

DOWNTOWN SIDNEY

Master Plan 2025



DRAFT 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SIDNEY CITY COUNCIL

- Mayor Rick Norby
- Tami Christensen
- Kali Buxbaum
- Jamie Larson
- Joe Kauffman
- Kysa Rassmussen
- Frank DiFonzo

RICHLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

- Duane Mitchell
- Loren Young
- Shane Gorder

STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS

Special recognition is due to Sidney's highly engaged community for its strong support and enthusiastic participation throughout this planning process. The many residents from within the City of Sidney and across Richland County, along with local business owners and visitors, who generously shared their time, insight, and local knowledge are too numerous to name individually. Their contributions were invaluable and played a critical role in shaping the Downtown Master Plan.

CITY OF SIDNEY KEY CONTRIBUTING STAFF

- Jeff Hintz, Public Works Director
- Jessica Chamberlin, City Clerk/Treasurer
- Stephanie Ridl, Parks Superintendent

FUNDING

The Sidney Downtown Master Plan was made possible through funding support from the Montana Main Street Program and the Community Development Block Grant program administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. These funding sources provided the resources necessary to support meaningful public engagement, technical analysis, and the development of a clear, community-driven vision for downtown Sidney. Implementation of the plan is guided by the Montana Main Street Program's Four-Point Approach, ensuring that future efforts are coordinated, strategic, and grounded in long-term economic vitality.



CONTENTS

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5
 - Purpose of the Master Plan 6
 - Summary of Community Priorities..... 7
- INTRODUCTION 8
- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT 9
- EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS 12
- BUILT ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS 17
 - Block 1 19
 - Block 2 21
 - Block 3 23
 - Block 4 26
 - Block 5 28
 - Block 6 30
 - Block 7 32
 - Block 8 34
 - Block 9 36
 - Context Area 39
 - Land Use and Zoning Assessment 41
 - Infrastructure and Utilities Overview 42
 - Building Stock and Ownership Patterns 43
 - Circulation and Connectivity Conditions..... 45
 - Physical Opportunities and Constraints 49
 - Community Assets and Concerns 50

- VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES 51
 - Vision Statement 51
 - Mission Statement 51
 - Core Values..... 51
- ECONOMIC VITALITY 52
 - ERecommendations..... 53
- IDENTITY, PLACEMAKING, AND EXPERIENCE 59
 - Recommendations..... 60
- PUBLIC REALM AND STREETSCAPE 67
 - Recommendations..... 70
- MOBILITY AND ACCESS 72
 - Recommendations..... 74
- ORGANIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP 77
 - Recommendations..... 78



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Sidney remains the civic and commercial anchor of the Lower Yellowstone Valley, serving both its 6,200 residents and a wider rural region that relies on Sidney for essential services, retail, dining, and entertainment. The downtown area includes approximately 75 buildings, a mix of civic institutions, small businesses, and long-standing anchors such as Meadowlark Brewing, Yellowstone Mercantile, and the Centre Theatre. These assets give downtown a solid foundation, yet the community recognizes clear opportunities to improve its appearance, vitality, and sense of identity.

This Master Plan provides Sidney with a realistic and community-driven roadmap for reinvestment. It responds directly to the priorities expressed through public engagement, drawing on 288 survey responses, three focus groups, a design charrette, and a public workshop. Residents were honest about downtown's weaknesses, often describing it as "old," "tired," or "rundown," but they were also clear about what they want the area to become. Their input shaped every chapter and recommendation.

THROUGHOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, SEVERAL CENTRAL THEMES EMERGED:

- Residents want filling vacant storefronts to be a top priority, with 79% identifying it as the most needed improvement.
- Building façades scored a 2.6 out of 5 on average, and 65% of survey respondents said they need significant upgrades.
- Public space improvements ranked highly, including more greenery (64%), outdoor seating (46%), and outdoor dining (44%).
- There is consistent demand for additional retail and specialty shops (78%), more dining options (65%), and more entertainment options (63%). However, further stakeholder research revealed that workforce and rental space availability create roadblocks for these tenants.

These findings reveal a downtown with strong activity patterns but visible gaps. Sidewalks range from well-maintained to deteriorated. Several intersections lack clear markings or ADA facilities. Highway 16 carries heavy freight traffic, with Truck Route 488 recording up to 5,000 vehicles per day, creating safety challenges for pedestrians and undermining the public realm. At the same time, four long-term vacant lots break the continuity of key blocks.

The Master Plan builds a practical path forward. It outlines steps to strengthen local businesses, encourage reinvestment, upgrade the public realm, improve walkability, and reinforce Sidney's rural identity. The plan is structured to help the City and its partners implement strategies at a manageable pace, supported by a realistic understanding of local resources and staffing. Ultimately, the plan sets the stage for a stronger, more inviting, and more active downtown that serves the community today and for decades to come.



PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Downtown Sidney Master Plan was created to guide the community through a coordinated and achievable revitalization effort. Downtown plays a critical role both locally and regionally, and the plan provides a structured approach to protect that role while encouraging new investment and activity. It establishes a clear vision for the downtown environment and offers a set of strategies that align community priorities, public investment, private development, and organizational support.

Sidney's downtown faces familiar rural challenges. Buildings vary widely in age and condition. Several upper floors remain unused, many for decades. Vacancies and deferred maintenance create perceptions of decline. Walkability is limited by inconsistent sidewalk conditions and high-volume truck traffic. Despite these issues, residents continue to rely on the area every day. More than 68% of survey respondents visit downtown at least a few times per week, and 37% visit daily or almost daily. This level of daily use underscores the importance of strategic reinvestment.

THE PLAN'S PURPOSE CENTERS ON SEVERAL KEY FUNCTIONS:

- It defines a shared vision for how downtown should look, feel, and perform.
- It organizes improvements into short-, medium-, and long-term actions that reflect community capacity.
- It integrates land use, design, mobility, economic development, and public space strategies into a single, cohesive document.
- It supports the City and its partners in pursuing funding by identifying clear projects and realistic cost ranges.
- It establishes a practical structure for collaboration and shared accountability among public, private, and nonprofit partners.

The Master Plan is not a set of hypothetical ideas. It is a working document that provides the steps necessary to improve building conditions, activate vacant lots, strengthen local businesses, and enhance the public realm. Its purpose is to guide decisions, coordinate local efforts, and ensure that future projects align with the identity and goals of the community.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Community input shaped every element of this Master Plan. The survey, focus groups, public workshop, and visioning boards revealed clear and consistent preferences across demographic groups. Residents value Sidney's historic buildings, rural setting, and small-town identity, but they want a downtown that feels more vibrant, welcoming, and well-maintained.

A striking pattern emerged in the survey results. When asked to describe downtown today in one word, the most common responses were “old,” “boring,” “tired,” and “empty.” When asked to describe their vision for downtown ten years from now, residents chose words such as “vibrant,” “thriving,” “welcoming,” and “revitalized.” This contrast reflects the community's strong desire for improvement and its optimism about what downtown can become.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK CONSISTENTLY CENTERED ON SEVERAL PRIORITIES:

- Reinvestment in buildings. Nearly half of respondents rated building conditions as “adequate,” while 32% rated them “poor.” Residents identified façade improvements and filling storefronts as the most important steps the City and its partners can take to strengthen downtown.
- More things to do. Retail and specialty shops led the business demand at 78%, followed by dining at 65% and entertainment options at 63%. Residents also mentioned family-friendly activities, indoor recreation, and late-night offerings.
- A better public realm. More greenery, seating, outdoor dining, shade, and accessible sidewalks were mentioned repeatedly. Board participants also emphasized the need for street trees, quality public art, benches, and improved lighting.
- A stronger sense of identity. More than 60% of survey respondents identified Sidney's historic character as a core element of downtown's identity, and many emphasized that future improvements must feel authentic, not overly themed or decorative.

Safety and accessibility appeared throughout engagement. Specific intersections were marked as unsafe during the workshop, including East Main and 2nd Avenue NE, and 3rd Avenue NW and East Holly Street. Residents expressed concerns about faded striping, missing crosswalks, long crossing distances, and insufficient ADA facilities.

Participants also highlighted organizational needs. They want better coordination among the City, Chamber, Richland Economic Development, and civic groups. Many praised existing events but said the community needs more consistent programming, better communication, and a shared sense of responsibility for downtown improvements. Several noted that more than 100 nonprofit and civic organizations are active in the area, and many are willing to contribute if given clear roles.

Taken together, these priorities form a strong and unified message. Sidney wants a downtown that looks better, performs better, and reflects the values of the community. Residents want reinvestment that respects the district's heritage while creating new opportunities for businesses, families, and visitors. This Master Plan is built around those priorities and provides a clear path to achieve them.

INTRODUCTION

Sidney serves as county seat of Richland County and functions as the primary service hub for the Lower Yellowstone Valley, drawing residents from eastern Montana and western North Dakota. Positioned north of the Yellowstone River along U.S. Highway 16, the city blends small-town character with regional influence.

With a population of just over 6,200, Sidney's economy is driven by agriculture, energy production, and supporting industries. **Downtown serves as the civic and cultural center of the community, home to host city and county offices, banking institutions, retail, dining, and entertainment.** Its compact main street core, shaped by early 20th-century development, is complemented by infill development and auto-oriented businesses.

The Sidney Downtown Master Plan was made possible through funding support from the Montana Department of Commerce's Montana Main Street Program and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). These programs invest in strengthening local economies, revitalizing commercial districts, and enhancing quality of life, priorities that directly align with Sidney's vision for a vibrant, resilient downtown. Their partnership allowed the community to complete a comprehensive planning process grounded in local input, economic analysis, and long-term strategic thinking.

Implementation of the Master Plan will follow the Montana Main Street Program's established four-point approach:

1. Organization

2. Promotion

3. Design

4. Economic Vitality

This framework provides a proven structure for guiding local leadership, fostering community partnerships, enhancing downtown aesthetics, and supporting long-term economic growth. By applying this approach, Sidney can move forward with coordinated, achievable steps that translate the community's priorities into real, visible improvements.



HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Downtown Sidney's historical growth has been tied to its role as a trade, service, and civic center for the Lower Yellowstone Valley. Agriculture laid the initial economic foundation, boosted by rail connections and irrigation systems that supported a thriving commercial core. Civic landmarks such as the Richland County Courthouse, MonDak Heritage Center and Art Gallery, and the Sidney-Richland County Library established downtown as both the seat of the county government and a central gathering place for the community.

In the mid-20th century, oil and gas development brought new investment and diversified Sidney's economy, shaping the mix of services, retail, and infrastructure downtown. The community experienced two major "booms" tied to these industries—first in the mid-1970s with the Red River Formation and later between 2011 and 2014 with the Elm Creek Coulee Formation. Each period left a visible mark on the local economy and downtown activity, driving waves of growth followed by quieter years of adjustment .

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement for the Downtown Sidney Master Plan was conducted through multiple opportunities for residents, business owners, property owners, and community stakeholders to share their ideas and priorities. These activities were designed to reach a broad cross section of the community and ensure that the plan reflected local needs and aspirations.

OUTREACH COMPLETED

FOCUS GROUPS

Three focus groups with a combined total of 17 participants, representing businesses, property owners, long-term residents, and community organizations.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Two sessions with community leaders and stakeholders to identify challenges, opportunities, and priorities for revitalization.

PUBLIC VISIONING WORKSHOP

Hosted in Meadowlark Public House on August 12, 2025, interactive boards gathered feedback on building design, public spaces, streetscapes, and pedestrian/bicycle improvements. Approximately 20 members of the public participated.

DOWNTOWN VISIONING SURVEY

Launched online on August 4, 2025, and open through August 25, 2025, with 288 responses. Survey participation was promoted through the city, area businesses, stakeholders, steering committee, local organizations, and direct outreach.

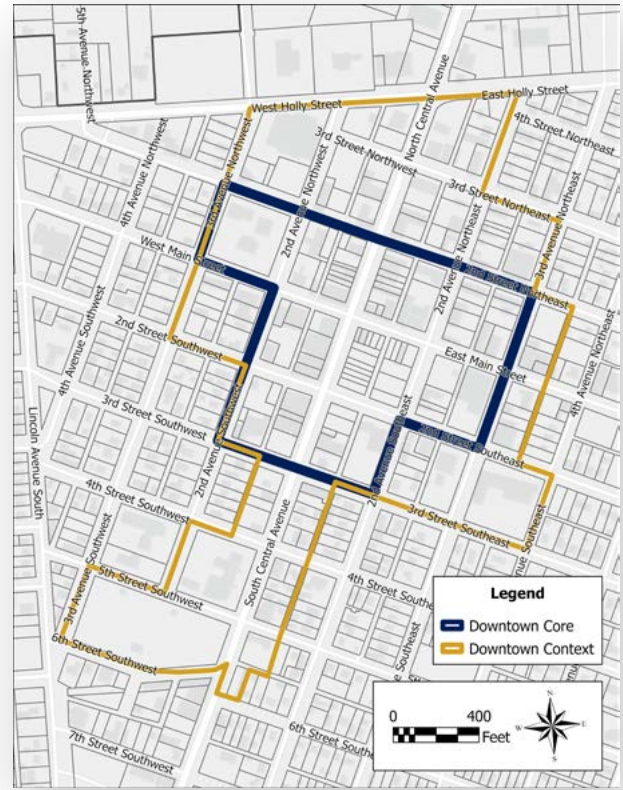
DESIGN CHARRETTE

Hosted at City Hall on September 26, 2025, dozens of downtown stakeholders and members of the public participated in five different charrette stations, covering infill development, building façade rehabilitation, interior uses of underutilized buildings, streetscape standards, and plaza designs of the lot next to City Hall.

EMAIL UPDATES

Regular project updates have been emailed to interested community members, keeping them informed about engagement opportunities and project milestones.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ENGAGEMENT



"When downtown thrives, the whole community thrives. Investing in downtown Sidney is an investment in ourselves."

Rick Norby
Mayor of Sidney

STRONGER DOWNTOWN IDENTITY

- The community wants a cohesive look and feel through building design, signage, and coordinated streetscape features.
- 70% supported festivals and public events.
- 64% supported unique local businesses.
- 60% supported historic buildings and character as anchors of identity.

EXPANDED DINING, RETAIL, AND EVENTS

- There is strong demand for more restaurants, cafés, specialty shops, and consistent year-round programming.
- 78% supported more retail and specialty shops.
- 65% supported more dining and cafés.
- 63% supported more entertainment and nightlife.
- Events are also a priority, with 70% supporting more festivals, 69% supporting concerts or performances, and 57% supporting farmers' markets.

PUBLIC SPACE ENHANCEMENTS

- Residents want more greenery, seating, gathering areas, and pedestrian-friendly amenities.
- 64% supported more greenery and landscaping.
- 46% supported more seating and public gathering areas.
- 44% supported more outdoor dining areas.
- Comments highlighted a need for better sidewalks, cleanliness, and more places for families to gather.

ADDRESSING VACANCY AND BUILDING CONDITION

- Reinvestment in vacant and underutilized properties was a top concern.
- 79% identified filling vacant storefronts as a priority.
- 65% identified improving building façades.
- Open-ended responses often mentioned Village Square Mall and other key vacant properties as redevelopment priorities.

IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY AND SAFETY

- Respondents support better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, safer intersections, and calming traffic on Main Street.
- While 10% selected bike lanes or bike parking as a top three priority, comments indicate broader concern about walkability, parking, and traffic safety.
- Many respondents emphasized improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and ADA accessibility as key safety issues.



