

SIDNEY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Vision

Sidney is a thriving regional center embracing its identity as a destination for experienced-based outdoor recreation and building on its homestead heritage. Its value-added agriculture is world renown and showcases a unique natural western quality.

Sidney is a cohesive and healthy community with a strong pioneering spirit that offers opportunities for entrepreneurs and new leaders. It encourages and supports young families to put down roots in a community with small town values and big town services.

Goals and Objectives

POPULATION

Item 1: Between 1980 and 2000, Sidney population declined after the end of the last oil boom that began in the late 1970s. Population in Sidney peaked around 1980 at approximately 6,000 persons (5,726 according to 1980 census) but fell to 4,774 in 2000. Although the most recent oil activity has resulted in an increase of out-of-county workers, most of these have their full-time residence elsewhere, so they don't count for census purposes as an increase in Sidney's population. When the development phase is completed, total anticipated net newcomers as a direct result of the recent oil boom is expected to be approximately 100 persons county-wide.

The percentage of population over age 65 is growing and the percentage of school-age children is declining. With the aging population is increased potential for number of persons on fixed incomes and reduced ability to support local taxes.

Sidney would like to see the population grow and expand to support a thriving regional center.

GOAL A:	Promote population growth to sustain new businesses and schools at a rate that can be supported with government services and infrastructure.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate with ongoing efforts to attract and retain businesses and young families. 2. For planning purposes, set population growth targets based on best available information. 3. Identify areas in the city and city-county area that are desirable for growth and target capital improvements in these areas.

HOUSING

Item 1: Even with declining populations over the past 20 years, the number of households was greater than the supply of housing in fair or better condition in the year 2000, before the most recent housing demand influx from oil activity. Nine percent of the city’s housing is in less than fair condition.

Despite the recent increase in demand, there have been no subdivisions of more than a few lots in Sidney. Both the private and the public sector have been cautious not to repeat losses resulting from overbuilding in response to the last oil boom.

Residential development in the city is constrained by availability of lots—much of the city is developed and areas that could expand within city limits are not for sale.

GOAL A:	Expand housing stock in good condition to meet needs.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess and quantify demand for housing based on existing and projected future needs. 2. Expand programs to rehabilitate existing housing units. 3. Identify and initiate programs to address decay and assist with demolition.

GOAL B:	Continue historical trend of residential development growth in or in very close proximity to Sidney
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify areas in the city and city-county area that are desirable for residential growth and target capital improvements in these areas. 2. Promote in-fill development and historical city housing densities to maximize use of existing and future infrastructure.

Item 2: The Richland Housing Authority works to provide low income housing, but demand continues to exceed supply.

Affordable housing for those who do not qualify for low income assistance is a continuing problem, especially as market demand has resulted in increased housing prices.

The increasing population over age 65 is resulting in specialized housing needs. Richland Opportunities Inc. has people on a waiting list for special needs housing.

GOAL A:	Improve capabilities of low-moderate income persons to purchase and maintain homes.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the number of low-moderate persons assisted in purchasing and maintaining homes. 2. Encourage new development to include affordable housing options. 3. Assess need for and develop a housing foundation fund.

GOAL B:	Encourage development to meet housing needs of seniors and those with disabilities.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify priority projects for Sidney area seniors. 2. Continue to support Richland Opportunities Inc. programs.

AGRICULTURE

Item 1: Agriculture is integral to the history, economy, and vision of the city of Sidney. Sidney Sugar, Sidney Livestock Market Center, Anheuser Busch facility, and the Agricultural Research Station are all located in the Sidney city-county area.

GOAL A:	Promote value-added agriculture.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to market Sidney as a place for agriculture-based businesses, particularly those needing city services and infrastructure. 2. Develop and expand new and existing agricultural businesses. 3. Increase resources for agricultural research that supports growth of agribusinesses and improves competitiveness of growers.

ECONOMY

Item 1: Oil and gas boom-bust cycles have provided benefits and costs for the Sidney economy in the past. Local economic development groups are working to diversify and strengthen the local economy.

Oil and gas development has potential for continued growth, and has contributed to a recent expansion of jobs, services, and higher paying wages since 2000. Revenues associated with the oil boom provide opportunities to plan ahead and make investments for the future.

GOAL A:	Develop Sidney’s economy in ways that can build small town character and big town services.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand and diversify businesses. 2. Coordinate economic development with land use and capital infrastructure policies. 3. Evaluate effect of specific development proposals on community character and health prior to committing public resources. 4. Continue to support downtown renewal and beautification projects and promote public participation in planning and goal-setting.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Item 1: Communities in Action, a multi-agency grassroots project initiated by Richland County Public Health, is in its second year of planning for the long-term overall health of Richland County (including health of the environment and quality of life). As part of that effort they have conducted a number of public surveys and public meetings around the county. Increased rates of domestic violence, drug and alcohol use/abuse; and suicide and other mental health issues; high numbers of uninsured and underinsured; shortage of medical and mental health care providers; special issues related to youth; increasing numbers of seniors; water and air quality, and desire for more cultural events and activities were all identified as issues or concerns by Sidney area residents.

The Communities in Action project is multi-year with a number of resources including VISTA volunteers. There are opportunities for implementing the Growth Policy by partnering with Communities in Action as they begin the next phase of their effort, which is strategic planning.

GOAL A:	Make improvements to overall community health and safety a priority for Sidney’s future.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify specific measures that can be taken by Sidney to address overall community health and safety. 2. Continue to have the City of Sidney designate a representative to the County Board of Health. 3. Implement relevant actions for the Sidney area in the County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Item 2: Attracting and retaining EMTs is a growing concern for Sidney.

