PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

5-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Ronan

GROWTH. OUR WAY.

KLJ

2024

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2023, the Ronan Revitalization, Ronan Chamber of Commerce, Mission West Community Development Partners, and the City of Ronan, selected a consultant and began the process of completing the Ronan Main Street Revitalization/Downtown Master Plan in tandem with the 5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Project funding was provided via grants from two entities: The Montana Main Street Program (Main Street Revitalization/Downtown Master Plan) and the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan). These plans—having a symbiotic relationship and significant overlap in subject matter, objectives, goals, analysis, findings, strategies, and recommendations—have been combined in a single report, albeit with sub-sections which address specific and/or unique requirements of each plan. This is a living document, and it is hoped that community leaders and stakeholders will review it regularly, modifying it to reflect completed projects, new priorities, and consideration of ever-changing community goals.

Project Approach

The project team adhered to the project planning and development approach set forth in the City of Ronan's scope of work, guidance provided by the Montana Main Street Program, and as detailed within the project team's proposed project approach. The approach includes the key items detailed in the following subsections.

Baseline Conditions Analysis

Data Collection

Along with information and feedback gathered during public engagement efforts, the existing conditions analysis served to identify additional partnership needs, as well as gain a better understanding of what has and has not been effective in past efforts. The 5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan includes EDA-required data and provides necessary background relevant to establishing current/baseline conditions. Information gathered and assessed included:

- Existing codes, policies, practices, programs, and community business plans
- Tribal and non-Tribal demographics/2020 US Census Bureau Update
- Tribal and city history/culture/socio-economic information
- Housing studies and/or data
- Tourism information/studies/forecasts
- Chamber of Commerce annual reports
- County/Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS)
- Capital Improvement Plans/Growth Policies and related information/documents

GIS and Base Mapping

Geographic Information System (GIS) data was used to inventory and understand existing City infrastructure and future projects (such as the US Highway (Hwy) 93 realignment project). Relevant maps and figures, especially for the Downtown Master plan efforts, were developed utilizing the following data:

- Existing Land Use/Zoning
  - Tribal and Public land use/zoning
  - Tribal and municipal boundaries
- Existing Sidewalks/Trails/Pathways
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space (Local and Regional)
- Parking Information (where available)
- Surface features (street lighting, street signs, poles, signals, crosswalks, curb and gutter, storm inlets, manholes, etc., where available (site visit/desktop inventory).
- Road Right of Ways (ROWs/Easement data (where available)
- Rail Lines/ROWs
- Lakes, streams & rivers
- Cadastral, Parcel, and Landcover data

Public Engagement

The primary objective of public engagement is to form a genuine partnership with members of the community and related stakeholders to better understand the needs and desires of individuals living in the area and to use this information as part of the planning process. Community plans are infinitely more effective when members of the community are invested in identified projects and can participate in the economic prosperity of their region. . Engagement strategies included in-person meetings (including scheduled and “pop-up” meetings, as well as development of “meetings-in-a-box" that community members could utilize for their own meetings), on-line information/opportunities for engagement, virtual meetings, surveys (both hard-copy and on-line), use of social media, and creation of publicity materials for distribution throughout the community.
5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan & Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan and 5-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) are companion plans. Public engagement addressed both plans simultaneously and information gathered collectively shaped and guided the overall project from visioning and alternatives development to final goals and project selection.

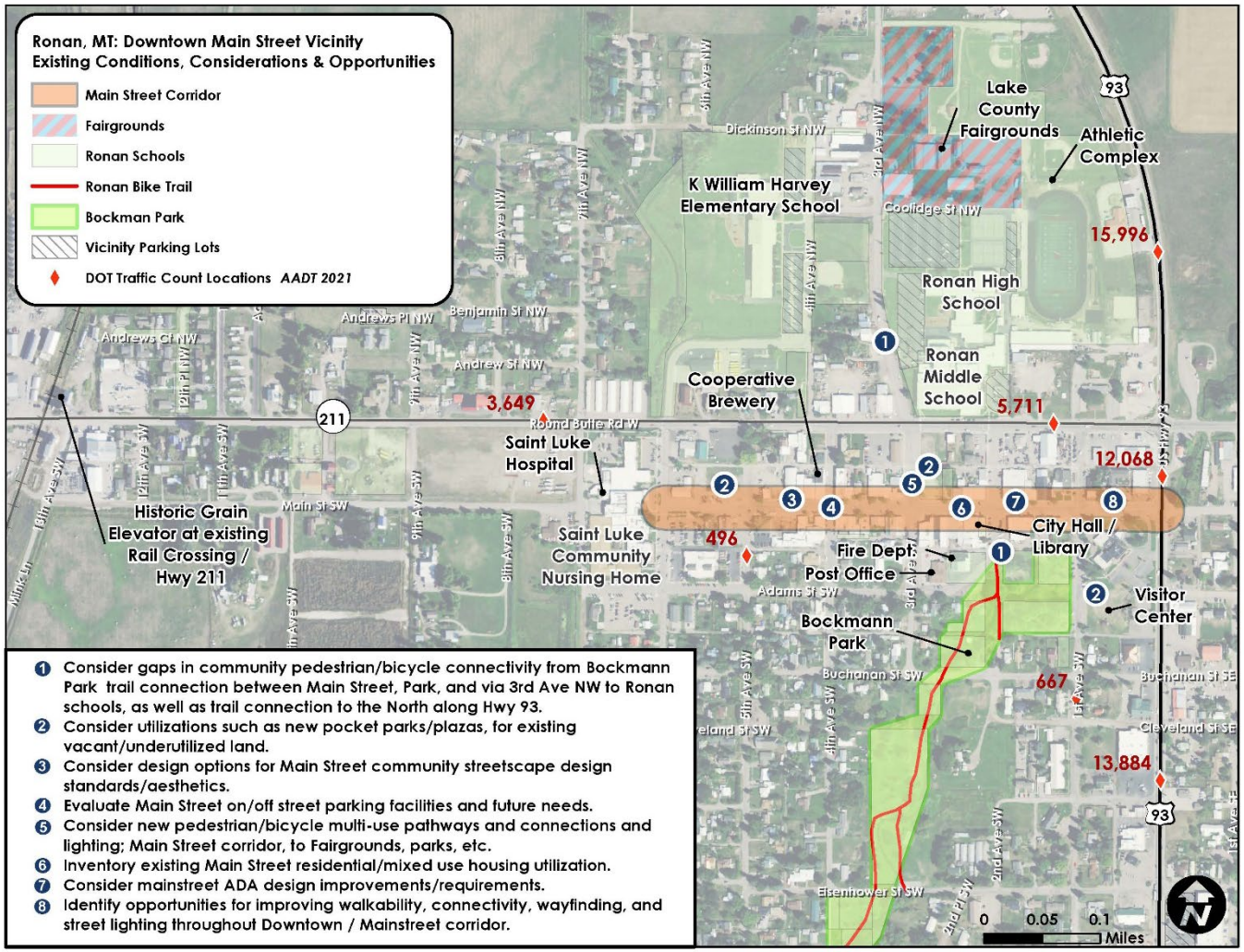
The final plan incorporates project and policy recommendations, identification of some initial funding resources and revitalization incentives, and an overall approach that adheres to Montana Main Street (MMS) guidance as well as EDA CEDS guidance/recommendations.

Both the Downtown Master Plan and CEDS utilize guidance from the National Trust Main Street Center Four Point Approach set forth in the Montana Main Street (MMS) Program, which includes the **Four Key Points:**

1. **Economic Vitality**
2. **Design**
3. **Promotion**
4. **Organization**

The Downtown Master Plan is directly informed by the CEDS. Main Street revitalization is centered on two of the four key points: **Design and Promotion.** Main Street planning and design focuses on the physical transformation of Main Street. This is achieved through enhancement of the existing environment through improvement to community and multi-modal transportation connectivity, aesthetic improvements, and commercial enterprises **(Reference Figure 1)**. In addition, identification of existing and potential community assets, facilities, public spaces, and business opportunities functions to promote new and attractive community amenities which are also identified in the CEDS.

FIGURE 1 - CITY OF RONAN EXISTING CONDITIONS, CONSIDERATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES



BASELINE CONDITIONS

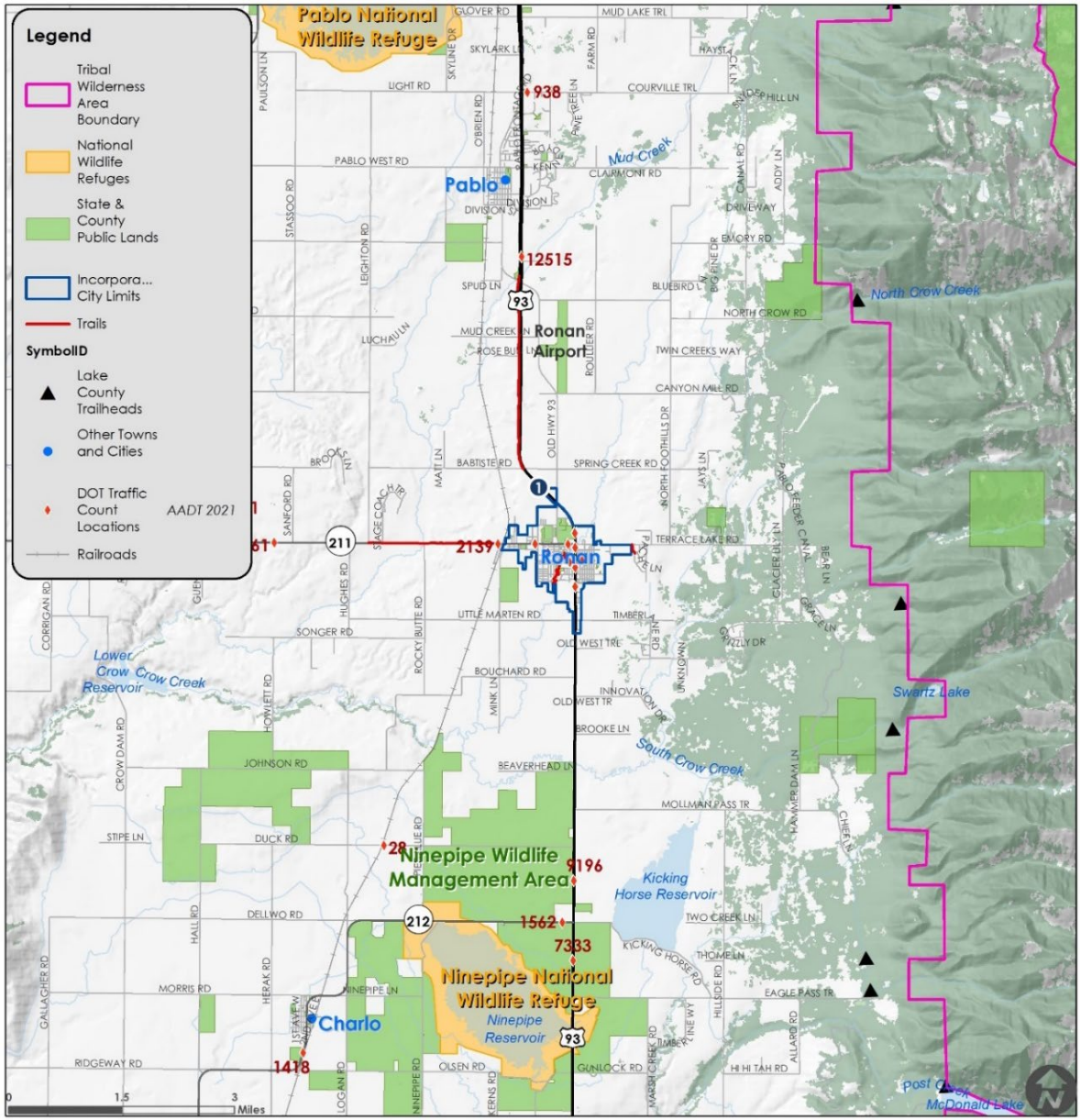
Ronan is considered a rural/frontier community. It has an estimated population of 1,995 (2020 Decennial Census) and is in Lake County, Montana (MT), located within the Flathead Indian Reservation. Ronan is situated along US Highway 93, a principal arterial roadway connecting the cities of Kalispel to the north and Missoula to the south. Farms, ranches, Tribal lands, and the Mission Mountain Range surround the community. Polson, the Lake County seat, is also located on Hwy 93, 14 miles north.

The Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) and its administrative headquarters and other Tribal Community facilities are located in Pablo, MT, approximately 6 miles north of Ronan. Much of the land area around the city and numerous parcels within the city itself are owned by the CSKT. A CSKT Council member described Ronan as the 'heart of the reservation' giving indication that the Tribe, in addition to other community members and officials, recognize the potential and importance of Ronan to the Tribe, and to this region of Montana.

Geography

Ronan is in close proximity to a number of regional geographic features and natural assets which include several wilderness, wildlife, and recreational areas. Refer to **Figure 2** for the locations and boundary delineations for the CSKT Tribal Wilderness Area, Pablo National Wildlife Refuge, Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area and Refuge, State and County Public Lands, and Lake County Trailhead locations.

FIGURE 2 – RONAN REGIONAL LOCATION MAP



Demographic Profile

Demographic information for Ronan is sourced from a combination of the most recent 2020 Decennial Census data with additional demographic estimations provided by 2021 and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data (Ronan, city, Montana Profile[1]). The 2020 Census population of Ronan was 1,955 (*current estimated population is approximately 2,200*). This reveals a low/modest growth trend from the previous 2010 Census (population 1,817) and the 2000 Census (population 1,812). . Lake County's population grew at a rate of 7.6% total or 0.7% per year from 2010 – 2020. The population of Lake County has continued to increase, even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1 details incorporated cities and towns in the Mission West Community Development Partners'-Economic Development District (MWCDP-EDD) region. These are listed from largest to smallest, including communities with a population threshold of 700+ residents. **Table 2** through **Table 5** provide total population breakdown details for Ronan's racial composition, gender statistics by age group, median age by gender, and primary languages spoken by residents, respectively.

TABLE 1 – LARGEST CITIES IN THE MISSION WEST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

CITY NAME	POPULATION IN 2020	PERCENT OF REGION	COUNTY
Polson	5,148	10.7%	Lake
Pablo	2,138	4.4%	Lake
Ronan	**1,955**	**4.1%**	**Lake**
Thompson Falls	1,336	2.8%	Sanders
Plains	1,106	2.3%	Sanders
Superior	830	1.7%	Mineral
St. Ignatius	768	1.6%	Lake
Arlee	720	1.5%	Lake

TABLE 2 – RACIAL COMPOSITION OF RONAN, MT

RONAN 2020 TOTAL POPULATION:	1,955
White alone (nor Hispanic or Latino)	1,089
Black or African American alone	3
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	579
Asian alone	22
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	2
Some Other Race alone	13
Two or More Races	247
***Hispanic or Latino**	102

[1] https://data.census.gov/all?q=Ronan%20city,%20Montana

TABLE 3 – POPULATION BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP FOR RONAN, MT

AGE	TOTAL FEMALE: 1,031	TOTAL MALE: 924
Under 5 years	62	67
5 to 9 years	68	63
10 to 14 years	58	89
15 to 17 years	42	31
18 and 19 years	20	19
20 years	14	9
21 years	17	10
22 to 24 years	34	36
25 to 29 years	66	70
30 to 34 years	52	58
35 to 39 years	82	50
40 to 44 years	53	58
45 to 49 years	54	45
50 to 54 years	51	47
55 to 59 years	40	50
60 and 61 years	30	17
62 to 64 years	45	32
65 and 66 years	29	23
67 to 69 years	38	29
70 to 74 years	57	48
75 to 79 years	33	39
80 to 84 years	40	14
85 years and over	46	20

TABLE 4 – MEDIAN AGE BY GENDER IN RONAN, MT

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	38.1
Male	35.7
Female	40.0

TABLE 5 – PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN RONAN, MT

LANGUAGE (PRIMARY) SPOKEN AT HOME (2021 ACS)	ESTIMATE	PERCENT ESTIMATE
Population 5 years and over	1,677	---
Speak only English	1,525	90.9%
Speak a language other than English	152	9.1%
OF THOSE WHO SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH:		
Asian and Pacific Island languages	56	3.3%
Spanish	49	2.9%
Other languages	40	2.4%
Other Indo-European languages	7	0.4%

Economy and Workforce

2020 Census and 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates were utilized for establishing baseline demographics. The data indicate Ronan's employment rate was 49.5% (compared to 61.1% for the state of Montana). The estimated 2022 median household income was $36,310, just over half that of Montana overall ($67,631). The city's poverty rate was 25.3% compared to 12.1% in Montana. 86% of children in the public school district qualify for free and reduced school lunch. The CSKT, hospital, and school district are the largest local employers. The city also has a variety of small businesses that provide employment opportunities in retail, human and community services, and entertainment.

TABLE 6 – RONAN, MT POPULATION LABOR FORCE STATISTICS

POPULATION AGE (2021 ACS)	TOTAL ESTIMATE	LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE ESTIMATE	EMPLOYMENT/ POPULATION RATIO ESTIMATE	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ESTIMATE
Total population 16 years and over	1,415	55.8%	50.6%	8.9%
16 to 19 years	125	38.4%	22.4%	41.7%
20 to 24 years	95	66.3%	50.5%	18.6%
25 to 29 years	116	77.6%	75.0%	3.3%
30 to 34 years	111	83.8%	77.5%	7.5%
35 to 44 years	261	79.3%	75.1%	5.3%
45 to 54 years	157	73.9%	66.9%	9.5%
55 to 59 years	98	45.9%	45.9%	0.0%
60 to 64 years	126	54.8%	52.4%	4.3%
65 to 74 years	180	26.1%	23.9%	8.5%
75 years and over	146	8.2%	8.2%	0.0%

St. Luke Community Healthcare is a non-profit community-owned network of healthcare providers located in Ronan. They are currently in the in the process of implementing an Integrated Behavioral Health Program, and, as part of their mission to provide holistic health services, also provides an array of health services to include a 24-hour Emergency Room, in-patient beds, family practice, pediatrics, internal medicine, OB/GYN services, general surgery, orthopedics, internal medicine, rehab, and lab/x-ray services. In addition, the facility offers more specialized care in cardiology, audiology, sleep, vein care, urology, oncology, nephrology, neurology, and neurosurgery. In addition to the clinic in Ronan, St. Luke's has facilities in Polson and St. Ignatius. For these reasons, St. Luke's is an employer and economic driver for the Ronan community as well as the region as a whole

TABLE 7 – RONAN, MT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

AGE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2021 ACS)	ESTIMATE
Population 18 to 24 years	119
Less than high school graduate	20
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	58
Some college or Associate's degree	36
Bachelor's degree or higher	5
Population 25 years and over	**1,195**
Less than 9th grade	38
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	62
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	439
Some college, no degree	309
Associate's degree	100
Bachelor's degree	184
Graduate or professional degree	63
High school graduate or higher	1,095
Bachelor's degree or higher	247

TABLE 8 - HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR RONAN, MT

HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2021 ACS – IN INFLATION ADJUSTED DOLLARS)	HOUSEHOLDS ESTIMATE	FAMILIES ESTIMATE	MARRIED-COUPLE FAMILIES ESTIMATE	NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS ESTIMATE
TOTAL	**740**	**394**	**247**	**346**
Less than $10,000	14.5%	8.6%	8.1%	21.1%
$10,000 to $14,999	10.1%	3.3%	2.4%	18.2%
$15,000 to $24,999	13.0%	7.6%	2.4%	19.1%
$25,000 to $34,999	12.6%	10.4%	5.3%	15.6%
$35,000 to $49,999	11.4%	13.7%	6.1%	13.3%
$50,000 to $74,999	17.2%	19.5%	24.7%	11.0%
$75,000 to $99,999	12.3%	21.6%	26.7%	0.9%
$100,000 to $149,999	8.2%	13.7%	21.9%	0.9%
$150,000 to $199,999	0.8%	1.5%	2.4%	0.0%
$200,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Median income (dollars)	**34,881**	**54,773**	**75,625**	**20,250**
Mean income (dollars)	**44,968**	**60,697**	**NA**	**24,896**

TABLE 9 – RONAN, MT POVERTY STATUS

POVERTY STATUS BY AGE / GENDER (2021 ACS)	TOTAL EST.	BELOW POVERTY LEVEL EST.	BELOW POVERTY LEVEL % ESTIMATE
Population for whom poverty status is determined	1,713	415	24.2%
Under 18 years	447	112	25.1%
Under 5 years	108	48	44.4%
5 to 17 years	339	64	18.9%
Related children of householder under 18 years	442	107	24.2%
18 to 64 years	967	236	24.4%
18 to 34 years	346	126	36.4%
35 to 64 years	621	110	17.7%
60 years and over	425	99	23.3%
65 years and over	299	67	22.4%
By Gender			
Male	791	167	21.1%
Female	922	248	26.9%

TABLE 10 – RONAN, MT POPULATION WITH DISABILITY

DISABILITY STATUS (2021 ACS)	POPULATION ESTIMATE	WITH DISABILITY ESTIMATE
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population	1,714	311
BY SEX		
Male	792	119
Female	922	192
BY RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN		
White alone	917	182
Black or African American alone	6	0
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	510	86
Asian alone	48	0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0	0
Some other race alone	11	0
Two or more races	222	43
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	859	176
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	158	14
BY AGE		
Under 5 years	108	2
5 to 17 years	344	14
18 to 34 years	342	43
35 to 64 years	621	129
65 to 74 years	180	62
75 years and over	119	61

Commuting



Transportation, and the ability for residents to access employment and other essential services and amenities becomes particularly critical in rural/frontier communities. Often, residents are isolated and required to drive long distances to larger communities if services/employment are not available in the community in which they live. According to 2020 Census and 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, just over 87% of resident workers 16 years and over drove to work, of which 71.8% drove alone. 10.6 % of workers walk to work and no residents reported biking to work. 2.1% of residents reported working from home. The average(mean) travel time to work was reported to be 13.2 minutes. Of the 699 households reporting workers 16 years and over, 2.7% indicated they did not have a vehicle . **Table 11** and **Table 12** provide details on *worker's travel time to work* and *vehicles available per household*, respectively.