2024 Sunset Festival | Photo Credit (PC): Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture

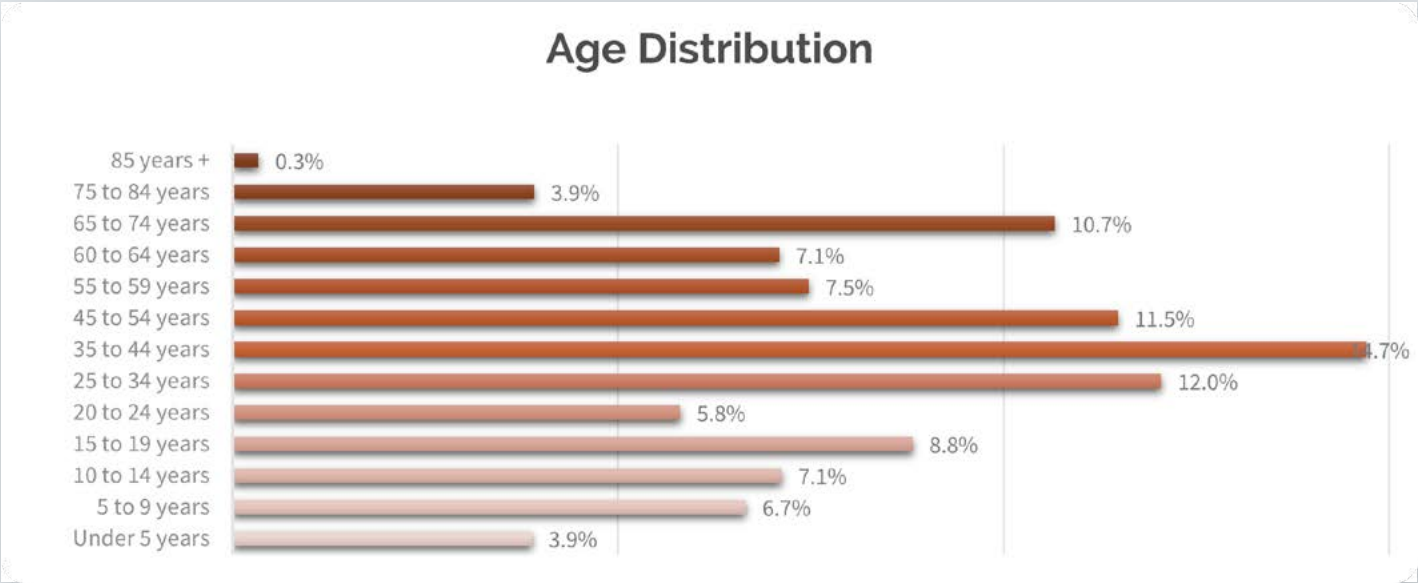
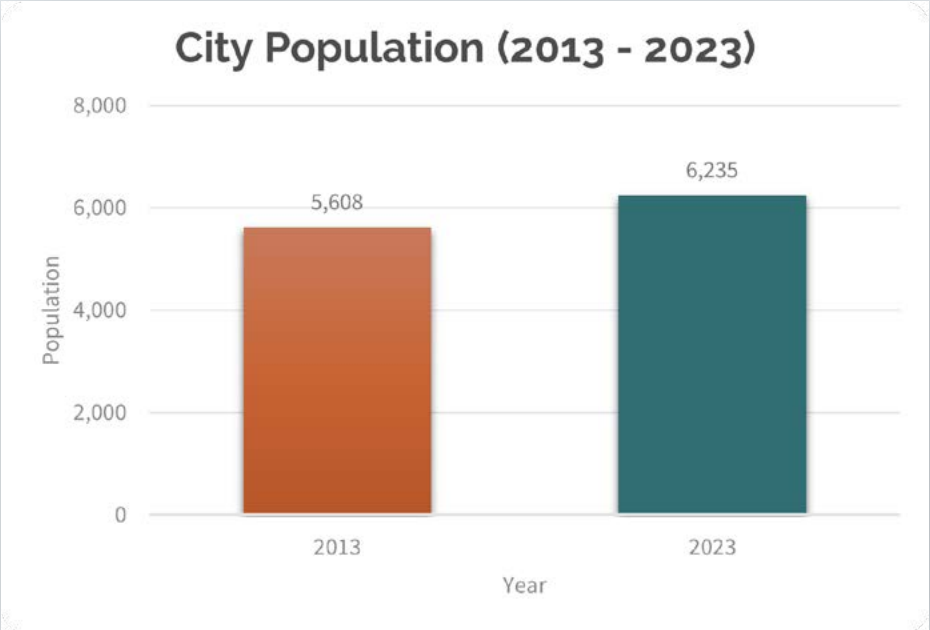
EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

Downtown Sidney serves as the civic and commercial center of Richland County, characterized by its historic buildings, local businesses, and key public institutions. Its traditional main street layout focused around Central Avenue and Main Street, blends legacy storefronts such as the Cheerio Lounge with auto-oriented infill development. While the area retains strong anchors and a walkable core, gaps in the urban fabric , underutilized used parcels, and infrastructure inconsistencies present both challenges and opportunities for revitalization.

DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS

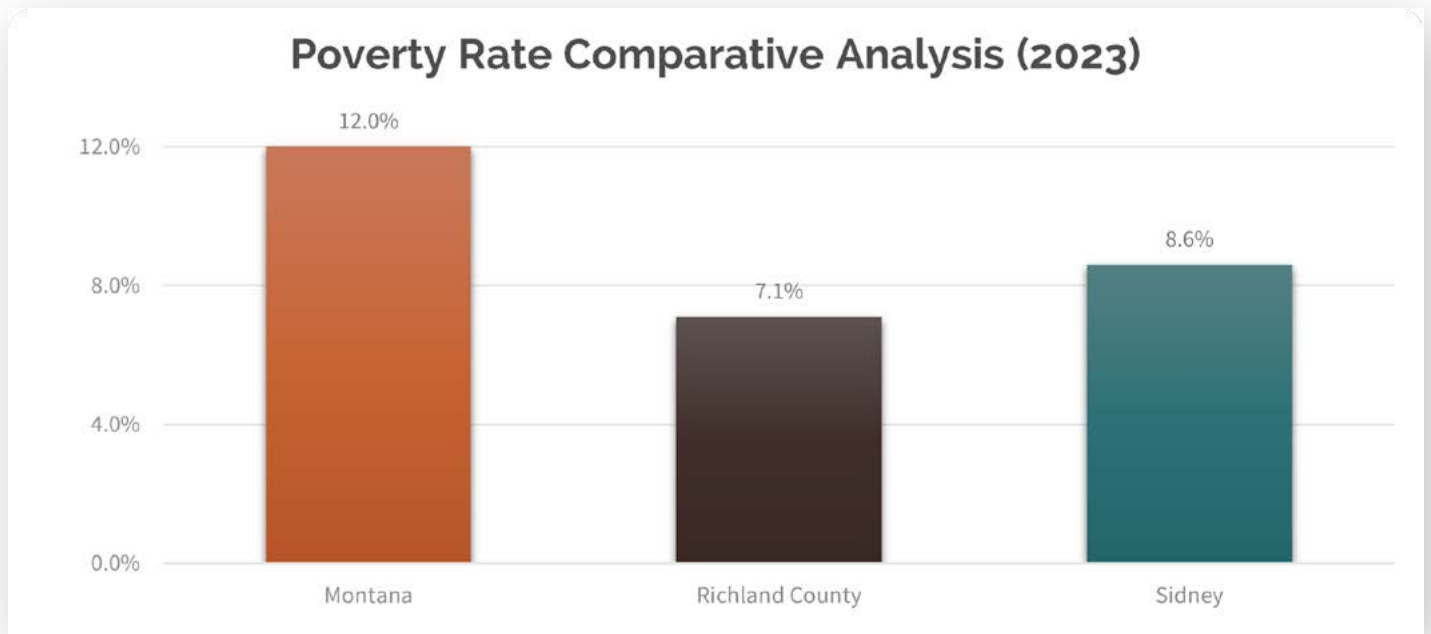
Sidney’s population grew from 5,608 in 2013 to 6,235 in 2023, showing an increase of approximately 11.2% over the last ten years (ACS).

The city’s gender distribution is balanced, with 47.57% male and 52.43% female residents. The median age is 38.9 years, around the same as the national median. The distribution of the population in Sidney among age cohorts is depicted below.

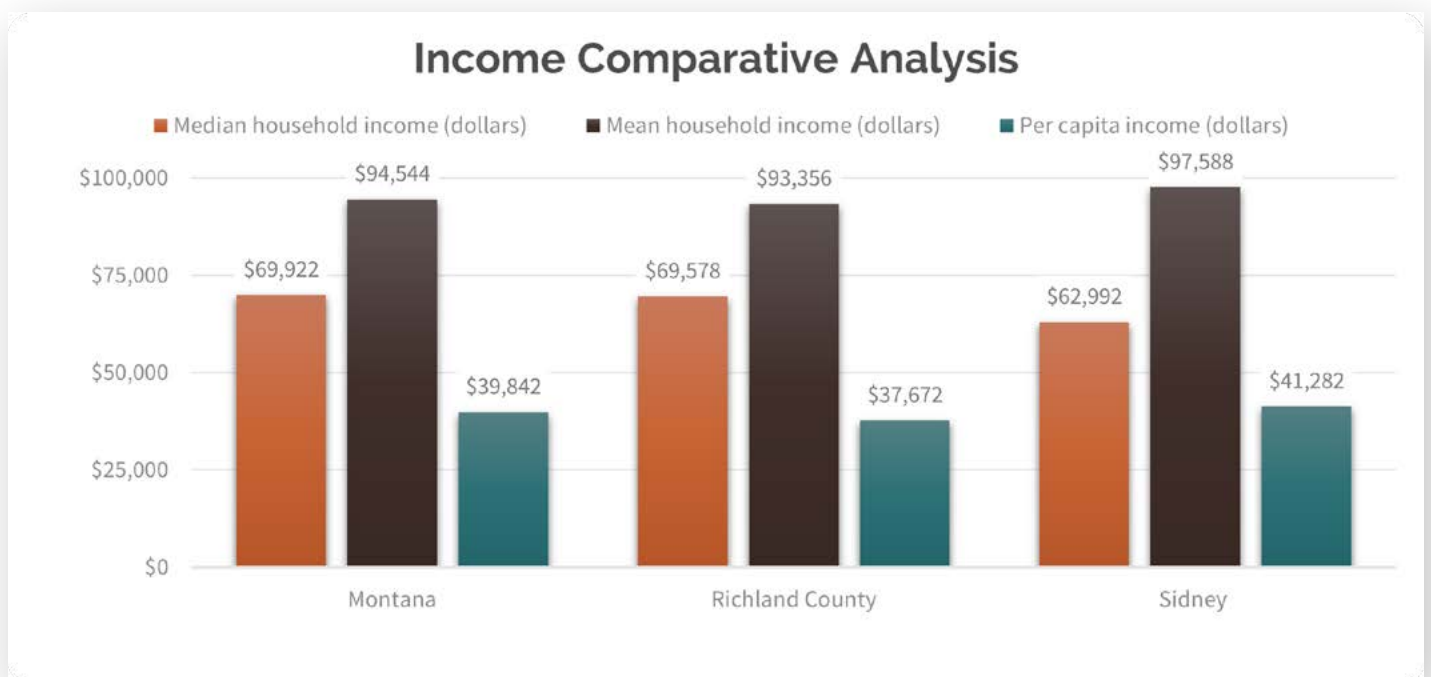


SOCIOECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

Sidney reports a poverty rate of 8.6%, slightly above Richland County's 7.1% yet significantly lower than Montana's statewide rate of 12.0%. This suggests that while Sidney's poverty rate is slightly higher than Richland County's, it remains well below the state average, indicating relatively stable local economic conditions within the broader regional context.

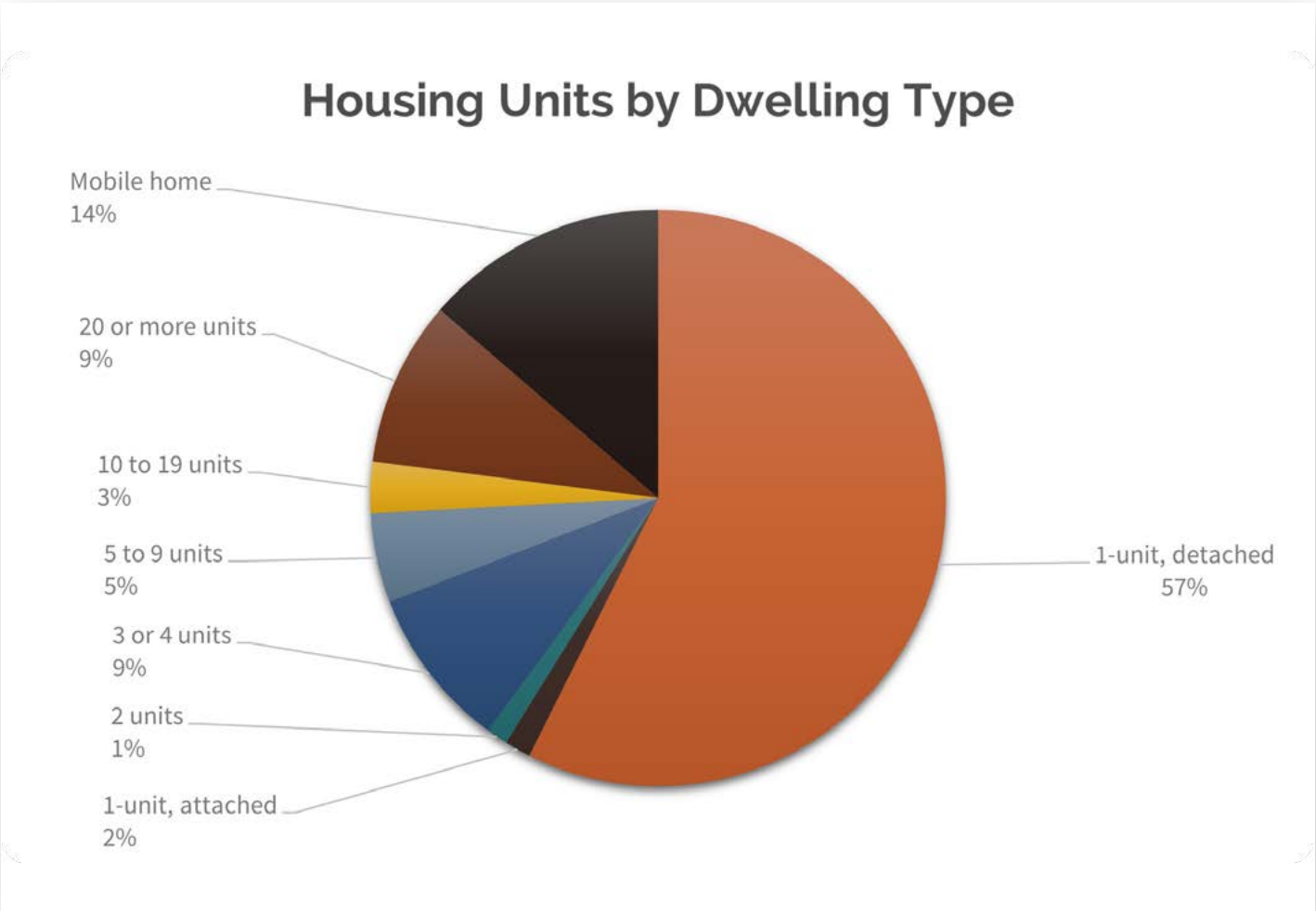


Sidney's median household income is \$62,992, which is comparable to both the Montana state median of \$69,922 and Richland County's median of \$69,578. The city reports a mean household income of \$97,588, exceeding the state average of \$94,544 and Richland County's mean of \$93,356. In terms of per capita income, Sidney also leads at \$41,282, compared to \$39,842 in Montana and \$37,672 in Richland County. These figures reflect Sidney's strong performance on average and individual earnings within the region.



HOUSING SNAPSHOT

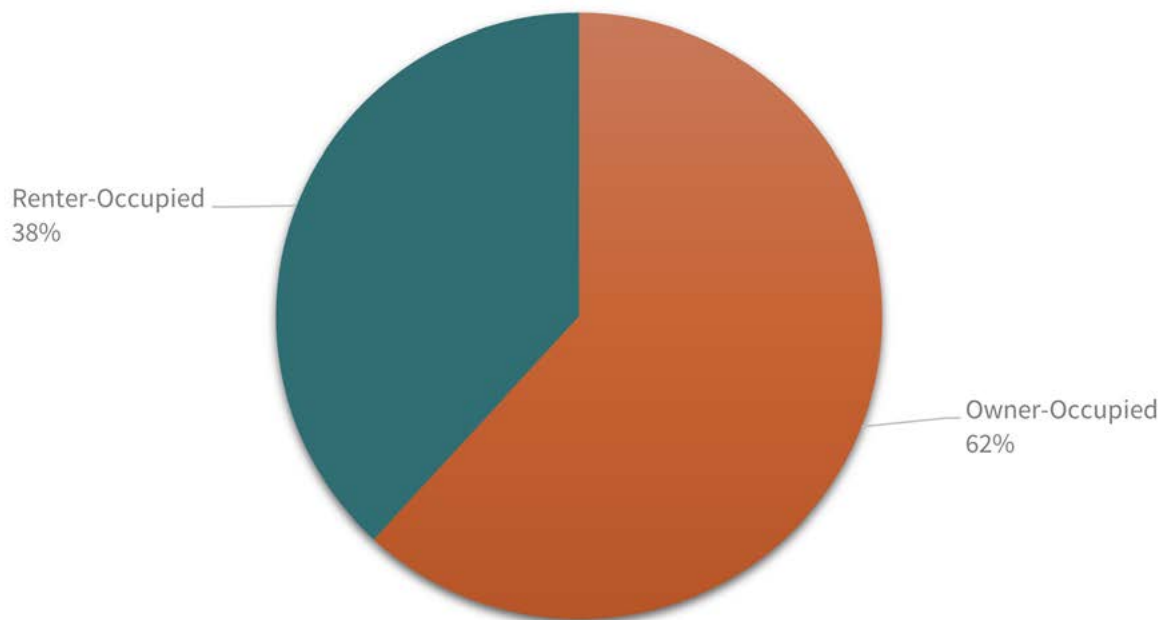
Sidney’s housing stock is predominantly composed of single-family detached homes, which make up 57.39% of the total supply. The remaining share includes a mix of other housing types, showing a relatively diverse residential typology.