GOAL A:	Continue emergency medical coverage with local ambulance and EMTs.
Objectives:	Attract and retain volunteers, and provide training and funding for programs.

Item 3: Life-long learning opportunities were identified as a need in the county. These included post-secondary education and the informational and recreational opportunities provided by the Richland County Library.

Expanding post-secondary education opportunities for existing residents could increase the potential of the existing workforce. Some believe the solution is a post-secondary institution in Richland County, while others encourage use of technology to access classes elsewhere. Many people have used the library for distance education classes. Library staff helps to facilitate these classes as well as proctor for tests.

The library provides a number of in-house and outreach programs and is currently expanding its “Every Child Ready to Read” program (birth through age four) especially to day care facilities. Staff, space limitations, and other resource needs constrain the library’s hours of operation and range of services.

GOAL A:	Expand opportunities for life-long learning for adults and children beyond the K-12 system.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore a variety of options to expand post-secondary educational opportunities in Sidney. 2. Support the Richland County Public Library in providing quality services for the recreational and life long learning needs of all residents. 3. Continue to have the City of Sidney designate a representative to the Library Board of Trustees.

Item 4: According to the July 2006 telephone survey, 86% of Sidney area residents consider recreational facilities important. Residents are avid users of the existing trail system and active participants in a number of city-sponsored and local organization activities such as hockey, gymnastics, etc. There is increasing desire for expansion of existing recreational services, such as recently added ball fields in the city's park system, expanded walking paths and sidewalks, and new facilities such as a skate park or a youth recreation center.

GOAL A:	Continue to expand recreational services to meet demand and projected long-term use.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the city trail system and consider extensions outside of the city (such as integration into a larger countywide trail system). 2. Continue support for non-profit recreation organizations. 3. Identify recreation needs, assess proposed or desired new facilities, long-term projected use and cost-benefit, and integrate into a capital improvements plan as needed.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Item 1: The City does not have an overall updated capital improvements plan for roads, streets, bridges, storm drainage, and city-owned buildings. Some major water supply and waste water system improvements identified in the 1983 Comprehensive Plan have not yet been addressed. Larger and/or additional main lines and storage facilities would be needed to serve a major increase in city water customers. Any major expansion in any direction except to the south would require new main collection lines for the city's wastewater system. A new cell is also needed for the city's lagoon system.

Transportation issues include a bypass to route truck traffic away from downtown (also identified in the 1983 plan), need for a traffic light at Holly and Central, and addressing delays at railroad crossings (potentially impeding timely emergency service).

Commercial and business "strip" development on major entrance routes to Sidney was identified in the 1983 Comprehensive Plan and raised again in Growth Policy planning meetings. One concern is that the many approaches create safety and traffic issues.

GOAL A:	Plan and design for long term public facilities development, maintenance, operation, and eventual upgrades or replacement over time.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare an overall capital improvements plan. 2. Coordinate with the Yellowstone Valley Railroad to address railroad crossings.

GOAL B:	Promote development with adequate services that does not add to the tax burden for existing landowners.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote development in city limits or areas identified for annexation/capital improvements extension, and discourage inefficient land use patterns. 2. Include provisions for subdivisions to pay their portion of infrastructure and services. 3. Require subdividers to provide financial guarantees to ensure development of subdivision improvements not completed by final plat.

GOAL C:	Maintain and improve safety on major routes.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify methods to establish a traffic light at Holly and Central. 2. Coordinate with Montana Department of Transportation to assess by-pass routes. 3. Assess and address safety impacts of “strip-development.”

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Item 1: Sidney residents value the appearance of their community. Tree-lined streets and well-kept yards are a signature feature of the city's core. 93% of Sidney area residents support preserving historic buildings and sites.

GOAL A:	Maintain and improve community character and implement beautification projects.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maintain Sidney's designation as a Tree City USA.2. Prioritize and implement historic building retention, preservation, and restoration.3. Develop a sign ordinance.



Tree-lined streets in Sidney

Item 2: According to the telephone survey conducted in June 2006, more residents are dissatisfied with cultural opportunities in Richland County than any other type of service or infrastructure. Nearly 40% of those surveyed ranked cultural events as poor or fair. Another 40% ranked such events as good. The need for a cultural event center was identified in the 1983 plan.

Cultural activities are amenities that help attract and retain high quality industries and employment.

GOAL A:	Improve cultural attractions/opportunities in the area.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue and increase support of the MonDak Heritage Center. 2. Develop a performing arts center. Consider including such a center as part of a community-conference center.

LAND USE

Item 1: The city and county have jointly identified a band that extends around the city limits as a joint city-county planning area. There is no zoning in this area, but there is in the city. Development outside of the city limits could proceed in a way that hinders logical extension of city streets and infrastructure. Zoning in at least a portion of the area around Sidney would facilitate extension of the city as it grows.

The zoning map is oversized and not electronic; making copies is not feasible.

The city has annexed several times in the past two decades. The result is a city boundary that is irregular and stretched out, making it difficult and costly for provision of city services such as law enforcement, and provision of city infrastructure such as water and wastewater.

New development within the city's boundaries is limited by the lack of vacant lots. In order for Sidney to provide for a major new housing development, the city may need to extend its boundaries.

GOAL A:	Provide for logical, cost effective future extension of city limits and city infrastructure.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify areas for potential city growth that will "fill in" the irregular and stretched out configuration of existing city limits. 2. Extend zoning up to one mile within the city-county planning area. 3. Review and update the zoning ordinance to reflect Growth Policy. 4. Develop the city zoning map as a GIS map to facilitate changes and ability to relate information to the public.