

# PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



DOWNTOWN  
MASTER PLAN



5-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGIC PLAN



2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (TO BE COMPLETED POST DRAFT REPORT PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND INCLUDED AS STANDALONE DOCUMENT WITH FINAL REPORT).....	1 -
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Project Approach .....	1
<b>BASELINE CONDITIONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Geography .....	4
Demographic Profile.....	5
Housing Profile.....	12
Existing Land Use .....	12
Infrastructure.....	14
Transportation System.....	16
<b>PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Tuesday, Oct. 10.....	22
Wednesday, Oct. 11.....	23
Thursday, Oct. 12 .....	23
Friday, Oct. 13 .....	24
CSKT Engagement.....	24
Website Traffic Data .....	25
Media Report .....	26
Press Release .....	26
Survey Data.....	26
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION: VISION, GOALS &amp; OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>5-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs).....</b>	<b>27</b>
Workforce/Resident Retention & Community Development.....	28



Growth in Agriculture and Food Production.....	29
Community Collaborations & Access to Financial Resources.....	31
Tourism and Supporting the Visitor Economy.....	32
Transportation and Community Infrastructure .....	34
<b>DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Montana Main Street (MMS) and Main Street America Program Guidance and Goals.....	35
Main Street Study Area .....	35
Future Land Use (FLU) Map .....	37
Downtown Corridor ELU/FLU.....	37
Landscape / Streetscape Plan .....	40
<b>COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE.....</b>	<b>54</b>
Steady State Initiatives .....	54
Responsive Initiatives .....	55
<b>GRANT OPPORTUNITIES .....</b>	<b>56</b>
State Level Grants .....	56
Federal Level Grants.....	57
<b>ACTION PLAN WORKBOOK (IMPLEMENTATION PLAN).....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>ADOPTION.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>60</b>
Public Survey Template .....	60
Public Engagement & Survey Summary.....	61
Related Documents/Sited Documents (Tribal CEDS, Ronan Growth Policy, etc..) .....	71

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - CITY OF RONAN EXISTING CONDITIONS, CONSIDERATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	3
Figure 2 – Ronan Regional Location Map .....	4



Figure 3 – City of Ronan Existing Land Use (ELU) Map .....	13
Figure 4 – Ronan Key Community Facilities .....	15
Figure 5 – US 93 Realignment – North and South Bound Travel Lanes Split .....	17
Figure 6 - US 93 Realignment Shared Use Path .....	18
Figure 7 - US 93 Realignment Ronan-North Vision Zero.....	18
Figure 8 – Multi-Modal Transportation System, AADT, and Vehicular Crash Locations.....	21
Figure 9 - Sidewalk sticker outside of Harvest Foods.....	22
Figure 10 - Promotional coffee sleeve at Dobson Creek Coffee. ....	23
Figure 11 – Website Views per Day.....	25
Figure 12 – Downtown/Main Street Ronan: Existing Conditions, Considerations, and Opportunities .....	36
Figure 13 - Ronan Future Land Use (FLU) Plan Map.....	38
Figure 14 – Main Street Ronan ELU/FLU and existing Mainstreet Parcels, housing, sidewalks, and pathways.....	39
Figure 15 – Alternative 1 – Bi-Directional Bike Lanes on North Side w/ Raised & Separated Curb .....	42
Figure 16 - Alternative 2 – Bi-Directional Bike Lanes Split N/S W/ Raised & Separated Curb .....	42
Figure 17 - Alternative 3 - Bi-Directional Bike Lanes Split N/S - On Street/No Curb Separation from Traffic .....	43
Figure 18 – Alternative 4 – Widened Sidewalk-Scape and No Designated Bike Lanes .....	43
Figure 19 –Main Street Site Plan w/ Proposed Improvements (Conceptual) .....	45
Figure 20 – Plan Enlargement at West End of Main Street (Conceptual).....	46
Figure 21 – Main Street Corridor Improvements – Street Level Perspective Renderings (Concepts).....	47
Figure 22 – View A: Fourth and Main St. (Looking West).....	48
Figure 23 - View B: Third and Main St. (Looking East) .....	49
Figure 24 – View C1 Before and After: (Third St. at Main Street Looking North across Main Street) .....	50
Figure 25 - View C2 Proposed: Third St. at Main Street (Looking North across Main Street).....	51
Figure 26 – View D1 Before and After: Main Street at Intersection of 1 <sup>st</sup> Street / Realigned Hwy 93.....	52
Figure 27 - View D Proposed: Main Street at Intersection of 1 <sup>st</sup> Street / Realigned Hwy 93 Southbound Lanes .....	53

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Largest Cities in the Mission West Community Development Partners’ Economic Development District .....	5
Table 2 – Racial Composition of Ronan, MT .....	5
Table 3 – Gender by Age Group for Ronan, MT .....	6
Table 4 – Median Age by Gender in Ronan, MT.....	7
Table 5 – Primary Language Spoken in Ronan, MT .....	7
Table 6 – Ronan, MT Population Labor Force Statistics .....	8
Table 7 – Ronan, MT Educational Attainment .....	8
Table 8 - Household income for Ronan, MT .....	9





Table 9 – Ronan, MT Poverty Status .....	10
Table 10 – Ronan, MT Population with Disability .....	10
Table 11 – Travel Time to Work .....	11
Table 12 – Vehicles Available (By Household) .....	11
Table 13 – Ronan, MT Household Size .....	12
Table 14 – ELU Acreages by Category .....	12
Table 15 – FLU Acreages.....	37
Table 16 – NACTO Multi-Modal Transportation Facility Capacity Estimate .....	41



DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



5-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** (TO BE COMPLETED POST DRAFT REPORT PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND INCLUDED AS STANDALONE DOCUMENT WITH FINAL REPORT).



## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2023, the project team, assisted by representatives from Ronan Revitalization, Ronan Chamber of Commerce, Mission West Community Development Partners, and the City of Ronan commenced on 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 (5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan). The two plans—having a symbiotic relationship and significant overlap in subject matter, objectives, goals, analysis, findings, strategies, and recommendations—have been combined in a singular report, albeit with sub-sections which address specific and/or unique requirements of each plan.

### 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 planning approach includes the key items detailed in the following subsections.

### Existing 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 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 info/studies/forecasts
- Chamber of Commerce annual reports
- County/Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS)
- Capital Improvement Plans/Growth Policies or related information/documents



### *GIS and Base Mapping*

GIS data collected was used by the project team to inventory and understand existing Tribal and City infrastructure, as well as development policy, planning goals, and planned future projects such as the US Highway (Hwy) 93 realignment project. The consultant team developed relevant maps and figures for the Downtown Master planning efforts. Data collected included the following:

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

### **Public Engagement**

The project team's primary public engagement objective is to understand the needs and issues of stakeholders and then utilize various forms of traditional engagement that would be most effective and well received by community members. Engagement strategies included in-person meetings, on-line information, virtual meetings, surveys, and other tools. The project team also employed two somewhat less traditional strategies; "Meeting in a Box" and "Pop-up Meetings."