TABLE 11 – TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

WORKERS 16 YEARS AND OVER WHO DID NOT WORK FROM HOME: TRAVEL TIME TO WORK (ACS 2021)	ESTIMATE
TOTAL WORKERS	**684**
Less than 10 minutes	34.5%
10 to 14 minutes	23.7%
15 to 19 minutes	17.5%
20 to 24 minutes	14.0%
25 to 29 minutes	0.7%
30 to 34 minutes	5.3%
35 to 44 minutes	0.3%
45 to 59 minutes	2.0%
60 or more minutes	1.9%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	13.2

TABLE 12 – VEHICLES AVAILABLE (BY HOUSEHOLD)

VEHICLES AVAILABLE (2021 ACS)	ESTIMATE
Workers 16 years and over in households	**699**
No vehicle available	2.7%
1 vehicle available	22.6%
2 vehicles available	47.4%
3 or more vehicles available	27.3%

Housing Profile

According to the 2020 US Decennial Census, Ronan has 857 housing units. Household size is shown in **Table 13**. Ronan's home ownership rates are less than the state of Montana as a whole. According to the census, home ownership in Ronan was 54.2 % whereas in Montana it was 68.8%. Median rent in Ronan (2020) was $733 compared to $1,005 for the State of Montana. Based on stakeholder feedback and anecdotal housing information, and despite the recent construction of the Meadowlark Apartments affordable housing project, there continues to be a housing shortage in Ronan. To address housing/residential shortfalls, undeveloped/open space acreage within Ronan's municipal boundary southeast of Garfield St. SE, has been identified for future residential development.



Existing Land Use

An inventory of Ronan's Existing Land Use (ELU) was conducted via GIS. Based on information gathered from data collection, stakeholder engagement, and base mapping, ELU data was used to formulate an updated Future Land Use (FLU) plan. Ronan's Existing Land Use map is shown in **Figure 3** with existing land use (ELU) categories and their respective acreages provided in **Table 14.**

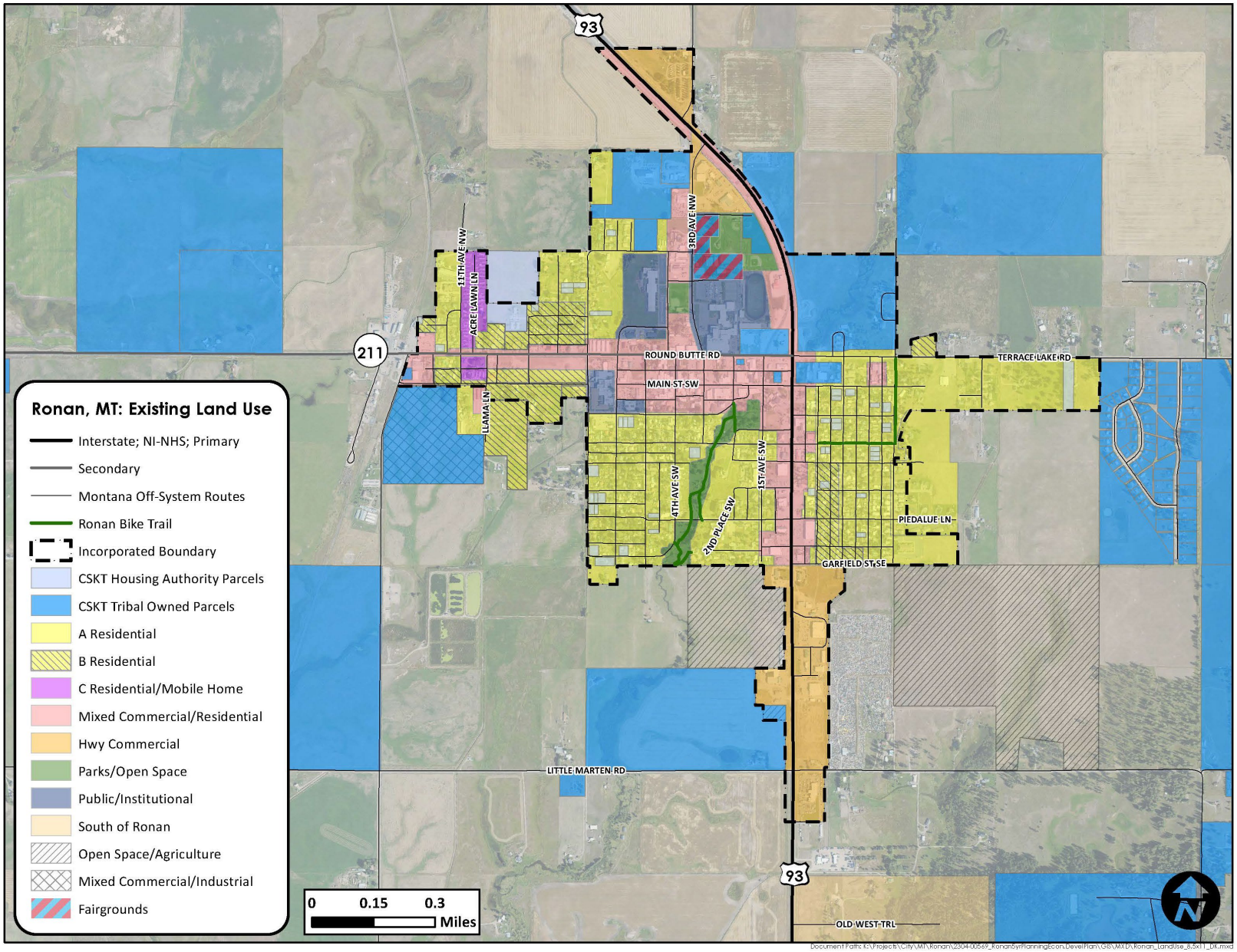
TABLE 13 – RONAN, MT HOUSEHOLD SIZE

HOUSEHOLD SIZE (2020)	RONAN CITY, MONTANA
1-person household	278
2-person household	228
3-person household	100
4-person household	93
5-person household	51
6-person household	24
7-or-more-person household	20
Total:	**794**

TABLE 14 – ELU ACREAGES BY CATEGORY

ELU	ACRES	
A Residential	276.69	
B Residential	44.59	Bockman Park = 12.8
C Commercial	198.5	
Parks/Open Space	24.65	Ball Diamonds = 9.9
Public/Institutional	51.68	Other = 1.9
South of Ronan	78.6	
Municipal Open Space/Agriculture	224.88	
Fairgrounds	7.87	
CSKT Tribal Owned Parcels	116.75	
CSKT Housing Authority Parcels	11.94	

FIGURE 3 – CITY OF RONAN EXISTING LAND USE (ELU) MAP



Key Community Facilities include the following:

Public and Retail

- City Hall/Library
- Fire Department
- Post Office
- CSKT Tribal Health
- Boys and Girls Club of the Flathead Reservation and Lake County
- Visitor Center
- Saint Luke Hospital
- Fairgrounds
- Cooperative Brewery and other Main Street businesses

Schools

- Ronan has one public Elementary School (K. William Harvey Elem.), one middle school, and one high school. Additionally, Ronan has one private school, Mountain Heights Mennonite School.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space

- Brockman Park
- Athletic Complex & Ball Fields

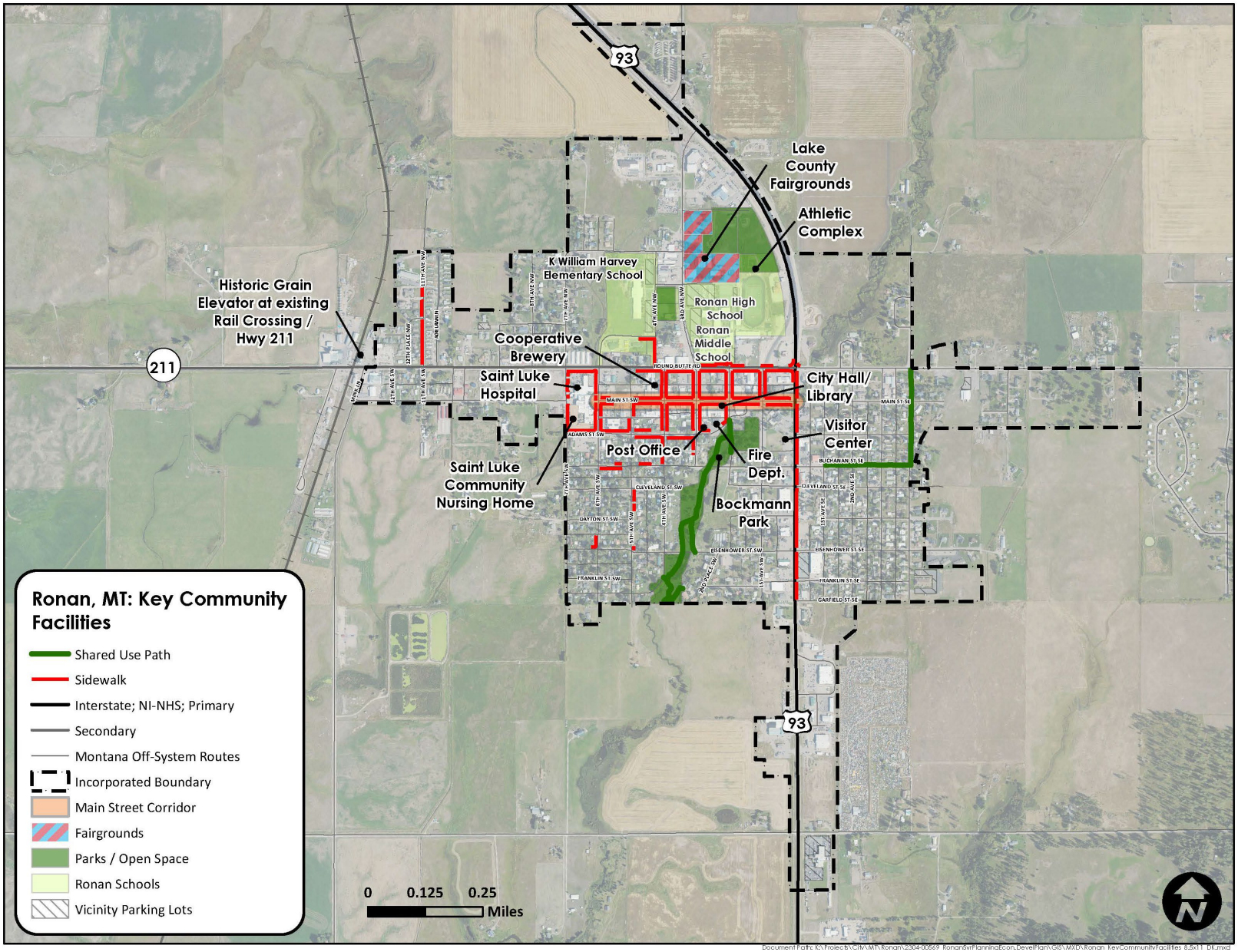
Transportation Facilities

- US Hwy 93



Key Community Facilities are shown in **Figure 4** on the following page.

FIGURE 4 – RONAN KEY COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Transportation System

Roads

Lake County has numerous state-maintained highways. In addition to County jurisdictional paved highways, the County is responsible for approximately 1,150 miles (about half the width of the United States) of rural roads, 80% of which are gravel. Local jurisdiction / maintained roads are challenging, both economically and for safety considerations. The transportation system is built on malleable glacial till; there is no drainage infrastructure and with sparse base materials, and severe seasonal weather, roadways have significant wear and tear. Maintenance costs are high and revenue resources are low. Many roads need complete reconstruction. Paved rural roads are being converted back to gravel to alleviate County maintenance cost burden. Given the importance of transportation infrastructure to rural/frontier community residents, as well as to the millions of tourists that utilize these roads (especially in the summer season), this is a significant consideration in both economic and downtown development.

Currently, Lake County receives $1.8 million in tax revenue for all direct and indirect costs for the road department. Due to financial constraints and a large geographic footprint, consistent and routine/regular maintenance of roadways is a significant and ongoing challenge. While tourism is essential to an economic strategic plan, tourism traffic generated on roadways also adversely impacts maintenance costs. In addition to County miles of roadway, the CSKT is also responsible for 406 miles of BIA jurisdictional roads and 2,580 miles of Tribal forest roads. The CSKT CEDS document[2] provides greater detail about transportation infrastructure as well as related economic development information/goals that potentially impact Ronan.

Road Jurisdiction and Functional Classification

County and City

Lake County has a road maintenance plan in place that monitors use, pavement, and gravel surface conditions, needed improvements, and prioritizes road projects annually. The County also needs updated road maintenance equipment and those equipment needs exceed budget due primarily to high/continuous maintenance costs. County and Tribal governments coordinate efforts to maximize maintenance efficiency, and state roads through Lake County are either maintained by the state or through contractual maintenance agreements with the county. As one mean to assist with transportation cost burden, the County has investigated the feasibility of passing a 2-cent per gallon gas tax to be divided between the County and identified municipalities.

Tribal

In 1996 CSKT approved its first Flathead Reservation Transportation Plan. These plans must be updated every five years and CSKT's plan has been updated but is due for another update soon. Tribal Long Range Transportations Plans (LRTP) include system wide transportation information for the entire Reservation. CSKT coordinates multiple Tribal authority transportation projects with Lake County, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT),

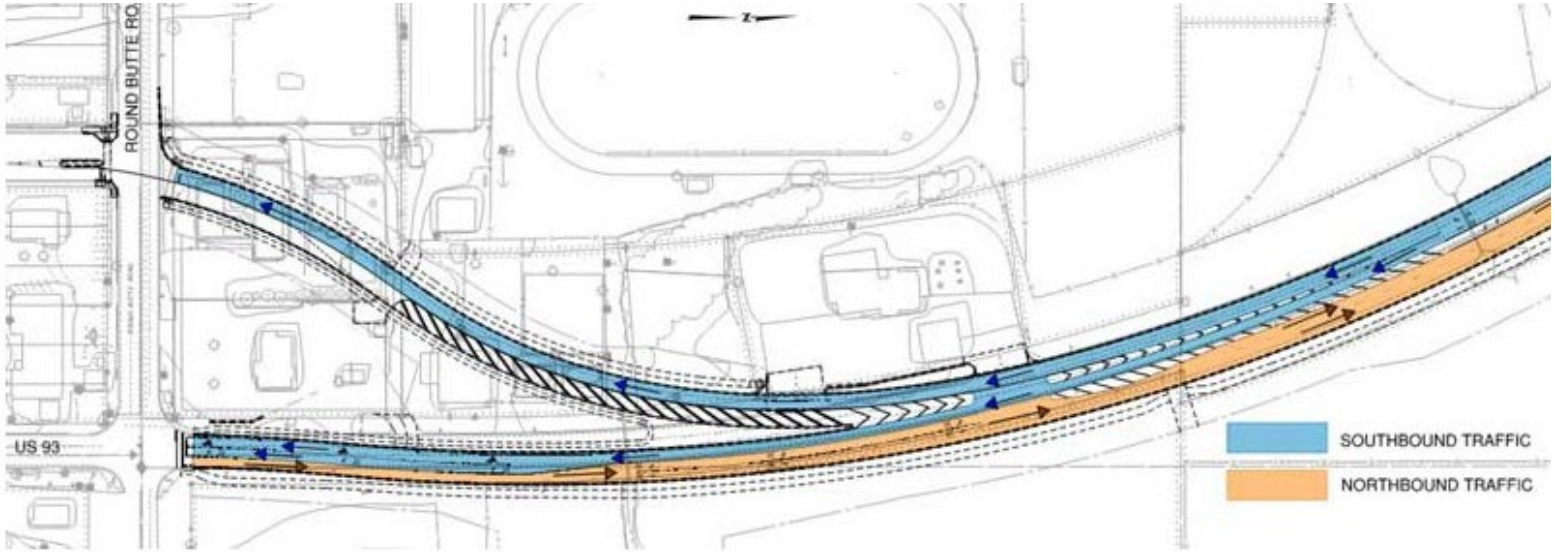
[2] http://cskteconomics.org/

and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Like many other Tribal governments in Montana, the CSKT also has a Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) that is updated annually. Road projects in the Ronan area should be coordinated, when possible, with the County, Tribe and/or MDT as appropriate. Given limited financial and personnel resources, this will assist in ensuring the most efficient use of time and money and reducing overlap.

Existing Road Projects

US Highway 93 bisects Ronan (see **Figure 5 through Figure 7**[3]). The highway is the principal arterial roadway between the cities of Kalispell (61 miles to the North of Ronan) and Missoula (57 miles to the south). Just north of Round Butte Rd., there is a current roadway realignment project that, when completed, will divert southbound traffic onto 1st Ave, and rejoin with the existing northbound travel lane just south of Garfield St. The purpose of this realignment is to decrease congestion through speed reduction/traffic calming and control design, which will simultaneously have a positive effect on improving multimodal transportation system safety, decreasing vehicular crash rates at existing intersection crash hotspots. This roadway realignment provides an excellent opportunity to incorporate related pedestrian and bicycle safety with physical design and aesthetic improvements at the intersections of Main Street at 1st Ave and at US Hwy 93. This is in alignment with goals of the Downtown / Main Street revitalization planning and design process and also aligns with goals of the Montana Main Street Program.

FIGURE 5 – US 93 REALIGNMENT – NORTH AND SOUTH BOUND TRAVEL LANES SPLIT



[3] https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/ronanurban/project-area.aspx

FIGURE 6 - US 93 REALIGNMENTSHARED USE PATH

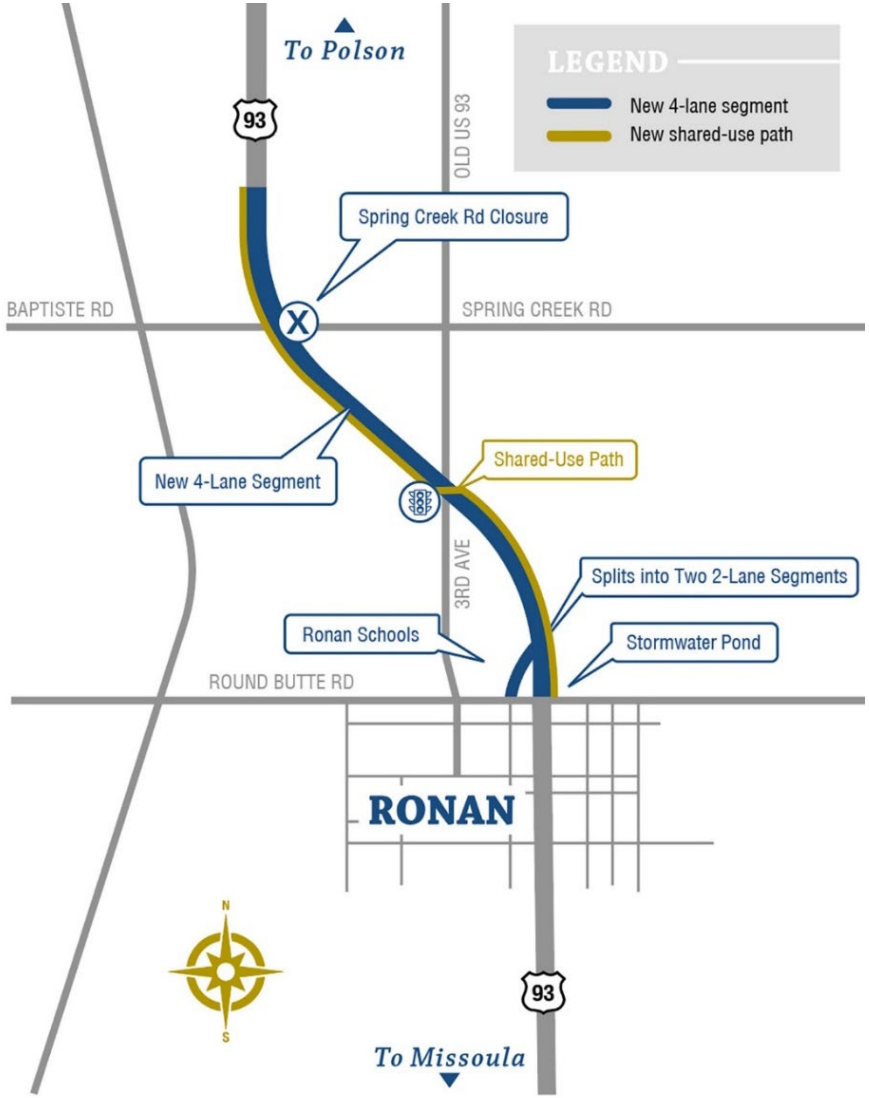


FIGURE 7 - US 93 REALIGNMENT RONAN-NORTH VISION ZERO



Traffic

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) was collected from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). There is notable correlation between the highest traffic volume roadways and intersections and vehicular crash locations.

