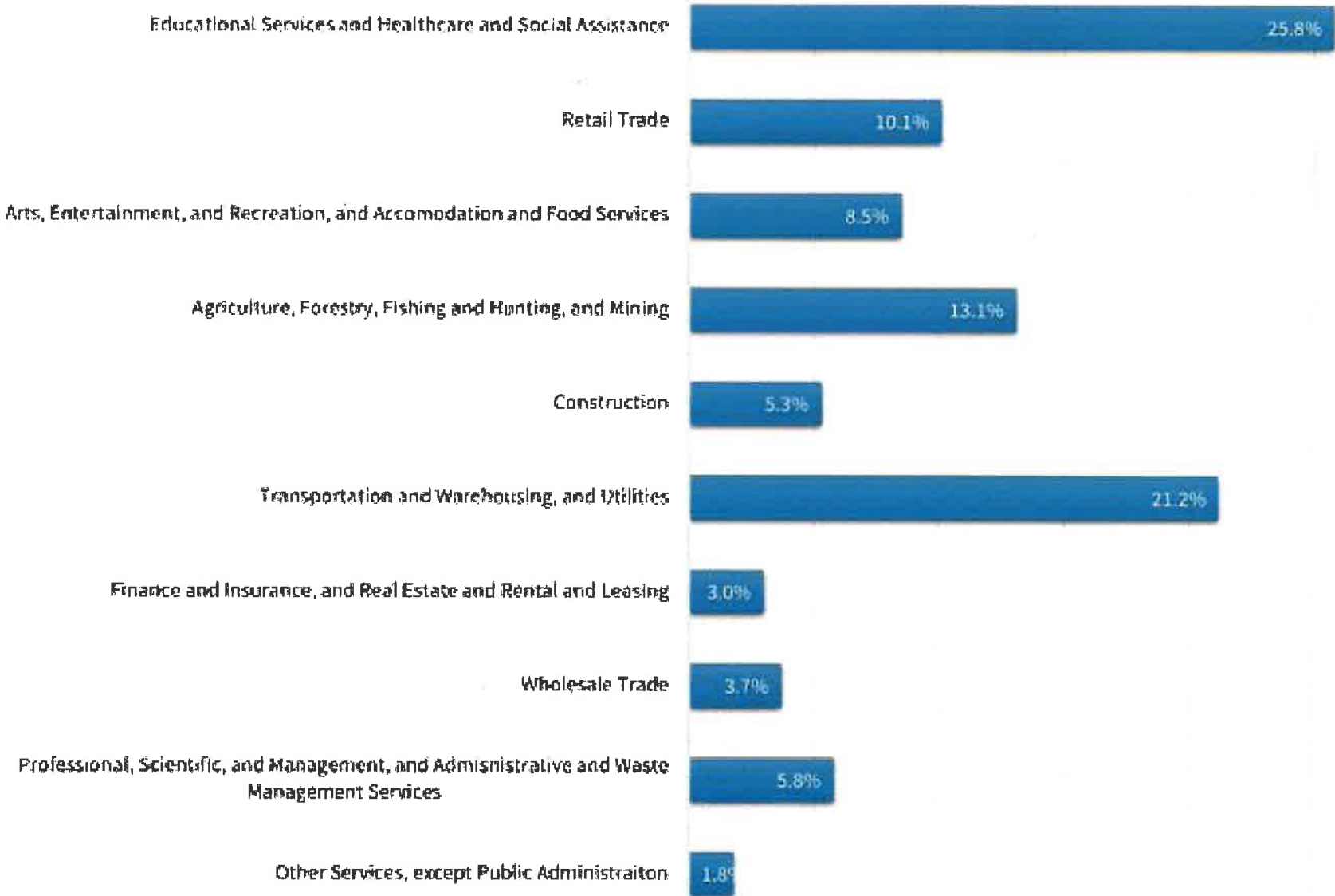
The top two industries in the town of Fairview include Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance (25.8%) and Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (21.2%). The other 53.0% of the industry is made up of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining (13.1%), Retail Trade (10.1%), Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services (8.5%), Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services (5.8%), Construction (5.3%), Wholesale Trades (3.7%), Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (3.0%), and other services excluding public administration (1.8%).

The employment rate in Fairview sits roughly at 57.0% according to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate. Of that 57.0% of population, 49.8% of employees work for a private company, 20.5% work for local, state, or federal government, 18.9% are self-employed through their own incorporated business, 6.5% work for a nonprofit, and 4.4% are self-employed through their business that is not incorporated.