### **Downtown Master Plan and 5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan**

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

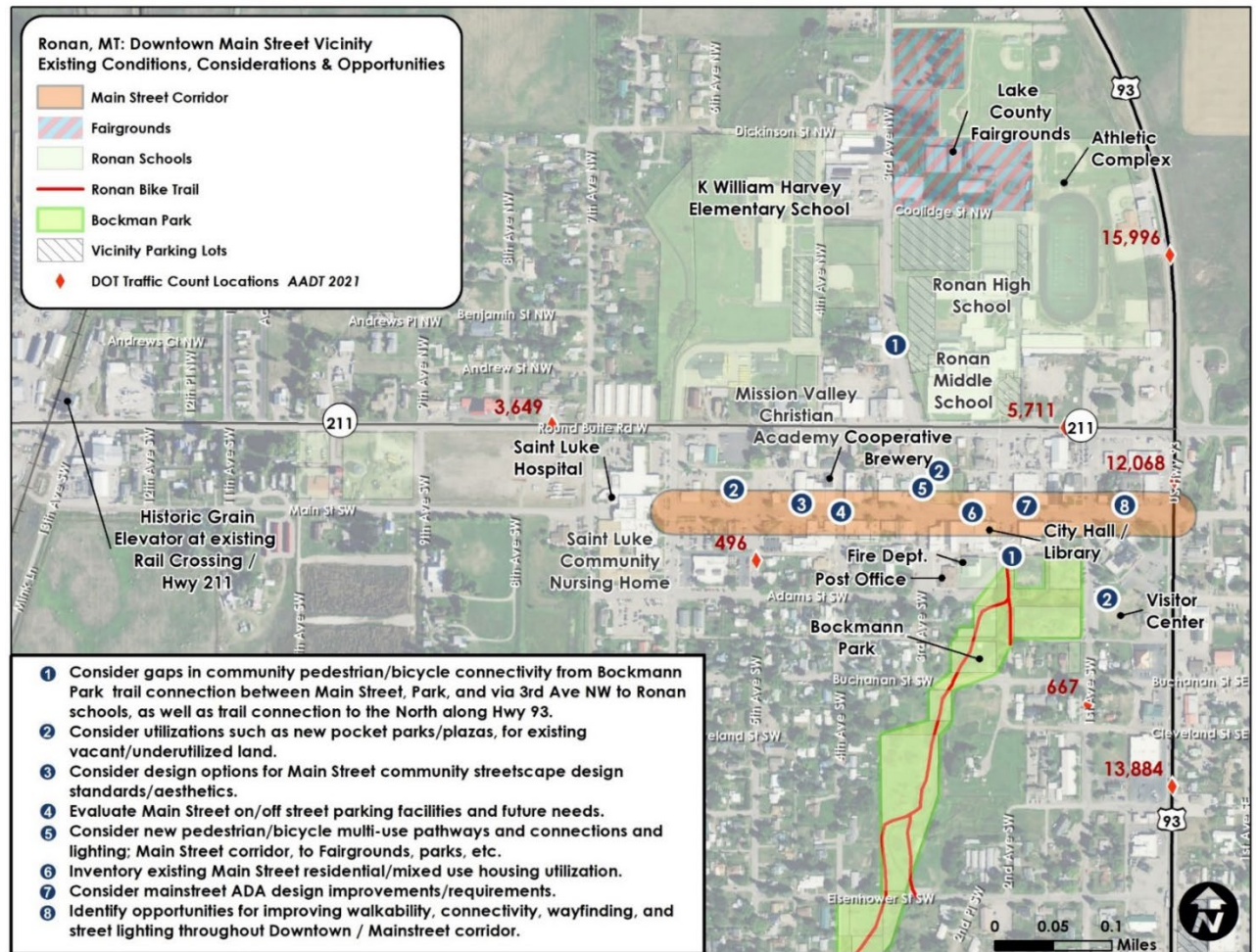
The plans solidify an appropriate City theme via the visioning process. The consultant team produced a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) along with a downtown planning analysis complete with conceptual and illustrative drawings and maps that visually capture potential future infrastructure projects of a revitalized downtown Ronan. The final plan incorporates implementation recommendations, identification of funding resources and revitalization incentives, and an overall approach that adheres to Montana Main Street (MMS) guidance.

Both the Downtown and 5-Year Economic plan utilize guidance from the National Trust Main Street Center Four Point Approach set forth in the Montana Main Street (MMS) Program, which includes the **key Four Points**:

- 1 Economic Vitality
- 2 Design
- 3 Promotion
- 4 Organization

Because the physical Downtown Master Plan will be directly informed by the 5-Year Economic Plan goals, **Main Street revitalization is centered on two of the Four Points: Design and Promotion.** Predominantly, the Main Street planning and design focus is the physical transformation of Ronan's Main Street; This is achieved through proposed enhancement of the existing built environment via improvements to community and multi-modal transportation connectivity, aesthetic improvements, and commercial enterprises (**Figure 1**). In addition, the identification and conceptualization of new stakeholder driven community assets, facilities, public spaces, and business opportunities function to promote new and attractive key downtown community amenities identified and promoted by non-physical economic planning elements identified within the 5-Year Economic Development Strategy.

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





## BASELINE CONDITIONS

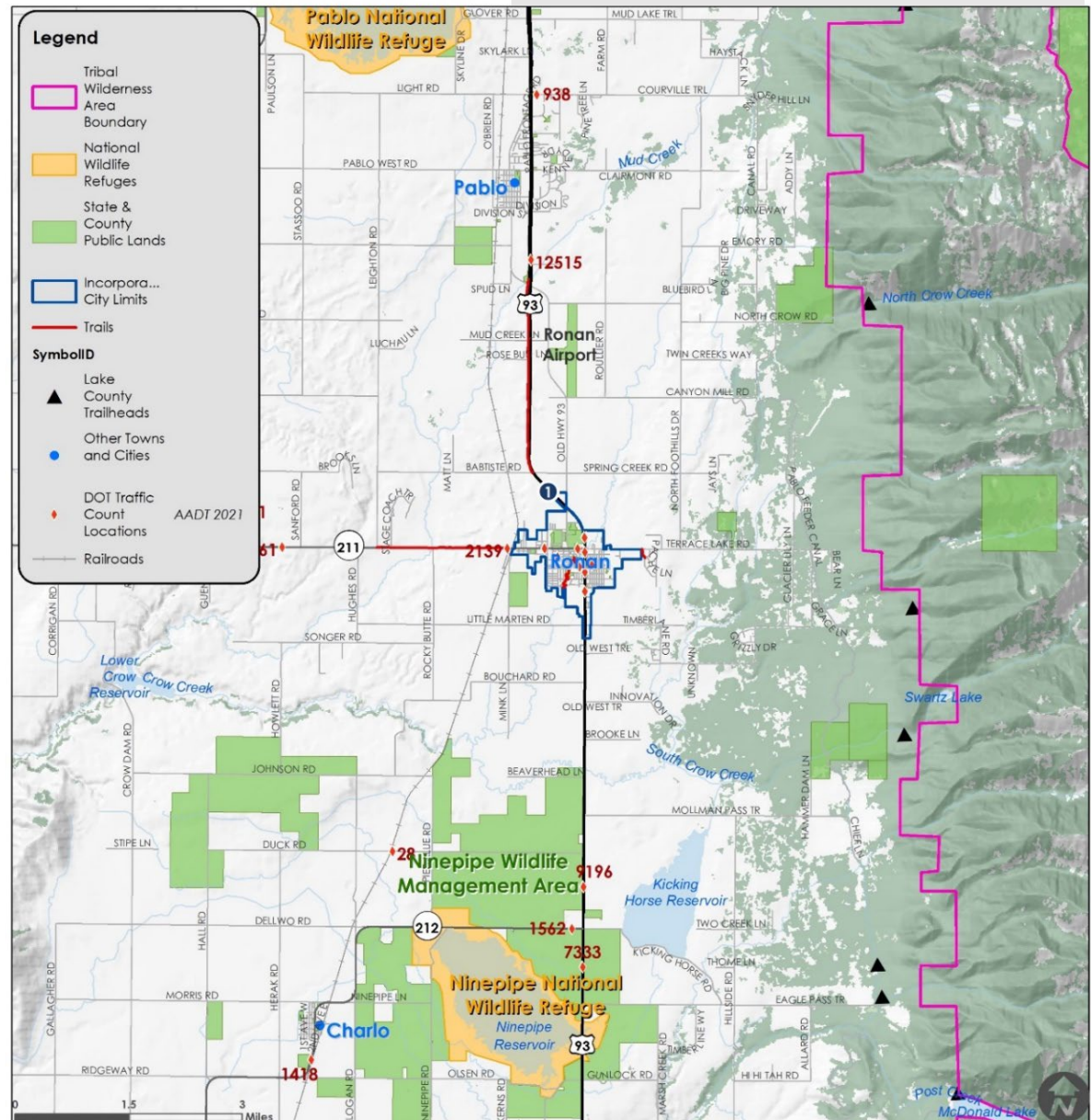
Ronan, population 1,995 (2020 Decennial Census) is a town in Lake County, Montana (MT) located within the Flathead Indian Reservation. Ronan is situated along US Highway 93, a principal arterial roadway connecting the cities of Kalispel to the north and Missoula to the south. Farms, ranches, Tribal land and the Mission Mountain Range surround the community. Also located along Hwy 93 14 miles north, is the Lake County seat of Polson, MT.

The Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) and its Administrative headquarters and other Tribal Community facilities are located in Pablo, MT, approximately six 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 Tribal Council member described Ronan as the ‘heart of the reservation’ giving indication that the Tribe, in addition to other community Ronan community members and officials, recognize the potential and importance of Ronan within 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

The following demographic profile information for the City of Ronan (excluding greater 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<sup>1</sup>). According to available data, the 2020 Census population of Ronan was 1,955 (*The 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). While growth is low, population has increased slightly over the 20-year period. 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 since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

**Table 1** details the largest Cities and Towns in the Mission West Community Development Partners'-Economic Development District (MWCDP-EDD) region listed from largest to smallest, 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

<b>RONAN 2020 TOTAL POPULATION:</b>	<b>1,955</b>
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

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.census.gov/all?q=Ronan%20city,%20Montana>



TABLE 3 – GENDER BY AGE GROUP FOR RONAN, MT

**2020 POPULATION TOTAL BY GENDER: 1,955**

<b>MALE: 924</b>	
Under 5 years	67
5 to 9 years	63
10 to 14 years	89
15 to 17 years	31
18 and 19 years	19
20 years	9
21 years	10
22 to 24 years	36
25 to 29 years	70
30 to 34 years	58
35 to 39 years	50
40 to 44 years	58
45 to 49 years	45
50 to 54 years	47
55 to 59 years	50
60 and 61 years	17
62 to 64 years	32
65 and 66 years	23
67 to 69 years	29
70 to 74 years	48
75 to 79 years	39
80 to 84 years	14
85 years and over	20

<b>FEMALE: 1,031</b>	
Under 5 years	62
5 to 9 years	68
10 to 14 years	58
15 to 17 years	42
18 and 19 years	20
20 years	14
21 years	17
22 to 24 years	34
25 to 29 years	66
30 to 34 years	52
35 to 39 years	82
40 to 44 years	53
45 to 49 years	54
50 to 54 years	51
55 to 59 years	40
60 and 61 years	30
62 to 64 years	45
65 and 66 years	29
67 to 69 years	38
70 to 74 years	57
75 to 79 years	33
80 to 84 years	40
85 years and over	46

TABLE 4 – MEDIAN AGE BY GENDER IN RONAN, MT

BOTH SEXES (2020)	38.1
Male	35.7
Female	40.0

### Economy and Workforce

2020 Census (2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates) show 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, nearly half that of Montana (\$67,631). The city's poverty rate was 25.3% compared to 12.1% in Montana. Eighty-six percent of the children in the public school district qualify for free and reduced school lunch. The statistics reveal that many residents face economic challenges and adversity.

The CSKT, hospital, and school district are the largest local employers. The city has a variety of business that provide employment opportunities in retail, services, and entertainment.

**St. Luke Community Healthcare:** a non-profit community-owned network of healthcare providers located in Ronan that delivers complete care for all stages of life. St. Luke Community Healthcare is in the process of implementing an Integrated Behavioral Health Program, which uses an integrated approach in the process of patient care.

St. Luke Community Healthcare offers a wide array of specialties including:

- A 24-hour emergency department
- 25 licensed and operational beds
- Walk-in clinic available seven days a week in Ronan
- Providers deliver family practice, pediatric, internal medicine, OB/GYN, general surgery, orthopedics, internal medicine, rehabilitation, Infusion, laboratory, and x-ray services.
- Specialty services offered include cardiologists from the Montana Heart Center, audiology, sleep studies, varicose vein medical care, urology, oncology, nephrology, neurology, and neurosurgery.
- Clinics located in Polson and St. Ignatius
- A 75-bed extended care facility includes a transitional care unit and adult daycare.

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%

Table 6 through Table 10 provide further demographic statistics for employment and unemployment rates, educational attainment, household income, poverty status/rates, and Ronan population with disability.

TABLE 6 – RONAN, MT POPULATION LABOR FORCE STATISTICS

POPULATION AGE (2021 ACS)	TOTAL ESTIMATE	LABOR PARTICIPATION RATE ESTIMATE	FORCE ESTIMATE	EMPLOYMENT/ POPULATION RATIO ESTIMATE	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ESTIMATE
<b>Total population 16 years and over</b>	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%

TABLE 7 – RONAN, MT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

AGE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2021 ACS)	ESTIMATE
<b>Population 18 to 24 years</b>	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
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	<b>1,195</b>
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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>Less than \$10,000</b>	14.5%	8.6%	8.1%	21.1%
<b>\$10,000 to \$14,999</b>	10.1%	3.3%	2.4%	18.2%
<b>\$15,000 to \$24,999</b>	13.0%	7.6%	2.4%	19.1%
<b>\$25,000 to \$34,999</b>	12.6%	10.4%	5.3%	15.6%
<b>\$35,000 to \$49,999</b>	11.4%	13.7%	6.1%	13.3%
<b>\$50,000 to \$74,999</b>	17.2%	19.5%	24.7%	11.0%
<b>\$75,000 to \$99,999</b>	12.3%	21.6%	26.7%	0.9%
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	8.2%	13.7%	21.9%	0.9%
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	0.8%	1.5%	2.4%	0.0%
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Median income (dollars)</b>	<b>34,881</b>	<b>54,773</b>	<b>75,625</b>	<b>20,250</b>
<b>Mean income (dollars)</b>	<b>44,968</b>	<b>60,697</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>24,896</b>

TABLE 10 – 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 9 – 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

According to the 2020 Census and 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, commuting statistics highlight that 87.1% of resident workers 16 years and over drove to work, of which 71.8% drove alone; 10.6 % of the population walks to work with 0% residents reported biking to work; 2.1% of residents reported working from home; The average (mean) travel time to work was 13.2 minutes; and out of 699 households with workers 16 years and over, 2.7% are households with no vehicle available. **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)

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. 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%. Based on stakeholder feedback and anecdotal housing information, and despite the recent construction of the Meadowlark Apartments affordable housing project, there is a known 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. Median Gross Rent in Ronan (2020) was \$733 compared to \$1,005 for the State of Montana.