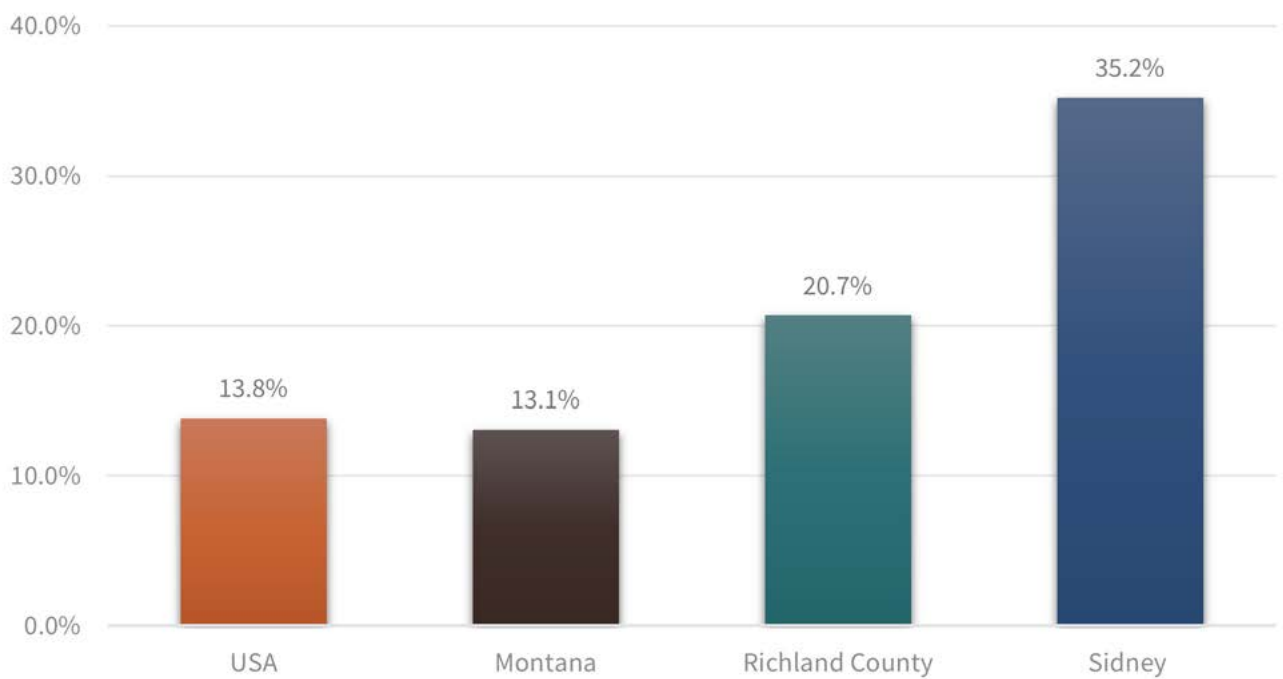
The majority of Sidney’s housing is owner-occupied at 61.8%, while the remaining 38.2% is renter-occupied. This shows a stable ownership base complemented by a substantial rental market, reflecting a balanced mix of long-term residents and housing flexibility.

Compared to national, state, and county levels, Sidney stands out with 35.2% of households classified as cost-burdened, meaning that 35.2% of households in the city spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. In contrast, 20.7% of households in Richland County, 13.1% in Montana, and 13.8% in the country are considered cost-burdened.

Owner Occupied Vs. Renter Occupied



Cost Burdened Households



BUILT ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

Downtown Sidney combines active blocks and underutilized parcels, anchored by strong civic and historic assets but challenged by gaps in the urban fabric, surface parking, and vehicle-oriented patterns. Opportunities exist for infill, adaptive reuse, and improved pedestrian connections.

A detailed analysis of Sidney's existing downtown conditions is critical to formulating recommendations that are grounded in place-based realities. This section presents the findings of a comprehensive analysis conducted in mid-2025, which utilized a combination of open-source data and field surveys. The study area focuses on the core of downtown Sidney, including Central Avenue, Main Street, and 2nd Street SE/SW. The existing conditions analysis is categorized as follows, recognizing that each element influences and overlaps with the others:

Built Environment

Urban Design

Infrastructure

**Pedestrian and
Vehicular Circulation**

**Real Estate and
End-User Mixture**

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Predominantly low-rise, 1–2 story structures along Central Avenue and Main Street.
- Anchors include the Richland County Courthouse, Centre Theatre, and Yellowstone Mercantile.
- Side-street parcels are often set back or oriented toward parking.
- Surface lots near Holly Street and Main Street interrupt continuity.
- Residential areas within a block could support mixed-use transitions.

URBAN DESIGN

- Strongest design elements cluster near civic sites; elsewhere, treatment is inconsistent.
- Sidewalks vary in width and accessibility.
- No gateway features at key entry points.
- Decorative lighting, benches, and planters are concentrated near the Courthouse and Theatre but not carried throughout downtown.
- Basic signage; no cohesive branding or gateways.
- Green space is underutilized; there is no central plaza.
- Limited seating, shade, or flexible programming in public areas.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Sidewalks are present but inconsistent in width, finish, and ADA compliance.
- Utility lines are overhead in some areas, and there is minimal green infrastructure.
- Surface parking is ample but often unbuffered or exposed.

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- Central Avenue carries both local and truck traffic, creating crossing challenges.
- Limited signalized intersections; no mid-block crossings.
- There are no bicycle lanes, shared markings, or bike racks.
- Parking is available on-street and in lots, but signage for public parking is limited. Additionally, on-street parking lacks proper markings, and those visiting do not know whether it is angled or parallel parking.

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

- Ground-floor occupancy is relatively strong; upper floors, where present, are often vacant or underused.
- While ground-floor occupancy is strong, active, engaging uses are extremely limited throughout the downtown area.
- Active uses are concentrated along Central Avenue and Main Street.
- Auto-oriented uses reduce walkability and street frontage.
- Vacant and underutilized parcels throughout downtown offer infill opportunities.



*Sidney Mural with artist Sam Rush. Location: Pizza House (710 South Central Ave.)
PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.*



BLOCK 1

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Block 1 is anchored by the Historic Richland County Courthouse and Sidney-Richland County Library, with formal landscaping and coordinated setbacks. The courthouse's two-story classical form with a domed cupola serves as a landmark facing West Main Street, while the library's single-story design offers a complementary civic presence facing 3rd Avenue.

- Well-maintained structures with mature trees, bollards, and decorative hardscape
- Parking is located to the rear or side, preserving street frontage
- Underbuilt compared to nearby blocks, but visually cohesive

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4/5 - *Somewhat positively affecting downtown*

The courthouse creates a composition for a city block with open space to allow for prominent visibility. Both buildings support strong street orientation, with defined walkways, perimeter bollards, and integrated signage. Setbacks are coordinated through consistent landscape bands and decorative concrete treatments. The courthouse's cupola provides a visible landmark from several downtown blocks, while the library's low profile and welcoming façade engages pedestrians.

- Walkways include bollards, benches, masonry detailed paths, and streetlights
- Focus of the civic architecture
- Landscaping to provide greenery in the grass and trees



Richland County Courthouse
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4/5 - *Somewhat positively affecting downtown*

Sidewalks surrounding the courthouse are wide, smooth, and well-integrated with bollards and rolled curbs. Curb ramps at intersections appear ADA-compliant, and textured paving zones are present at several corners. Site lighting is uniform, using decorative poles at all corners and along primary walkways. Infrastructure serves its purpose without clutter, supporting both pedestrian access and landscape maintenance.

- Hydrant access is present on both the east and west sides of the courthouse
- Minimal wear to the curb cut leading into the parking
- Well-maintained with minimal need for updating



Richland County Courthouse Landscaping
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4/5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Four-sided sidewalk continuity with bollards to protect pedestrians on the wide curb radii. The building is set back within an internal plaza, creating a safe buffer from traffic with sidewalks protected with angled parking. Vehicular access for parking is located on the North and East sides of the block with a connecting alley on the West side. While designed primarily for public access to a single facility, the block models circulation design that prioritizes pedestrian safety.

- Prioritizes pedestrian access and safety
- Crosswalks could benefit from higher visibility markings for the wide ROW

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2/5 - Somewhat negatively affecting downtown

The courthouse dominates Block 1, while it provides an essential civic use and generates consistent daytime activity, it does not offer diverse services. Adjacent public areas invite casual use; The absence of end-user diversity constrains the block's economic contribution to downtown. However, the courthouse remains an anchor that brings visibility, investment, and stable land use.

- Uses limited to civic
- Established use and built for continued longevity



BLOCK 2

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Mid-century commercial buildings and a financial institution on West Main Street. Structures along Main Street and Central Avenue show consistent single and double-story massing and a mix of materials: brick, concrete, and paneling. Many buildings are built to the sidewalk with minimal setbacks. The east half of the block is dominated by Yellowstone Bank, which lacks street-level transparency and turns inward with parking access on 2nd Street.

- Structures in fair condition
- No visible vacancies, but some gaps in activation
- Historic commercial spaces



North Central Avenue

PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2/5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

The Yellowstone bank's blank concrete façade and drive-up orientation diminish the pedestrian environment. Elsewhere, storefronts vary in transparency and signage quality. Most lack awnings or street-level detailing. Landscaping is minimal, limited to a planter and some trees. Intersections feature wide sidewalks with rolled curbs, but continuity across the block is lacking. No public art, lighting fixtures, or coordinated signage ties the block together visually.

- Improved signage and upgrades would help the commercial façades
- Visibility for structures is lacking

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Sidewalks are mostly intact, with relatively consistent surfacing. ADA curb ramps appear inconsistent with the Southwest corner missing established ramps. No mid-block crossings exist, and tactile guidance is limited. Utility lines are primarily overhead along the alleys and side streets but do not intrude on major viewsheds. Street lighting is limited to standard cobra-head fixtures, with no pedestrian-scale lights.

- Traditional stormwater management inlets
- Improvements for lighting and seating for pedestrian use



West Side of Yellowstone Bank
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Pedestrian access is adequate but lacks visual emphasis. Driveway cuts and blank frontages weaken pedestrian flow along Main Street and 2nd Street. Crosswalk markings are faded, and the signalized intersection of 2nd Street and Central Avenue lacks high-visibility striping. The wide width of streets prioritizes vehicle movement, and turning lanes create long crossing distances without pedestrian refuge. No bike racks, designated lanes, or directional signage are present.

- Sidewalks are given extra space from setbacks
- Parking is available both on-street and in off-street lots
- The block remains legible and accessible but not yet pedestrian-friendly

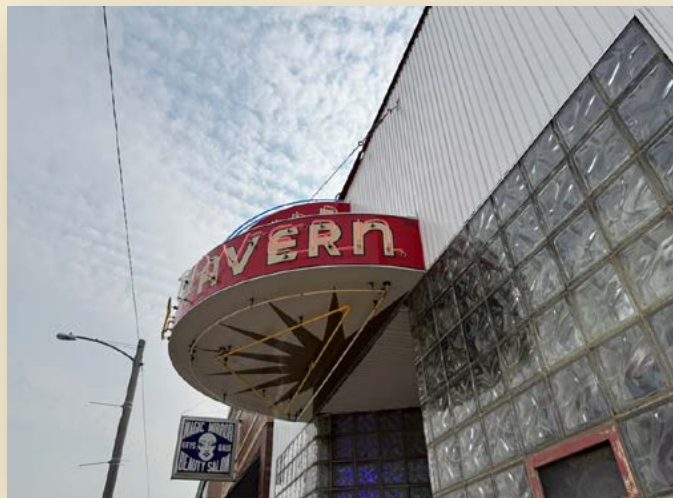
REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Includes active public, professional, and retail uses, but lacks density or synergy among tenants. Contained businesses, banks, offices, and small service retailers offer limited storefront visibility or evening activation. While there are no major vacancies, the block contains multiple lots that are underutilized or structured around parking rather than pedestrian access. While stable and functional, the end-user mix does not encourage street-level engagement.

- No upper-story space appears to be occupied
- Upgrades to improve pedestrian activation



Club Tavern Facade

PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



BLOCK 3

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Features a cohesive collection of early 20th-century commercial buildings lining the sidewalks on the West side. Most structures sit at the lot line with zero setbacks, and many retain original architectural features with predominant masonry. Uses range from restaurants, retail, and entertainment. Despite some cosmetic aging, most buildings appear structurally sound and occupied. Recessed entries, storefront windows, and defined parapets reinforce the block's pedestrian scale.

- Façades using non-historic materials or need maintenance
- Block contains some gaps and lots



North Entrance of Sunny's Family Restaurant

PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



North Entrance of Cattle-Ac Restaurant - Bar - Casino | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - Somewhat negatively affecting downtown

Storefronts align at the sidewalk, and recessed entries, blade signs, and window displays activate the pedestrian environment. Sunny's Family Restaurant and Cattle-Ac Nite Club serve as visual anchors on opposite corners, offering clear entries, signage, and curb appeal. Most façades present durable materials (brick, stucco, and tile) and several feature painted wall signs or canopy extensions. Street trees, benches, and lighting are notably absent, and overhead wires slightly detract from views. Nonetheless, the block reads as a cohesive commercial environment that invites pedestrian use.

- Businesses not on the central street lack visual intrigue
- Planters, lighting, seating and other features for pedestrians are lacking
- Upgrades elevate the user experience without altering the block's historic character

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Sidewalks are in serviceable condition, but paving varies by segment. Corners feature ADA curb ramps with detectable warning strips, though some appear weathered or slightly misaligned. No mid-block crossings exist, and crosswalk striping is inconsistent or faded. The block has minimal green infrastructure and limited curbside protection from traffic. No dedicated pedestrian-scale lighting is visible; street illumination appears to rely on cobra lighting fixtures.

- Pedestrian focused features to improve experience
- Activation of commercial uses vitalizes area

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Sidewalks are unobstructed and directly connect to storefronts. Curb cuts are limited, with minimal conflict between vehicles and foot traffic. Parked vehicles create a de facto buffer between pedestrians and travel lanes. Signalized intersections on both Main Street and 2nd Street enhance crossing safety, though markings could be more visible. Street widths are manageable, with clear sightlines at corners and limited congestion. Traffic speeds and volumes appear low enough to accommodate mixed use, encouraging walking and support multiple entry points per parcel.

However, a lack of designated crossings at mid-block, curb extensions, or wayfinding signage leaves room for improvement. Small interventions could make the block more legible and comfortable for pedestrians while preserving vehicle access.

- Angled and parallel parking lines
- Pedestrian focused crossing is lacking prioritization
- Would benefit from improved buffers for pedestrians from vehicles

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - *Somewhat positively affecting downtown*

Tenants include restaurants, retail shops, a nightclub, a bank, and service providers, offering consistent foot traffic throughout the day and evening. Many businesses appear locally owned, with signage and programming tailored to the Sidney market. Vacancies are minimal, and storefronts display signs of active use and regular maintenance. The block lacks large institutional or national tenants, giving it a distinctly local character. Frequent entries and window displays support walk-in traffic, and block-scale coherence encourages cross-shopping.

- Longstanding local businesses
- Infrastructure positions this as a retail core for downtown
- Could benefit from façade improvements



Village Square Mall South Entrance
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services.



BLOCK 4

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Block 4 contains a mix of auto-oriented businesses, metal commercial structures, and older brick buildings, with moderate site coverage. Most buildings are one story and vary in width, form, and age. Though occupied and functional, several buildings show patchwork repairs, non-original cladding, or partial vacancy. Surface parking occupies much of the interior and corner lots, creating gaps in continuity.

- Lacking cohesive structures
- Incontiguous sidewalks limiting usability
- Economic focused, but lacking in walkability

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

Buildings exhibit basic forms and plain façades, with limited pedestrian articulation. Most signage is pole-mounted and scaled for vehicles, with no street furniture, coordinated landscaping, or decorative lighting. Gaps between buildings and front-loaded lots disrupt enclosures. Along 2nd Avenue, industrial-style structures sit behind shallow lawns or gravel setbacks, offering no visual interest on the sidewalk. Although a few entries include benches or overhangs, these treatments are inconsistent and disconnected from broader streetscape design.

- Lacking pedestrian focused amenities
- Gaps in activation resulting in disjointed streetscape

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Sidewalks' widths vary, and surfaces show signs of patching or cracking. ADA ramps are present but differ in quality and style, and they lack tactile strips. Curb cuts for parking and drive-through lanes are wide and frequent, interrupting sidewalk continuity. Utility lines are mostly overhead, especially alongside streets. Street lighting relies on tall fixtures without pedestrian-scale elements. While public infrastructure accommodates auto circulation and access, it does not enhance comfort, safety, or identity for pedestrians.

- Intersections lack adequate ADA considerations and have faded linework
- Upgrades to curbing, lighting, and streetscape features would better revitalize downtown
- Drainage appears to function by conventional inlets

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - Somewhat negatively affecting downtown

Prioritizes vehicle access, with frequent curb cuts, surface parking, and wide drive aisles shaping the flow of traffic. Sidewalks are present but rarely buffered from moving vehicles with parallel parking. Crosswalks at intersections lack bold markings or pedestrian signals. Angled on-street parking creates turnover for businesses, but inconsistent striping and long curb cuts complicate circulation. While functional for drivers, the current circulation design limits comfort and safety for pedestrians.