FIGURE 8 - MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, AADT, AND VEHICULAR CRASH LOCATIONS

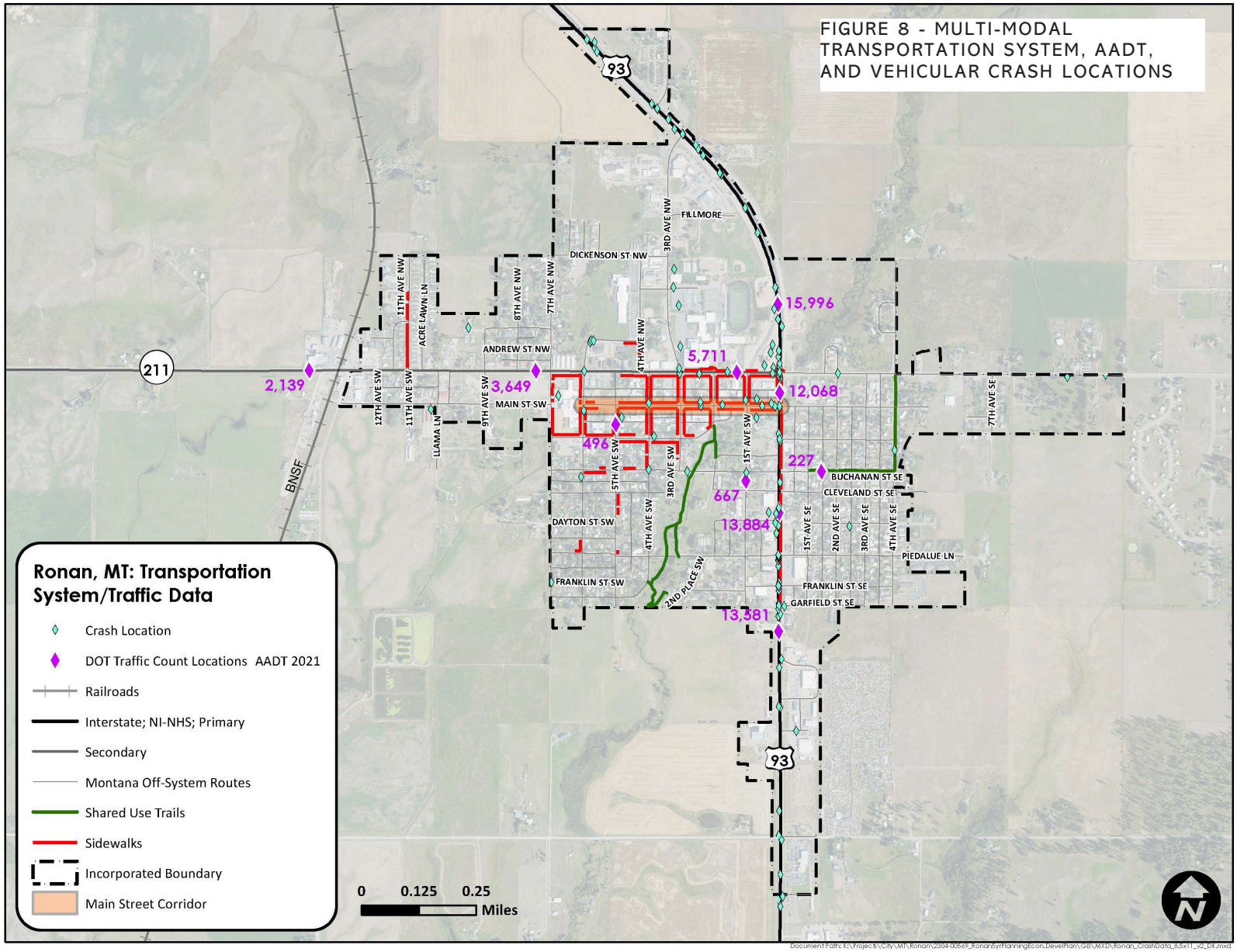


Figure 8 shows the municipal boundary of Ronan and provides a composite map view of crash locations, traffic volume (AADT), and the multimodal transportation network, including existing sidewalks and pathways/trails and the Main Street corridor.

Bridges

In addition to roadways, Lake County is responsible for maintaining 92 bridges. Within the Ronan community and downtown/Main Street study area , while there are culverts, there are no bridges . The South Valley Creek Bridge provides an example/sets precedent for transportation collaboration between government agencies (i.e., Tribal, State, and County organizations). The South Valley Creek Bridge project, in which the CSKT The CSKT were awarded a $1 million grant through BIA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with the *Indian Reservation Road's High Priority Project Program, is a great example of* collaboration between government agencies which led to the new bridge replacement. Regarding downtown Ronan, Spring Creek was buried under the downtown years ago. There has been stakeholder discussion of daylighting the creek, making it a prominent feature of Mainstreet. Inter-governmental collaboration and funding for daylighting the creek, which could require a small bridge, should be explored.

Multimodal

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Existing Sidewalks and Trail System

The Mission Valley is home to multiple pedestrian pathways and bicycle trails in various stages of project completion. A recent construction project on the Highway 93 Ronan to Polson corridor and north and south of Arlee included a bicycle/pedestrian pathway. Regional, County, and local goals are mostly in alignment and are trending with the inclusion of additional bicycle/pedestrian pathway projects scaled with relevant roadway projects. Even though maintenance can be more difficult/costly, recently constructed pathways are separated from road surfaces and typically have higher rates of use because of inherent safety benefits that come with separated non-motorized pathways. Both the Lake County Commissioners and CSKT are dedicated to expanding multi-use pathways because of increased interest and use, as well bike travel-based tourism opportunities. and the health benefits that come from an active outdoor lifestyle. Ronan is also interested in increasing pedestrian/bicycle access/facilities and in partnering with the county, CSKT, and MDT as appropriate to connect facilities with existing/planned projects moving forward.

Public Transit

Currently, The City of Ronan does not fund or provide a public transit agency . While there are limited public transit services in the County, CSKT and other social service organizations such as Flathead Transit and the Lake County Council on Aging provide some limited on-demand transit services. Existing Missoula to Kalispell bus routes are underutilized by County residents and are not expected to be expanded or increased as a result.

Flathead Tribal Transit

In 1996 the CSKT created the Flathead Tribal Transit system and has continued to expand and customize service based on Tribal needs. Flathead Tribal Transit has successfully scaled in the region, providing over 30,000 rides annually. The CSKT Transit Program provides low-cost bus transportation for Reservation residents and employees from Missoula to Whitefish, Montana. CSKT Transit has several regularly scheduled routes and drop-off/pick-up points. The Transit Program also provides individualized transportation if requested at least 24 hours in advance for on-

Reservation transport, and 48 hours (about 2 days) in advance for off-Reservation transportation. While the Flathead Tribal Transit service is owned/operated by CKST, because Ronan is on the Reservation, transit services are available to Ronan residents as needed.

Freight

Trucking and Rail

US 93 is the primary route for heavy commercial truck traffic running north and south in western Montana, connecting the two larger communities of Kalispell and Missoula. In 1883, the Northern Pacific Company built a railroad across the south end of the Flathead Reservation, completing a spur line from Dixon to Polson in the early 1900s. Burlington Northern bought Montana Rail Link in January 2022 and currently owns both lines. The main line is used approximately three days a week for transporting inter- and intrastate freight. The spur line to Polson has not been operated since 2012. If future shipping volumes increase, there is potential to reopen the line.

Airports

Lake County has three non-commercial airports: Polson, Ronan, and St. Ignatius. Polson and Ronan have seen increased use by large private planes and are projected to continue to increase in usage. Some of the use can be attributed to non-local landowners living outside the region. There are also private airfields in the Jocko, Mission, and Little Bitterroot Valleys. Ronan regional airports do not have commercial or freight services to any of these airports (Refer back to **Figure 2** for airport locations within the project's region).

Safety

Vehicular Crashes and Crash Severity

Along with traffic volume data (AADT), vehicular crash location data was retrieved from MDT from 2018 to 2022. During this period, there were 119 total crashes . 12 of these occurred on Main Street or at a cross street intersection with Main Street.

Due to the limitations of publicly available MDT data, only crash *locations* are available from the desktop data inventory. Vehicular crash details such as crash severity (e.g., the range from *property damage only* to *serious injury*, and/or *fatality*, as well as vehicular crashes involving a pedestrian or bicyclist) are not available. Additional information may be available from sources such as police or sheriff's office incident reports. As Ronan considers improvements to the transportation network, this data will be valuable in prioritizing projects to address safety and access/connectivity.

Crash Density / Most Frequent Crash Locations

The most frequent crash incident locations have occurred along US 93 segments and at the following intersections: Round Butte Rd. W; Main Street; Cleveland St; Garfield St. SE.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Crashes

Granular crash detail for vehicular crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists is currently unavailable from the public MDT online crash database. Anecdotal data, if available, can help to identify any significant crash locations that may have involved a fatality or serious injury, and again will be useful in prioritizing transportation/nonmotorized transportation infrastructure projects moving forward.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder and "pop-up" meetings were scheduled and conducted between Tuesday, Oct. 10 and Friday, Oct. 13, 2023. A total of 15 meetings were hosted during that time which included 8 "scheduled" meetings with identified community stakeholders and 7 public "pop-up" events in which staff/community members went to already populated/frequented locations and discussed the project/had surveys completed by community members at those locations.

A second stakeholder engagement was held on May 21, 2024. KLJ presented the draft plan to a stakeholder group at Mission West. In attendance were Mission West, Ronan Chamber, Ronan Police Department, residents, and business community members. Following the presentation on the same day, an informal open house event was held at the Ronan Cooperative Brewery where additional opportunity for stakeholders to offer comments to the plan was facilitated by KLJ. Both the presentation and the public open house events solicited additional stakeholder feedback which was incorporated into this final report.

A full public engagement report is available in **Appendix A**.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Strategic goals and objectives include those that deal specifically with Economic Development as well as those that address the Downtown Master Plan. While there is consistent overlap as it pertains to attracting tourism opportunities and developing the economy around the downtown corridor, there are details and proposed projects that are independent to the downtown master plan and to the CEDS. Goals and strategies are based on public input, previously identified goals that have not yet been fully achieved, baseline data, and an understanding of the regional/state level economy indicators. Generally, strategies can be categorized as addressing:

- Growth in Agriculture & Food Production Industries
- Workforce/Resident Retention & Community Development
- Community/Tribal Collaborations and Access to Financial Resources
- Tourism and Supporting the Visitor Economy
- Transportation and Community Infrastructure

5-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

Due to the economic downturn in 2020, every community in Montana suffered job loss, ranging from approximately five percent in the eastern part of the state to 25% in the northwestern sector. In addition, the lengthy adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed areas in which local economies were vulnerable. The impacts of social distancing, supply disruptions, and the upheaval in the energy markets combined to produce a lower estimate of US economic activity, which translated into a harder hit and a slower recovery to the Montana economy.

Public input, and review of regional and community strengths and challenges revealed a concern common at the state and national level related to workforce, housing, and infrastructure. Community leaders expressed challenges related to recruiting and retention of qualified/skilled workers, exacerbated by lack of housing stock and the expenses related to upgrading/extending infrastructure to support both residential and business growth.

Goals and objectives, including those that specifically address economic resilience, seek to balance continued growth and development but also reflect the unique culture and historic economy of Ronan. With quality of life identified as the greatest community asset (83 percent of survey respondents indicated this), it is important to balance development and growth with tradition and local culture. Strongly embedded in the establishing of economic development goals and objectives is regional background information, current economic trends, coordination with existing community plans, public input, and community leadership/willingness to address challenges and drive change. For results of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) please see **Appendix A** related to Public Engagement.

In addition to assuring that Ronan can access EDA resources for future projects, development of economic development strategies ensure that Ronan and the citizenship are genuinely invested in the process and outcomes and that, because of this, community leaders and community members are prepared to invest both capital and human resources in meeting the needs of their community. Goals and objectives are intended to:

1. Foster Economic Development and Opportunity
2. Increase the size and quality of the workforce (through development of resources that support workforce, such as housing, community amenities, childcare, and training)
3. Create a welcoming community that supports small business, encourages an entrepreneurial environment, and provides for the needs of citizens/tourists.

Growth in Agriculture and Food Production

Agriculture is a primary economic driver in Montana and continues to be key in both maintaining the economic health of the Ronan community and providing opportunity for growth. Agriculture is unpredictable and often influenced by factors outside human control such as weather and drought. Goals and objectives related to agriculture are rooted in ways in which agricultural technology, land use, and value-added agricultural tools might be implemented to ensure continued strength and consistency in agricultural pursuits.

Goal 1: Protect Agricultural Land.

The protection of agricultural land is becoming increas-ingly difficult, and complex given both environmental and human factors. This includes fewer young family members wanting to take on the family farm, land use issues, deterioration of agricultural land due to weather concerns, and lucrative offers for land for other development purposes.

The following tasks/objectives are identified as ways in which Ronan in partnership with economic development agencies and other community/agricultural partners can potentially protect valuable agricultural land moving forward:

- Partnership with Extension and Montana Ag and Food Development Network resources to assist in education to farmers and ranchers on control of noxious weeds, the importance of crop rotation, tillage practices, soil erosion, preservation of native vegetation, ditching practices and water conservation and protection of water quality.
- Conduct research and foster partnerships that address and take advantage of changes in commodity markets that could “add value” to the agricultural region, including discus-sions regarding climate-controlled agriculture (USDA), crop distribution/meat processing, and other value-add industries.
- Support the implementation/development of land use poli-cies that prohibit or severely limit annexation of property by the municipality except under certain circumstances, supporting the protection of agricultural land that surrounds existing city limits.

Goal 2: Increase opportunities for access for beginning farmers/ranchers and entrepreneurs.

National and statewide trends indicate the num-ber of farms and ranches throughout Mon-tana are decreasing while the acreage farmed/ ranched remains relatively stable. One of the results is larger farming operations and fewer people over an exceptionally large geographic area; in addition to reduced operational diversity. From an economic perspective, the larger the operation the more capital is need-ed to be viable and competitive. This creates obstacles and limits opportunities for access to these industries for begin-ning farmers/ranchers or agricultural entrepreneurs.
The following objective has been identified:

- Work with regional and government entities to create incentive programs for beginning farmers/ranchers that provide improved opportunities and financial incentives to landowners/asset owners to rent or sell assets (land, machinery, etc.…) to a beginning farmer. (Several states/counties outside Montana have implemented these types of programs. Minnesota is an excellent example).

Goal 3: Support local and regional “food pathways” and creation of a local food systems plan, focusing on creating more local resilience and value-added economic drivers.

In Montana, a significant percent-age of agricultural products are shipped or exported out of state. Based on 2017 USDA Census data the State of Montana produced a market value of 3.5 billion in agricultural products. Of that 3.5 billion, only 9.8 million or 2.8 percent was sold directly to the Montana consumer. The current scale of the operations and production by the agricultural industry may not line up nicely with a farm to table type approach. Population density to support some of these initiatives may also not be present in such a rural area. Despite previous trends towards larger farming operations and the inherent efficiency of moving product in bulk, recent increases in fuel/diesel, the nationwide shortage of truck drivers, and ongoing concerns about vehicle emissions provide an opening and opportunity for more localized food systems and food pathways.

There is consider-able growth in this area, interest in both the state and federal sectors, and significant federal money currently available that would encourage exploration of part-nership/coalition building with agriculture producers, USDA, County Extension and other state and federal partners for further discussion of how agri-business might be expanded and diversified and what opportunities exist. The following objective supports new development and growth of existing local and regional food pathways and systems that encourage ongoing agricultural economic development:

- Provision of continued support and growth in understanding of the importance of local, regional, and family scale food production that is sustainable. Examples of ways in which this may be accomplished include:
    - Creation/expansion of marketing and advertising campaigns highlighting local/regional growers and farm-to-table opportunities.
    - Creation/expansion of events/community gatherings that highlight and support agricultural endeavors and seek to promote regional uniqueness and local availability.
    - Creation/development of opportunities for non-agriculture-based community members to engage in agricultural endeavors (including promotion of agritourism opportunities and educational opportunities that bring the agriculture community to the forefront). By way of example in Montana, see the Billings Chamber of Commerce Ag Celebration Week and Annual Ag Tour. Billings Chamber Ag Celebration Week.

Workforce/Resident Retention & Community Development

In almost all the surveys collected during public engagement and stakeholder meetings, quality of life is noted as a strength and a primary reason individuals move into and stay in Ronan and the surrounding area. The small town feel that permeates the region creates a sense of community, safety, and ability to make a real difference that is a draw for residents and for people interested in relocating. Additionally, the scenic splendor of the area and the easy and varied access to outdoor recreational opportunities is part of quality of life, drawing both residents and visitors seeking natural “social distancing” and the opportunity to leave “city” life.

Rural does not, however, mean that people do not still seek quality of life services and amenities which are sometimes difficult to find as well as to fund. Issues such as workforce training, daycare availability, housing, and access to amenities such as restau-rants, and other family activities were high on the list of challenges in both the stakeholder meetings and survey responses. The following goals and objectives seek to address resident and workforce recruit-ment and retention, through support of, and leadership in, expansion of workforce training opportunities, community development and revitalization, and addressing housing availability concerns:

Goal 1: Business development and financial assistance for workforce, customer service, and business succession planning.

This will require additional community engagement work and discus-sion with existing and potential businesses as well as collaboration with area educational institutions, extension offices, and agencies supporting education, entrepreneurism, and small business development to identify specific workforce needs and then to match those to opportunities to achieve the following objectives:

- Improving access to secondary education and trade schools (including broadband development that allows for consistent virtual access to education and work-from-home opportunities).

- Developing and/or attending trainings, meetings and seminars designed to increase skills and resources related to workforce development.
- Developing access to college credits and trade courses for high school students and building improved partnerships with programs to meet identified needs.
- Identifying/accessing the considerable federal resources currently available to develop workforce and related broadband infrastructure that supports remote access to educational and workforce training resources.
- Partnering with local companies/businesses to create specific "on the job" training programs that support workforce development for existing businesses seeking to expand and grow.
- Developing and facilitating "succession planning" training for small and family-owned businesses at risk of closing should the originating owner/operator retire or pass away.
- Providing technical assistance to local business owners as they contemplate starting or growing local businesses.
- Supporting and advocating for existing tax incentives for businesses including tax abatements, and development of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDD).

Goal 2: Address Main Street and downtown barriers that are hindering business growth or community positivity.

Public input and several survey responses and conversations referenced vacant main street/downtown buildings/lots and a desire to make Main Streets vibrant and more appealing both for visitors and perspective new business development. This sometimes includes development of primary infrastructure but is sometimes resolved by increasing community pride and developing the experience of place: How primary thoroughfares look and feel, especially for visitors and newcomers to the area. The following are low-cost objectives by which this can be addressed by building both community pride and community economic development and resilience (and should also be a part of the Downtown Master Plan):

- Repairs/replacement of building facades to ensure a consistent, clean, and safe "Main Street" (This includes repairs/replacements to empty buildings, when possible, to make them appear more utilized. In some communities, this has also included partnerships with artists or other businesses to have art or commerce items in the windows of empty buildings advertising open businesses or highlighting community activities/recreational opportunities).
- Hosting of a community clean-up day in which residents/ business owners take an afternoon to clean up blighted areas/empty buildings.
- Utilizing state/federal dollars to repair/construct/improve basic pedestrian infrastructure to encourage "walkability" in the primary business arena (Transportation Alterna-tives, Safe Roads, and Streets for All, etc.).
- Install new streetlights, building lighting, flower planters, and other aesthetics that encourage community engage-ment and reduce crime.
- Plan/host multiple "Main Street" activities that bring current/new residents into the core of the community for relationship building and development of community pride.
- Target infrastructure investments (water, sewer, and roads) that support community growth and the development of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses.
- Continue and grow participation in the Montana Main Street Program.
- Access brownfield planning and construction grant dollars to assist in addressing blighted properties for redevelopment.

Goal 3: Increase available housing with special emphasis on increasing the supply of affordable and workforce housing.

- Continue to establish/fortify affordable housing programs with USDA Rural Development, HUD, the Montana Community Reinvestment Initiative, and other state and federal organizations to establish/fund sufficient financial incentives to promote and/or implement afford-able housing projects.
- Advocate for and support regulatory and financial incentives for affordable and workforce housing development.
- Aid/encourage community leadership to implement workforce housing zoning that include subdivision standards for the appropriate location, size, and design standards.
- Prioritize infrastructure investments (water, sewer, and roads) that support the development of housing.
- Consider how multi-family/multiunit housing might be developed to meet specific needs (workforce, senior, young families). Multifamily housing, or investments in "vertical builds" and mixed-use housing is often less expensive to develop both in terms of infrastructure and construction and allows for more units than single family homes.