## Existing Land Use

To begin to orchestrate the physical and visual revitalization of Main Street, an inventory of Ronan's Existing Land Use (ELU) was conducted via GIS. Based on information gathered during data collection, stakeholder engagement, and base mapping, the project team used ELU data 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

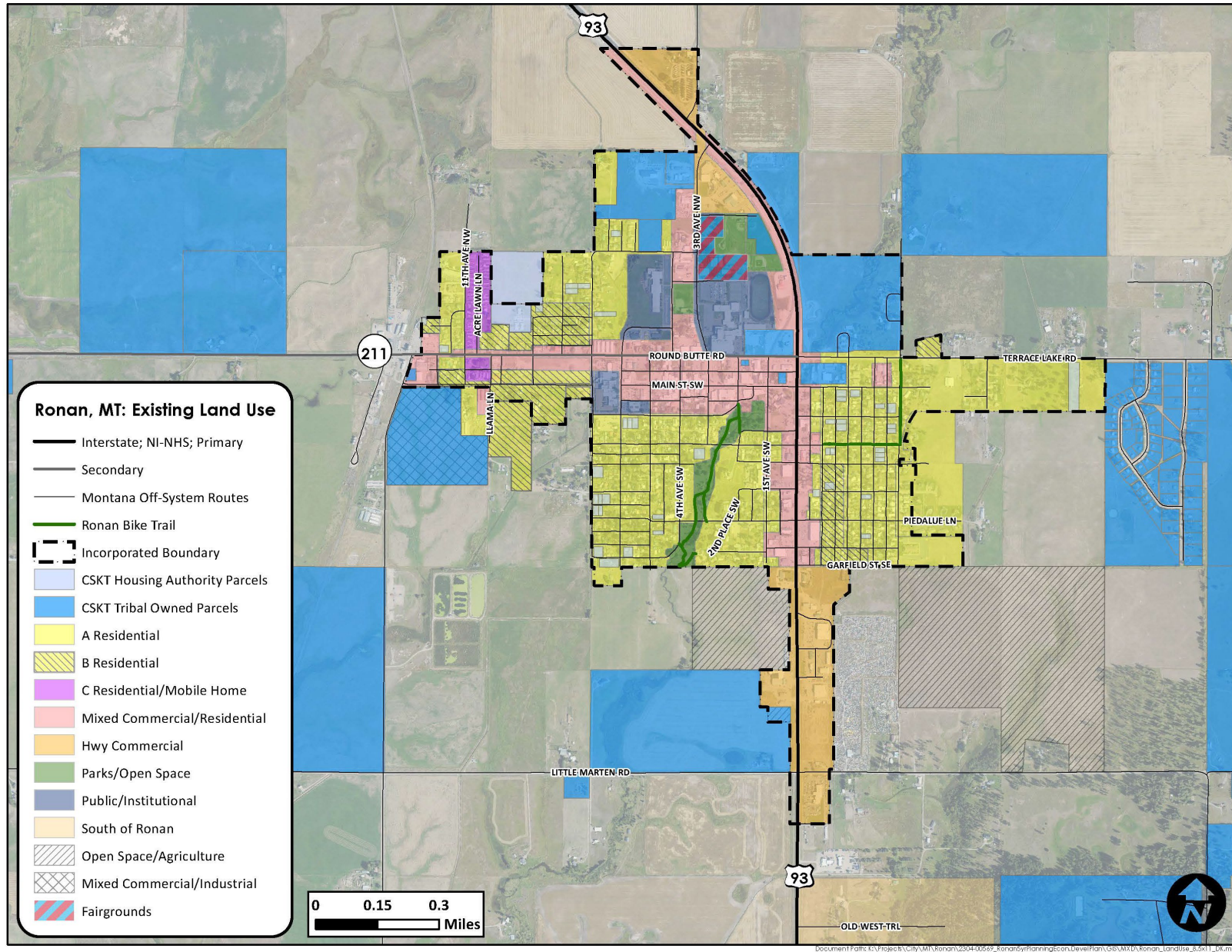
HOUSEHOLD SIZE (2020)	RONAN CITY, MONTANA
1-person household	278
2-person household	228
3-person household	100
4-person household	93
5-person household	51
6-person household	24
7-or-more-person household	20
<b>Total:</b>	<b>794</b>

TABLE 14 – ELU ACREAGES BY CATEGORY

ELU	ACRES	
A Residential	276.69	
B Residential	44.59	Bockman Park = 12.8 Ball Diamonds = 9.9 Other = 1.9
C Commercial	198.5	
Parks/Open Space	24.65	
Public/Institutional	51.68	
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





## Infrastructure

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.

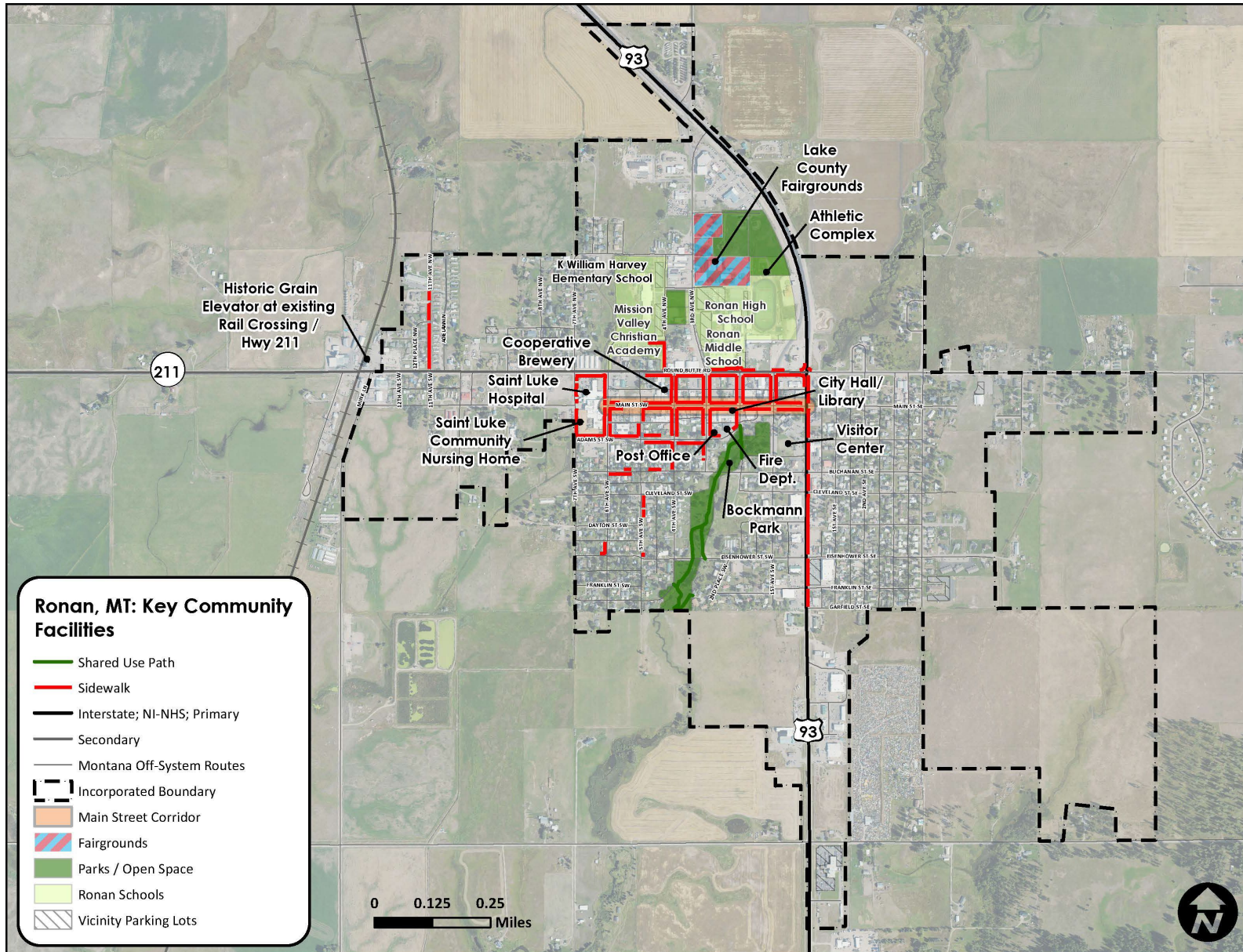
### *Parks, Trails, and Open Space*

- Brockman Park
- Athletic Complex & Ball Fields

Key Community Infrastructure 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 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, no drainage infrastructure with sparse base materials, and severe seasonal weather that causes stress on roadways. Maintenance costs are high and revenue resources are low. Many system roads need complete reconstruction. Paved rural roads are being converted back to gravel to alleviate County maintenance cost burden.

Currently, Lake County receives \$1.8 million in tax revenue for all direct and indirect costs for the road department. Due to financial constraints with funding and funding sources and a large geographic footprint, consistent and routine/regular maintenance of roadways is an 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 are also responsible for 406 miles of BIA jurisdictional roads and 2,580 miles of Tribal Forest roads. The CSKT CEDS document<sup>2</sup> provides greater detail.