- Design for traffic calming features to improve pedestrian experience
- Discourages walking, but has active commercial



2nd Avenue Northeast

PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Hosts an active mix of auto service, food, and retail tenants, drawing consistent vehicle-based traffic. Buildings generally serve single tenants, single-story façades. While most spaces appear occupied, some show signs of underutilization or transitional use. The block functions as a service corridor rather than a destination node. Its current use mix supports auto-centric commerce, not community gathering or diversified foot traffic. To strengthen downtown cohesion, this block could benefit from structured infill, conversion of excess lot depth, and recruitment of more pedestrian-oriented businesses.

- The block lacks variety and walkable destinations
- Pedestrian appeal is limited.



Mucho Si | East Main Street

PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



BLOCK 5

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Block 5 features a mix of detached commercial structures, surface parking lots, and a small, landscaped parcel. Buildings are single or double-story with flat roofs and varied materials, ranging from painted concrete blocks to stucco and metal siding. Several structures have visible deferred maintenance and inactive frontages. There is little cohesion between buildings in terms of orientation, massing, or lot coverage. While the overall scale is consistent with small-town downtowns, underutilization and poor condition reduce the block's contribution to area.

- Diverse commercial uses for area
- Materials create intrigue with established structures
- Second-story of structures do not seem to be in use



Meadowlark Public House | Central Avenue
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



2nd Street Southwest Mural. Mural Painted by Afton Rossol (2022)
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

The block exhibits fragmented design with limited continuity in facade articulation or streetscape treatment. Building setbacks vary and provide meaningful architectural interest and pedestrian-scale frontage. The southeast corner accounting firm incorporates a painted mural, offering some visual interest, signage on commercial windows. Lack design elements, lighting features, or seating areas that encourage pedestrian activity or wayfinding.

- Commercial storefronts have signage and awnings
- Landscaping is limited to one narrow parcel
- Features of design focused on higher foot trafficked parts

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Basic infrastructure appears functional but lacks enhancement. Curb and gutter infrastructure are consistent around the perimeter, and two east corners are upgraded with ADA curb ramps. Sidewalk conditions vary, with segments narrow, cracked, or interrupted by utility poles. Overhead lines and minimal street lighting dominate the streetscape.

- Faded crosswalk lining
- Intersections of 2nd Avenue lacks upgraded ADA amenities
- Minor upgrades to improve quality of use

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Full vehicular access on all four frontages, with wide travel lanes and clear turning movements. The two intersections with signalized crosswalks offer pedestrian safety at Main Street. However, midblock pedestrian movement is limited by inactive building frontages and curb cuts. On-street parking is available along Central Avenue and side streets but lacks striping and delineation.

- Covered awning along commercial spaces
- Sidewalks are continuous but narrow, and lack buffering from vehicle traffic

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

The block hosts a range of commercial tenants including an accounting firm branch, small education offices, and professional service businesses. Building utilization appears relatively high, though most users operate in low-foot-traffic sectors. Few retail or food uses exist to drive consistent public activity. Multiple parcels are dedicated to surface parking or side yards, further reducing density. While the businesses serve local needs, they do not activate the streetscape or contribute to extended hours of use, limiting economic and social vitality.

- No upper-story residential or office uses are present
- Prioritization is present of east side of block



BLOCK 6

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Contains a mix of historic and contemporary commercial buildings, most of which are in active use. The two-story brick building at the corner of Main and Central Avenue anchors the block with strong street presence and architectural detail, housing the Cheerio Lounge. Other structures, including the Sidney Eye Care Center and Anytime Fitness, are mid-century and modern single-story buildings in good condition. Materials range from brick and concrete blocks with varied massing. The block lacks consistent visibility; most storefronts engage the street with clear pedestrian access. Building coverage is high, and the block maintains a traditional urban form.



Cheerio Lounge | Intersection of Main Street and Central Avenue. | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

- Minimal setback on Main Street with larger on side street for parking
- Inconsistent architectural styles, but support active commercial strip
- Well maintained structures preserved or updated for longevity

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

The block supports a functional urban form but lacks cohesive streetscape design. Buildings consistently front Main Street with defined corners and minimal setbacks. The intersection of Central Avenue and Main Street features prominent signage but lacks pedestrian design features. Signage ranges from painted signs on walls to lit mounted panels, contributing to a visually disjointed experience. Despite this, the built form encourages pedestrian movement and maintains a high visibility for businesses.

- Pedestrian improvements in lighting and seating would improve the commercial experience
- Emphasize role as part of Sidney's core commercial corridor
- Façade consistency for visual cohesion

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Concrete sidewalks line all frontages, and corners feature ADA-compliant curb ramps with delineators on intersections of Central Avenue. Overhead utilities are visible throughout the block, and multiple poles carry electric and telecom lines. Alleys behind structures likely support service access but are not prominently visible in the provided imagery. Public lighting exists at intersections by mast-arm streetlights, but mid-block lighting for pedestrian safety is not apparent. Overall, the infrastructure meets baseline downtown standards but could benefit from targeted upgrades for pedestrian comfort and multimodal access.

- In fair condition with minor maintenance to improve
- Public lighting prioritizing vehicles over pedestrian
- Fading crosswalk linework



Sidney Eye Care | Intersection of Central Avenue and 2nd St. Southeast. | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services.

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

A central location at the intersection of Main Street and Central Avenue, with signalized crosswalks on all sides of the intersection. Wide sidewalks provide sufficient space for pedestrian movement. Vehicles have ample access via Main Street and 2nd Avenue, with angled and parallel parking available on most block faces. Traffic moves steadily along both corridors, and intersections include visible traffic control measures. Despite active vehicular use, pedestrian crossing infrastructure remains basic, lacking textured treatments or signage beyond standard striping.

- Accessible storefronts for active commercial uses
- Rolling curbs and lacking pedestrian buffers for safety
- Green Infrastructure buffer to enhance experience of streetscape



Party Central and Main Street Popcorn Factory | East Main Street | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4/5 - Somewhat positively affecting downtown

Key tenants include Anytime Fitness, Sidney Eye Care Center, and Cheerio Lounge, which draw consistent foot traffic. Additional storefronts provide personal services and small-scale office functions, while adjacent blocks offer complementary retail options. Most buildings appear occupied and actively maintained. Vacancy is low, with no visible signs of disuse or prolonged closures. The block's businesses cater to a broad cross-section of downtown visitors, including residents, office workers, and regional travelers.

- Reinvestment in building façades could further commercial impact
- Supports as being an anchor of downtown
- Offers a mix of local services, retail, and hospitality



Fink Dental Center | 2nd Street Southeast
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



BLOCK 7

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

The south and southeast sides of the block feature light industrial uses, including service garages and warehouse-type buildings. The massing is consistent, but the scale favors vehicles over pedestrians. Rear and side lot configurations dominate the spatial layout, and open lots and parking areas account for much of the land cover. The buildings are generally well maintained, with limited signage clutter and minimal building articulation. While the block lacks cohesive form or historic character, it provides essential commercial services that support local economic activity.

- Commercial or industrial uses with vehicle focus
- Lacks density to accommodate for the current uses



Eagle Country Ford Lot | East Main Street

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - Somewhat negatively affecting downtown

Building orientation faces the street, but the presence of large curb cuts, limited landscaping, and minimal streetscape features reduces the pedestrian appeal. There are few visual cues to indicate block edges or transitions between private and public space. Open parking lots occupy prominent corner positions, diminishing enclosures and rhythm along Main Street. The presence of a large Ford dealership introduces a recognizable identity but dominates the block's aesthetic.

- Car focused with curb cuts and prominence of lots
- Northeast corner has the Ford dealership with the most present streetscaped façade
- Wide sidewalks on commercial fronts and narrow for lot surrounding

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Utility infrastructure appears consistent and functional across the block, with minimal standard street lighting, overhead electrical service, and sidewalks in good condition. Curb ramps are present but inconsistently aligned. Drainage grates and inlet placement appear functional, though the large, paved surfaces may lead to localized runoff issues during heavy precipitation. The presence of major auto service operations implies sufficient electrical and water service. However, alley access is unclear, and utility servicing may rely heavily on street frontage. The infrastructure adequately supports current uses but lacks adaptation for future flexibility or sustainability.

- Prioritizes current use, lacking opportunities for alternate opportunities
- There is no visible stormwater retention or green infrastructure

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Multiple driveways, unmarked parking areas, and angled on-street parking reinforce car-centric access. Sidewalks are continuous along primary frontages but lack width, shade, or buffers from traffic. Crosswalks are either faded or absent, and intersections are designed to expedite vehicle flow rather than prioritize pedestrian safety. The block connects easily to adjacent Main Street traffic but offers limited options for slower modes. Curbside access is ample, and vehicle maneuverability is unimpeded.

- Walkability remains secondary to vehicular throughput
- Some lots utilized for showcasing cars over flow

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

The block houses primarily auto-related businesses, including new car sales, parts services, and garages. These uses attract regional traffic and serve a broad market beyond Sidney's core, contributing to daytime activity but not walk-in retail. Lot configurations and surface parking discourage additional infill or adaptive reuse without significant redesign. The current mix supports employment and retail volume but offers limited spillover benefits to downtown's pedestrian-oriented economy.

- Single land use type predominantly occupies the block
- Potential future land uses are not compatible with current uses



BLOCK 8

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Includes a mix of commercial and professional services in primarily one-story buildings. Structures like Yellowstone Chiropractic and Stockman Bank represent modern construction with distinct architectural expressions, while others exhibit utilitarian forms. The building stock is somewhat inconsistent in quality and character, with visible signs of deferred maintenance on certain structures and variable setback depths. Although occupied and functional, the built form lacks cohesion and design uniformity, limiting its contribution to a distinct downtown identity.

- Commercial storefront access is present facing the street
- Gaps between structures along the South edge disrupt the continuity



Thee Boutique | Central Avenue | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

This block benefits from well-maintained sidewalks, curb ramps, and visible pedestrian infrastructure, yet the public realm lacks visual interest. Landscaping is minimal, and most buildings do not feature awnings or public-facing enhancements. The Stockman Bank's pitched roof and materials contrast with neighboring buildings, while signage on other structures is more simplistic. Despite the absence of blight, the urban design lacks elements that activate or enrich the streetscape. Improvements such as facade upgrades, public art, or shade features could elevate the block's visual coherence and pedestrian appeal.

- Vacant lot on the southeast corner diminishes block enclosure along Main Street
- Architectural interest from the Centre Theatre offers the most visual intrigue
- Lack of visibility

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4 / 5 - *Somewhat positively affecting downtown*

Rolled curbing is intact; ADA curb ramps are present, and sidewalks are continuous on all frontages with few cuts. While the infrastructure effectively supports daily use, it provides a limited aesthetic or comfort value. Investment in infrastructure enhancements such as improved lighting, benches, or pedestrian-scaled amenities would further strengthen the block's functionality and visual integration with the downtown core.

- Street lighting favors vehicles
- ADA ramp accessibility is limited to intersections on Central Avenue

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Strong vehicular access from Main Street and its cross-streets, with ample curbside and lot parking options. Drive aisles to parking lots are wide and accessible, although parking lot design lacks delineation and landscaping. A signalized intersection at Main Street and 2nd Avenue improves crosswalk visibility and vehicle flow. Pedestrian activity is possible but not encouraged by the current streetscape, which lacks shade, interest, and seating.

- Central Avenue accommodates pedestrians which is lacking on west-side
- Improved pedestrian amenities would enhance comfort with lighting and buffers
- Extruding curb radii at intersection on Central Avenue has single delineator



Centre Movie Theatre on Central Avenue
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services.

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Tenants include financial institutions, chiropractic offices, and other low-traffic professional services. While occupied, the block does not serve as a destination and lacks complementary uses that would support active downtown life. Opportunities exist to introduce mixed uses or food-and-beverage tenants that attract broader demographics and increase dwell time. A vacant parcel at the southeast corner represents a redevelopment opportunity that could reestablish continuity along Main Street and add more dynamic end-user options.

- Primarily service-oriented and auto-dependent
- Customer foot traffic and retail functions are limited



Centre Movie Theatre | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services



BLOCK 9

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

The former Sidney Fire Department structure remains on the block, now operating as City Hall with a recent makeover. Adjacent structures are single-story with minimal street presence, and several properties, including open lots which break the block's continuity. Several curb cuts serve drive-throughs or off-street lots. Although most buildings are in serviceable condition, they contribute little to a cohesive or walkable downtown environment. Setbacks, windowless façades, and low lot coverage diminish the block's contribution to Main Street character.

- Single-story structures with masonry façades
- North and South corners are predominantly open lots



Sidney City Hall | 2nd Street Southeast | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

The block lacks pedestrian-scale design features and creates a visual gap at the eastern edge of downtown. Large setbacks, wide drive aisles, and lots disrupt the streetscape. While one mural faces Main Street, the block offers few visual cues or architectural details to encourage walking or lingering. The buildings do not frame corners or define intersections, and existing signs and lighting are oriented toward drivers. The overall visual hierarchy is weak, with inconsistent frontages and minimal landscaping.

- Offers opportunities for infill or façade treatments to improve coherence.
- Public realm improvements such as sidewalks and lighting
- South lot has an example of use of parkstrips

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Sidewalks appear intact on all sides, with ADA ramps at corners and adequate curb radii for turning vehicles. Utilities are present but not obtrusive; a cell tower and light poles are visible in the interior and at corners. Surface drainage and road conditions appear average for downtown Sidney. Streetscape elements such as lighting, furnishings, and seating are absent. The block appears to have reliable service access, though minimal recent investments have been made in pedestrian infrastructure with new sidewalks in front of City Hall about 3 years ago.

- Sidewalk outside City Hall lacks adequate ADA accessibility at intersection
- Intersections have indicated coloration, but faded or missing linework

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*



Club Royal Casino South Entrance
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

Internal driveways and surface parking serve commercial uses and allow for turning movements off Main Street. Pedestrian infrastructure is limited to sidewalks, which lack buffers, shade, or separation from vehicles. Crosswalks at the signalized intersection of Main Street and 2nd Avenue improve visibility. Wide road widths and minimal pedestrian features reduce comfort for walkers. The block supports drive-up and short-visit uses but lacks elements that support longer or multimodal visits.

- Curb cuts disrupt flow of pedestrian use
- Prioritization for vehicles in general and lighting
- Higher trafficked streets have some method of signage or signal

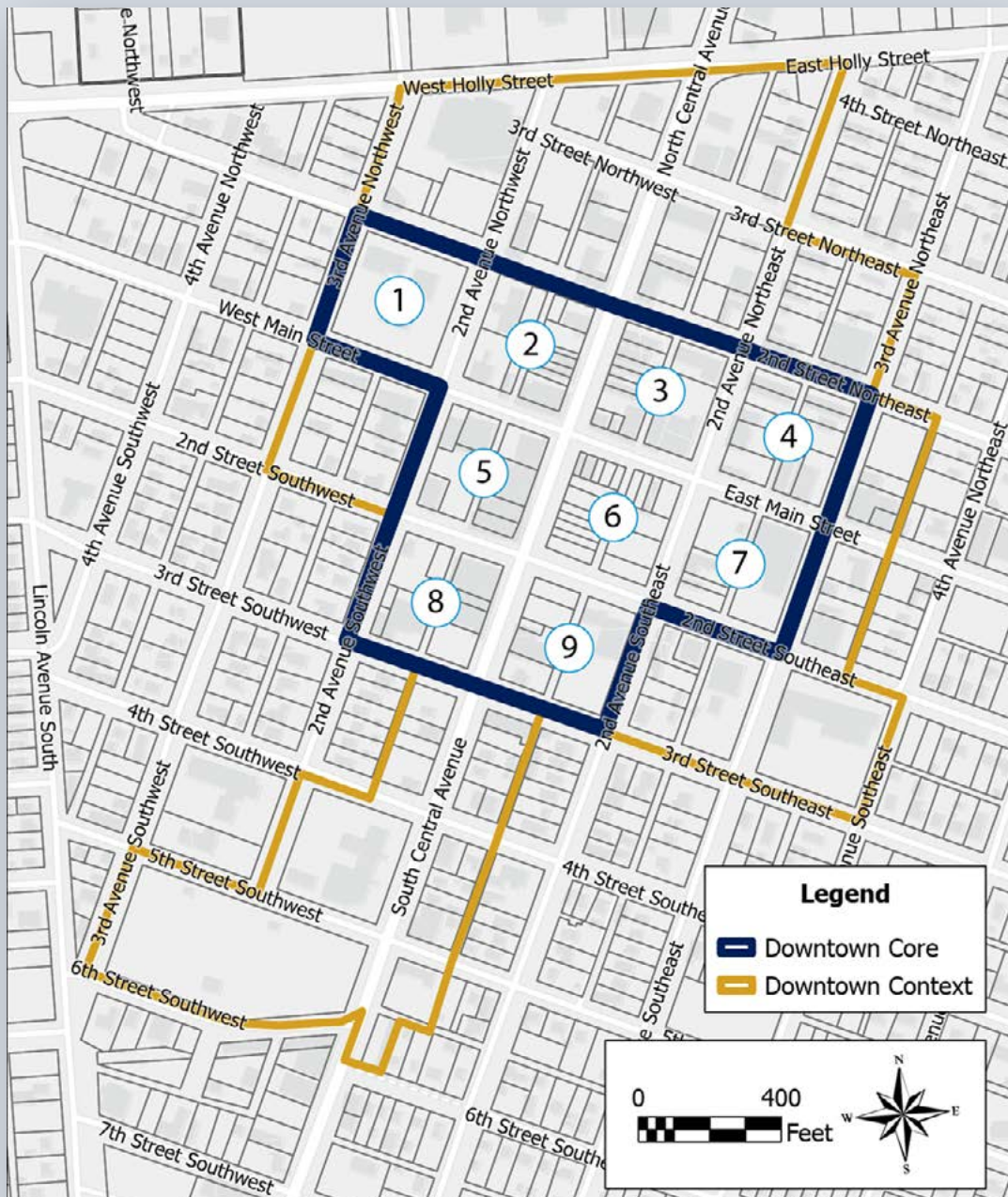
REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - Somewhat negatively affecting downtown

The block contains a mix of commercial users including Club Royale Casino, small offices, and municipal functions but does not present a diverse or vibrant mix of tenants. The block is better suited to service uses or municipal overflow than retail, food, or mixed-use formats. Its location at the edge of the downtown core reduces foot traffic, and nearby active uses are limited. Long-term, the block would benefit from redevelopment or strategic tenant clustering.