Community Collaborations & Access to Financial Resources

We can achieve more together than on our own has always been true, but no more so than when working in rural areas with limited human and financial capital. In response to the survey question "How would you meet the economic development and business needs in your community," the response that received the most responses was "Partner with surrounding counties for economic development purposes."

To ensure maximum return on investment, acknowledge that individual communities and counties cannot achieve their goals in a bubble, and recognition that the state legislature has a role to serve in collaboration and community development, the following goals and objectives address the need to collaborate as fully as possible:

Goal 1: Continue to facilitate communications between community leadership, county leadership, Tribal leaders, state, and federal legislators, and community nonprofit organizations.

- Support local leadership programs that increase the skills of community citizens to participate in their communities and to step into leadership positions as those become available.
- Work with city, county, and state level elected leadership to continue authorization and appropriations that assist in the funding of economic development activities and related infrastructure needs.

Goal 2: Work collaboratively with county, tribal, and state governments in formally identifying needs (planning) and then identifying potential financial resources (loans/grants) that support completion of projects that meet those needs.

- Cross-educate and attend local/regional & state level meetings and, as appropriate, provide letters of support, and contributions to support grant writing and technical assistance resources that will benefit Ronan and the larger regional economy.
- Consider formation of a cross jurisdictional coordination committee that brings county, tribal, local and regional representatives together to discuss those projects that are too large to be undertaken by one entity but benefit the region.

Goal 3: Work in partnership with the Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) to support and coordinate efforts as outlined in their 2021 CEDS.

In 2021, the CSKT published their CEDS. This document outlines the specific goals, objectives, and action steps identified with input from an interdisciplinary, interagency steering committee to improve the Flathead Reservation economy.

Ronan is committed to collaborating with the Tribe and requested opportunities are made available for the Tribe to meet their identified needs and goals. This encompasses an intentional effort by Ronan to collaborate with the Tribe in support of their identified CEDS goals which mutually support Ronan's identified goals in support of the regional economy through:

- Ongoing workforce development, including young workforce, and support of higher education and training opportunities
- Diversification of revenue sources.
- Creation/maintenance of a business climate that supports attraction, retention, and growth of businesses (contributing to sustainable employment at meaningful wages).
- Support of infrastructure development that enables economic growth to include broadband, water, sewer, transportation, and housing
- Nurturing emerging industries and innovation, including agribusiness, forest product development, the hot springs rejuvenation project, and culturally appropriate tourism.

Tourism and Supporting the Visitor Economy

Tourism is one of Montana's leading industries, creating thousands of jobs, and contributing an estimated $3.1-$3.7 billion annually to the Montana economy. In 2021, an estimated 12 million people (about twice the population of Arizona) visited Montana while in-state travelers contributed $.1.1 billion in tourism dollars. According to the Montana Free Press, beginning in 2023, tourism is anticipated to grow 4 to 5 percent annually. Tourism has been identified in several existing economic development and planning documents as a significant economic driver and an opportunity for additional growth and development moving forward.

Even during the pandemic, tourism in Montana remained a viable industry providing "social distancing" simply by way of sparse population density. Both Yellowstone and Glacier Parks saw significant increases in visitation and those regions that border these national parks benefited from the additional exposure. Where this was not the case was on Tribal lands as most Reservation communities were devastated by the pandemic, forcing temporary closure of businesses and significant limitations to travelers on and off the Reservation. Ronan, with its ideal location at the base of the Mission Mountains and as a direct route to Glacier National Park, is well positioned to grow through the tourism economy. Capturing the current and anticipated future "wave" of tourists and tourism opportunities will assist the community in ensuring a resilient economy. The following goals/objectives will be considered in maintaining and growing the tourism industry:

Goal 1: Develop "specialized" tours and at-tractions and expand individual community events/tourism campaigns.

Tourists are often seeking the unique, the extraordinary, and the one-of-a-kind experience. Events and programs that provide excitement and destination opportunities can be expanded and new events created that will drive Ronan specific community tourism.

By way of example, Ronan is home to a cooperative brewery and a unique popcorn store. While not the only businesses in town that would have tourist appeal, both provide an "anchor" for potential local events, punch cards, and other means that might draw visitors into the downtown corridor where additional businesses would benefit from the exposure. This would also be effective with unique and nationally known retailers to further highlight and capitalize on popularity activities to be considered in this realm include:

- Develop a comprehensive list of possible place based, local, cultural, ecotourism, and agritourism activities that can be marketed to visitors.
- Assist in the development of a "Path to Glacier Park" route that encompasses identified place-based activities in Ronan and "links" these to other area/regional activities that tourists might take advantage of as part of a "path" to the Park.
- Agritourism opportunities should also be considered. Agritourism gives producers an oppor-tunity to generate additional income and an avenue for direct marketing to consumers. It enhances the tourism industry by increasing the volume of visitors to an area and the length of their stay. According to Allied Market Research, the agritour-ism market size was valued at $42.4 million in 2019 and is estimated to reach $63 million by 2027. This both supports the tourism and visitor market and addresses value added agricultural growth.

Goal 2: Give special consideration (as part of a Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan) of nonmotorized travelers

No longer just for the athletic elite, bike tours are becoming a fast-growing trend in the travel industry—and tour operators have taken notice. Travelers are seeking out bike tours to stay active, minimize environmental impact, and experience diverse landscapes and cityscapes at a closer level. With its wide-open spaces, unique landscape features, proximity to Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park, and small-town appeal, Ronan has an opportunity to capture the bicycle tourism trend. Consideration of how to make rural and community road-ways more "complete" with the addition of wider shoulders, enhanced signage, and/or designated bicycle lanes are ways to encourage bicycle tourism and engagement with community businesses.

Goal 3: Develop/expand individual community tourism campaigns.

Tourists are looking for unique experiences and places. Not every traveler is looking for a theme park or a nationally ranked beach, and small, rural communities are positioned to take advantage of travelers looking for the "off the beaten path" opportunities. Nature tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, local festivals and events are all ways in which Ronan can capitalize on those attributes unique to Ronan. This can include more broadly or boldly marketing special events, times of year, unique community attributes, and regional connectivi-ty to other tourism opportunities (ex: agritourism and/or connection to Glacier): As with specialized tours and attractions, highlighting those activities that already happen and/or are being developed is an excel-lent way to draw tourists and regional/statewide residents into the area. It is often easy to take what's right in front of us for granted. Evaluating what Ronan already offers that could appeal to visitors and developing a plan to market those attractors to their fullest potential is an excellent, and often lower cost way, to promote tourism opportunities that already exist.

Transportation and Community Infrastructure

Transportation infrastructure is essential throughout the country, but perhaps no more essential than in rural areas in which access is often limited, Impassable or unsafe roadways can lead to a complete halt in commerce and significant safety risks for citizens. Identification of transportation

infrastructure needs, including nonmotorized infrastructure that supports connectivity and equity in access, areas for growth or enhancement, and comprehensive planning for addressing road and bridge infrastructure is essential to economic sustainability and growth.

Goal 1: Develop a communitywide *Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan* (SS4A).

The first step to addressing transportation infrastructure needs can be the creation of a comprehensive plan that identifies critical infrastructure, prioritizes needs, and outlines both the strategies and the funding resources available to address those needs, ensuring the transportation network is maintained, funded, and improved where necessary. Especially over the next two years, there is substantial federal funding available to address transportation infrastructure deficits, including funding available for creation of transportation plans and development of nonmotorized transportation infrastructure (sidewalks, biking lanes/paths, and multiuse trails) that promote equity in access and tourism growth.

Given the rural nature of most of this region, it may be most cost effective to consider a regional plan. In addition to identifying and prioritizing transportation infrastructure needs and giving community leaders a roadmap for allocation of limited dollars, the Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan is a key step in being able to access state and federal resources for construction of identified projects. This should include engaging Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in ongoing discussion and collaboration to improve MDT transportation routes surrounding the community.

Goal 2: Support and encourage prioritizing of resources to support critical water and sewer infrastructure.

Although Ronan has adequate or better-than-adequate water and wastewater infrastructure, housing and business growth often requires expansion of existing systems to support development of properties and land not currently connected to the city/town systems. While grant dollars are sometimes available for repair/replacement of existing systems, it is rare grant dollars are available for expansion/new growth projects. Addressing this goal may include the following objectives/tasks:

- Advocating for ongoing investments at the local, state, and federal level for expansion/extension of existing systems to provide growth opportunities.
- Assistance with review/changes in community zoning and annexation policies, allowing for targeted annexation of neighboring county property into city/town limits for the purpose of extension of water/sewer infrastructure that supports business attraction, retention, and growth.
- Partnering with community leadership and State Revolving Fund (SRF) staff to ensure that water and sewer infrastructure projects are prioritized and listed on the state Intended Use Plan, maximizing the opportunities to receive bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL) grant and loan forgiveness dollars.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The City of Ronan Downtown Master Plan explores the uses of existing Main Street and vicinity properties, both occupied and vacant, existing and future land use plans, landscape / streetscape planning and design guidelines, and how each relates to the future physical (and economic) growth of Ronan.

Montana Main Street (MMS) and Main Street America Program Guidance and Goals

For the Downtown Master Planning efforts and revitalization recommendations, Main Street Montana redevelopment guidance was utilized. This planning guidance is centered on two of the four *Main Street Montana Four Points*: **Design** and **Promotion**.

It should be noted that while some of the Flathead Reservation falls within a designated Opportunity Zone, the City of Ronan itself, does not (https://commerce.mt.gov/Opportunity-Zones/). Additionally, after conducting a search of designated Historic Places from the Montana Historical Society's national register mapping tool, Ronan has only one structure that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places: The Don E. Olsson House and Garage located at 503 4th Ave SW (not within the Main Street study area).
https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5378695ae71b414ba66f478fc57241f6

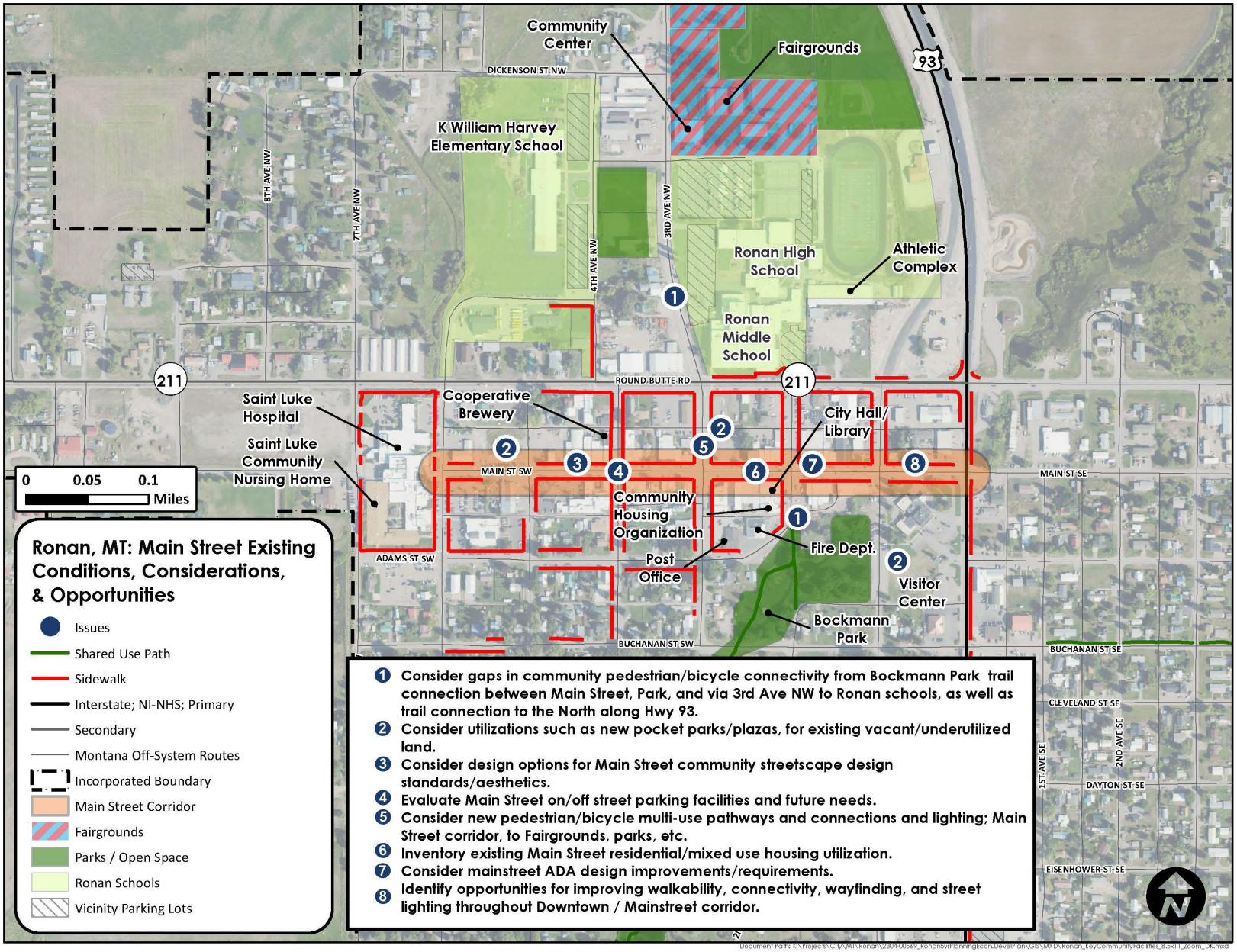
Downtown/Main Street Study Area

Main Street is located between the school campus to the north, Bockman Park to the south, St. Luke Hospital to the west, and US Hwy 93 to the east. The core Main Street study area spans from approximately 6th Ave SW to highway 93 (see **Figure 12**). The area consists of retail, second floor/mixed use residential, service, public, and entertainment facilities, and curbside parking (It was noted that some residents of the mixed-use residential units on Main Street utilize the curbside parking). There are also vacant buildings in various states of disrepair. The sidewalks on Main Street need maintenance, and intersection curbs are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Main Street's landscape currently includes limited treescape.

Ronan Main Street Key Issues and Opportunities Identification and Mapping

Figure 9 (Main Street Corridor View) provides detailed narrative and location points that inventory existing Main Street infrastructure and design considerations and opportunities for improvement of the corridor. Identification of deficiencies provided the basis for solicitation of public input to inform Land Scape/Streetscape design standards and infrastructure improvement recommendations.

FIGURE 9 – DOWNTOWN/MAIN STREET RONAN: EXISTING CONDITIONS, CONSIDERATIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES



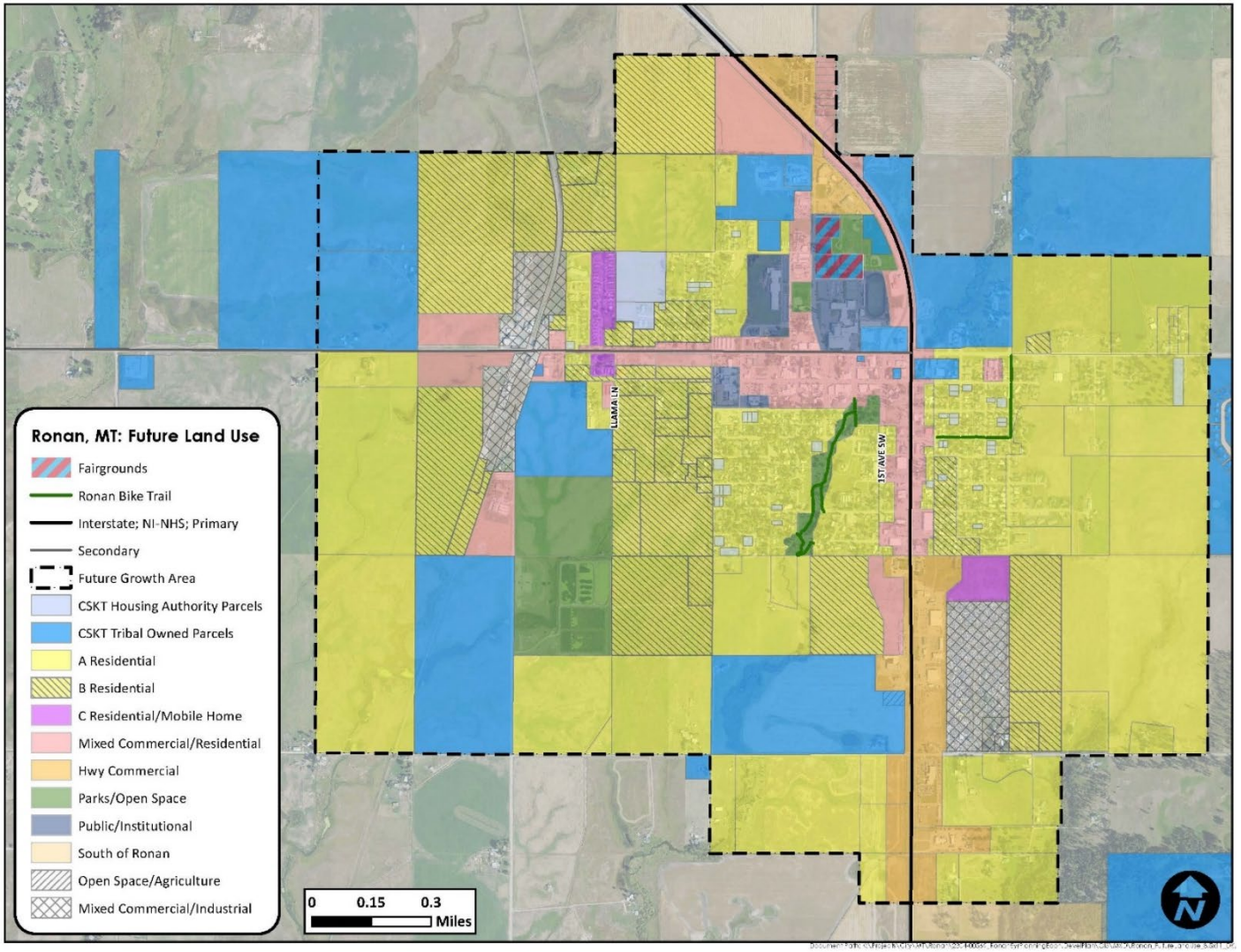
Future Land Use (FLU) Map

During this process, existing, desired future, and nonconforming/non-commercial land uses were identified to explore potential FLU scenarios. The final FLU plan also functions to guide future project identification and implementation and assist with any rezoning actions or zoning code updates. **Table 15** provides FLU category acreage totals. **Figure 10** depicts Ronan's FLU Map.

TABLE 15 – FLU ACREAGES

FLU ACREAGES BY CATEGORY	ACRES
A Residential	1018.3
B Residential	429.13
C Residential/Mobile Home	21.13
C Commercial	198.5
Mixed Commercial/Residential	193.93
Mixed Commercial/Industrial	74.71
Hwy Commercial	51.57
Parks/Open Space	96
Ball diamonds	12.2
Bockman Park	12.8
Other	71
Public/Institutional	50.09
South of Ronan	42.47
Municipal Open Space/Agriculture	102.48
Fairgrounds	7.87
CSKT Tribal Owned Parcels	274.63
CSKT Housing Authority Parcels	25.91
TOTAL FLU ACRES:	**2,682.72**

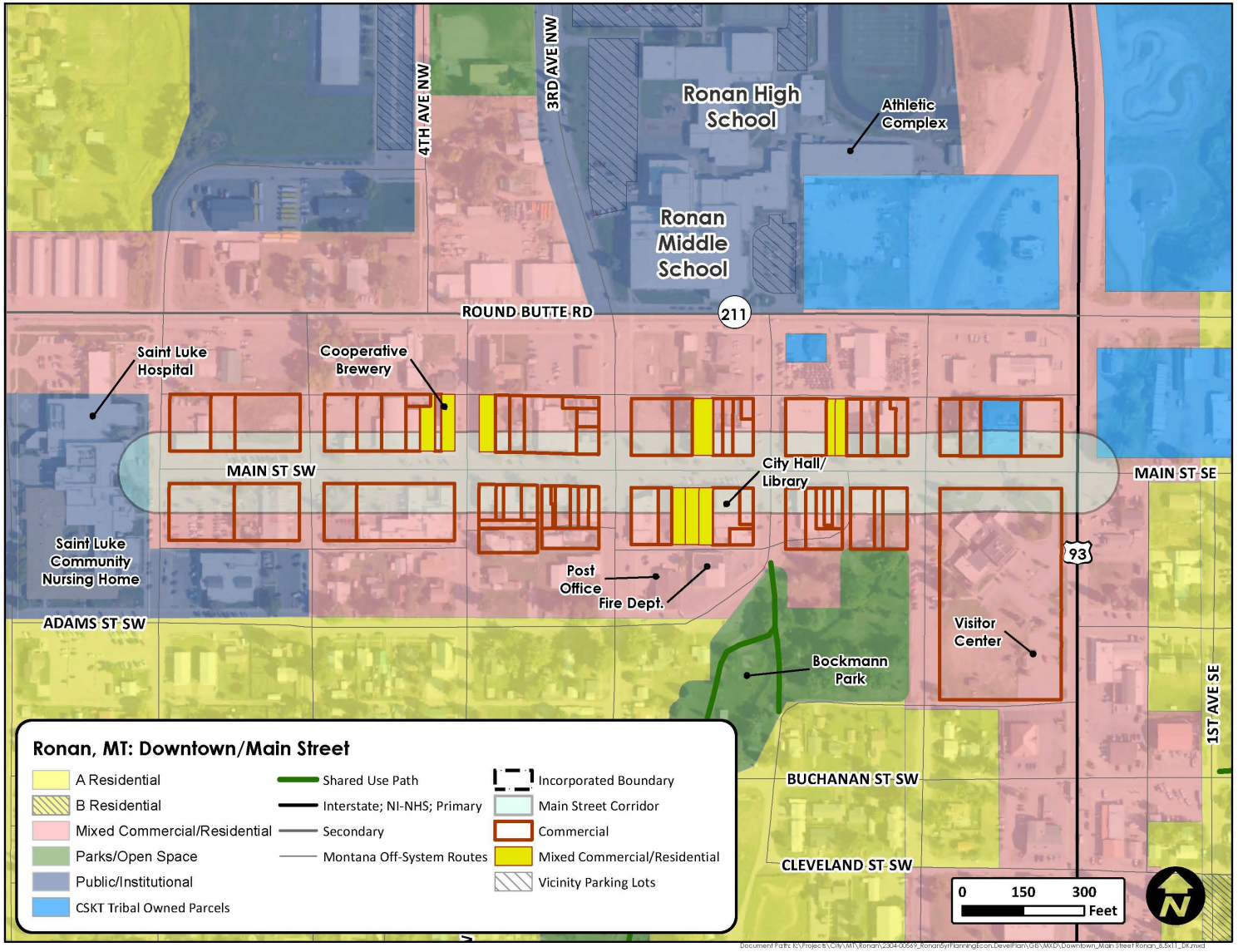
FIGURE 10 - RONAN FUTURE LAND USE (FLU) PLAN MAP



Downtown Corridor ELU/FLU

Figure 11 shows Main Street Land Use and denotes structures with single family and two-story mixed-use housing, and existing sidewalks.