#### *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. Equipment needs exceed budget due to maintenance costs and the County needs updated road maintenance equipment. County and Tribal governments coordinate efforts to maximize maintenance efficiency. State roads through Lake County are either maintained by the state or through contractual maintenance agreements with the county. To alleviate costs burden, the County has investigated the feasibility of passing a 2-cent per gallon gas tax to be rationed out to the County and 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 jurisdiction transportation projects with Lake County, MDT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Like many other Tribal governments in Montana, the CSKT have a five-year Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) that is updated annually.

#### *Existing Road Projects*

US Highway 93 bisects Ronan (see **Figure 5 through Figure 7<sup>3</sup>**). The highway is the principle 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., the realignment project will divert southbound

<sup>2</sup> <http://cskteconomics.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/ronanurban/project-area.aspx>



traffic onto 1<sup>st</sup> Ave, and rejoin with the existing northbound travel lane just south of Garfield St. The purpose of this realignment is to ultimately decrease congestion via speed reduction/traffic calming and control design, which will simultaneously have a positive effect on improving multi-modal transportation system safety by 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 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and at US Hwy 93; These are stated goals of the Downtown / Main Street revitalization planning and design process and aligns with goals of the Montana Main Street Program.

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

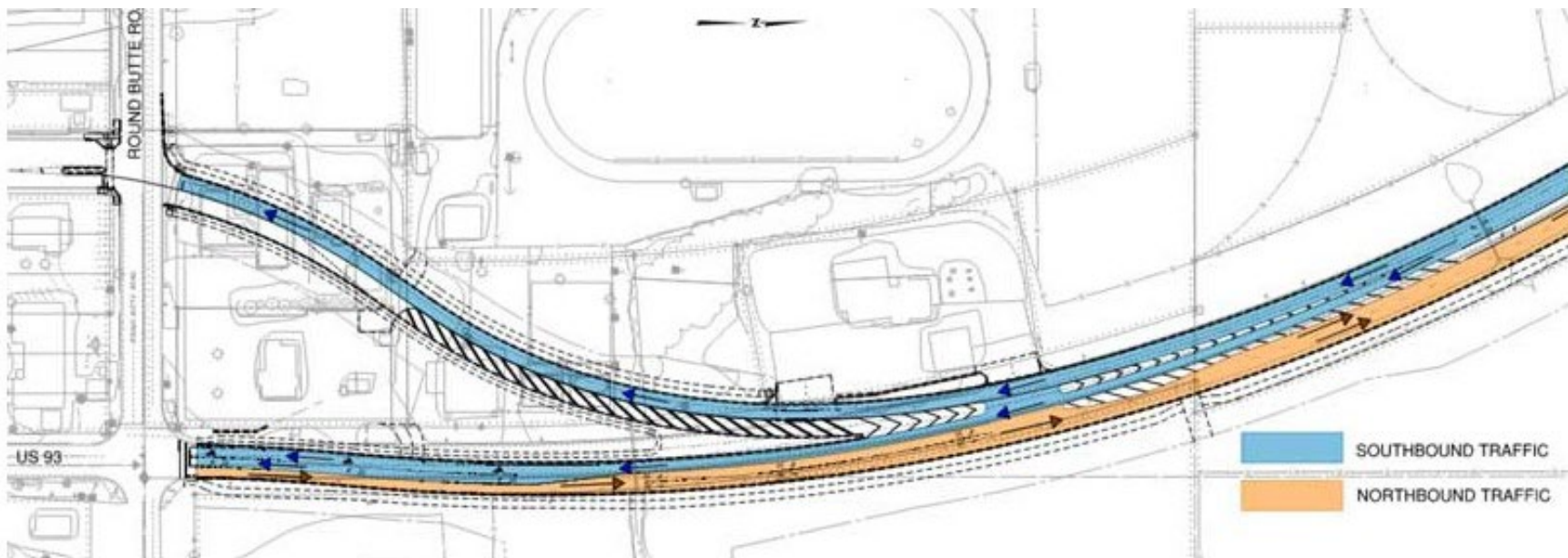
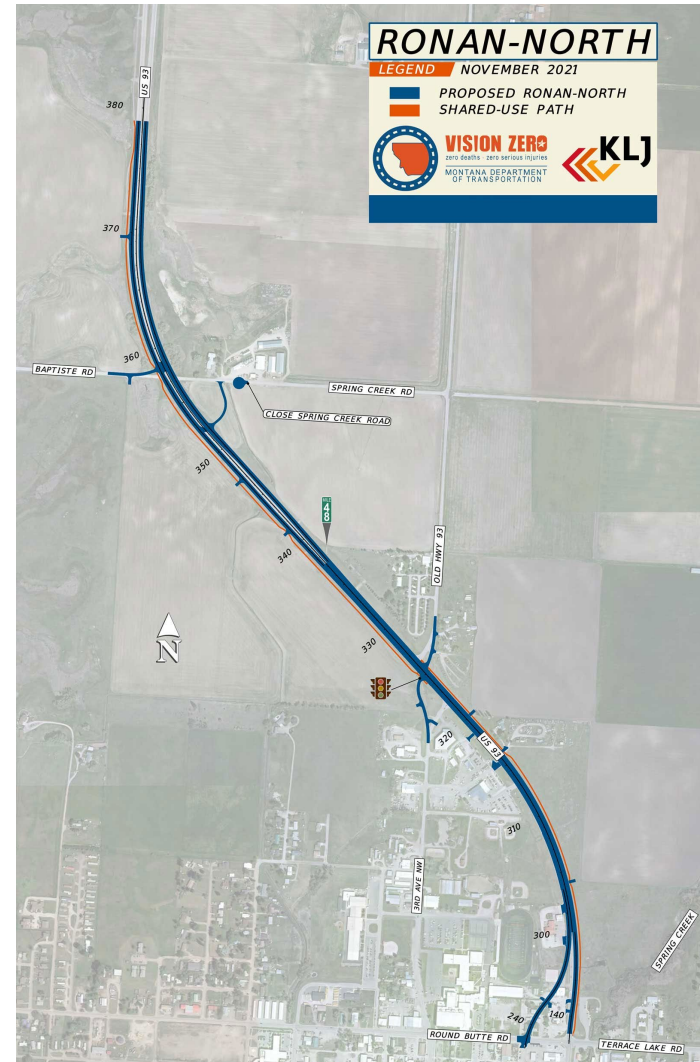


FIGURE 7 - US 93 REALIGNMENT RONAN-NORTH VISION ZERO



Annual average daily traffic (AADT) was collected from the Montana Department of Transportation (MTD). There is notable correlation between the highest traffic volume roadways and intersections and vehicular crash locations (See **Figure 8** for AADT).



## Bridges

Lake County is responsible for maintaining 92 bridges. However, within the Main Street study area and within Downtown Ronan's vicinity, while there are culverts, there are no major bridges present. However, the South Valley Creek Bridge provides an example/sets precedent for transportation collaboration between government agencies (i.e., Tribal, State, and County organizations). This collaboration among agencies led to the new two-lane bridge which replaced a dangerously outdated wooden deck bridge built in 1910 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). With an 8-ton weight limit, the previous bridge restricted residents' safe access to services provided by large vehicles such as fire engines, ambulances, and school buses. Funding was an issue, however the CSKT were awarded a \$1 million grant issued through the BIA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with the *Indian Reservation Road's High Priority Project Program*.

## Multimodal

### *Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities*

#### Existing Sidewalks and Trail System

Mission Valley is home to multiple pedestrian pathways and bicycle trails in various stages of project completion. A recent construction project of 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. The recently constructed pathways are separated from the road surfaces and typically have higher rates of use because of perceived safety benefits, even though maintenance can be more difficult. 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 reliant on bike travel and the health benefits that come from an active outdoor lifestyle.