EMPLOYMENT BY CLASS



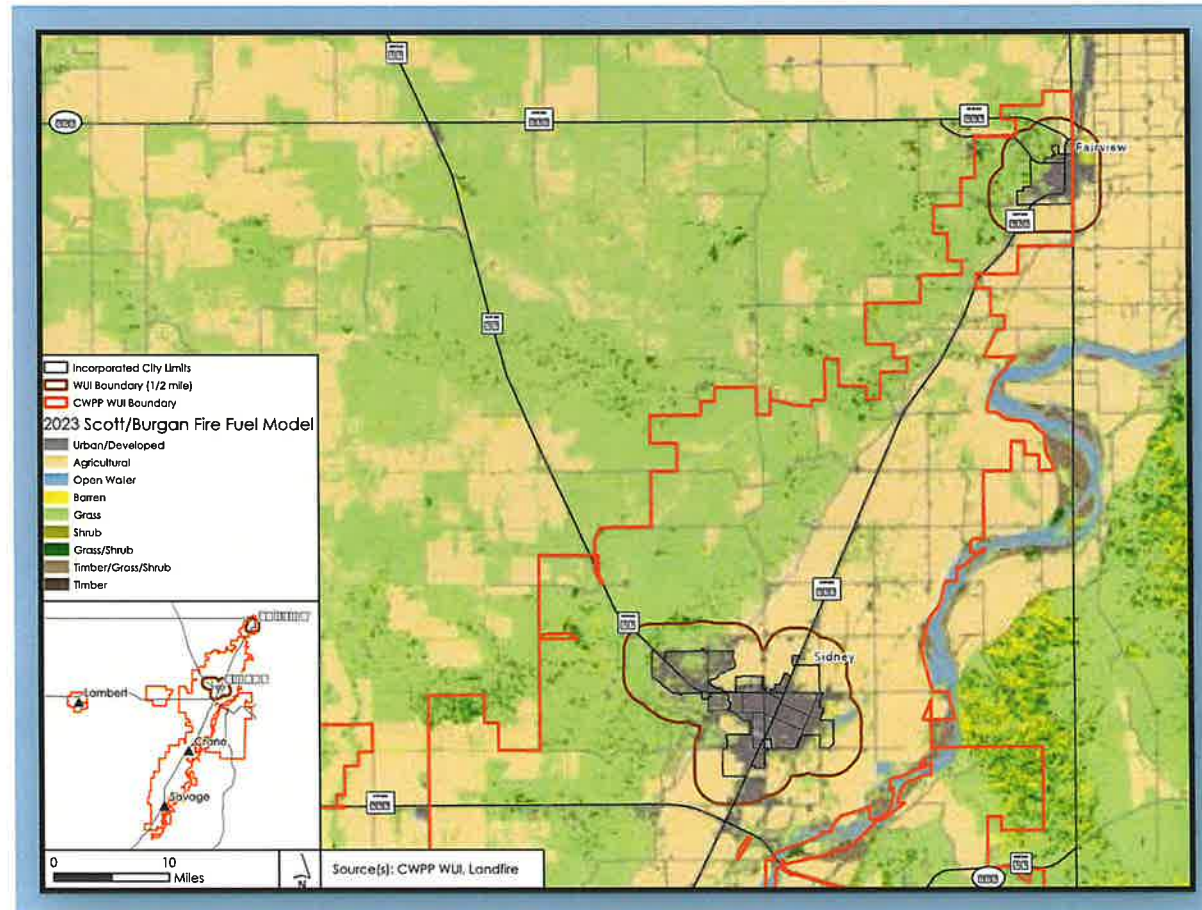
EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Natural Resources