- Many structures serve with limited hours and minimal storefront activity
- Vacancy or underutilization appears likely in some buildings



CONTEXT AREA

The context area surrounds the nine-block downtown core and includes adjacent residential neighborhoods, highway-oriented commercial corridors, and civic and industrial sites. It provides critical connections, transitional land uses, and supporting services that influence downtown's vitality.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

The built environment surrounding the core blocks is varied and dispersed. To the north and east these begin to bleed into residential spaces as well as a commercial grocery. These buildings support local economic functions but do not contribute to a walkable or cohesive street fabric. South and southwest of downtown, has some lower density commercial areas as well as Central Park. Along the west, public uses like schools and religious facilities introduce large-footprint structures with deep setbacks and limited street-facing engagement.

- Industrial and public buildings use wide lots with deep setbacks, limiting enclosure
- Built form does not tie into downtown to support spillover activity
- Scale of structures and lots increase



*The Market | 2nd Street Northwest
PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services*

URBAN DESIGN

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2 / 5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

Urban design elements are maintained outside the nine-block study area. Industrial and auto-service buildings have limited architectural detailing, blank façades, and few pedestrian entries. The transition between ROW and pedestrian space is abrupt, with little use of buffers or landscape features to create visual cohesion. Wayfinding signage is minimal, and intersections lack gateways or cues to signify downtown entry. The result is a loose collection of land uses with minimal spatial coordination.

- No gateway elements or design transitions mark the edge of the downtown core
- Visibility and lighting are consistent with downtown and could use improvement
- Southside has improved greenery with park strips or mature trees

INFRASTRUCTURE

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - *Neutrally affecting downtown*

Within one to two blocks of the core, streets retain rolled curb systems, standard street lighting, and sidewalks. Street lighting is auto-oriented, with few pedestrian-scale fixtures. Surface drainage relies heavily on curb inlets, but no green infrastructure or stormwater planters are present. Street paving appears in fair condition, improved near established structures and diminished near residential or industrial.

- Sidewalks exist but are inconsistently maintained outside the core
- Lighting and utility infrastructure prioritize vehicle access over pedestrian safety
- ADA ramp access at intersections is consistent with downtown core



Alleyway of Yellowstone Bank Parking and Mid-Rivers Communications | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3/5 - *Somewhat negatively affecting downtown*

Wide streets, multiple driveways, and limited curb management allow for easy truck and equipment movement but discourage walking. Access to downtown is technically available but uncomfortable and unclear for non-drivers. Opportunities exist for more pedestrian friendly improvements to facilitate pedestrian circulation.

- Circulation patterns around downtown heavily favor vehicles
- Large sidewalk gaps, buffers, lighting, and faded crosswalks hinder walkability
- Lacking biking infrastructure prevents multimodal movement



Sidney Middle School | Central Avenue | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

REAL ESTATE AND END-USER MIX

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3 / 5 - Neutrally affecting downtown

Land uses surrounding the core blocks are low density and functionally segmented. North of downtown has some industrial and cross-over commercial activity morphing to the East with residential. East and south of the core, education organizations and a few churches define the character of adjoining neighborhoods. These uses are stable but offer limited interaction with the downtown economy. To the southwest Central Park offers greenspace near the downtown core.

- Adjacent neighborhoods remain stable but disconnected in function and layout
- Economic development is prioritized in the downtown core



Verizon | Central Avenue and 4th Street Southwest | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

LAND USE AND ZONING ASSESSMENT

Downtown Sidney is anchored by the B-3 Central Business zoning district, covering the Main Street corridor and adjacent parcels. B-3 supports compact, pedestrian-oriented development, fitting in a traditional downtown form, but its performance depends on surrounding zoning.

- **R-3 Residential: Medium-density but not well-suited for commercial spillover or mixed use, limiting downtown expansion.**
- **CLM & B-1: Introduce light industrial and general business uses at edges; may disrupt pedestrian scale if poorly integrated.**
- **R-1: Minimal presence but reinforces rigid boundaries.**

In many areas, B-3 extends only one parcel deep, creating a narrow, linear pattern and limiting back-lot infill or alley activation. No overlay districts or transitional zoning connect the core to nearby neighborhoods, producing abrupt land use changes and restricting options for upper-story housing or mixed-use development.

The B-3 district preserves downtown's pedestrian scale, but its shallow depth, sharp boundaries, and adjacency to uncoordinated zones constrain reinvestment. Zoning adjustments or overlays could promote mixed uses, improve transitions, and unlock underutilized parcels.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES OVERVIEW

Infrastructure in Downtown Sidney is managed through a combination of state, municipal, and private entities.

ROADWAYS

- The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) maintains Holly Street and Highway 16 (Central Avenue), the primary north–south corridor through downtown.
- The City of Sidney is responsible for all other streets within the downtown district, including collectors and local streets.

WATER AND WASTEWATER

- The City of Sidney owns and operates both the municipal water distribution and sanitary sewer systems serving downtown.
- These systems are maintained by the City’s Public Works Department.

STORMWATER

- The City of Sidney oversees stormwater collection and conveyance within the downtown area.
- Infrastructure includes curb inlets, gutters, and drainage structures maintained at the local level.

ELECTRIC POWER

- Electric service in Sidney is provided by Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU).
- Service infrastructure is maintained by the utility company, with local coordination as needed.



Johnson Hardware and Furniture | Central Avenue | PC: Downtown Redevelopment Services

BUILDING STOCK AND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

Downtown Sidney retains a traditional main street character with predominantly low-rise buildings, anchored by civic landmarks and a mix of active, underutilized, and vacant structures.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

- One- and two-story buildings, oriented to the street with minimal setbacks
- Consistent small-town commercial form and pedestrian scale

PRIMARY COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

- Main Street is the center of business activity, especially between Central Avenue and 2nd Street SW
- Continuous building frontages with limited gaps
- Uses include retail, dining, financial, and professional services

INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL ANCHORS

- Richland County Courthouse (full block at Main & 2nd Ave NW)
- Centre Theatre (Central between 2nd and 3rd Street SW)
- Larger footprints that break the smaller-lot pattern but reinforce downtown identity

VACANCY AND UNDERUTILIZATION

- Scattered vacant lots and marginally active parcels, especially near 2nd Street SE, E Main Street, and North Central Avenue.
- Side streets contain buildings with low occupancy

BUILDING CONDITIONS

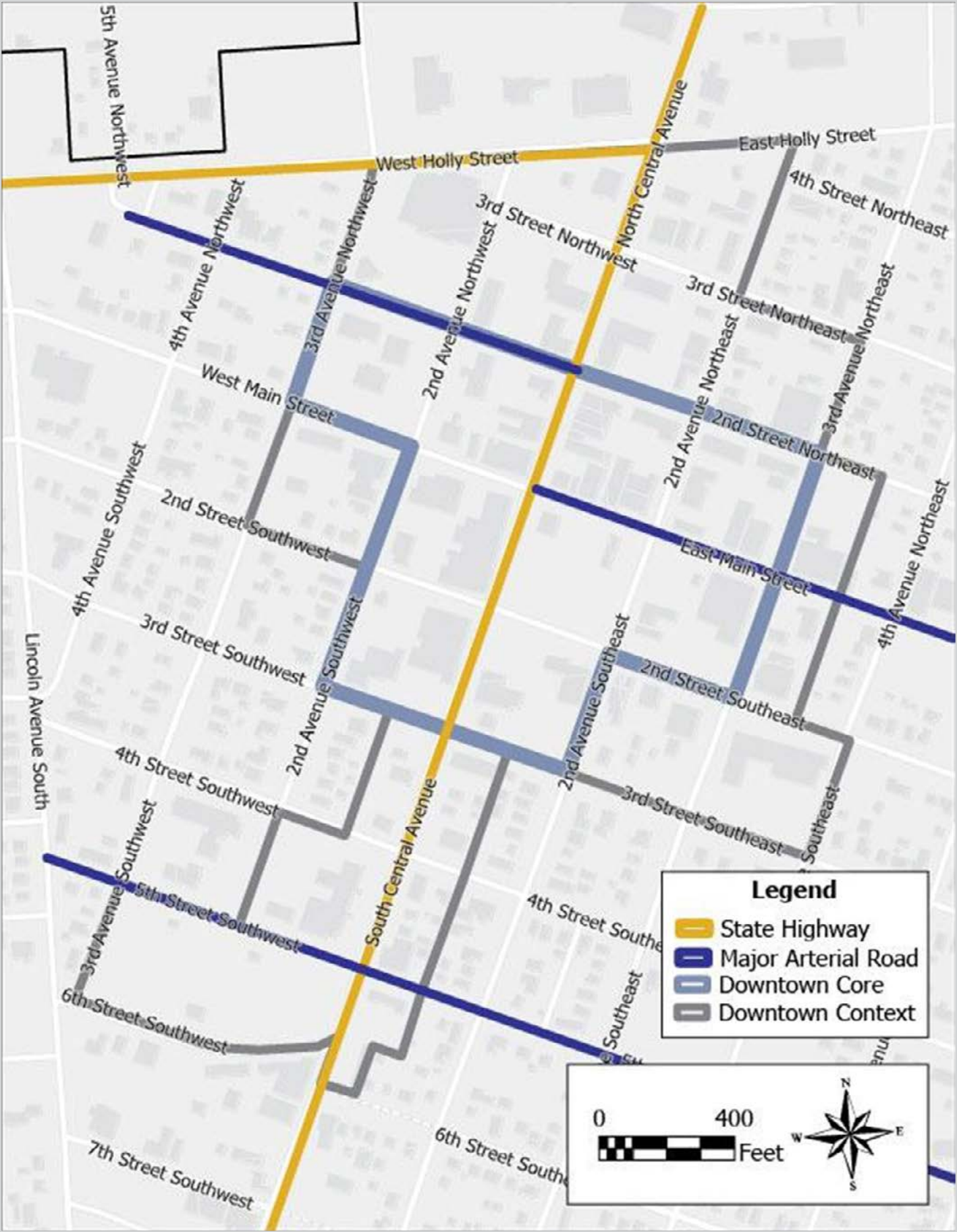
- Range from well-maintained to in need of rehabilitation
- Recent improvements on West Main and parts of Central Avenue
- Deferred maintenance visible on upper stories and façades

ACCESS AND REAR LOT USE

- Most parcels have alley access for service and deliveries
- Rear parking common; opportunities exist for shared parking or alley enhancements

LOT CONFIGURATION

- Narrow, historic storefront lots dominate Main Street
- Larger parcels at the edges are single-use or unimproved
- Parcel fragmentation may require coordinated redevelopment strategies



CIRCULATION AND CONNECTIVITY CONDITIONS

ROADWAY NETWORK

The downtown street system follows a traditional grid, supporting both regional travel and local access. The network centers on Central Avenue (U.S. Highway 16), the community's main street and primary state highway, which carries significant local traffic as well as freight tied to agriculture and oilfield activity.

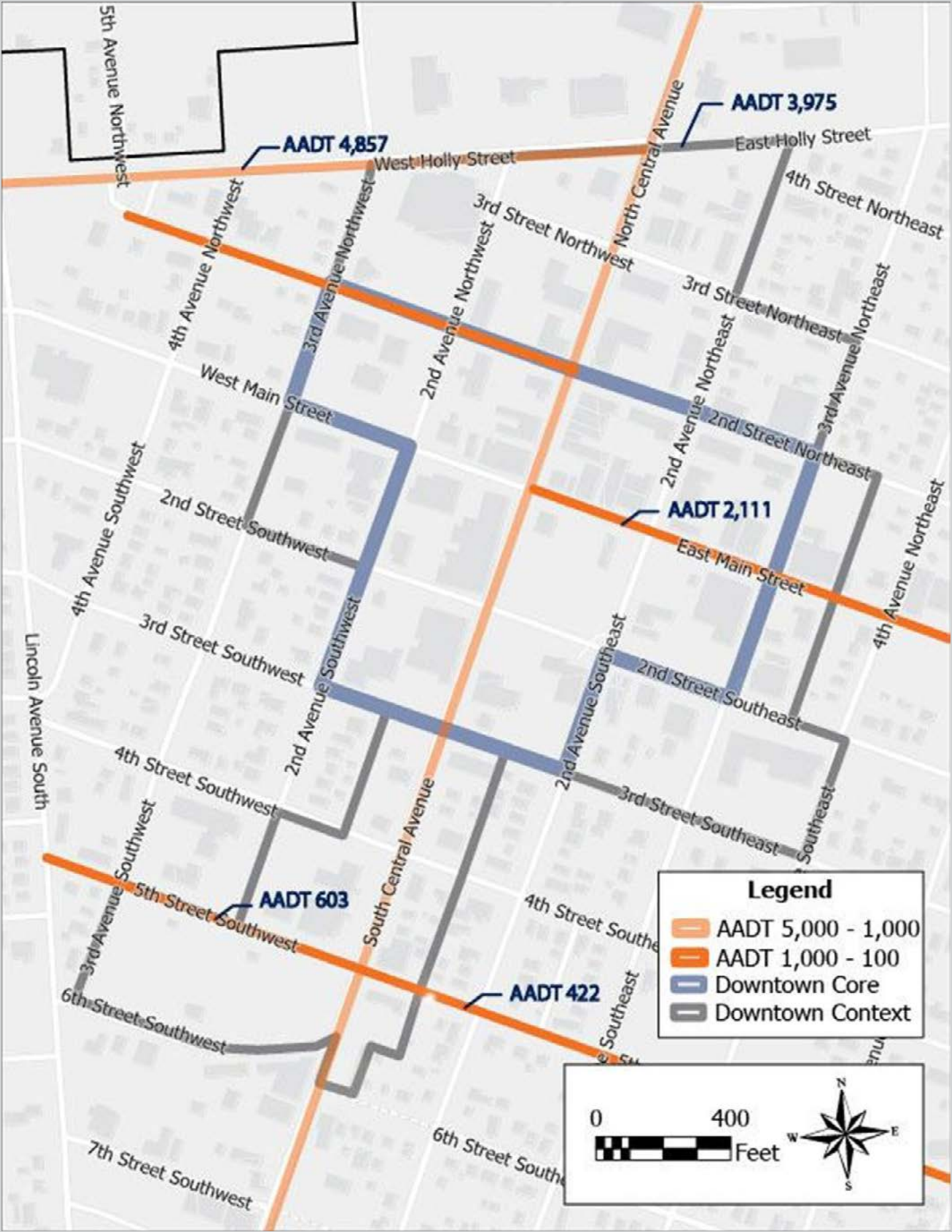
- Central Avenue (U.S. Highway 16): Main north–south route; high traffic volumes including trucks
- East–West Access: Streets like Main Street and 2nd Street SE connect key destinations such as government offices, healthcare, retail, and parking
- E Main Street: Major arterial linking Central Avenue to residential neighborhoods
- Mix of street parking and mid-block lots, but limited wayfinding signage
- No enforced truck bypass, resulting in continuous heavy vehicle movement through downtown

Traffic activity downtown is heaviest along its principal arterials and state highway corridors, with freight movement contributing significantly to daily volumes.

- Truck RT 488: Up to 5,000 vehicles per day (highest recorded volume)
- E Main Street: Principal east–west corridor, up to 2,000 vehicles per day
- Smaller Arterials: Southwest section of 5th Street SE sees up to 600 vehicles per day



Sidney looking West | PC: Interstate Engineering



BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Downtown Sidney's active transportation network is moderately connected but inconsistent in quality and coverage. Sidewalks are present on most blocks, with the most consistent infrastructure along Central Avenue, 2nd Street NW, and 3rd Street NW. Elsewhere, sidewalks narrow to 5–6 feet, shift in materials, or show signs of deterioration. Gaps in coverage and faded crosswalks reduce accessibility, and long crossing distances often lack pedestrian refuge.