### *Public Transit*

Currently, The City of Ronan does not fund or provide a public transit agency that provides public transit or on-demand transit services. 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 provided some limited on-demand transit services. Existing Missoula to Kalispell bus routes is underutilized by County residents.

#### Flathead Tribal Transit

In 1996 the CSKT created the Flathead Tribal Transit system and has continued to expand or customize service based on changing needs. Flathead Tribal Transit has successfully scaled in the region while providing over 30,000 rides annually. The CSKT Transit Program provides low-cost bus transportation for Reservation residents and employees throughout the Reservation and 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.

Flathead Tribal Transit has received support from multiple organization which include federal Tribal Transit Program, a Congressional earmark, the State of Montana, The Indian Reservation Roads Program, the Community Transportation Association of America Vocational Rehabilitation,



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), the Older Americans Act, the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act and local partners.

### *Freight*

#### *Trucking and Rail*

US 93 is the prime route for heavy commercial truck traffic running north and south in western Montana and connecting 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 the potential to re-open the line.

#### *Airports*

Lake County has three non-commercial airports: Polson, Ronan, and St. Ignatius. Polson and Roan have seen increased use by large private planes and are projected to increase in usage. Some of the usage 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 1** for airport locations within the project's region).

### *Safety*

#### *Vehicular Crashes and Crash Severity*

Along with traffic volume data (AADT), crash location data was retrieved from MTD. Due to the limitations of the publicly available data, only *crash locations* are available from the desktop data inventory. Vehicular crash details other than *crash location*, such as the severity of a crash (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 from current data. Anecdotal data that provides further information may be available from additional sources such as police or sheriff's office incident reports.

#### *Crash Density / Most Frequent Crash Locations*

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

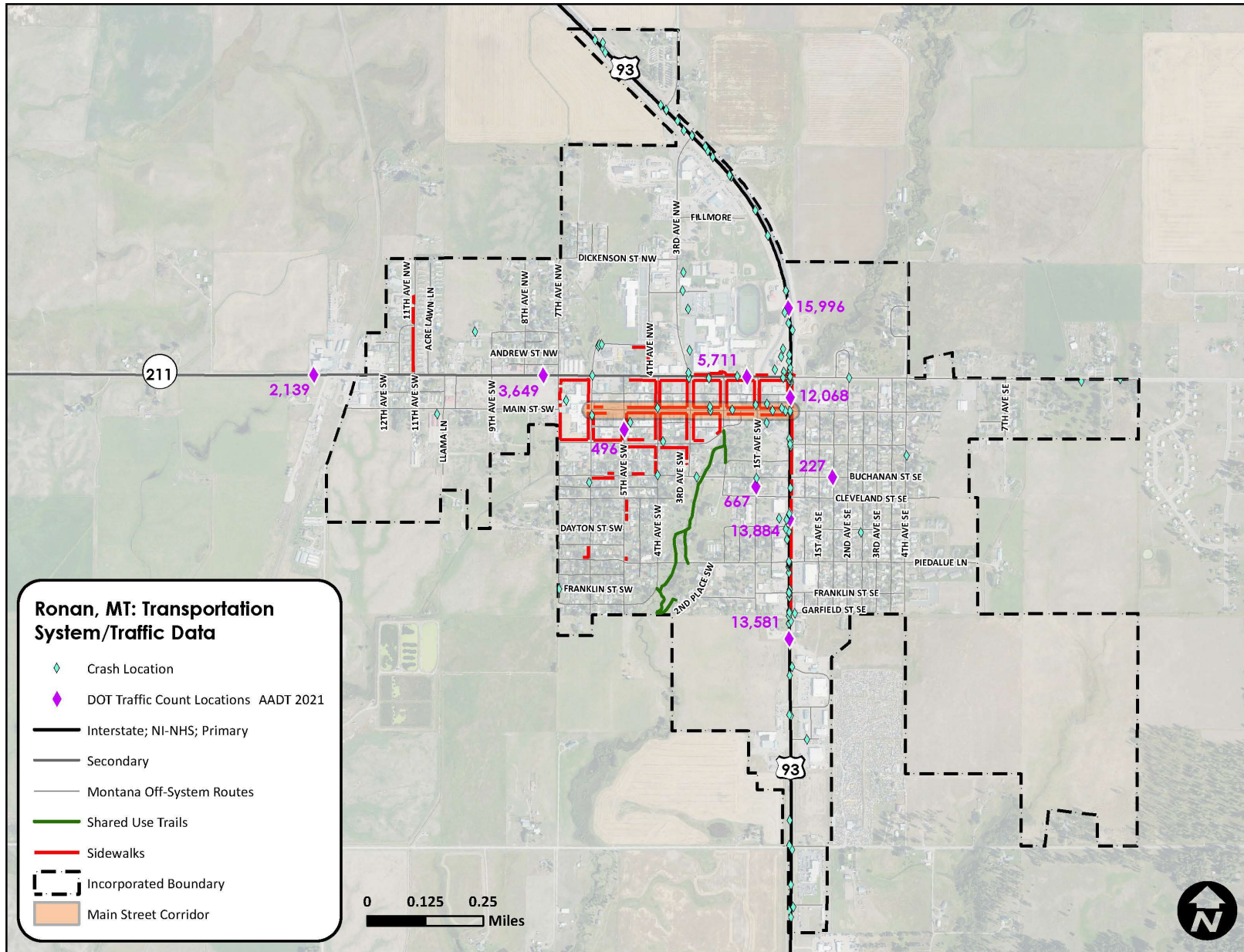
#### *Pedestrian/Bicycle Crashes*

Granular crash details for vehicular crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists are currently unavailable from the public MTD online crash database. Anecdotal data, if available, can help to identify any significant crash locations that may have involved a fatality or serious injury.

**Figure 8** on the next page 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.



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



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The consultant team traveled to Ronan and conducted stakeholder and public engagement from Tuesday, Oct. 10-Friday, Oct. 13, 2023. Mark Garff, SCJ Landscape Architect, visited Ronan on Tuesday Oct. 10 and attended stakeholder and public events. 15 meetings were hosted. Eight meetings were with stakeholders; seven were public “pop-up” events.

The consultant team met with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe’s (CSKT) Council on November 30. Key items discussed included:

- Ronan serves as the heart of the reservation.
- The sense of community needs to be developed in the town.
  - Desire to include history and interpretive signage of/for community amenities and facilities.
- Pedestrian safety is a critical issue; Ronan has pedestrian and bicyclist residents (and visitors), some of whom are children, persons with disabilities, and low income who all need and would benefit from improved safety US Hwy 93 crossing amenities.

### Tuesday, Oct. 10

#### 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.

#### 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.

FIGURE 9 - SIDEWALK STICKER OUTSIDE OF HARVEST FOODS.





## Wednesday, Oct. 11

### 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.

## Thursday, Oct. 12

### 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.

FIGURE 10 - PROMOTIONAL COFFEE SLEEVE AT DOBSON CREEK COFFEE.





**Friday, Oct. 13**

### 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 half-time.

### CSKT Engagement

CSKT Presentation for Ronan Downtown Master Plan Economic Development Plan

CSKT: Carole Lankford, Martin Charlo, Ellie Bougy, Tom McDonald (Chairman), Jennifer Pinto, Terry Pitts and Jennifer Trahan

Katie Elliot – Representing Ronan Chamber

Gary Johnson – KLJ

Neil Putnam – KLJ (remote)

- Question on addressing pedestrian crossings at Round Butte Rd and Hwy 93.
- Ronan is seen as the Heart of the Reservation
- Include the history of the Pend d'Oreilles also – one of the three chiefs is Chief Alexander of the Pend d'Oreilles
- The tribe is building a skate park by the tribal health facility
- Many of Ronan's residents are low income so they want to make sure any planning includes them. Especially pedestrian traffic.
- Would like us to advertise in the Char-Koosta News
- The key areas we mention as cornerstones to the planning (the park, school, fairgrounds, and ball fields) were largely donations to Ronan by the Tribe.
- Moving people through town (pedestrian traffic), especially across 93 is important, Tom thinks it's the most important issue.
- Interpretive Signage is important.
- The community of Ronan is largely the families of the schools there.