FIGURE 11 – MAIN STREET RONAN ELU/FLU AND EXISTING MAINSTREET PARCELS, HOUSING, AND SHARED USE PATHWAYS



Landscape / Streetscape Plan

Community Infrastructure Design Guidelines and Recommendations

As a related extension of the FLU plan and design standards development, Main Street existing conditions were analyzed, and recommendations developed for revitalizing the downtown/Main Street streetscaping, creating more community connectivity. Recommendations address walkability and connectivity to local parks and key community facilities such as the Fairgrounds and city parks, aesthetics, and uniformity of landscape plan, pedestrian and bicycle facilities/safety, on and off-street parking needs and options, as well as opportunities for unique design elements such as public gathering spaces that incorporate the opportunity for public art.

Walkability and Connectivity

Ronan is experiencing a significant increase in outdoor recreational tourism. Connectivity to natural amenities and resources outside of the commercial district (e.g., parks, fairgrounds) was examined. Local recreation opportunities were incorporated to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Design Guidelines/Standards and Recommended Improvements:

Implementation of design guidelines ensures a unified aesthetic for the entire streetscape and includes development of multimodal transportation system infrastructure, street and public space furniture, signs (wayfinding), materials (hard and soft scaping), and plantings. Subheadings below provide guidelines for recommended Main Street improvements and/or upgrades to the various physical elements of the corridor. Public input was weighed heavily in determining potential Main Street design improvements.

Sidewalks

- Widen sidewalks (This would also involve changing the existing angle parking to parallel parking which allows for better mobility, space for sidewalk cafes, displays, sidewalk sales, more planting, etc.)
- Lighted/signalized crosswalks in strategic locations (High School, Hwy 93 in both directions, etc.)
- Curb bulb-outs at major intersections w/ raised crosswalks
- Consistent curb cuts
- Complete connectivity through the addition of missing sidewalks (west end, north side)
- Create intentional/strategic connections to trail system, schools, and key community amenities/facilities

Street Amenities

- Add street furniture (benches, trash containers, dog bags, bike racks, etc.), encouraging residents and visitors to “stop” and enjoy the Main Street/downtown corridor.

Street planting

- Plan trees in sufficiently sized tree pits (where the sidewalk width can accommodate minimum 36” width by 6’ pit); Include street tree stormwater planters
- Where sidewalks don’t allow street trees, add raised planters

Street Lighting

- Current street lighting is no sufficient. Increase/add pedestrian scale lighting

Wayfinding (Informational Signage)

- Install directional signs - pedestrian scale at corners
    - Consider signage that highlights historical markers, points of interest, maps
- Install directional signs - vehicle scale at strategic locations

Main Street Typical Sections: Recommended Complete Streets Alternatives

Based on stakeholder input, the following graphic represents the Preferred Alternative street scape configuration for Main Street Improvements. **Figure 12** on the next page depicts the ***Preferred Alternative typical section***. In **Appendix B,** four (4) other *Main Street Complete Streets Alternative* typical sections are also presented. All typical section graphics show and visualize various streetscape options for incorporating multi-modal (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle) complete streets design elements. All recommendation/alternatives are based on the existing conditions analysis, stakeholder input, stated goals and needs, and adherence to Montana Main Street Program guidance.

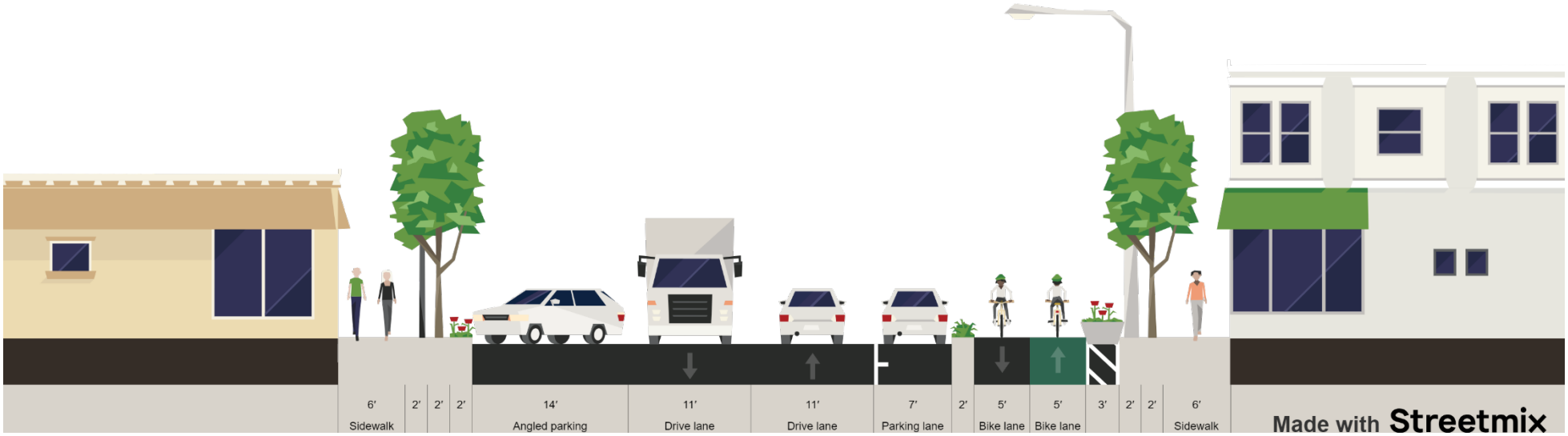
The ***Preferred Alternative*** represents the primary recommendation for a streetscape/Main Street redesign. The ***Preferred Alternative***, and the additional four alternatives shown in **Appendix B**, use the basis of the existing 80-foot width of Main Street (standard width of 80 feet across the street from building envelope to building envelope). It is advised that the community weigh alternatives based on further analysis of overall project cost and specific needs and/or aesthetic or functional preferences. **Appendix B Alternatives 1** through **3** incorporate designated bike paths, whereas **Alternative 4** removes bike paths in lieu of wider sidewalks. The vehicular streetscape layouts for each of the Alternatives 1 through 4 are identical; 11 ft drive lanes with 8 ft curbside/end to end parking, whereas the ***Preferred Alternative*** retains angled parking on the southside of Mainstreet, with parallel parking on the north side. Reconfiguration of on street parking saves road space, allowing for the addition of bike lanes and/or wider sidewalks within the existing 80-foot corridor width. Based on National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) transportation facility standards estimates, the Preferred Alternative typical section / street layout has the following capacity for vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic per hour, shown in **Table 16** below.

TABLE 16 – NACTO MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITY CAPACITY ESTIMATE[4]

TRANSPORTATION AMENITY	AVERAGE CAPACITY/HR.	POTENTIAL CAPACITY / HR.
Drive lane	1,200	3,200
Bike lane	7,500	7,500
Sidewalk	18,000	18,000

[4] https://nacto.org/publications/design-guides/

FIGURE 12 – MAIN STREET PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TYPICAL SECTION – BIDIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES ON NORTH SIDE W/ RAISED & SEPARATED CURB, ANGLED *AND* PARALLEL PARKING OPTIONS



Main Street Design Recommendations (to Enhance Tourism and Economic Development)

Better Utilize Public Spaces

- Event space (take advantage of a vacant lot, and add a small stage and related amenities
- Incorporate public art

Add Sustainable Features

- EV Charging stations
- Bike lanes, bike parking
- Street stormwater planters (raingardens)
- Tree boxes
- Urban tree canopy (heat island effect)
- Public water refill stations for reusable bottles
- Incorporate Locally sourced materials
- Habitat planting - in stormwater planters and larger tree pits, plant for pollinators, native birds
- Daylight the creek

Attract Business/Economic Development

- Facade improvements
- Establish/Implement Design guidelines
- Encourage/implement outdoor dining (on wider sidewalks)
- Load zones

Project Prioritization / Recommendations

Several conceptual plan views and street level perspective visualizations were designed to provide guidance and recommendations for Main Street design elements and possible improvements to the existing corridor. A list of priority recommendations and representative conceptual renderings follow.

Figures 13 through 15 are conceptual plan view and street level perspective visualizations based on the design guidelines and recommendations for Main Street design elements and improvements to the existing corridor. The design and physical streetscape amenities and recommendations, which are annotated graphically, combine stakeholder input in combination with vision, goals, and objectives developed throughout the public engagement and existing conditions analysis processes.

The following is a prioritized list of recommended Main Street revitalization project improvements, ranked in order of stakeholder and public input feedback:

1. Construction of New Sidewalk & Improvement/Widening of Existing Sidewalks
2. Development of Crosswalk Infrastructure
3. Address Street/Curb Side and Public Parking
4. Creation/Connection of Bike Paths and/or dedicated bike lanes on key segments of Main Street and 3rd Street.
5. Replanting of appropriately sized street trees
6. Creation of Parklets
7. Addition of Public Seating
8. Inclusion of Signage/Wayfinding
9. Addition of Bike Racks
10. Inclusion of Public Art/Art Murals
11. Creation of Public Gathering & Event Spaces / Pocket Plaza / Outdoor Amphitheater or Band Shell
12. Increased/Improved Street Lighting(Pedestrian)
13. Addition of Waste Receptacles
14. Creation of a Raingarden Buffer
15. Improved Intersection Traffic Control

Additional conceptual plans/renderings can be found in the **Appendix C** as "Street Level Perspective Visualizations."

FIGURE 13 –MAIN STREET SITE PLAN W/ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS (CONCEPTUAL)

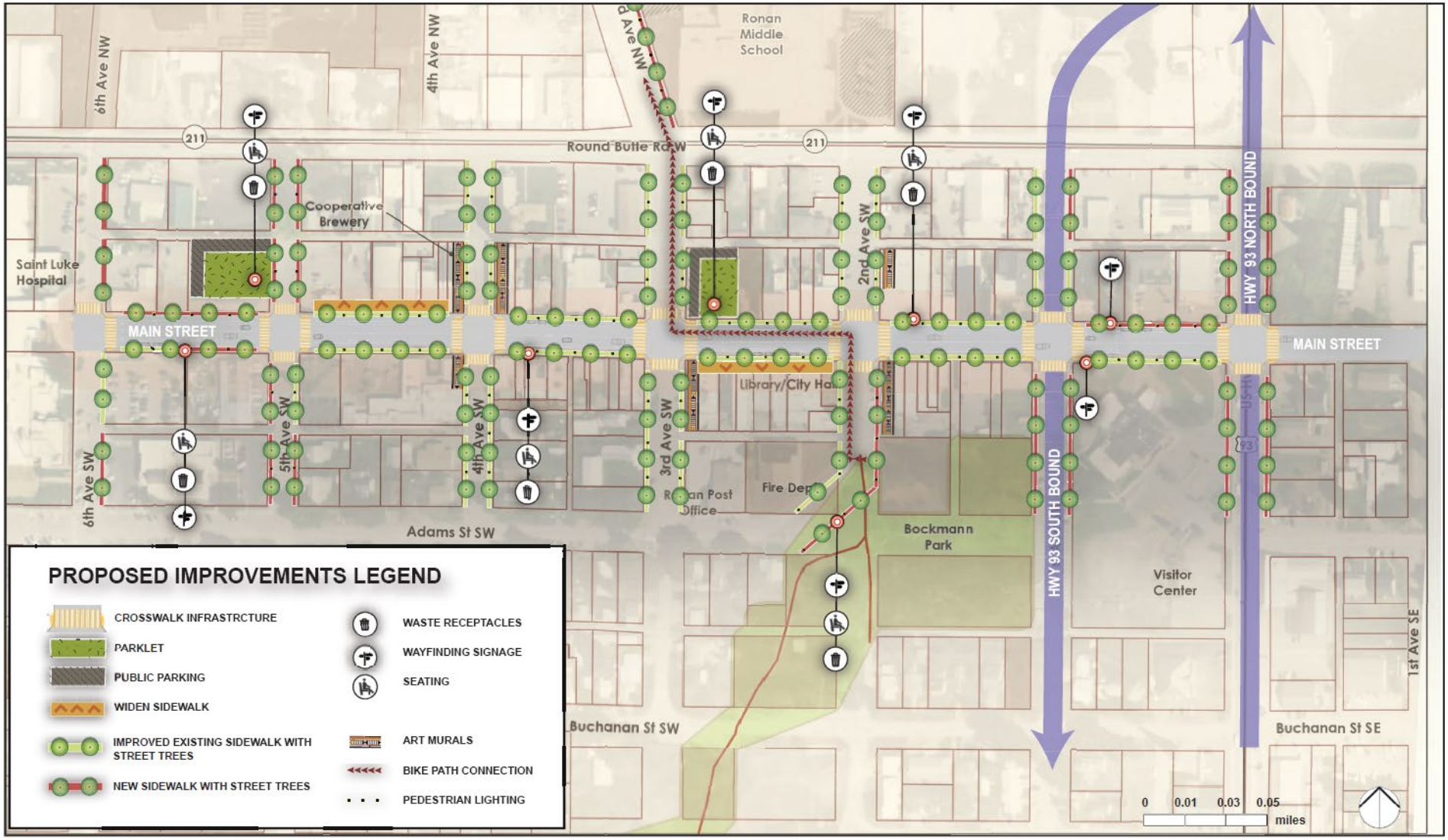


FIGURE 14 - VIEW C2 PROPOSED: THIRD ST. AT MAIN STREET (LOOKING NORTH ACROSS MAIN STREET)



FIGURE 15 - VIEW D2 PROPOSED: MAIN STREET (LOOKING EAST AT 1ST STREET / NEW S. BOUND HWY 93)



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

It is becoming increasingly apparent that economic prosperity is linked to the ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions to the economic base. In the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: 1) the ability to recover quickly from the disruption or shock, 2) the ability to withstand the disruption or shock, and 3) the ability to avoid the disruption or shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how the risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity (EDA, Economic Resilience, 2020).

Every year, people and communities experience disasters and other major disruptions that impact the economy (in both positive and negative ways). These can be the result of damaging weather events, the decline of a significant industry or closure of a major employer, or in the case of Covid-19, a global pandemic that results in temporary closure of entire communities. The financial, social, and environmental costs of these disruptions continue to rise and represent substantial drains on governments, businesses, communities, and the nation.

The community of Ronan intends to integrate resilience in two ways:

- Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals and actions that increase the long-term economic durability of the region (steady state), and
- Establishing and/or enhancing information networks among stakeholders that encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, educational, and nonprofit sectors, promoting collaboration that allows for faster and more effective response to potential future challenges (responsive).

Steady State Initiatives

1. Community leaders will be aware of county and regional level planning efforts and will participate in resiliency and hazard mitigation planning processes when given the opportunity.
2. Ronan leadership will work with local and regional economic and business development agencies to enhance their website to include links to resources and step-by-step guides for community-based projects, educational opportunities, local capacity building opportunities, and other forms of development of community capital and coordination of resources.
3. In addressing Workforce and Resident Retention, Goal 1: Develop customer service, and business succession train-ing programs, focused consideration should be given to programs that encourage a resilient workforce, defined as a workforce that can better shift between jobs/industries as needed/indicated by everchanging economic factors.
4. More workers are moving to a remote work environment. Given the importance of a strong and reliable telecommunications network in recruiting these workers, ensuring redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety is a resilience priority. Ronan will seek to work regionally and at the state and federal levels to advocate for, and support, telecommunications and broadband development that support both remote work opportunities and a resilient workforce.

Responsive Initiatives

The Ronan CEDS and Downtown Master Plan empowers the community to develop and implement a plan of action and utilize resources efficiently, embedding resilience and economic diversity into identified goals and objectives. There is no silver bullet in this arena. Resilience and diversification are a series of base hits and long-haul strategies to secure success through multiple community initiatives coming together to provide support and balance to one another.

Moving forward, continued community engagement is critical. This community was founded and continues to be sustained due to a legacy of families that have created homes in a sometimes-brutal natural environment and with few traditionally urban resources. There is a need to balance steady growth and development that also reflects the unique culture and historic economy of the region.

1. Ronan will continue to plan and implement goals and objectives that embed resilience in the workforce, communications, and collaborative goals that seek to bolster the long-term economic durability of the community.
2. Agriculture continues to be a key economic driver. Resilience planning considers ways in which agricultural technology, land use, and value-added agricultural tools might be implemented to ensure continued strength and consistency in agricultural pursuits. Also related to agriculture, and to access, natural disasters such as drought, flooding, hazardous materials spills, severe winter storms, strong wind events and wildfires have and can heavily impact this small community. Resilience planning will consider better ways in which to keep Emergency Services connected and in communication to minimize negative impacts,
3. Infrastructure, especially nonmotorized transportation infrastructure has been identified as an essential piece of community and business recruitment and growth. In addition to addressing the health of businesses and the quality of life, strong community infrastructure should be addressed for both access and emergency response resilience.
4. As part of the discussion related to disaster preparedness and resilience, climate resilience that addresses hotter temperatures, dryer conditions, and extreme weather patterns is important to address. This is particularly relevant when discussing infrastructure resilience and should be considered in community conversations and planning. Utilizing “green” materials and technology that supports sustainability and climate resilience will be considered when appropriate.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Especially for the next two years, there is significant federal money available to address economic development/resilience and infrastructure, especially transportation infrastructure. Even outside funding that is the result of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), there are typically several state and federal grants available to assist communities in addressing infrastructure and related economic development/community revitalization. While these opportunities change all the time, the following list is a sampling of traditional granting resources at the state and federal level that Ronan may consider applying for moving forward with the identified initiatives/recommended projects.