PEDESTRIAN HIGHLIGHTS:

- Missing or incomplete sidewalk segments disrupt walkability between blocks
- Surface variations and uneven conditions affect accessibility
- Many intersections lack marked crossings or have faded striping
- Street trees, benches, and pedestrian-scale lighting are limited
- Wider sidewalks and better lighting near civic sites are not extended elsewhere
- Few landscaped buffers or curb extensions separate pedestrians from traffic and parking

BICYCLE HIGHLIGHTS:

- No dedicated bicycle lanes or shared-lane markings within downtown
- Cyclists share travel lanes with vehicles, including on high-volume streets, without signage or protection
- No public bike racks, directional signage, or intersection safety treatments
- A multiuse path runs near downtown just outside the context area but lacks a direct connection to the core



Photos Clockwise: Undeveloped Lot owned by City of Sidney | Central Avenue and 2nd Street SE; Undeveloped Lot owned by City of Sidney | Central Avenue and 2nd Street SE; Alleyway between Mid-Rivers Communications and Yellowstone Bank Gravel parking; Central Avenue and Second Street SE | PC: Interstate Engineering

EXISTING VACANCY TRENDS

Vacancies in Downtown Sidney are dispersed, with a mix of undeveloped parcels, underused buildings, and inactive upper floors. Conditions range from visible, high-profile sites on primary corridors to smaller, less conspicuous gaps in the urban fabric.

- Large undeveloped parcels at Main Street & 2nd Avenue SW and at Central Avenue & 2nd Street SE create noticeable breaks in street frontage.
- Gravel or overgrown parcels appear at 3rd Street SE & 2nd Avenue SE and on West Main Street, some adjacent to deteriorated buildings.
- Several lots near 3rd Street SW function as unpaved, unmarked parking areas.
- Multiple blocks of East Main Street between Central Avenue and 2nd Avenue NE feature covered windows with no signage or apparent activity.
- Many two-story buildings along Route 16 and East Main Street have upper floors used for storage or left vacant.



Central Avenue Store fronts | PC: Interstate Engineering

PHYSICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Downtown Sidney's physical environment presents strengths to build on and limitations that must be addressed to support revitalization.

OPPORTUNITIES

HISTORIC BUILDING STOCK

A concentration of architecturally distinctive buildings provides a strong foundation for identity and adaptive reuse.

COMPACT STREET GRID

Walkable block lengths and connected streets create opportunities for enhanced pedestrian circulation and public space activation.

EXISTING ANCHORS

Destinations such as Meadowlark Brewing, the Merc, Veterans Park, and the courthouse draw visitors and serve as focal points for activity.

AVAILABLE SITES

Vacant lots and underused parcels offer redevelopment potential for new commercial, mixed-use, and public spaces.

REGIONAL LOCATION

Sidney's position as a service and cultural hub for the surrounding area provides a market base for expanded retail, dining, and entertainment.

CONSTRAINTS

BUILDING CONDITION AND VACANCY

Deferred maintenance, deteriorated facades, and long-term vacancies limit occupancy and deter investment.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

High vehicle speeds along Main Street reduce pedestrian comfort and make crossings difficult.

INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS

Sidewalks, drainage, ADA accessibility, and crosswalk visibility require upgrades.

FRAGMENTED STREETScape

Inconsistent signage, landscaping, and building design weakens the sense of place.

UNDERUTILIZED UPPER FLOORS

Many second stories are vacant or used for storage, reducing the potential for housing or office space in the downtown core.

COMMUNITY ASSETS AND CONCERNS

The Community Assets and Concerns analysis reflects locations identified during public engagement as valued resources or areas needing improvement. This synthesizes comments from focus groups, the steering committee, visioning boards, and the preliminary survey results.

ASSETS

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC LANDMARKS

- The courthouse, Veterans Park, historic post office, and museum.

RECREATION AND GATHERING SPACES

- Farmers market area, Veterans Park, and the courthouse lawn for events.

BUSINESSES AND VENUES

- Meadowlark Brewing, the Merc, Sunny’s Family Restaurant, Ranger Lounge, and other locally owned establishments.

ART AND AESTHETICS

- Existing murals and building remodels that enhance downtown’s appearance.

CONCERNS

SAFETY HOTSPOTS

- Multiple intersections noted as unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists, including East Main & 2nd Ave NE, and 3rd Ave NW & East Holly Street.

VACANCY AND DETERIORATION

- Empty lots and visibly deteriorated buildings, particularly along Main Street and key corners.

PUBLIC REALM GAPS

- Lack of shade, greenery, benches, and garbage cans in parts of downtown.

CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

- Incomplete bike path “loop” into downtown, lack of pedestrian signage, and unclear parking locations.

UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES

- Upper floors of commercial buildings and vacant parcels not contributing to downtown activity.

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION STATEMENT

Downtown Sidney will be a vibrant and welcoming destination where history, community, and commerce meet. It will serve as the heart of the region, with thriving local businesses, attractive public spaces, and year-round events that bring people together and celebrate Sidney's identity.

MISSION STATEMENT

To strengthen Downtown Sidney by investing in its people, places, and businesses. We will support building reinvestment and storefront activation, foster a diverse mix of shops, dining, and services, enhance streetscapes and public spaces, and create programming that encourages residents and visitors to gather, spend time, and contribute to the community's vitality.

CORE VALUES

COMMUNITY FIRST

Downtown is the gathering place of Sidney, and revitalization efforts must serve residents while also welcoming visitors.

AUTHENTICITY

Sidney's history, architecture, and agricultural heritage character elements are central to its identity and should guide reinvestment and design decisions.

ACCESSIBILITY

Downtown should promote being safe, walkable, and inclusive, offering spaces and amenities for people of all ages and abilities.

PRIDE OF PLACE

Clean, well-maintained buildings and inviting public spaces create a downtown that reflects community pride and attracts new investment.

COLLABORATION

Strong partnerships among the city, County, Chamber, businesses, and residents are essential to successful downtown revitalization.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

In a rural community like Sidney, strengthening the local economy depends less on large-scale development and more on supporting the small businesses and entrepreneurs that reside there. Downtown Sidney already plays a key role by providing the community essential services, dining, and retail options for the community, but residents still share concerns about vacant storefronts, inconsistent business hours, and limited reinvestment in existing properties. Residents also noted that many local businesses operate with tight margins, making it difficult to sustain daily operations or fund building improvements without external support.

Community feedback shows the importance of steady and achievable progress, especially when it reflects what residents genuinely want to see in the area. Focus group participants expressed the desire for affordable rents with higher quality building facades, noting that deferred maintenance and empty storefronts often create a negative perception of downtown. Others discussed the difficulty of launching and growing a new business in a small market, especially when startup owners lack the necessary resources or business planning experience. Overall, the community has a clear interest in additional dining, service, and retail options that would reduce the need to travel elsewhere for shopping or entertainment.

Reinvestment in downtown properties remains a critical priority for Sidney. Many buildings have not been updated in decades, and while some owners have taken on major renovations, others have been slow to invest or are reluctant to lower asking prices for vacant spaces. This dynamic makes redevelopment more difficult but also highlights the need for targeted resources that can help property owners fill vacancies and invest in building improvements. Connecting owners to state or federal tax credits, rural development grants, and small-scale incentive programs could address these challenges and encourage new investment.

Equally important is the need for coordinated leadership to properly carry out the community's vision. While Sidney benefits from active civic groups and a strong Chamber of Commerce, there is currently no dedicated organization committed to focusing on the needs and opportunities exclusively downtown. Establishing a coordinated association or district would bring together businesses, property owners, and civic partners to align marketing efforts, events, and property improvements. This organization would not only reduce overlapping efforts but also serve as a vehicle for applying for grants, pursuing shared promotions, and sustaining downtown programming over time.

Visible improvements to the downtown area remain a top priority for both residents and visitors. Even modest upgrades, such as new signage, fresh paint, storefront lighting, and improved window displays, can improve perceptions of downtown and make it more inviting. These small changes, when multiplied across several businesses and blocks, display a clear sense of progress while remaining realistic and achievable within the local market.

In sum, economic vitality in Sidney is less about attracting large outside investments and more about nurturing what already exists in the community. By strengthening local businesses, supporting steady reinvestment, and creating unified leadership, downtown can continue to serve as the community's economic and cultural hub. Achieving success will require a practical approach that is realistic for a rural setting, grounded in local partnerships, and reinforced by outside funding opportunities where available.



2024 Leadership Sidney class planting trees in Veterans Memorial Park. Photo credit: Sidney Chamber of Commerce

ECONOMIC VITALITY RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: SUPPORT SIDNEY'S SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH FOCUSED RESOURCES AND DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS, ALWAYS BALANCING GROWTH WITH THE RURAL IDENTITY.

Objective 1.1: Strengthen existing businesses through partnerships, technical assistance, and modest programs that help them adapt, remain competitive, and continue serving residents and regional visitors.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.1 Host short, skills-based workshops on marketing, bookkeeping, and succession planning.	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce Richland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time or \$2,000 - \$5,000 annually
1.1.2 Create a one-page business resource sheet summarizing local and regional funding programs, contacts, and technical assistance providers.	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
1.1.3 Promote cooperative advertising or shared promotions among downtown businesses to lower marketing costs and expand visibility.	REDC	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Annual
1.1.4 Publicize local business milestones, such as anniversaries, façade improvements, or expansions, through City and Chamber channels to reinforce community support.	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce City of Sidney	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time

Objective 1.2: Improve the appearance and functionality of downtown storefronts through small, visible upgrades.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.1 Establish a voluntary façade mini-grant program focused on affordable improvements such as painting, lighting, signage, and awning repairs.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$25,000–\$75,000 annually
1.2.2 Launch a “Downtown Pride” recognition effort that highlights businesses completing improvements and encourages others to participate.	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
1.2.3 Facilitate the bundling of multiple small projects on one block to create visual impact and reduce contractor mobilization costs.	City of Sidney Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce Construction Consultant	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Staff time

Objective 1.3: Fill local service and retail gaps by supporting small-scale business growth and reuse of existing space.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST
1.3.1 Use available sales and survey data to identify missing business types that are financially sustainable in Sidney’s market.	Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
1.3.2 Maintain an online and printed inventory of downtown spaces for lease or sale, including basic rent ranges and contact information.	Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
1.3.3 Potential zoning updates to allow short-term or pop-up leases in vacant buildings to test new business ideas and activate empty storefronts.	Private Landlords REDC	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Staff time
1.3.4 Connect entrepreneurs to local banks and revolving loan programs offering low-interest financing for inventory, equipment, or tenant improvements.	Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time

GOAL #2: ENCOURAGE REINVESTMENT AND COORDINATED LEADERSHIP TO ADDRESS VACANCIES AND PROMOTE STEADY DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH LOCALLY DRIVEN, ACHIEVABLE EFFORTS.

Objective 2.1: Support reinvestment in vacant and underutilized properties through practical tools, local partnerships, and targeted outreach.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
<p>2.1.1</p> <p>Prepare a simple Property Owner Resource Guide to summarize available incentives such as state historic tax credits, revolving loan funds, and USDA Rural Development programs.</p>	REDC	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
<p>2.1.2</p> <p>Work with property owners to make basic repairs and display active “Available for Lease” signage to signal opportunity and readiness to potential tenants.</p>	REDC	Short Term (0–2 years)	\$500–\$2,000 annually
<p>2.1.3</p> <p>Facilitate temporary uses in vacant spaces, including pop-ups, seasonal vendors, or short-term exhibits, to build interest and activate empty storefronts.</p>	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Staff time



East Main Street | PC: Interstate Engineering

Objective 2.2: Establish a unified downtown organization or working group to coordinate marketing, events, and improvement efforts.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.1 Form a Downtown Working Group made up of business owners, property owners, City staff, and Chamber representatives to coordinate near-term projects.	City of Sidney Consultant	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
2.2.2 Further develop the Main Street program for Sidney in partnership with the Montana Main Street program.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Staff time
2.2.3 Seek seed funding from the Montana Department of Commerce or private foundations to support startup costs or part-time coordination staff.	City of Sidney Consultant	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$10,000–\$50,000
2.2.4 Document and celebrate early successes to build credibility and demonstrate the value of a dedicated downtown organization.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce City of Sidney	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time



Rustic Revival Grand Opening (2024) | East Main Street | PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce

GOAL #3: FOSTER STRONGER TIES AMONG BUSINESSES, CIVIC GROUPS, AND RESIDENTS, SO DOWNTOWN SIDNEY IS WELL-MARKETED AND CONTINUES TO SERVE AS THE COMMUNITY'S HUB.

Objective 3.1: Strengthen communication and collaboration among organizations already active downtown such as the city, Chamber, and businesses.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.1.1 Pilot a “downtown evenings” program where businesses agree to stay open late one evening per month, paired with small community events.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$10,000-\$20,000 annually
3.1.2 Host quarterly coordination meetings with representatives from local businesses, churches, schools, and service clubs to align activities and avoid scheduling conflicts.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
3.1.3 Designate a downtown liaison or volunteer coordinator to connect event organizers, property owners, and City staff for routine logistics and permitting.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$10,000–\$25,000 annually
3.1.4 Maintain an up-to-date contact list of downtown stakeholders for use during outreach, emergencies, and promotions.	REDC	Short Term (0–2 years)	Annually
3.1.5 Use existing newsletters and social media pages to share progress updates and reinforce a consistent downtown brand voice.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce All Interested Parties	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time

Objective 3.2: Promote downtown as Sidney's central gathering place through coordinated marketing and community events.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.2.1 Create short spotlight features (print, online, or video) that tell the stories of Sidney's local businesses and their owners.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$2,000–\$10,000 annually
3.2.2 Incorporate downtown highlights into tourism promotion.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time; \$10,000–\$15,000 annually
3.2.3 Track attendance and sales during major events to demonstrate measurable benefits of downtown activity and guide future programming.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500–\$5,000
3.2.4 Launch a “Shop Downtown Sidney” campaign timed around key seasons, e.g., holiday shopping, summer events, and back-to-school weekends.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$5,000–\$15,000 annually



Fall Festival 2023 East Main Street | C: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce

IDENTITY, PLACEMAKING, AND EXPERIENCE

A strong community identity is essential, particularly in a small rural city like Sidney, where downtown serves as both a functional hub and a symbol of community pride. Residents agree that downtown lacks a cohesive look and feel. While projects like Meadowlark Brewing, the Yellowstone Mercantile, and several murals showcase reinvestment, inconsistent signage, deferred maintenance, and vacant storefronts diminish the district's overall appeal and make it harder to market as a destination.

Residents want Sidney's identity to stay grounded in its rural and agricultural heritage—authentic, not overly themed or decorative. Farming, ranching, and local history remain central to how people describe the community, and many want those elements reflected in downtown design, signage, and marketing. The goal is a unified, down-to-earth identity that feels true to Sidney's character and scale.

Branding and wayfinding are simple, high-impact tools to strengthen that identity. Many visitors pass through Sidney without noticing downtown; clear, well-placed signage and a consistent visual language can change that. A branding toolkit—developed with local input and designed for easy use by businesses, civic groups, and event organizers—would help create uniformity across storefronts, marketing materials, and downtown events. Shared colors, fonts, and logo templates would allow anyone to promote downtown in a recognizable, coordinated way without large marketing budgets.

Sidney values its historic buildings but many need basic upkeep. Encouraging small, visible improvements—fresh paint, window repair, restored signage—can build momentum and pride. Recognition programs or walking tours could highlight successful restorations and inspire others to invest. New construction should complement downtown's scale, materials, and traditional form, strengthening rather than diluting its historic character.

Events and experiences also shape identity. Sidney already has strong traditions—parades, markets, and seasonal festivals—but residents want more family-friendly programming throughout the year. Vacant lots and underused spaces could host pop-ups, food trucks, or small performances, turning idle areas into gathering places. Collaboration among businesses, civic groups, and residents can sustain programming without overburdening the City.

Sidney's downtown identity will grow through practical, authentic steps—cohesive branding, preservation of rural character, and community-driven events. Success will depend on coordination, visible progress, and a shared sense of pride in downtown as the heart of the community.