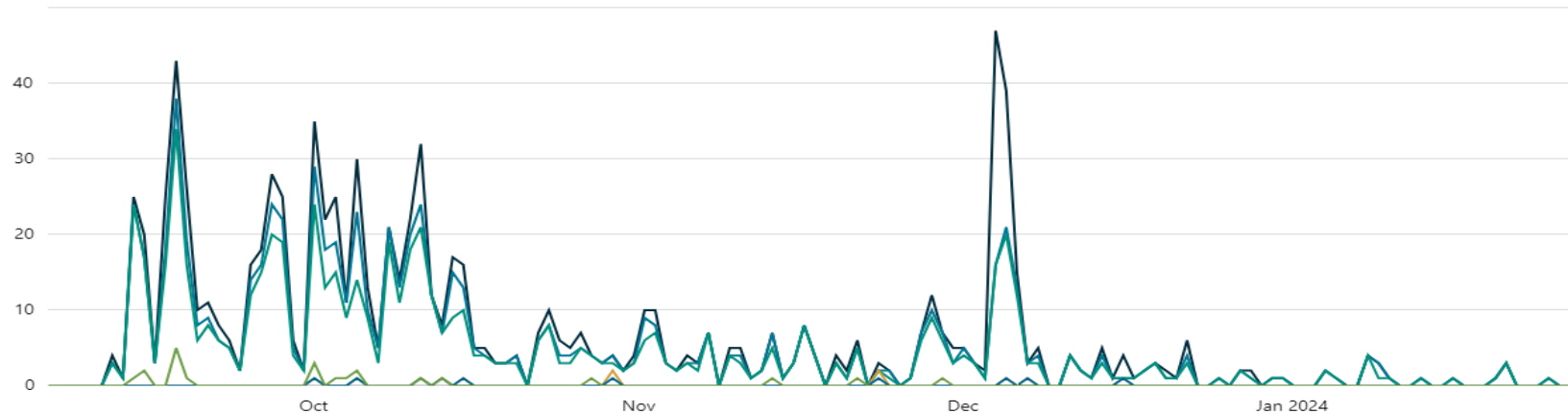


- Tom is an “at-large” council member for Ronan
- Ronan is the heart of the reservation. Things should be developed here first then those things that are successful spread to other communities on the reservation.
- There is also much concern over the open ditches around Ronan. They are a safety and health problem with a lot of mosquitoes. They should be piped.
- Would like us to leave flyers and surveys at the following locations
  - Here at tribal headquarters
  - Tribal Health
  - Fire Department
  - Housing Authority
  - Boys & Girls Club
- Tom would like to be a part of monthly meetings as they go along.
- Could we put surveys/fliers in utility bills?
- Can we do a presentation for the Youth Tribal Council?

### 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 11 – 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)



## 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. Broadly, based on public input, previously outlined goals that have not yet been fully achieved, and baseline data, goals and objectives are centered around the following themes:

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

## 5-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

Due to the economic downturn in 2020, every community in Montana suffered job loss, ranging from approximately 5% 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 translates into a harder hit and a slower recovery to the Montana economy as well.

Public input, and review of regional and community strengths and challenges reveal 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 growth.

Goals and objectives, including those that specifically address economic resilience, seek to balance continued growth and development that 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/will. For results of the survey SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) please see Appendix/Attachment.

In addition to assuring that Ronan can access EDA resources for future projects, development of economic development strategies ensure that Ronan is 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 and encourages an entrepreneurial environment.





## **Workforce/Resident Retention & Community Development**

In almost all the surveys collected during public engagement, and stakeholder meetings, some version of 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.

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 restaurants, 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 recruitment 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 discussion with existing and potential businesses as well as collaboration with area educational institutions, extension offices, and agencies supporting small business development to identify specific workforce needs and then to match those to educational opportunities to achieve the following objectives:

- Improve access to secondary education and trade schools (including broadband development that allows for consistent virtual access)
- Develop and/or attend trainings, meetings and seminars designed to increase skills and resources related to workforce development
- Develop access to college credits and trade courses for high school students and build improved partnerships with programs to meet needs.
- Identify/access the considerable federal resources currently available to develop workforce and related broadband infrastructure that supports remote access to educational and workforce training resources.
- Partner with local companies/businesses to create specific “on the job” training programs that support workforce development for existing businesses seeking to expand and grow.
- 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.
- Provide technical assistance to local business owners as they contemplate starting or growing local businesses
- 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.**

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 typically 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 Alternatives, Safe Roads, and Streets for All, etc.)
- Install new streetlights, building lighting, flower planters, and other aesthetics that encourage community engagement 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 affordable 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/multi-unit housing might be developed to meet specific needs (workforce, senior, young families). Multi-family housing, or investments in “vertical builds” and mixed-use housing is often less expensive to develop both in terms of infrastructure and construction.

### 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 increasingly difficult, and complex given both environmental and human factors. These include 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 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 discussions regarding climate-controlled agriculture (USDA).
- Support the implementation/development of land use policies 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 number of farms and ranches throughout Montana 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 needed to be viable and competitive. This creates obstacles and limits opportunities for access to these industries for beginning farmers/ranchers or 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 percentage 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 considerable growth in this area, interest in both the state and federal sectors, and significant federal money currently available that would encourage exploration of partnership/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)

### **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 were “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 non-profit 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 (CSKT) Tribes to support and coordinate efforts as outlined in their 2021 CEDS.

In 2021, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes published their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (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 as appropriate and requested to ensure opportunities are made available for the Tribe to meet their identified needs and goals. This encompasses an intentional effort by Ronan to work with the Tribe in support of their identified goals which mutually support Ronan's identified goals in supporting 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 agri-business, 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 visited Montana while instate 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 the 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 in the 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 attractions 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 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 opportunity 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 agritourism 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 non-motorized travelers, specifically bicyclists.**

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 roadways more “complete” with the addition of wider shoulders, enhanced signage, and/or designated bicycle lanes are ways to encourage bicycle tourism and genuine 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 connectivity 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 excellent 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 non-motorized 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 is 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 to three years, there is substantial federal funding available to address transportation infrastructure deficits, including funding available for creation of transportation plans and development of non-motorized transportation infrastructure (sidewalks, biking lanes/paths, and multi-use 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 Bi-partisan 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 Montana Designated Opportunity Zone, the City of Ronan itself, does not (<https://commerce.mt.gov/Opportunity-Zones/>). Additionally, after conducting a desktop search of designated Historic Places from the Montana Historical Society's national register mapping tool, Ronan returns one structure that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places: The Don E. Olsson House and Garage located at 503 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SW (not within the Main Street study area).