State Level Grants

- The Montana Historic Preservation Grant
  - Both planning and construction funding directed at preservation of historic sites, development/maintenance of historical societies, or history museums.
- The Foundation for Montana History Grants
  - Up to $10,000 for historic buildings and structures, historic cemeteries and sacred sites, collections and artifacts, oral histories, outreach. and project development.
- The Montana Main Street Program
  - Ronan is already an active Montana Main Street participant and should continue to take advantage of the multiple opportunities/resources this program offers for continued revitalization of the Main Street/Downtown corridor.
- Department of Natural Resources Renewable Resource Grants (DNRC-RRGL)
  - Both planning/construction of water and sewer projects when infrastructure improvements/updates .
- Montana Coal Endowment Program (MCEP)
  - Planning/construction of water, sewer, solid waste, storm sewer and bridges.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - Wide range of uses, particularly for planning and construction of community facilities (i.e., daycares, senior centers, community centers, etc..) if Ronan can show areas of Low-to-Moderate-Income (LMI) impact.
- Transportation Alternatives (TA)
  - Construction of nonmotorized infrastructure including sidewalks, recreational pathways, ADA accessibility projects, etc.
- Montana Strategic Investment Grants
  - Supports a wide variety of arts related activities and opportunities including:
    - Attendance at workshops, trainings, residencies, or conferences
    - Exhibiting at trade shows, gallery showings conferences, festivals, or other art events
    - Public outreach and marketing for events or publications

        - Expansion of online presence or entry into new online marketplaces
        - Performances, public art installations, demonstrations, or exhibitions
        - Investments in technology or tools that represent a clear step forward professionally
- Hart Family Fund for Small Towns
    - Hart Family Fund for Small Towns grants are awarded for planning activities and education efforts focused on preservation. Grants may be made for activities and projects such as:
        - Planning: Support for obtaining professional expertise in areas such as architecture, archaeology, engineering, preservation planning, land use planning, and law. Eligible planning activities include, but are not limited to:
        - Hiring a preservation architect or landscape architect to produce a historic structure report or historic landscape master plan
        - Hiring a preservation planner to produce design guidelines for a historic district
        - Hiring a real estate development consultant to produce an economic feasibility study for the reuse of a threatened structure
        - Sponsoring a community forum to develop a shared vision for the future of a historic neighborhood
- Rural Project Initiative (details provided in link)
- Hometown Proud (details provided in link)

Federal Level Grants

IIJA has produced billions of dollars in infrastructure investment. While most of these are for large projects, especially in transportation, there are dollars that will allow for community wide investments. Note that there are over 100 of these programs; the ones most relevant to Ronan based on currently identified goals and objectives are listed below:

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)
    - Large, community wide/regionally significant transportation projects
    - Both planning/construction
    - Includes projects that address non-motorized transportation infrastructure
- Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment (ATII) Program
    - Large, community/regionally significant, nonmotorized transportation projects (pathways, bike lanes, sidewalks, connections between communities or within communities that support nonmotorized transportation
- HUD Preservation & Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement (PRICE)
    - For preservation or revitalization of manufactured housing
- Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

  - Planning and construction for nonmotorized transportation infrastructure (planning allows you to create a community-wide Transportation Safety Action plan that can be used to access implementation dollars)
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) WaterSmart Planning and Project grants
  - Water related projects to address domestic water supply/community growth
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
  - Planning and Project grants for a wide variety of economic, workforce and business development (including infrastructure) projects that support economic development/workforce retention and growth
- Reconnecting Communities
  - Planning and Project grants for transportation projects that "reconnect" areas of the community in poverty/disadvantaged or residential areas to areas of commerce/essential needs/services.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN / ACTION WORKBOOK PLAN

To ensure the CEDS met EDA guidelines and was also as functional and flexible as was possible to ensure adoption and utilization, Ronan adhered to the following in completion of both the CEDS and the Downtown Master Plan:

- Robust and Inclusive community participation (as previously outlined).
- Data gathering and analysis of local trends in economy, workforce, economic development tools (past, current and future), and economic resilience opportunities that include both steady state and responsive resilience strategies.
- Completion of a SWOT analysis and inclusion of the outcomes
- Development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) goals, objectives, and activities to include prioritization of those goals for each year of the 5-year plan.
- Inclusion of an implementation "workbook" that outlines performance measures and means by which to measure success, anticipated dates for completion, possible additional financial and human resources to assist in completing goals/objectives, and who in the community (or outside of it) is responsible for ensuring plan/goal implementation.

Key goals, objectives, and strategies identified in the finalized Downtown Master Plan reflect and compliment the CEDS. The Implementation/Action Plan Workbook incorporates the following strategy and deliverables specific to the Downtown Master Plan:

- Robust and inclusive community participation (as previously outlined).
- Final maps and Illustrative design concept visualizations.
- Infrastructure development concepts and preferred development alternative guided by the MMS approach.
- FLU plan and community/streetscape design recommendations and standards to guide implementation of projects.
- Comparative analysis of economic growth scenarios developed from the CEDS that will be used to determine key physical infrastructure improvements, and further help identify available revitalization incentives and funding opportunities for Downtown/Main Street Ronan .

ADOPTION

A public meeting and presentation of this plan were held with Ronan public boards on July 24th, 2024. The City of Ronan will use the guidance provided by the adopted conceptual plans to execute actionable items laid out in the *Action Plan Workbook* (implementation plan).

The complete Action Workbook Plan document is found in **Appendix D**.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Public Engagement & Survey Summary

The KLJ Public Engagement team traveled to Ronan and conducted a first round of stakeholder and public engagement from Tuesday, Oct. 10 to Friday, Oct. 13, 2023. Mark Garff, SCJ Landscape Architect, visited Ronan on Tuesday Oct. 10 and attended some stakeholder and public events that day. A total of 15 meetings were hosted. Eight (8) meetings were with stakeholders and seven (7) were public pop-in events. One of the stakeholder meetings that had been scheduled with CSKT was cancelled by the Tribe due to a scheduling conflict.

A second stakeholder engagement was held on May 21, 2024. KLJ presented the draft plan to a stakeholder group at Mission West. In attendance were Mission West, Ronan Chamber, Ronan Police Department, residents, and business community members. Following the presentation on the same day, an informal open house event was held at the Ronan Cooperative Brewery where additional opportunity for stakeholder's was facilitated by KLJ. Both the presentation and the public open house events solicited additional stakeholder feedback which was incorporated into this final report.

Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023

Stakeholder Meetings

- St. Luke Community Healthcare
  - Discussed staffing challenges, current issues, and what the future could look like.
- Ronan Steering Committee
  - Briefing with the City, reviewed maps, discussed the history and current issues, tour of the main street, and history and detail of the business challenges.
- County Fair Board and Extension Office
  - Discussed how the fairgrounds is used, the future of the fairground's property, current challenges, and toured the site.

FIGURE 16 - SIDEWALK STICKER OUTSIDE OF HARVEST FOODS.



Public Pop-In Events

- Harvest Foods
  - Tabling event and handed out project information cards. Left a sidewalk sticker for the business to place outside.
- Pizza Café
  - Tabling event. Not much traffic flow. Left project cards and project napkins for the restaurant to distribute.

- Senior Volleyball Night
  - Tabling event near concessions. Handed out project information cards and left some at the cash register at concessions.

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023

Stakeholder Meetings

- Ronan City Council Meeting
  - Provided an update to Council and gathered information about local issues.

Public Pop-In Events

- Dobson Creek Coffee
  - Tabling event. Handed out project information cards and distributed promotional coffee sleeves.
- Co-Op Brewery
  - Tabling event. Distributed project information cards and promotional sidewalk stickers. Collected a hard copy survey.

FIGURE 17 - PROMOTIONAL COFFEE SLEEVE AT DOBSON CREEK COFFEE.



Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023

Stakeholder Meetings

- CSKT Tribal Council Meeting
  - Cancelled by Tribe but still attended the meeting. Will provide project information as a follow up and will return to meet with the Council.
- Mission West Community Development Partners
  - Toured the facility and learned more about how they support businesses and organizations in the region.
- City of Ronan
  - Met with Dan Miller and discussed growth and issues facing the City.
- School District
  - Discussed enrollment, student workforce, collaboration with other organizations, and the future of the district.

Public Pop-In Events

- Farmer's Market
  - Tabling event. Handed out project information cards and collected a few hard copy surveys.

Friday, Oct. 13, 2023

Stakeholder Meetings

- Larry Hall
  - Met at City Hall.
- Janet Sucha, Lake County Park Board
  - Met at Fairgrounds.
- Jason Moore
  - Met at Red Poppy.

Public Pop-In Events

- Football Game
  - Tabling event through halftime.

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

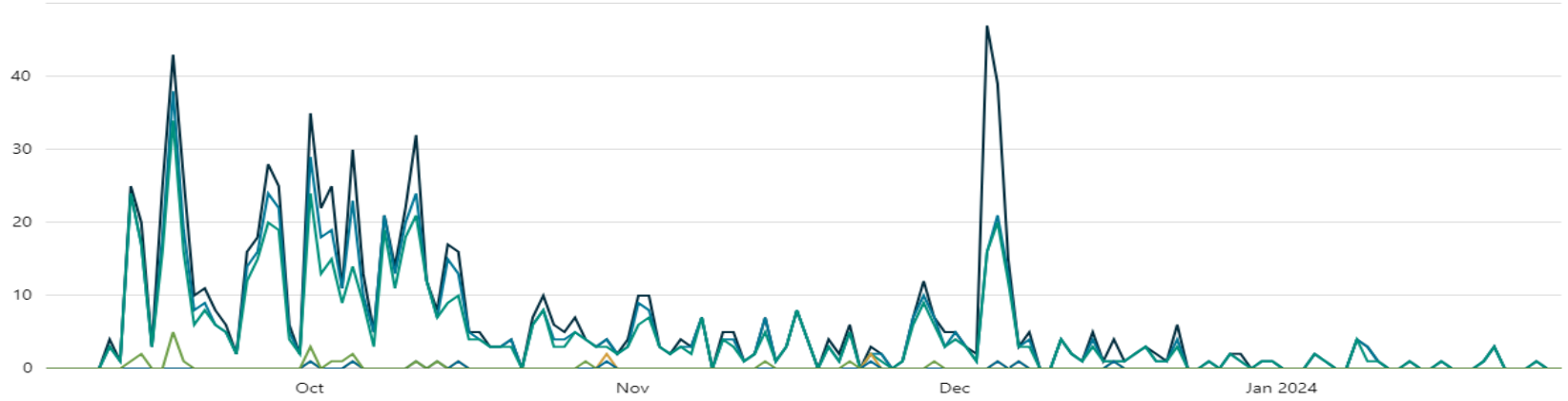
- Presentation at Mission West
- Open House at Ronan Cooperative Brewery
  - Public Comments solicited at the open house included the following:
    - Business and Event venue opportunities that incorporate historical background information
    - All ages coffee shop / tap house – to be open late
    - Native murals
    - Improve Parking and street trees – use drought tolerant species
    - Improve sidewalks and streetlights
    - Updated City Park and new playground equipment
    - Improvement to bike network

- Incorporate fewer paved areas i.e., “less concrete”
- Improved food options and/or restaurants
- Other attractions such as bowling alley, movie theater, etc.
- Horse drawn trolley
- Improve housing and safety
- Refurbish historic buildings / add them to National Historic Register
- Music Venue (outdoor and indoor)

Website Traffic Data

940 website views and 595 visitors in total. 117 visitors from social media, 431 from clicking a direct link, and 45 visitors from a Google search.

FIGURE 18 – WEBSITE VIEWS PER DAY



Media Report

Social Media

Five posts were made to the Chamber Facebook page between Sept. 29 and Oct. 13. Mission West posted on Oct. 4

Earned Media

KPAX published an article on Oct. 6 titled, "Public input sought on Ronan Master Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan". The article is attached.

Press Release

A press release titled "City of Ronan Begins Visioning Process" was issued on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2023, to the following outlets:

- The Lake County Leader
- The Valley Journal
- KKMT (Ronan)
- KERR (Ronan)
- KIBG (Big Fork)
- KQRT (Pablo)
- KPAX (Missoula)
- KAJ (Kalispell)

Survey Data

Summary of the results are attached.

- 227 survey responses.
- Average time spent: 7 minutes.
- Roughly 10% of respondents were associated with the Salish Kootenai Tribes.
- Zip codes reached:
  - 59864 (150 respondents)
  - 59860 (26 respondents)
  - 59865 (19 respondents)
  - 59824 (12 respondents)
  - Other (20 respondents)

KPAX 8 MISSOULA & WESTERN MONTANA

Public input sought on Ronan Master Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan

An online survey is available to help people to consider strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities for growth.

By: MTN News
Posted at 2:35 PM, Oct 06, 2023
and last updated 2:35 PM, Oct 06, 2023

RONAN — Residents are being asked for their input as Ronan prepares to update its Master Plan and five-year Economic Development Strategic Plan.

The City of Ronan, the Ronan Chamber of Commerce, and Mission West Community Development Partners are using money from two grants to work together on the process.

An online survey is available to help people to consider strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities for growth.

According to a news release, "the plans will examine existing, potential, and achievable opportunities for Ronan's future."

The plans are expected to be completed in August 2024.

Project partners and volunteers will be visiting various businesses to promote the plans and the survey from Oct. 10 through Oct. 13, 2023.

The survey and a full schedule of events are available at inputcentral.com/ronan.

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Poll question: What is your vision for Ronan?



Survey Results

Question 2: Pick three words to describe your vision for Ronan.

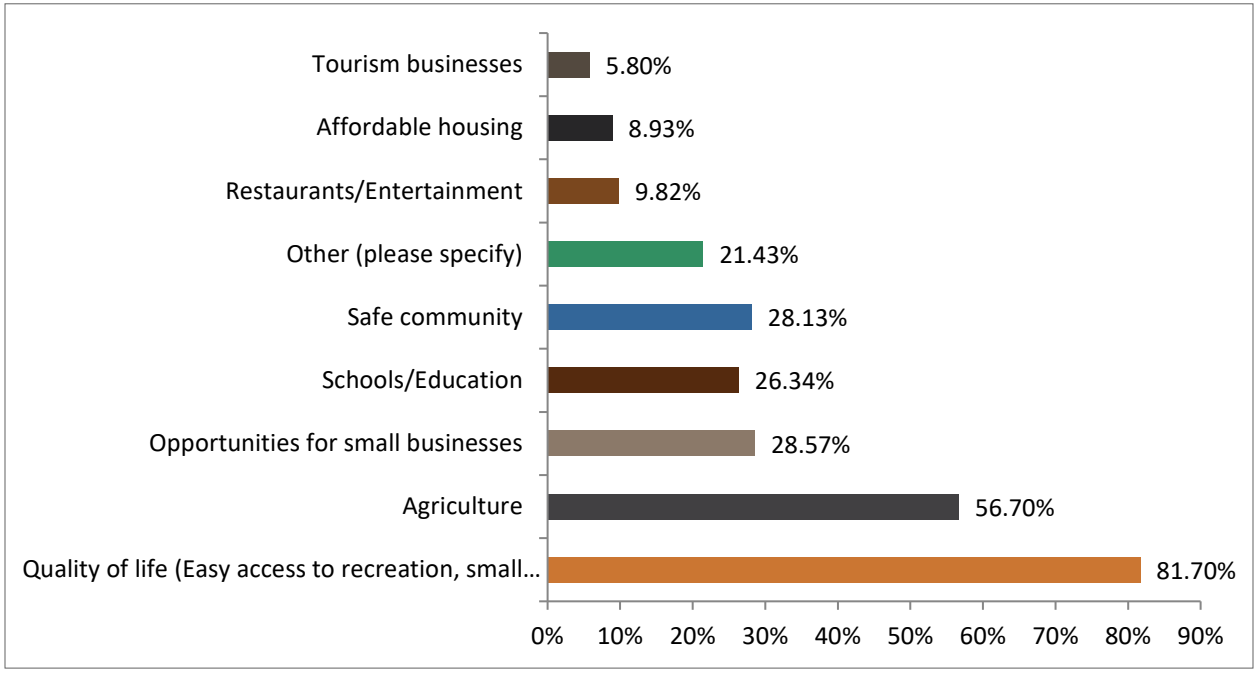
Top 5 words people used included:

1) Clean
2) Community
3) Friendly
4) Family
5) Welcoming

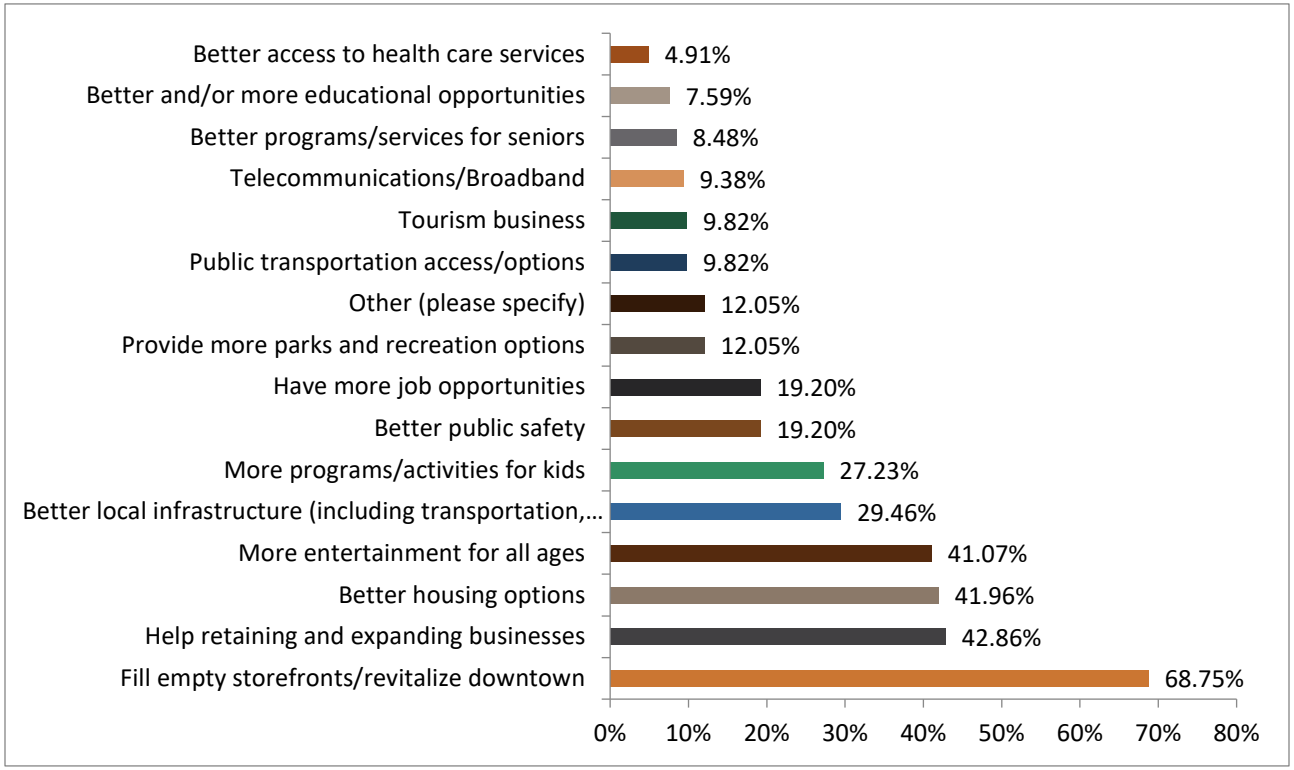
A word cloud of trending words for Ronan's vision is below.



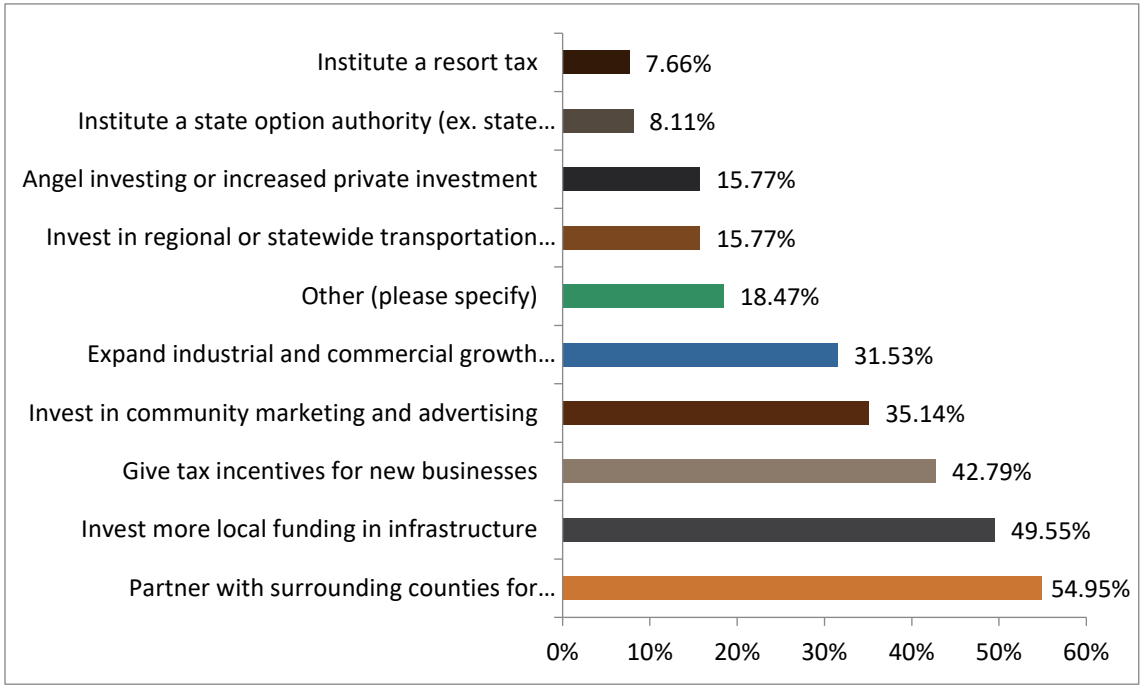
Question 3: What are the greatest assets in your area? What makes your community stand out? List your top 3.