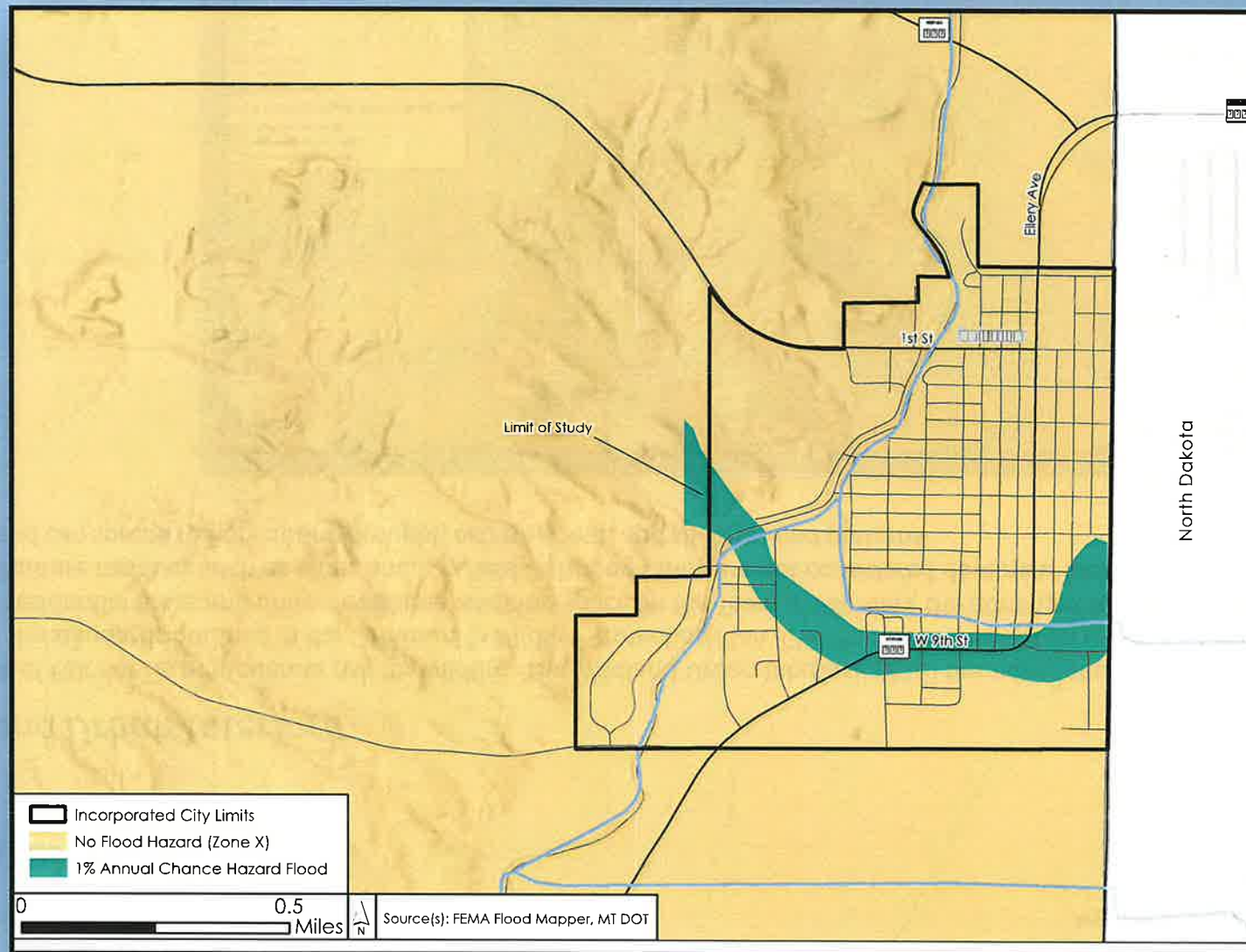
Wildland Urban Interface

The Town of Fairview is at moderate risk for wildfire. The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary shown on the map is defined using parcel data and the standards outlined in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). A Wildland-Urban Interface is defined as a transitional zone between residential areas and underdeveloped wildland space. In the Town of Fairview, the dominant fuels are grasslands, with additional risk from agriculture residues such as crops and hay fields, although they are not considered dominant fuels. These fuels are highly susceptible to ignition and can spread rapidly during drought, extreme heat, and shifting wind patterns



Floodplain

Floodplain regulations in Fairview follow the Richland County Hazard Management Regulations, which follow FEMA and Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) guidelines. Permits are required for building in a 100-year floodplain or Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).



Infrastructure and Community Facilities

City Government

The Fairview City Government has four full time employees, including a clerk and recorder and an assistant clerk and recorder, as well as one public works director. The Town Council meets monthly and handles all budgetary, human resources, and business related matters in its meetings. It operate with several council members serving on several committees, including engineering and public works, hiring, and a committee for updates to the zoning and subdivision code.



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Law Enforcement

The Fairview Police Department is located at 318 S Central Avenue, in Fairview Montana. The department is led by a police chief who oversees operations and has 3 full-time sworn in officers. In 2024, the most common crimes in Fairview were assault, larceny, and theft.