Example of Wayfinding sign

Source: Town of Estes Park Colorado

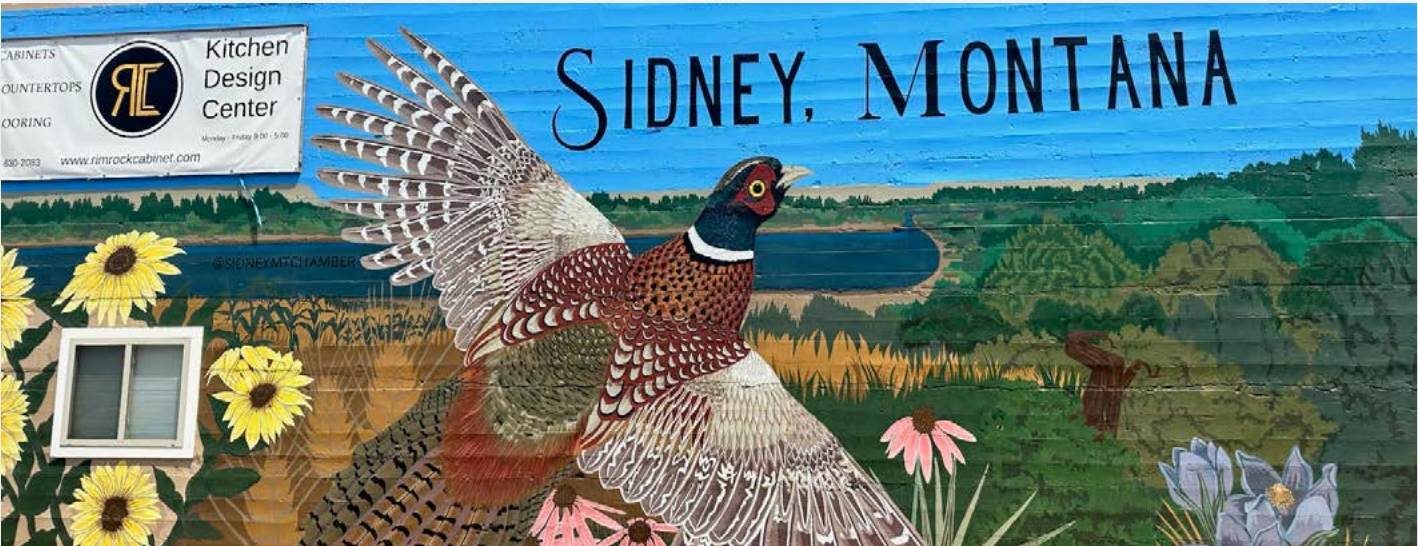
IDENTITY, PLACEMAKING & EXPERIENCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: ESTABLISH A COHESIVE IDENTITY FOR DOWNTOWN WITH BRANDING AND SIGNAGE VISUALS THAT MATCH SIDNEY’S SCALE, TO GIVE RESIDENTS A SENSE OF PLACE.

Objective 1.1: Create a simple, shared brand for Downtown Sidney that businesses and civic groups can apply consistently across signs, storefronts, and promotions.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.1 Develop a concise branding toolkit for Downtown related efforts that includes logo options, color palettes, fonts, and templates for signs, flyers, and social media graphics.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$10,000–\$20,000
1.1.2 Partner with the Chamber, schools, or local artists to design imagery that reflects Sidney’s agricultural roots and small-town character.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time
1.1.3 Engage a professional designer through state grants or Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) funding to prepare print-ready files and editable templates.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$15,000–\$30,000



Central Avenue Mural on the South side of Rimrock Cabinet Company. Mural Artist: Colleen Clarke | PC: Interstate Engineering

Objective 1.2: Install coordinated wayfinding and gateway signage that reinforces the downtown brand and guides visitors to key destinations.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.1 Start with three to five pilot signs utilizing the Downtown brand at primary entry points and major intersections to test layout and durability.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce City of Sidney	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$15,000–\$40,000
1.2.2 Plan for gradual expansion, adding pedestrian-scale wayfinding, parking markers, and directional inserts to parks, schools, and attractions as additional funding becomes available.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce City of Sidney	Long Term (5+ years)	\$20,000–\$75,000
1.2.3 Seek sponsorships or partnerships to offset installation and maintenance costs, ensuring the signs remain well-kept.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3–4 years)	Staff time; \$2,500–\$5,000

Objective 1.3: Coordinate communication and marketing so that all partners share consistent messages and maximize limited resources.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.3.1 Form a small communications group of downtown businesses, the Chamber, and civic organizations to align promotions and media outreach.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time; \$500 - \$1,000 annually
1.3.2 Maintain a unified events calendar posted online, on social media, and in printed form for storefront display.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time; \$1,000 - \$2,000 annually
1.3.3 Track engagement metrics (social-media reach, event attendance, website hits) to measure progress and guide future marketing efforts.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0–2 years)	Staff time; \$1,000 - \$2,000 annually

GOAL #2: PRESERVE SIDNEY'S HISTORIC CHARACTER WHILE MODERNIZING DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TO ENSURE NEW CONSTRUCTION, INFILL, AND LAND USES REINFORCE THE COMMUNITY'S RURAL IDENTITY AND SMALL-TOWN SCALE.

Objective 2.1: Update the zoning code and design standards to provide clear, accessible, and enforceable guidance for future development.



Conceptual Rendering of a design that provides a realistic, code-compliant vision for adaptive reuse and infill development. Not meant to reflect actual projects. (2.2)

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.1 Use input from the design charrette and public workshops to calibrate standards that reflect community preferences while remaining practical for local builders and property owners.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500
2.1.2 Clarify approval procedures for façade improvements, signage, and infill development, so applicants understand expectations and timelines from the outset.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000
2.1.3 Consolidate and rewrite the City’s zoning and design standards into a clear, user-friendly format that defines building scale, massing, setbacks, stepbacks, façade treatments, and materials appropriate for downtown.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 years)	\$50,000 - \$75,000

Objective 2.2: Create voluntary design guidelines and funding mechanisms that encourage property owners to reinvest and align with new standards.



Conceptual rendering of a building design that demonstrates how community priorities can guide adaptive reuse of historic properties and enhance Sidney's downtown character. Not meant to reflect actual projects.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.1 Prepare illustrated design guidelines that show appropriate colors, materials, and architectural details consistent with Sidney's rural and historic character.	City of Sidney Design Consultant	Medium Term (3–4 years)	\$20,000 - \$40,000
2.2.2 Pursue funding through state preservation, tourism, or rural development grants to establish small incentive programs (e.g., mini-grants, design assistance) that encourage compliance.	REDC	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000
2.2.3 Highlight and celebrate early adopters through local media or City recognition programs to showcase successful reinvestment.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce Newspapers MonDak Heritage	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000
2.2.4 Maintain an online library of resources, including the guidelines, application forms, and funding options, to improve transparency and ease of access.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000

Objective 2.3: Refine permitted uses and zoning overlays to strengthen downtown’s commercial vitality and visual appeal.



Conceptual rendering of an existing downtown structure that reflects community input and aligns with the character of the B-3 Central Business District. The concept maintains the current building footprint while upgrading materials, lighting, and facade detailing to create a more inviting and functional mixed-use space. Not meant to reflect actual projects.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.3.1 Revise zoning to limit non-active uses such as storage or warehousing along Main Street and Central Avenue, ensuring ground floors remain pedestrian-oriented.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500-\$5,000
2.3.2 Encourage active and engaging uses, like retail, restaurants, galleries, or personal services, on primary corridors to sustain downtown energy throughout the day.	REDC	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500-\$5,000
2.3.3 Evaluate implementation options such as a downtown overlay district, a simplified form-based code, or targeted amendments to the existing zoning framework.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 years)	Staff time; \$5,000-\$10,000
2.3.4 Coordinate land use adjustments with design standards to ensure building form and function work together.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 years)	Staff time; \$5,000-\$10,000

GOAL #3: EXPAND EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES THAT REFLECT SIDNEY'S CULTURE, BRING RESIDENTS TOGETHER, AND PROVIDE VISITORS WITH AUTHENTIC, FAMILY-FRIENDLY EXPERIENCES ROOTED IN THE COMMUNITY'S IDENTITY.

Objective 3.1: Strengthen existing events through coordinated planning, shared resources, and diverse local partnerships.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.1.1 Enhance established events, such as the Sunrise Festival, parades, and Farmers Market, with simple, affordable additions like live music, family games, or food vendors.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce Richland County Extension Office MonDak Heritage Center	Short Term (0-2 years)	\$10,000 - \$20,000 annually
3.1.2 Rotate event leadership among civic groups, businesses, and service clubs to share responsibilities and sustain volunteer energy.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce (event coordination?)	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$500 - \$1,000
3.1.3 Create a shared equipment inventory (tents, lighting, signage, sound systems) maintained by the City or Chamber to reduce recurring costs.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000
3.1.4 Pursue combined funding sources, including TBID grants, Chamber sponsorships, and local business contributions, to strengthen financial stability for recurring events.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3-4 years)	Staff time; \$1,000 - \$2,500



Fall Festival in Downtown Sidney | Source: Sidney Chamber of Commerce Facebook

Objective 3.2: Develop new, tourism-oriented programming that complements community events and supports local businesses.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.2.1 Promote downtown as the preferred venue for festivals, pop-up markets, and holiday activities to increase foot traffic and retail sales.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce TBID	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$5,000 - \$10,000 annually
3.2.2 Encourage multi-day or weekend-long events that include dining and shopping incentives for attendees.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3-4 years)	Staff time; \$5,000 - \$10,000 annually
3.2.3 Track event performance (e.g., attendance, spending, and lodging impact) to demonstrate value and guide future programming decisions.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time; \$2,500 - \$5,000 annually

Objective 3.3: Expand community participation and volunteer capacity to sustain downtown programming long term.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.3.1 Establish a volunteer sign-up system that matches community members with specific event roles such as setup, promotion, or hospitality.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce RSVP	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time
3.3.2 Encourage sponsorships from local businesses in exchange for visible recognition during events.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time
3.3.3 Host an annual event-planning workshop led by the Chamber, City, and TBID to coordinate logistics, marketing, and funding opportunities.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3-4 years)	Staff time; \$1,000 - \$2,500 annually
3.3.4 Publicly recognize volunteers and sponsors during community events and through Chamber media channels to build pride and ongoing support.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.3.5 Document event best practices, such as checklists, vendor contacts, and templates, to ease leadership transitions and maintain consistency.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 years)	Staff time

PUBLIC REALM AND STREETScape

The public realm and streetscape are at the heart of how residents and visitors experience downtown Sidney. These spaces—our sidewalks, streets, plazas, parks, and gathering spots—are more than just functional infrastructure. They are the physical stage where daily life, commerce, and community connection take place.

A well-designed public realm fosters social interaction, encouraging neighbors to meet, linger, and engage in the life of the community. It supports downtown businesses by creating an inviting, walkable environment that draws people in and keeps them exploring. Elements such as street trees, landscaping, lighting, benches, and safe crosswalks enhance comfort, safety, and accessibility for all users, from children to seniors.

The streetscape plays a key role in Sidney’s identity. Thoughtful design can reflect our history, culture, and values, making downtown a place residents are proud of and visitors remember. Sidney has already demonstrated the value of integrating art into the public realm through the installation of four Sidney-themed murals in the downtown area. These works not only enhance the visual character of the streetscape but also serve as a form of regional promotion, telling our story and showcasing the community to both residents and travelers. Survey feedback shows that while 22.6% of respondents identified a desire for additional public art or murals, the majority expressed higher priorities in other streetscape enhancements. Public art, signage, and distinctive architectural details remain important tools for adding character and reinforcing Sidney’s sense of place.

Beyond aesthetics, the public realm contributes to health, accessibility, and sustainability. Walkable, shaded streets encourage active lifestyles and provide direct connections to essential community resources. In downtown Sidney, a short walk can link residents to the school system, vision and dental care providers, and both city and county government offices. According to the 2022 Richland County Quality of Life Assessment, 38.6% of county residents say that sidewalks would help them be more physically active, while 45.2% say that parks and trails would encourage them to increase their physical activity. These findings underscore the importance of investing in pedestrian and recreational infrastructure as part of the public realm. At the same time, green infrastructure, such as permeable pavements, native plantings, and stormwater features, supports environmental stewardship.



Fall Festival 2024 | 2nd Street Northwest Mural
PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce

Well-maintained sidewalks are a key component of the public realm, yet their condition and consistency vary significantly throughout downtown Sidney. This is particularly evident in the transition areas where residential neighborhoods meet the downtown core. Within the heart of downtown, sidewalks are generally 7 feet wide, providing adequate space for pedestrians, street furniture, and landscaping features. The Montana Department of Transportation holds a right-of-way extending to the exterior of buildings along Central Avenue, influencing sidewalk design, placement, and maintenance. Despite this, sidewalk conditions are not ideal—several segments are crumbling, collapsing, or missing entirely, creating accessibility issues and detracting from the pedestrian experience. Addressing these deficiencies, particularly in high-traffic areas and key connection points to surrounding neighborhoods, will be essential to fostering walkability and ensuring the downtown is safe and welcoming for all users.

The public realm also directly influences the economic vitality of downtown. Sidney's core includes approximately 75 buildings, housing a diverse mix of uses: 17 bars and restaurants, 15 retail businesses, and numerous service-oriented establishments such as law offices, CPA firms, dental and eye care providers, insurance agencies, hair salons, and a 24-hour gym. An attractive and accessible streetscape encourages residents and visitors to spend more time, and money, in these businesses. Enhancements to the public realm can create a positive feedback loop: increased foot traffic supports local merchants, which in turn sustains a vibrant and active downtown. Furthermore, the Sidney Tourism Business Improvement District, the Convention and Visitor Bureau, and the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture have all developed tourism strategies, funded by the Montana Department of Commerce, that explicitly integrate downtown Sidney as a tourism attraction. These efforts recognize downtown not only as a local hub but also as a destination for visitors, reinforcing the importance of investing in its public spaces and streetscape.

Currently, Sidney faces a lack of functional, healthy vegetation in its downtown streetscape. A tree-planting effort undertaken roughly 20 years ago used species ill-suited for the setting, resulting in hard-to-maintain trees and inadequate sidewalk accommodations. Many of these trees have since failed, leaving limited greenery in the public realm. With downtown following the Highway 16 corridor, future landscaping plans must consider the unique operational needs of semi-trailers, snowplows, and the heavy oil and agricultural traffic that define Sidney's economy. Survey results indicate strong public support for reintroducing greenery—64.6% of respondents identified the need for more landscaping and plantings in downtown.

Feedback from the public visioning workshop also emphasized the need for more garbage receptacles, improved overall cleanliness, and better street maintenance. Maintaining a clean and well-kept streetscape is



Artist paints mural on South Side of Centre Movie Theatre. Artist: Rhonda Whited | PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce



Memorial Day 2024 in Veterans Memorial Park | PC: Interstate Engineering

especially challenging in Sidney due to the downtown's role as part of Highway 16—a heavily traveled route for the agricultural and oil industries. Large trucks, equipment, and constant freight traffic contribute to wear and tear, debris, and grime at a pace that outmatches typical municipal maintenance schedules. Addressing these concerns will require both strategic design solutions and maintenance planning that acknowledges the demands placed on this critical transportation corridor.

Currently, there is no formal public initiative for street furniture in downtown Sidney. The City of Sidney provides three trash receptacles along the downtown sidewalks and offers additional receptacles and services upon request for festivals, parades, and other events. Some individual businesses choose to add their own small benches, flower pots, or flags, but there is no organized program to ensure these amenities are distributed consistently throughout downtown. A grassroots patriotism effort is led by Richland County JCI (formerly the Jaycees), which contracts with businesses to display the American flag at their locations during appropriate patriotic holidays. These independent efforts highlight both the community's interest in enhancing downtown's appearance and the opportunity to coordinate and expand such amenities as part of a comprehensive streetscape strategy.

There are currently four empty lots within downtown that present opportunities for enhancing the public realm. Lot 1 sits next to the Centre Movie Theatre, Lot 2—owned by the City of Sidney—is located west of City Hall, Lot 3 is next to Yellowstone Mercantile Company, and Lot 4 is adjacent to Sunny's Family Restaurant. Most of these sites have remained undeveloped for decades, with their origins as vacant lots tied to fires that destroyed former buildings 20 to 60 years ago. These spaces could be transformed into pocket parks, outdoor seating areas, public art installations, or new commercial developments, providing valuable infill opportunities to strengthen downtown's vibrancy and pedestrian appeal.

Wayfinding and signage improvements are also recommended to better draw people into downtown and guide them to local businesses, attractions, and amenities. Well-placed directional signs, maps, and branded gateways can strengthen downtown's visibility and encourage visitors to explore more of what Sidney offers. Parking availability is not necessarily a shortage issue; rather, survey feedback and observations indicate that the location, condition, and visibility of parking options need improvement. Enhancing signage for parking areas, upgrading their appearance, and ensuring they are well-lit and easy to navigate will improve the downtown experience for residents and visitors alike.

In Sidney, investment in our public realm and streetscape is an investment in our community's vitality. By creating safe, accessible, and attractive spaces, we can strengthen downtown as the social, economic, and cultural heart of our city.