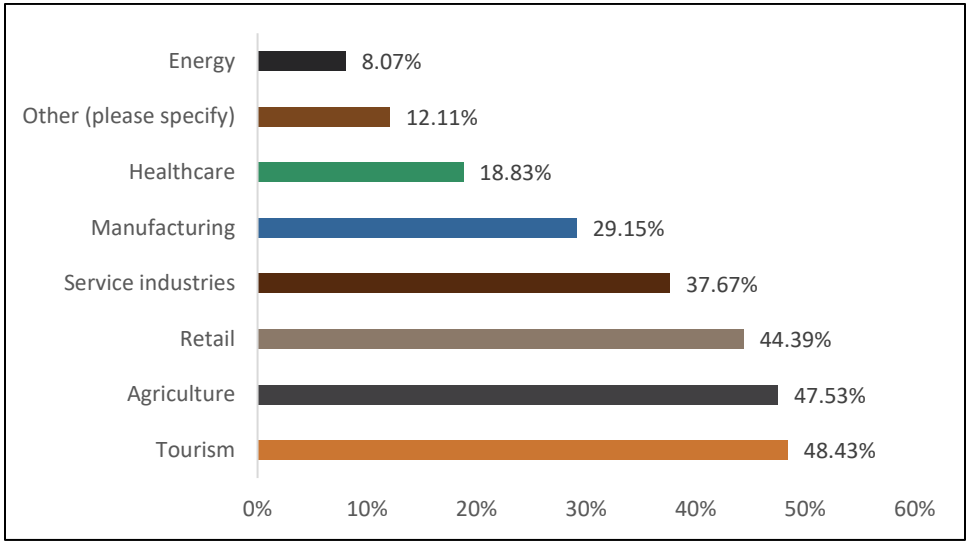
Question 4: What are the biggest needs in your area? Pick your top 3.



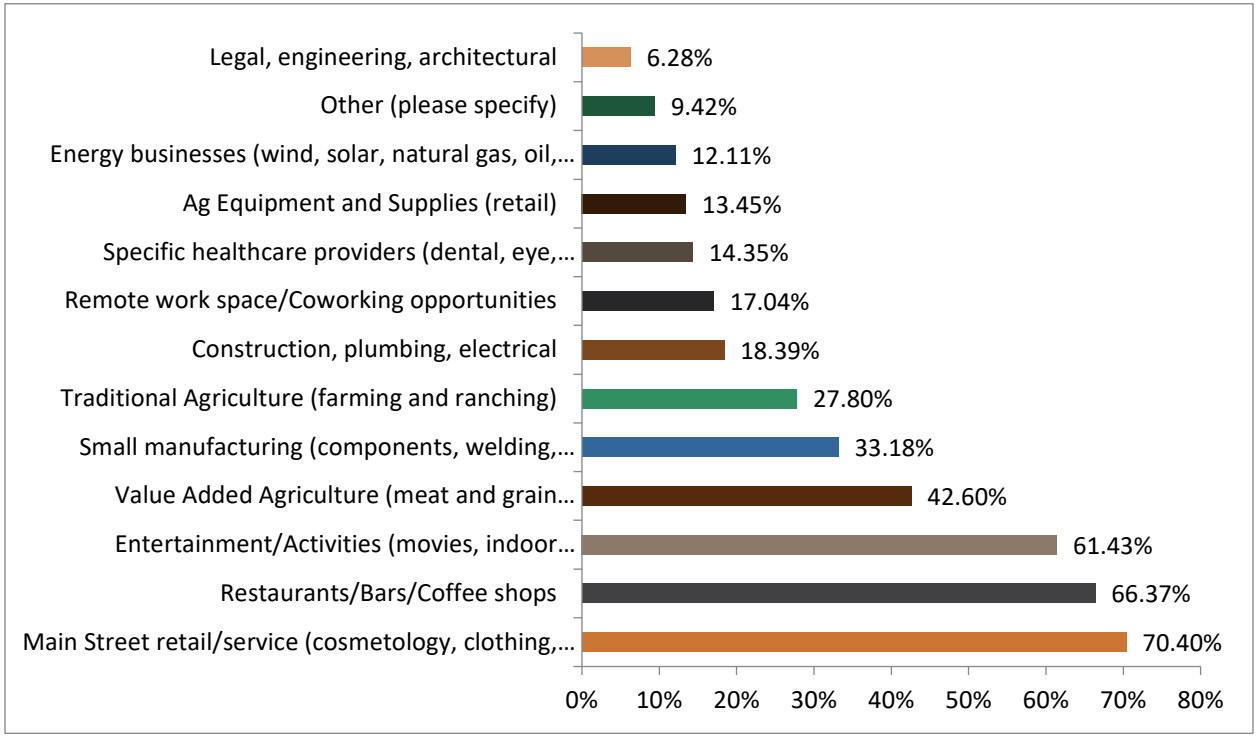
Question 5: How would you meet those needs? Pick your top 3.



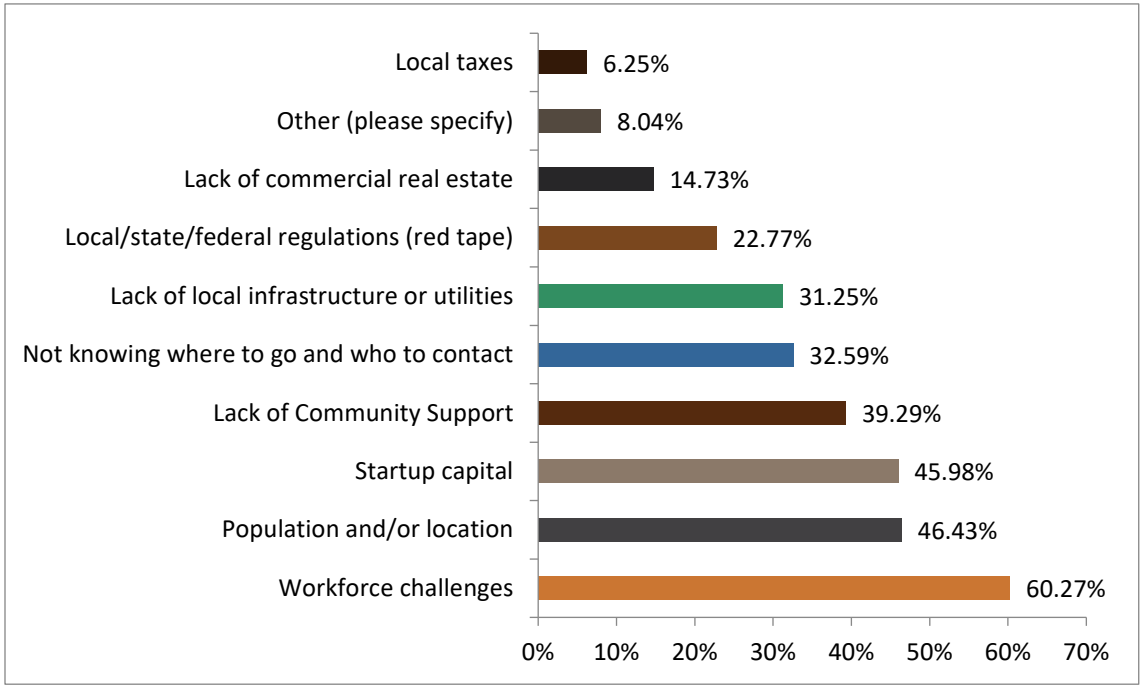
Question 6: Which business industries have the most growth potential in your area? Pick your top 2.



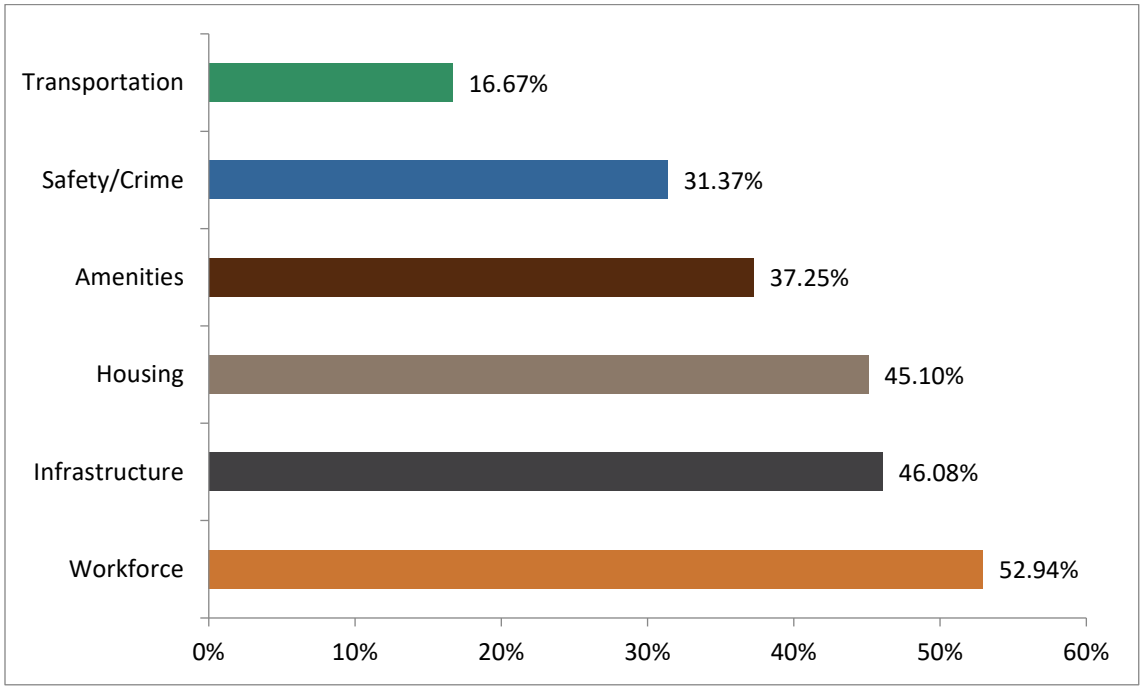
Question 7: Based upon your choices above, what TYPES of business would you like to see?



Question 8: What do you see as some of the obstacles for new businesses to open in your community?



Question 9: Would you like to be part of a small focus group to get more involved? If so, pick topics you are interested in and enter your contact information.



Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis Report

The SWOT analysis is a tool used in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) development process to identify the advantages of the community and/or the region that will make it competitive on a local, regional, national and/or global scale. This process can also be utilized to identify factors that might limit the community's ability to realize its potential or make it difficult to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Public outreach, some of which included SWOT analysis began in October of 2023. Initial public outreach concluded in January of 2024. In addition to strong online opportunities to participate, outreach included a series of in-person "pop-up" meetings in which Ronan Revitalization, Mission West, and Ronan Chamber of Commerce representatives and staff from KLJ (the contractor selected to assist in the process) would "pop-up" at various locations in Ronan and meet with citizens to request survey participation, and multiple scheduled meetings with higher-level stakeholders and elected officials. The survey tool utilized included questions targeting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats requesting respondents identify the greatest area assets, biggest needs in the area, opportunities for business growth that would enhance/sustain the economy and obstacles that new businesses and community development might face moving forward. Additionally, the survey added questions that provided more in-depth and specific information to Ronan, allowing goals, objectives, and action items to be tailored to best meet community perception and need.

In addition to comments collected at in person events, 227 survey responses were received. Roughly 10 percent of those responses came from members of the Confederated Salish and Kootanai Tribes (CKST). Some of the traditional verbiage was altered to better encompass community vision. For instance, "strengths" were framed as "assets" or "greatest economic strengths." "Need" was utilized instead of weakness and "new business and community development opportunities" was utilized to obtain information regarding general "opportunities."

Commonalities and themes arising from the SWOT analysis are as follows:

Strengths:

Survey responses and input at the stakeholder meetings indicated community strengths to be Quality of Life (which included easy access to recreational opportunities, small town feel, and "connected" neighborhoods (82 percent), Agriculture (57 percent), Opportunities for small business (29 percent), Schools/Education systems (26 percent) and public safety/safe community (28) percent as the top 5 community strengths. Additionally, amenities (restaurants/entertainment), affordable housing, and tourism businesses were also listed in lessening percentages (all less than 10 percent).

Weaknesses:

Areas of need/weaknesses were more diverse than identified strengths/assets, however, again, there was commonality in at least three to five areas. These included revitalization of downtown (filling of empty storefronts) (69 percent), increased need for retention and expansion of businesses (43 percent), better/more diverse housing options (42 percent), more amenities and activities for families/children (68 percent), and better local infrastructure (including transportation infrastructure (29 percent). Additional needs/areas for improvement included increased public safety, more parks/recreational opportunities, additional public transportation access/options, increased broadband/telecommunications technology, better programs/services for senior citizens, more educational opportunities, and better access to health care (all coming in at percentages below 20 percent).

Opportunities:

When asked about what industries/businesses and activities had the most opportunity for growth and where there might be ongoing opportunities, tourism, agriculture, retail, and service industries ranked most highly. Additionally, respondents indicated they believed there were additional opportunities in manufacturing, healthcare, and energy sectors that might diversify the local economy and provide opportunities for worker recruitment and retention.

Threats:

Like many communities/regions in Montana and across the country, the primary threat/challenge identified was workforce and the ability to recruit and retain qualified and ample workforce. Ronan's isolated location and small population was considered a significant threat/obstacle to workforce, but so was lack of startup capital, lack of community support, not knowing where to go and who to contact for assistance, inadequate local infrastructure, local/state/federal regulations, lack of commercial real estate, and local taxes were also listed as contributing factors/threats to business recruitment/development within the region.

A copy of the survey, summary of public engagement and stakeholder meetings, media outreach, and survey responses including demographics and total number of surveys received is also attached. Additionally, a short summary of overall public and stakeholder input is also provided in the full report outlined as "Public Engagement Summary."

Appendix B: Main Street Complete Streets Alternatives 1 through 4, Typical Sections

FIGURE 19 – ALTERNATIVE 1 – BIDIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES ON NORTH SIDE W/ RAISED & SEPARATED CURB

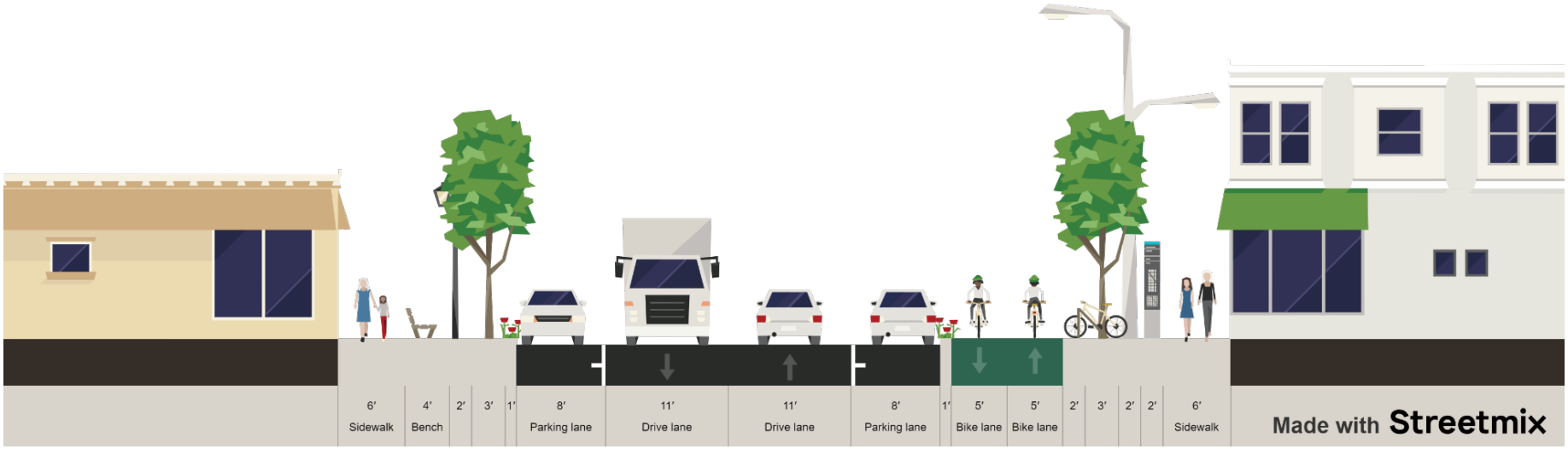


FIGURE 20 - ALTERNATIVE 2 – BI-DIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES SPLIT N/S W/ RAISED & SEPARATED CURB

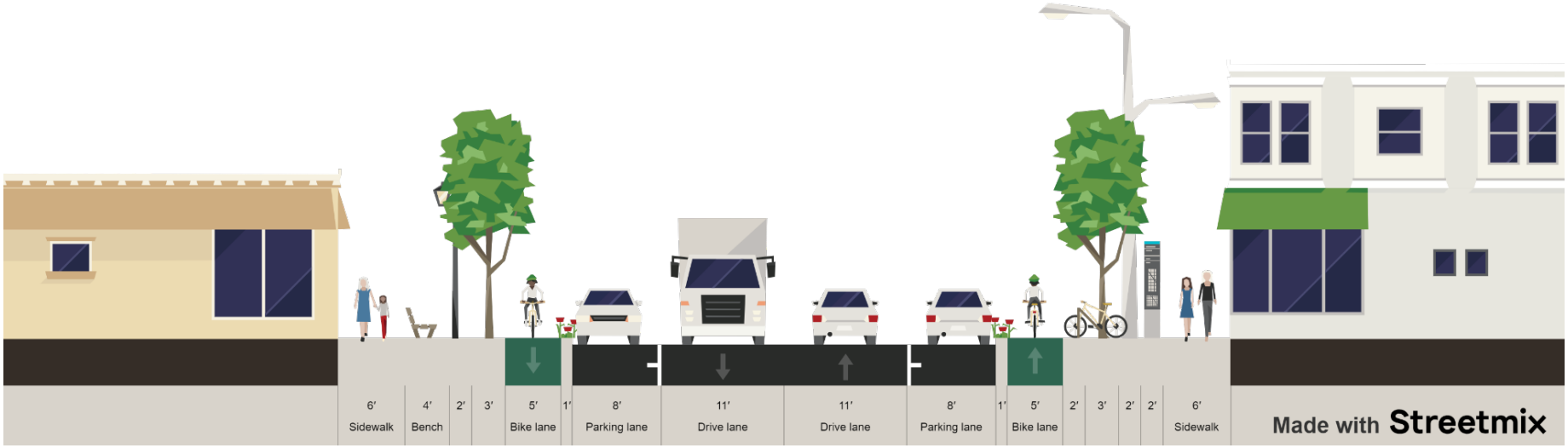


FIGURE 21 - ALTERNATIVE 3 - BIDIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES SPLIT N/S - ON STREET/NO CURB SEPARATION FROM TRAFFIC

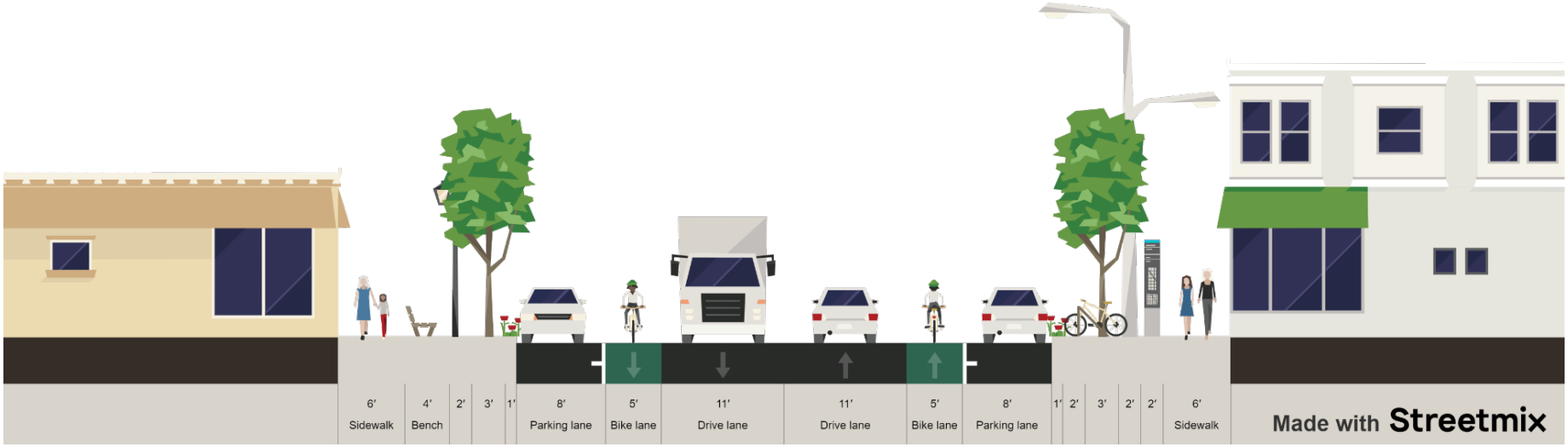
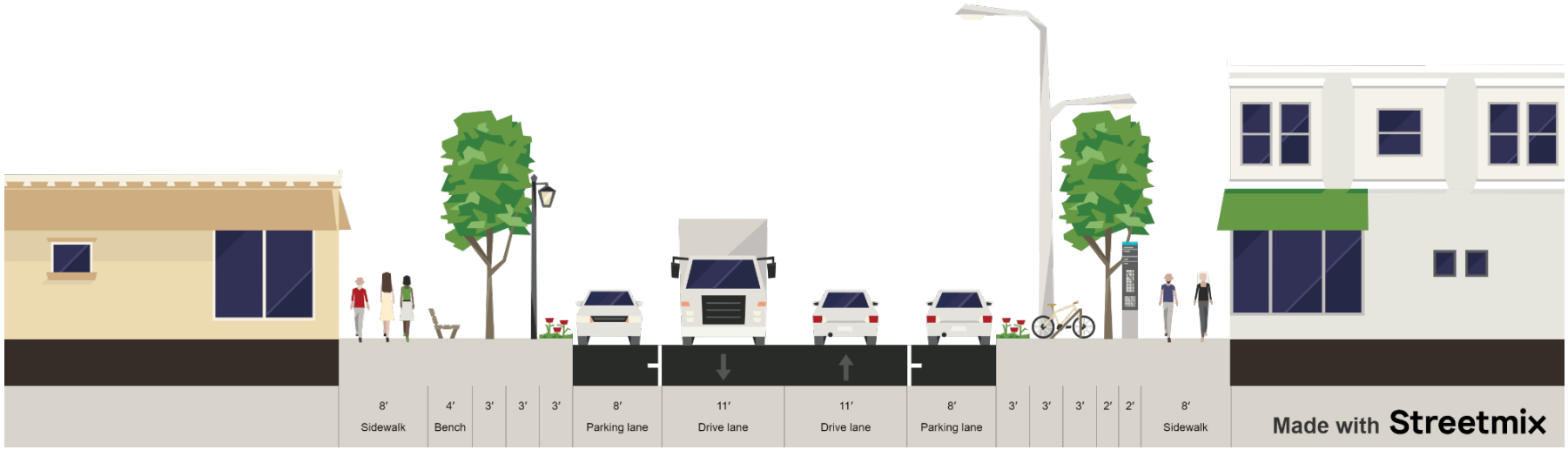