Fire Services

The Fairview Volunteer Fire Department enjoys a newer firehall, built in 2018. The department has 20 volunteers in the department. The Fairview Volunteer Fire Department, located at 412 South Central Avenue in Fairview, operates nine trucks, including a new 2021 tanker, 2024 Kenworth/ Pierce engine, a mini pumper, and multiple brush trucks, including a 2024 brush truck. There are several satellite units on surrounding farms as well. The Fire Hall was built in 2017, and there are no needed updates at this time. The department is working toward communications updates, particularly concerning ongoing updates in North Dakota. North Dakota is moving to broadband communication, and part of the District area is in North Dakota, necessitating communication channels with neighboring North Dakota departments. In some areas, radio and cell service can be spotty, necessitating updates to communication channels. The Fire Department budget comes mainly from donations, as the Town does not provide a budget but does pay for Hall utilities. The County also provides a budget, and Fairview does work in coordination with County departments.

Medical Services

The MonDak Family Clinic, a partner clinic of Sidney Health Center, is located at 304 Ellery Avenue in Fairview. The clinic provides services for adult care, minor trauma, pediatrics, geriatrics, and acute and chronic illnesses.

Potable Water

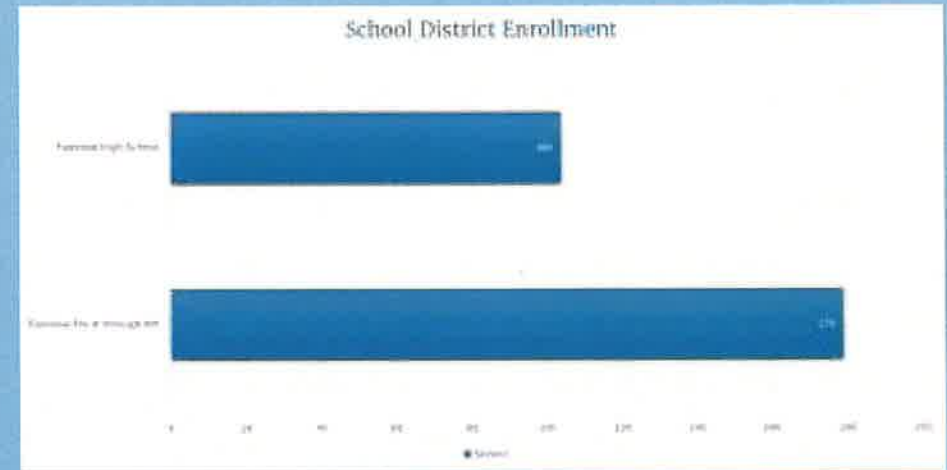
In the Town of Fairview, water is sourced from two ground water wells located in Sharbono Park. The water storage tank is 300,000 gallons and is treated for manganese, iron, lead and copper through polyphosphate injection. Residents use an average of 147 gallons of water per day per resident. The Town is working towards replacing the existing water storage tank in the coming years.

Wastewater Treatment

The Town of Fairview uses 3 treatment lagoon cells with one in North Dakota, and the other two in Montana. Effluent is discharged from the second Montana cell to a drainage ditch that conveys flows to the Yellowstone River. The Wastewater Preliminary Engineering Report is in process of being updated and is scheduled to be complete in 2026.

Education

Fairview has two districts, Fairview Elementary School District and Fairview High School District. Fairview Elementary School District serves Pre-K through 8th grade and has an enrollment of 179 and two schools in the district, Fairview 6-8 and Fairview School. Fairview High School District has one school, Fairview High School, serving 9th through 12th grade and has an enrollment of 104 students. Enrollment has decreased in the last 5 years, which could be due to the overall decrease in population.



Community Facilities

Fairview Senior Center: The Fairview Senior Center is located at 217 5th Street W in Fairview. The new center is renovated and provides a commercial kitchen and a large dining room. It is open during the week from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.





Appendix B. Resource List

The following pages provide resources that have helped shape the Richland County, Sidney, Fairview Growth Policy.

You can also find an interactive list here: www.richland.org/planner/growth2045



Richland County

Richland Economic Development Corporation CEDS



Richland Economic Development Corporation Diversification Strategy



Richland County Quality of Life Assessment 2023-2028



Richland County Subdivision Regulations



McGlynn Reservoir Resolution and Map



Richland Economic Development Corporation CEDS



Planning Board Bylaws



City of Sidney

[Sidney Medical Center Community Assessment 2023-2028](#)



[Sidney Zoning Ordinance](#)



[Sidney Subdivision Regulations](#)



Town of Fairview

[Fairview Zoning Ordinance](#)



[Fairview Subdivision Regulations](#)