PUBLIC REALM AND STREETSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: ENHANCE DOWNTOWN'S AESTHETIC, IDENTITY, AND COMFORT

Objective 1.1: Enhance Downtown’s aesthetic, identity, and comfort

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.2 Use functional art (bike racks, benches, trash receptacles), native and drought-tolerant landscaping, and seasonal change-outs (removable planters, banners) to keep downtown both practical and visually dynamic year-round.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 years)	\$50,000
1.1.3 Require or incentivize decorative barriers and streetside buffering along parking lots to soften their appearance, improve walkability, and blend them into the downtown streetscape.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Medium Term (3-4 years)	\$50,000
1.1.4. Incorporate street trees, planters with integrated seating, awnings, or canopies to provide shade, weather protection, and pedestrian comfort along sidewalks and gathering areas.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Long Term (5+ Years)	Staff Time \$100,000

Objective: 1.2 Improve comfort and vitality downtown by adding coordinated street furniture and amenities.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.1 Install coordinated street furniture—benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, and modular fixtures—placed strategically to support walkability and accessibility.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Medium Term (3-4 years)	\$50,000
1.2.2 Layer visual cues such as furniture placement, public art, and lighting to reduce perceived lane widths, calm traffic, and reinforce downtown’s brand identity.	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 years)	\$25,000

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.3 Integrate lighting with planters, benches, signage, and art installations for multifunctional impact.	City of Sidney	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$5,000

Objective 1.3: Activate vacant and underutilized spaces as community assets

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.3.1 Repurpose vacant lots, unused rights-of-way, and low-demand redevelopment areas into pocket parks, plazas, or permanent community spaces for events, markets, and gatherings.	Property Owners City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	\$150,000
1.3.2. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant buildings as business incubators or specialty shops	Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
1.3.3 Offer incentives (tax abatements, expedited permitting) to support private redevelopment alongside public activation.	City of Sidney Richland County	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	Staff Time

GOAL #2: MAINTAIN A CLEAN, FUNCTIONAL, AND RESILIENT STREETScape

Objective 2.1: Design and maintain streetscape elements and infrastructure that can withstand Sidney's climate, heavy truck/freight use, and daily wear—ensuring long-term functionality with consistent cleaning and maintenance schedules.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.1 Establish consistent maintenance and cleaning schedules that address heavy truck and freight impacts	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
2.1.2 Explore additional options to address heavy truck and freight impacts in town	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.3 Apply protective coatings like anticorrosion finishes, anti-graffiti films, and freeze thaw resistant sealants to extend lifespan of street furniture, public art, etc.	Mural Owners City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$5,000
2.1.4 Regularly seal, stripe, and repair parking lots and on-street spaces to keep them functional and visually appealing.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years) Yearly Basis	Staff Time \$30,000

Objective 2.2: Maintain a clean, functional, and resilient streetscape

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.2 Ensure trash bins are paired and located within 50 feet of food or gathering areas to reduce litter.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
2.2.3 Require streets to be cleared at posted times, as shown on public signage, to allow for routine street cleaning.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time \$1,000

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Downtown Sidney’s transportation network is centered around vehicle travel. Most residents and visitors arrive by car, with direct access provided from Highway 16 and surrounding arterial streets. The downtown corridor is served by on-street parking, and while City Code 10-2-15 limits parking to two hours between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (excluding Sundays and holidays), signage is not consistently posted throughout the district, leading to some uncertainty about where and how the ordinance is enforced.

Pedestrian movement through downtown is supported in part by the network of crosswalks provided by the City of Sidney and the Montana Department of Transportation. Crosswalks are installed at every intersection along Highway 16, as well as in high-traffic areas around Sidney Middle School, Veterans Memorial Park, and Central Elementary School. However, important gaps remain—particularly along Second Avenue East and Second Avenue West, where crosswalks are noticeably absent. This limits the ease and safety of crossing in those areas.

Sidewalks in the core of downtown range from 5 to 7 feet in width, providing enough space for two-way pedestrian traffic under normal conditions. However, this width is minimal when factoring in other potential uses. For example, if a business places a sidewalk sign, merchandise rack, or seasonal display in front of their store, it can significantly reduce the available walkway space and make it difficult for two people to pass comfortably. This limitation can affect both the pedestrian experience and the ability of businesses to activate the street edge for



*Centre Movie Theatre Mural. Artist: Rhonda Whited
PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce*



*Sidney Middle School | Central Avenue
PC: Interstate Engineering*

marketing purposes. Sidewalk condition is also inconsistent—some sections are well maintained, while others are collapsing, crumbling, or missing entirely. These irregularities, particularly near residential areas adjacent to downtown, can further hinder walkability and detract from the overall pedestrian experience.

Pedestrian activity in downtown is notably higher during the school year, particularly between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., as students travel between Sidney Middle School, Central Elementary School, and nearby neighborhoods. The close proximity of these schools to the downtown corridor creates regular surges in foot traffic, underscoring the importance of safe crossings, continuous sidewalks, and well-maintained pedestrian routes.

Connectivity to the broader active transportation network is limited. The nearest connection to the Sherry Arnold Fitness Trail is located half a mile from the primary downtown corridor. Without a direct or clearly defined link, pedestrians and cyclists are less likely to combine trail use with downtown visits.

Bicycle infrastructure is also absent from downtown Sidney. There are no designated bike lanes, meaning cyclists must share the roadway with vehicles. This can be intimidating for less experienced riders and may discourage regular bicycle trips into downtown.

In addition to the lack of bike lanes, downtown lacks other infrastructure to support alternative modes of transportation. There are no public bike racks available for secure storage, and no bike- or scooter-sharing programs currently operate in Sidney. Public transportation is available only through an appointment-based ride service, which limits its practicality for spontaneous or short trips into downtown. This lack of multimodal support reduces travel options for those without access to a vehicle and may limit downtown's appeal as a destination for younger residents, seniors, and visitors seeking alternative ways to get around.

Seasonal weather also plays a significant role in mobility and access. Winters in Sidney can last between five and seven months in some years, with prolonged periods of snow, ice, and cold temperatures. For residents and consumers, the ability to access downtown on roads and sidewalks that are cleared and maintained is critical. Safe, ice-free walking surfaces and parking located within a comfortable distance of destinations are especially important during these extended winter months, when travel can be physically challenging and less appealing.

The City of Sidney does have adequate policy in place for snow and ice removal. Per Ordinance 494 (3-1-2010): "It shall be the duty of the owner or tenant of any privately held real property in the city of Sidney to remove snow, ice and slush from sidewalks abutting said real property within twenty-four (24) hours after a snowfall." Enforcement capacity has recently been strengthened through the creation of a Compliance Officer position in 2023, allowing the city to more proactively address violations of city codes, including those related to sidewalk maintenance in winter.

Overall, while vehicle access to downtown Sidney is straightforward, pedestrian and bicycle connections are fragmented, infrastructure for alternative transportation modes is minimal, and seasonal weather conditions can further limit mobility. Addressing these gaps—along with improving sidewalk conditions and width usability, enhancing pedestrian safety during peak school-related foot traffic, and ensuring consistent winter maintenance and enforcement—will be critical in creating a more accessible, inviting, and multimodal downtown environment that serves all users.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: CREATE A SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, AND CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

Objective 1.1: Upgrade sidewalks and pedestrian areas to be smoother, more accessible, and clearly separated from vehicle traffic.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.1 Replace and expand deteriorated, uneven, or missing segments of sidewalk to accommodate protected multiuse path.	City of Sidney Private Landowners	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$100,000
1.1.2 Widen sidewalks where possible to increase capacity and comfort, especially in areas with heavy foot traffic.	City of Sidney	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$200,000
1.1.3. Incorporate planting strips, planters, or street trees to separate sidewalks from vehicle lanes, providing safety, shade, and visual appeal	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$75,000
1.1.4 Install decorative LED fixtures and canopy-style festoon or string lighting to enhance visibility, safety, and atmosphere along sidewalks and plazas.	City of Sidney	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$30,000
1.1.5. Use lighting, colored/textured pavement, and decorative elements at key crossings to reinforce downtown’s pedestrian character and identity	City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$40,000

Objective 1.2: Minimize crash risks and improve safety by redesigning crossings, intersections, and circulation patterns to lessen conflict points between people and vehicles.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.1. Use raised crosswalks with bold markings, raised designs, lighting, curb extensions, narrowed lanes, or 3D optical illusion designs to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$50,000
1.2.2 Highlight key pedestrian crossings with high-contrast paint, themed or seasonal treatments, and illuminated pavement markings or overhead lighting.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$50,000
1.2.3 Integrate Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at signals and pedestrian refuge islands at wide intersections to give walkers a safer head start and reduce conflicts.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$75,000
1.2.4 Incorporate decorative elements—such as archways, coordinated lighting, or cohesive design palettes—that reinforce downtown character while signaling driver awareness of pedestrian zones.	City of Sidney Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$150,000
1.2.5 Reconfigure and stripe narrow streets to feature parallel parking on one side and angled parking on the other, improving pedestrian visibility and overall safety.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time \$10,000

GOAL #2: MODERNIZE STREET LIGHTING BY INTEGRATING PEDESTRIAN-SCALE FIXTURES, ENHANCING SAFETY AT CROSSINGS, AND ADDING DECORATIVE ELEMENTS THAT STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN'S CHARACTER.

Objective 2.1: Integrate pedestrian-scale fixtures, decorative LEDs, and multi-functional lighting (on benches, planter posts, signage) to provide consistent illumination while reinforcing downtown's character.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.1 Select LED fixtures and posts that align with downtown's historic or architectural identity. Decorative poles, warm-temperature LEDs, and coordinated banners/flower baskets can reinforce Sidney's unique downtown feel while still providing modern efficiency.	Montana-Dakota Utilities City of Sidney Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce Branding Plan	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$500,000
2.1.3 Install color-changing LEDs, festoon string lighting, or wall uplighting that can shift for holidays, community events, or public art highlights.	Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce City of Sidney Private Property Owners	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$100,000
2.1.4 Incorporate lighting into benches, planters, bollards, and signage to maximize every element of the streetscape.	City of Sidney	Long Term (5+ Years)	\$5,000

Objective 2.2: Place hanging baskets, banners, and architectural details on light poles to lower the street "ceiling," add texture, and reflect Sidney's identity.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.1 Use pole-mounted brackets, decorative finials, and cross-arms that echo downtown's historic building details. Pair with architectural LED uplighting to emphasize vertical rhythm and make the "street ceiling" feel cohesive and human-scaled.	City of Sidney Montana Dakota Utilities Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$25,000

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.2 Integrate heritage plaques or “Did You Know?” mini-panels on poles that share Sidney’s history, local legends, or notable figures.	MonDak Heritage Center	Short Term (0-2 Years)	\$10,000
2.2.3 Install cascading flower baskets, pole planters, or climbing vines on trellis-style pole wraps. The downward and vertical growth softens pole height while visually compressing the space above sidewalks.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce Civic Groups (Lions, Kiwanis, Sunrise Ambassadors)	Short Term (0-2 Years)	\$10,000

ORGANIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Sidney is a community that is rich in social capital, supported by more than 100 nonprofit organizations serving the area. This strong network of civic, charitable, and service-oriented groups provides a solid foundation for collaboration. However, despite the abundance of active organizations, there are currently no formalized local efforts dedicated specifically to the downtown district or its beautification. With such a high level of social capital, it is reasonable to consider allocating specific downtown projects to interested civic groups whose missions align with downtown improvement. For example, local Kiwanis or Lions Clubs could “adopt a block” of downtown, taking responsibility for cleanliness, landscaping, and seasonal public floral displays. The Masons, VFW, or other fraternal organizations might choose to sponsor or construct amenities such as bike racks, benches, or wayfinding features. These targeted partnerships could channel community energy into visible, impactful enhancements while fostering shared ownership of the district’s success.

The downtown area is home to key public institutions that serve both city and county functions. Within the district, the Richland County Courthouse and its associated public parking, the Nutter Building, Sidney City Hall, and two city-owned parking lots provide essential civic infrastructure. The City also owns an undeveloped downtown lot with potential for placemaking, additional parking, or other community-centered uses.



City of Sidney Public Works Installing Street Pole Banners.
PC: Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce.

State-level support comes primarily from the Montana Department of Commerce, which offers both funding and technical assistance to Sidney through programs such as the Montana Main Street Program and the Community Development Block Grant. The Montana Main Street Program follows the nationally recognized Main Street Approach, which is built on four interconnected points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. This framework provides a community-based revitalization strategy that is practical, adaptable, and proven to guide downtown transformation. It encourages communities to strengthen their economic base, improve the physical and visual environment, promote the downtown as a destination, and establish strong partnerships and organizational capacity to sustain revitalization over time.

The Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce has been a primary driver of downtown activity, leveraging its affiliation with the Montana Main Street Program to implement several “lower-hanging fruit” projects that enhance the downtown experience. These have included the creation of downtown festivals, the installation of public murals, and the placement of decorative street pole banners. The Chamber also manages the Convention and Visitors Bureau, which allocates funding for tourism initiatives. By strategically aligning tourism promotion with downtown development, the Chamber has strengthened both the local economy and the district’s appeal to visitors.

Operationally, the City of Sidney’s Public Works Department is recognized for its forward-thinking approach, maintaining long-term planning and capital improvement programs that keep the city in a strong financial position. However, Sidney’s ability to generate new revenue for downtown projects is constrained by a limited tax structure, and public sentiment tends to be fiscally conservative.

Looking forward, the success of downtown revitalization will depend on building a more formalized coalition of public, private, and nonprofit partners who can coordinate resources, pursue funding opportunities, and implement both short-term enhancements and long-term transformational projects. By capitalizing on existing strengths—such as high community engagement, established civic infrastructure, and access to state-level programs—Sidney can develop an organizational framework that ensures downtown remains a thriving and vibrant core for generations to come.

ORGANIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: ESTABLISH A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR REVITALIZATION THAT UNIFIES PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND CIVIC EFFORTS, ENSURING PROJECTS MOVE FORWARD IN A COORDINATED WAY.

Objective 1.1: Empower Civic Contributions

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.1 Create a Downtown Project Menu – A simple one-page sheet listing tangible projects with a scope, cost, and volunteer needs (e.g., “Adopt a planter for the summer,” “Fund a bike rack,” “Sponsor a mural panel”).	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.1.2 Provide Turnkey Toolkits – Clear instructions, supply lists, and point-of-contact details so they don’t have to figure it out themselves.	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
1.1.3 Assign groups a recurring role they can take pride in.(Example: Adopt a Block Programs)	City of Sidney	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

Objective 1.2: Expand City Capacity to Manage Downtown Efforts

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
1.2.1 Dedicate annual funding to support a part-time (10 hours/week) Downtown Renewal Coordinator position within city operations, ensuring consistent management, communication, and oversight of downtown revitalization efforts.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	\$20,000/Annually
1.2.2 Explore mechanisms like a Business Improvement District (BID) or a dedicated downtown fund to support recurring operations.	City of Sidney Richland County	Medium Term (3-5 Years)	Staff Time
1.2.3 Form or formalize a Downtown Partnership Board that includes Chamber, business owners, civic clubs, and property owners.	Downtown Businesses	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

GOAL #2: MARKET DOWNTOWN SIDNEY AS A DESTINATION STOP

Objective 2.1: Build a unified brand

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.1 Develop a shared branding guide in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Center, local businesses, and municipal leaders.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	\$15,000

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.1.2 Apply the brand consistently to wayfinding signage, banners, kiosks, benches, light poles, and other streetscape elements.	City of Sidney Montana Department of Transportation	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	\$25,000
2.1.3 Encourage local adoption by supporting merchants and organizations in integrating the brand into their own marketing	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	Staff Time

Objective 2.2: Centralize and Strengthen Marketing Collaboration

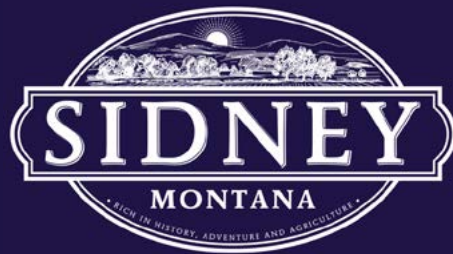
STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
2.2.1 Utilize the Chamber of Commerce as the single online hub that consolidates downtown news, events, and promotional materials.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time \$3000
2.2.2 Host quarterly roundtables with partners to align campaigns, share resources, and coordinate messaging.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
2.2.3 Launch joint campaigns that highlight seasonal events, promotions, and downtown experiences.	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time \$5,000/Annually
2.2.4 Implement a shared evaluation process where partners contribute data and feedback, with transparent reporting of results.	Downtown Group	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

GOAL #3: ALIGN LOCAL INITIATIVES AND INCENTIVES WITH DOWNTOWN GOALS**Objective 3.1: Incentivize downtown improvements to private owners**

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.1.1 Establish a local fund dedicated to funding downtown renewal initiatives, to support both private façade improvements that meet established branding guidelines and priority public infrastructure projects.	Richland County Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time
3.1.2 Align tourism development with downtown development to leverage additional funding	Sidney Chamber of Commerce	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time

Objective 3.2: Drive redevelopment forward by putting tax abatements, credits, and current funding programs to work.

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE	COST ESTIMATES
3.2.1 Collaborate with local tax authorities to adopt a property tax abatement program that incentivizes the redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized properties.	Richland County City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	Staff Time
3.2.2 Collaborate with local government to adopt a property tax abatement program for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.	Richland County City of Sidney	Medium Term (3-4 Years)	Staff Time
3.2.3 Inform and assist property owners in leveraging available programs—such as the REAP Program and Historic Preservation Tax Credits—to enhance and restore their building facades.	Richland Economic Development	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Staff Time



© 2025

DEVELOPED BY



INTERSTATE
ENGINEERING