FIGURE 22 – ALTERNATIVE 4 – WIDENED SIDEWALK-SCAPE AND NO DESIGNATED BIKE LANES



Appendix C: Street Level Plan View and Perspective Visualizations

FIGURE 23 – PLAN ENLARGEMENT AT WEST END OF MAIN STREET (CONCEPTUAL)

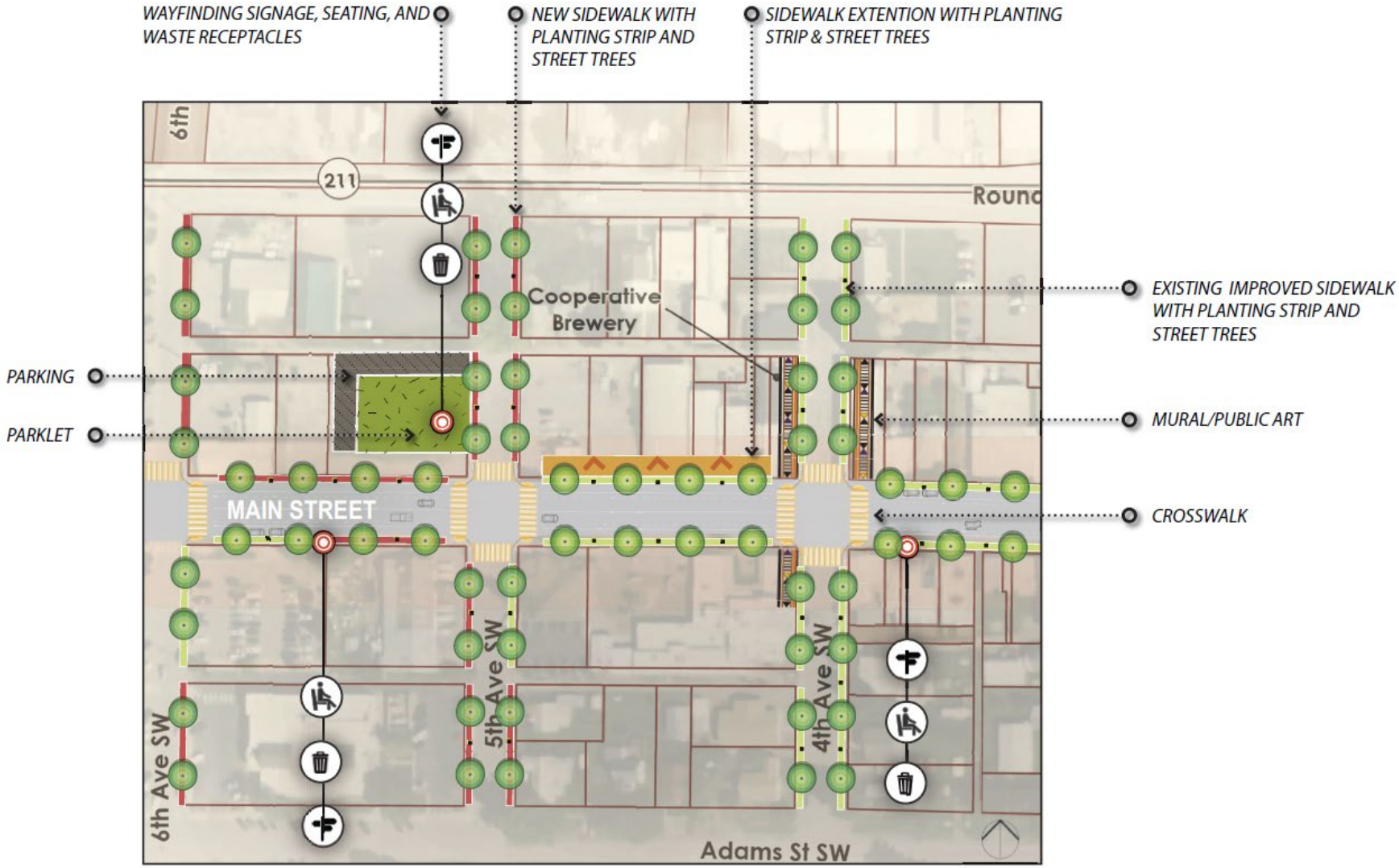
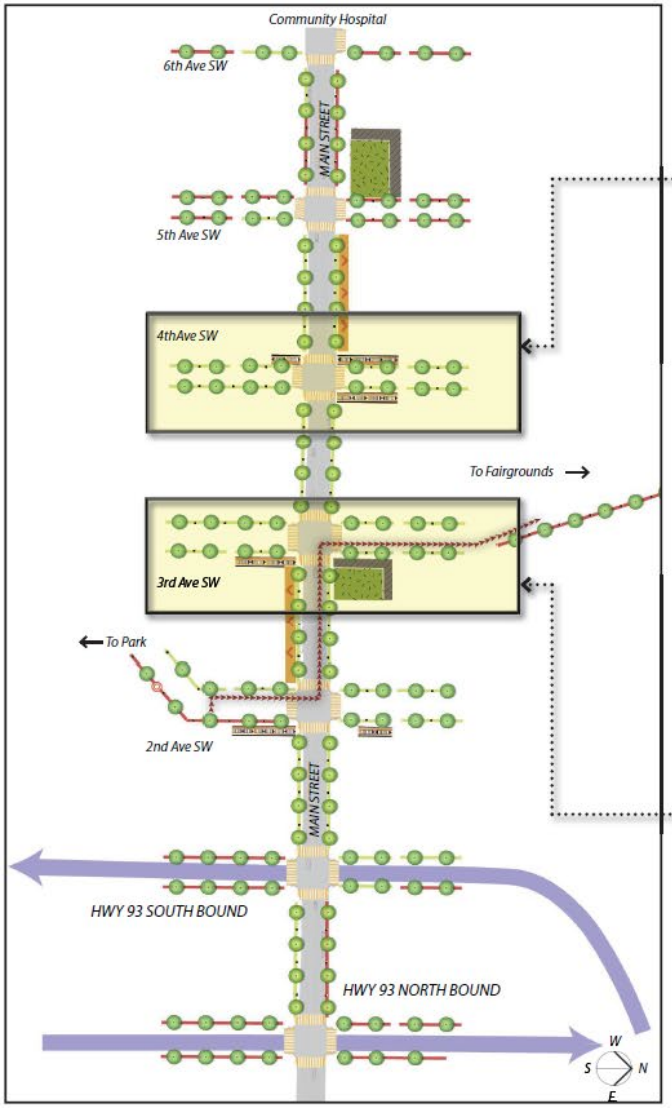
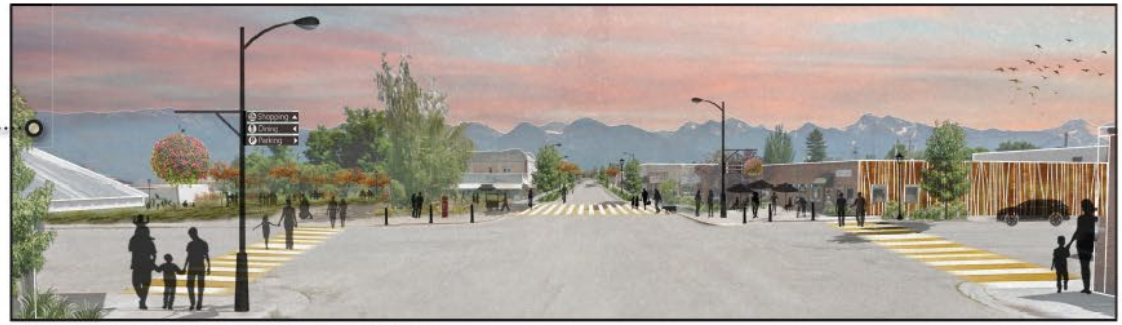


FIGURE 24 – MAIN STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS – STREET LEVEL PERSPECTIVE RENDERINGS (CONCEPTS)





VIEW A | FOURTH AND MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST



VIEW B | THIRD AND MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST

FIGURE 25 – VIEW A: FOURTH AND MAIN ST. (LOOKING WEST)



FIGURE 26 - VIEW B: THIRD AND MAIN ST. (LOOKING EAST)

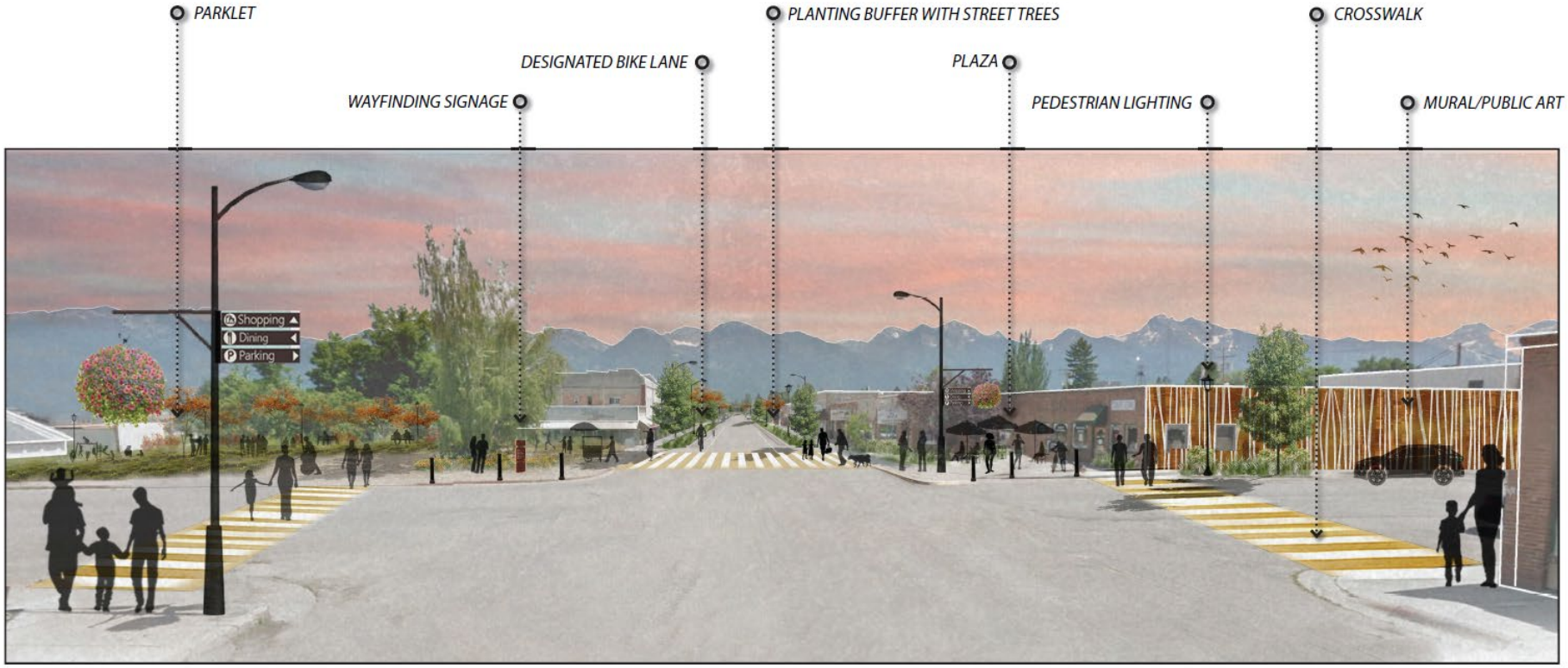


FIGURE 27 –BEFORE AND AFTER: (THIRD ST. AT MAIN STREET LOOKING NORTH ACROSS MAIN STREET)



FIGURE 28 – BEFORE AND AFTER: (MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST AT 1ST STREET/HWY 93



Appendix D: Action Workbook Plan

ACTION PLAN WORKBOOK			
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES City of Ronan / Ronan Revitalization / Mission West Companion Action Plan Worksheet and Task Organization/Assignments			
GROWTH IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION			
Task	**Assigned To**	**Completion Yr.**	**Status**
Goal 1: Protect Agricultural Land			
Objective 1: **Identify and partner with Extension and Montana Ag & Food Development Network resources to continue education to farmers/ranchers**			
Objective 2: **Conduct research and foster partnerships that address and take advantage of changes in the commodity markets that could add value to the agricultural region**			
Objective 3: **Support implementation/development of land use policies that prohibit or severely limit annexation of property by municipalities, supporting the protection of agricultural land surrounding existing municipal limits**			
Goal 2: Increase opportunities for access for beginning famers/ranchers and entrepreneurs			
Objective 1: **Work with regional and government entities to create incentive programs for beginning farmers/ranchers that provide improved opportunities and financial incentives to landowners/asset owners to rent/sell assets to a beginning farmer/rancher**			
Goal 3: Support local and regional food pathways and creation of a local food systems plan, focusing on creating more local resilience and value-added economic drivers			
Objective 1: **Provide continued support and growth and understanding of the importance of local, regional, and family scale food production that is sustainable**			
Objective 2: **Create/expand marketing and advertising campaigns highlighting local/regional growers and farm-to-table opportunities**			
Objective 3: **Create/expand events/community gatherings that highlight and support agricultural endeavors and promote regional uniqueness**			
Objective 4: **Create/develop opportunities for non-agriculture-based community members to engage in agricultural endeavors (including promotion of agritourism opportunities)**			

WORKFORCE / RESIDENT RETENTION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT			
Task	**Assigned To**	**Completion Yr.**	**Status**
Goal 1: Business development and financial assistance for workforce, customer service, and business succession planning			
Objective 1: **Improve access to secondary education and trade schools (including broadband development that allows for consistent virtual access)**			
Objective 2: **Continue to attend trainings, meetings, and seminars designed to increase skills and resources related to workforce development**			
Objective 3: **Develop access to college credits and trade courses for high school students and build improved partnerships with programs to meet needs**			
Objective 4: **Identify/access federal resources currently available to develop workforce and related broadband infrastructure that supports remote access to educational and workforce training resources**			
Objective 5: **Partner with local companies to create specific "on the job" training programs that specifically support workforce development for existing businesses seeking to expand and grow**			
Objective 6: **Develop and facilitate a "succession planning" training for small and family-owned businesses at risk of closing should the originating owner/operator retire or pass away**			
Objective 7: **Continue to provide technical assistance to local business owners as they contemplate starting or growing local businesses**			
Objective 8: Continue to support and advocate for existing tax incentives for businesses including tax abatements, and development of TIF Districts and TEDDs			
Goal 2: Address Main Street and Downtown barriers that are hindering business growth or community positivity			
Objective 1: **Repair/replace building facades to ensure a consistent, clean, and safe "Main Street," including repairs/replacements to empty buildings when possible**			
Objective 2: **Host community clean up days in which residents/business owners take time to clean blighted areas/empty buildings**			
Objective 3: **Utilize state/federal dollars to repair/construct/improve basic pedestrian infrastructure which encourages walkability in the primary business arena**			

Task	Assigned To	Completion Yr.	Status
Objective 4: **Install new streetlights, building lighting, flower planters, and other aesthetics that encourage community engagement and reduce crime**			
Objective 5: **Plan/host multiple "Main Street" activities that bring current/new residents into the core of the community for relationship building and development of community pride**			
Objective 6: **Target infrastructure investments (water, sewer & roads) that support community growth development of new businesses and expansion of existing business**			
Objective 7: **Continue to support participation in the Montana Main Street Program**			
Objective 8: **Continue to assist communities in accessing brownfield planning and construction grant dollars to assist in addressing blighted properties in redevelopment**			
Goal 3: Increase available housing with special emphasis on increasing the supply of affordable and workforce housing			
Objective 1: **Establish/fortify affordable housing programs with USDA RD, HUD, and the Montana Community Reinvestment Initiative, and other state and federal organizations to establish/fund sufficient financial incentives to promote and/or implement affordable housing projects**			
Objective 2: **Advocate for and support regulatory and financial incentives for affordable and workforce housing development**			
Objective 3: **Aid community leadership in implementation of workforce housing zoning in the towns/counties that include subdivision standards for the appropriate location, size, and design standards**			
Objective 4: **Target infrastructure investments (water, sewer, and roads) that support development of housing**			
Objective 5: **Consider how multifamily/multi-housing might be developed to meet specific needs**			

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS & ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES			
Task	**Assigned To**	**Completion Yr.**	**Status**
Goal 1: Continue to facilitate communications between community, county and state leadership, federal legislators, and community nonprofit organizations			
Objective 1: **Support local leadership programs that increase the skills of citizens to participate in their communities and to step into leadership positions as they become available**			
Objective 2: **Work with city, county, and state level elected leadership to continue authorization and appropriations that assist in the funding of economic development activities**			
Goal 2: Work collaboratively with county, Tribal, and state governments in formally identifying needs (planning) and then identifying potential financial resources (loans/grants) that support completion of projects that meet those needs.			
Objective 1: **Cross educate and attend local/regional & state level meetings and, as appropriate, provide letters of support, and contributions to support grant writing and technical assistance resources that will benefit Ronan and the larger regional economy**			
Objective 2: **Consider formation of a cross jurisdictional coordination committee that brings county, tribal, local and regional representatives together to discuss those projects that are too large to be undertaken by one entity but benefit the region.**			
Goal 3: Work in partnership with the Salish & Kootenai (CKST) Tribes to support and coordinate efforts as outlined in their 2021 CEDS.			
Objective 1: **Ongoing workforce development, including young workforce, and support of higher education and training opportunities**			
Objective 2: **Diversification of revenue sources**			
Objective 3: **Creation/maintenance of a business climate that supports attraction, retention, and growth of businesses (contributing to sustainable employment at meaningful wages)**			
Objective 4: **Support of infrastructure development that enables economic growth to include broadband, water, sewer, transportation, and housing**			
Objective 5: **Nurturing emerging industries and innovation, including agribusiness, forest product development, the hot springs rejuvenation project, and culturally appropriate tourism.**			

TOURISM & SUPPORTING THE VISITOR ECONOMY			
Task	**Assigned To**	**Completion Yr.**	**Status**
Goal 1: Develop specialized tours and attractions and expand individual community events/tourism campaigns			
Objective 1: **Develop a comprehensive list of possible place-based, local, cultural, ecotourism, and agritourism activities that can be marketed to visitors**			
Objective 2: **Assist in the development of a "Path to Glacier Park" route that encompasses identified place-based activities in Ronan and "links" these to other area/regional activities that tourists might take advantage of as part of a "path" to the Park**			
Objective 3: **Agritourism opportunities should also be considered. Agritourism gives producers an oppor-tunity to generate additional income and an avenue for direct marketing to consumers. It enhances the tourism industry by increasing the volume of visitors to an area and the length of their stay. According to Allied Market Research, the agritour-ism market size was valued at $42.4 million in 2019 and is estimated to reach $63 million by 2027. This both supports the tourism and visitor market and addresses value added agricultural growth**			
Goal 2: Give special consideration (as part of the Transportation Safety Action Plan) of nonmotorized travelers, specifically bicyclists			
Goal 3: Develop/expand individual community tourism campaigns			
TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE			
Goal 1: Develop a Community-Wide Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan (SS4A)			
Goal 2: Support and encourage prioritizing of resources to support critical water and sewer infrastructure			
Objective 1: **Advocate for ongoing investments at the local, state, and federal level for expansion of existing systems to provide for growth opportunities**			
Objective 2: **Assist with review/changes in community zoning and annexation policies, allowing for targeted annexation of neighboring county property into city/town limits for the purpose of extension of water/sewer infrastructure that supports business attraction, retention, and growth**			
Objective 3: **Partner with community leadership and SRF staff to ensure water and sewer infrastructure projects are prioritized and listed on the Intended Use Plan, maximizing opportunities to receive BIL grant and loan forgiveness dollars**			

Appendix E: Cited Documents links

CSKT CEDS (2021)

EDA CEDS (2023)

Mission West Community Development Partners 2022-2027 CEDS

Eastern Plains Resiliency Strategy (2022-2027)

City of Ronan Growth Policy (2008)

Ronan MEDA Resource Assessment (2016)

2020 Decennial Census 2021/2022 American Community Survey 5 years Estimates