<https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5378695ae71b414ba66f478fc57241f6>

### Main Street Study Area

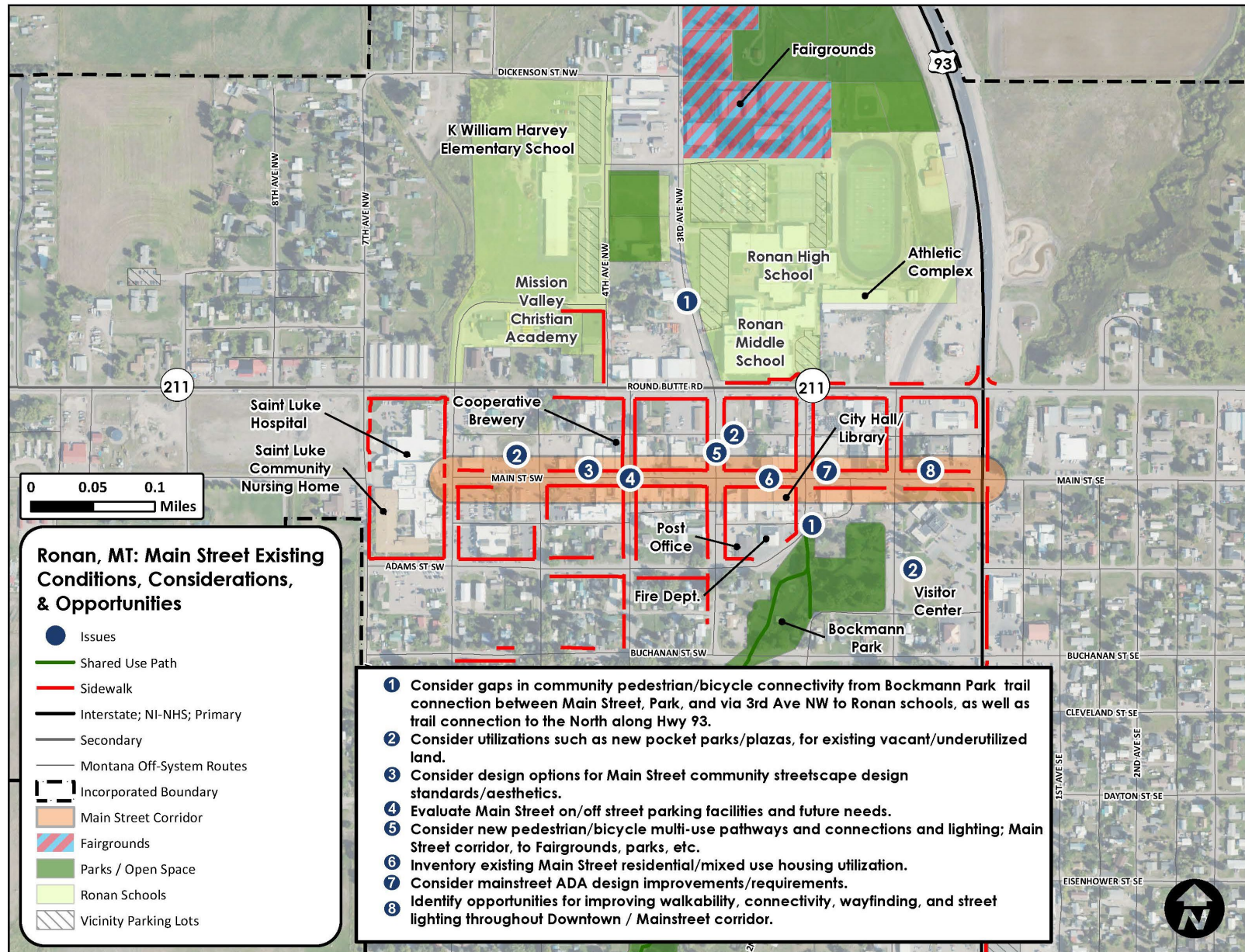
Main Street is located between the school campus to the north, Bockman park to the south, St. Luke Hospital to the west, and US Hwy 93 to the east. The core Main Street study area spans from approximately 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SW to highway 93 (see **Figure 12**). The area consists of retail, second floor/mixed use residential, service, public, entertainment facilities, and curbside parking (It has been noted that some residents of mixed use residential utilize curbside parking on main street). There are also vacant buildings in 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*

On the next page, **Figure 12** (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. The identification of deficiencies provided the basis for solicitation of public input to inform the consultant team's Land Landscape/Streetscape design standards and infrastructure improvement recommendations based on public input and project vision, goals, and objectives for Main Street revitalization.



FIGURE 12 – 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 needed rezoning actions or zoning code updates for the City of Ronan. **Table 15** provides FLU category acreage totals. **Figure 13** 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
<b>TOTAL FLU ACRES:</b>	<b>2,682.72</b>

## Downtown Corridor ELU/FLU

**Figure 14** shows Main Street Land Use and denotes structures with 2<sup>nd</sup> story mixed use Housing, and existing sidewalks and paths.



FIGURE 13 - RONAN FUTURE LAND USE (FLU) PLAN MAP

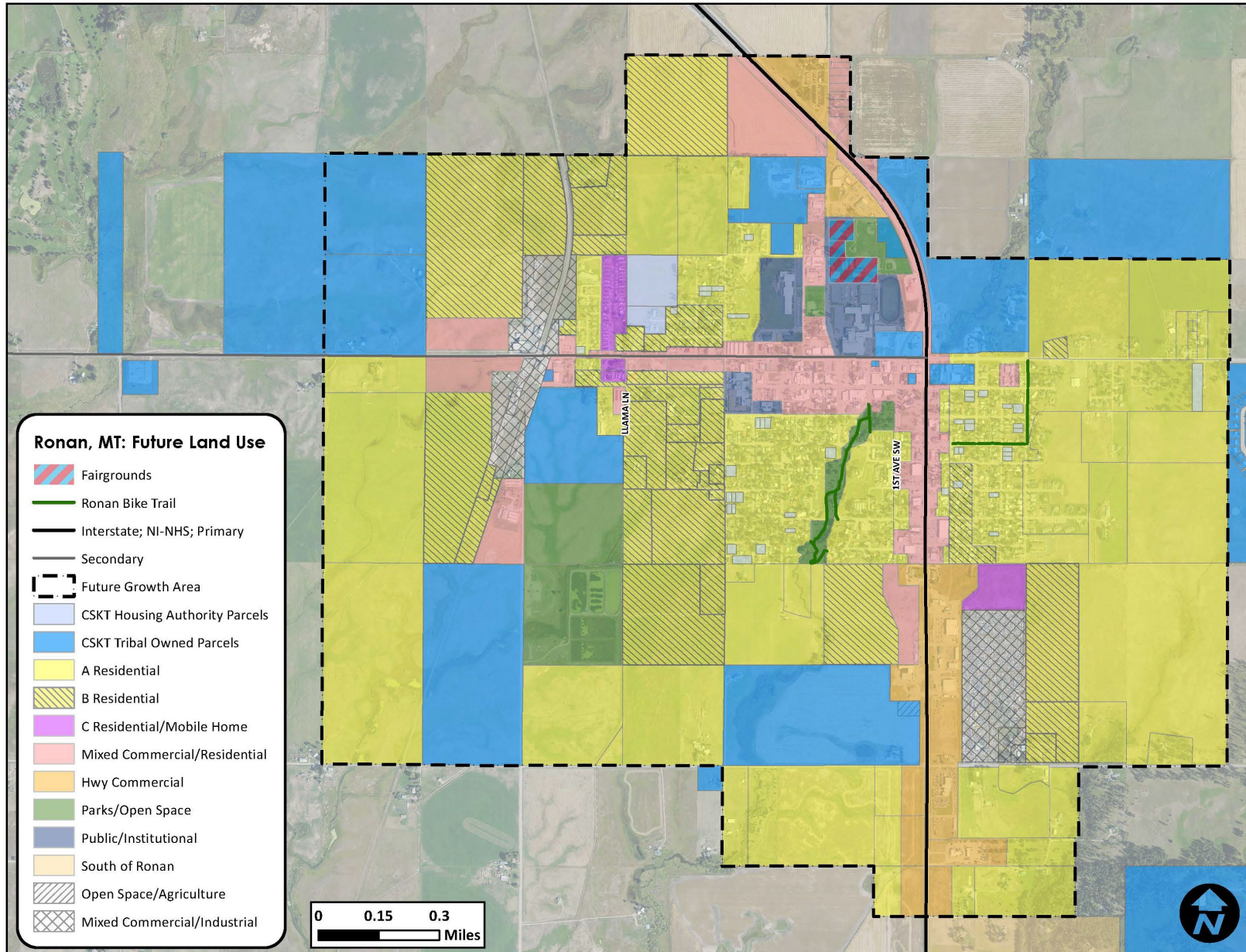
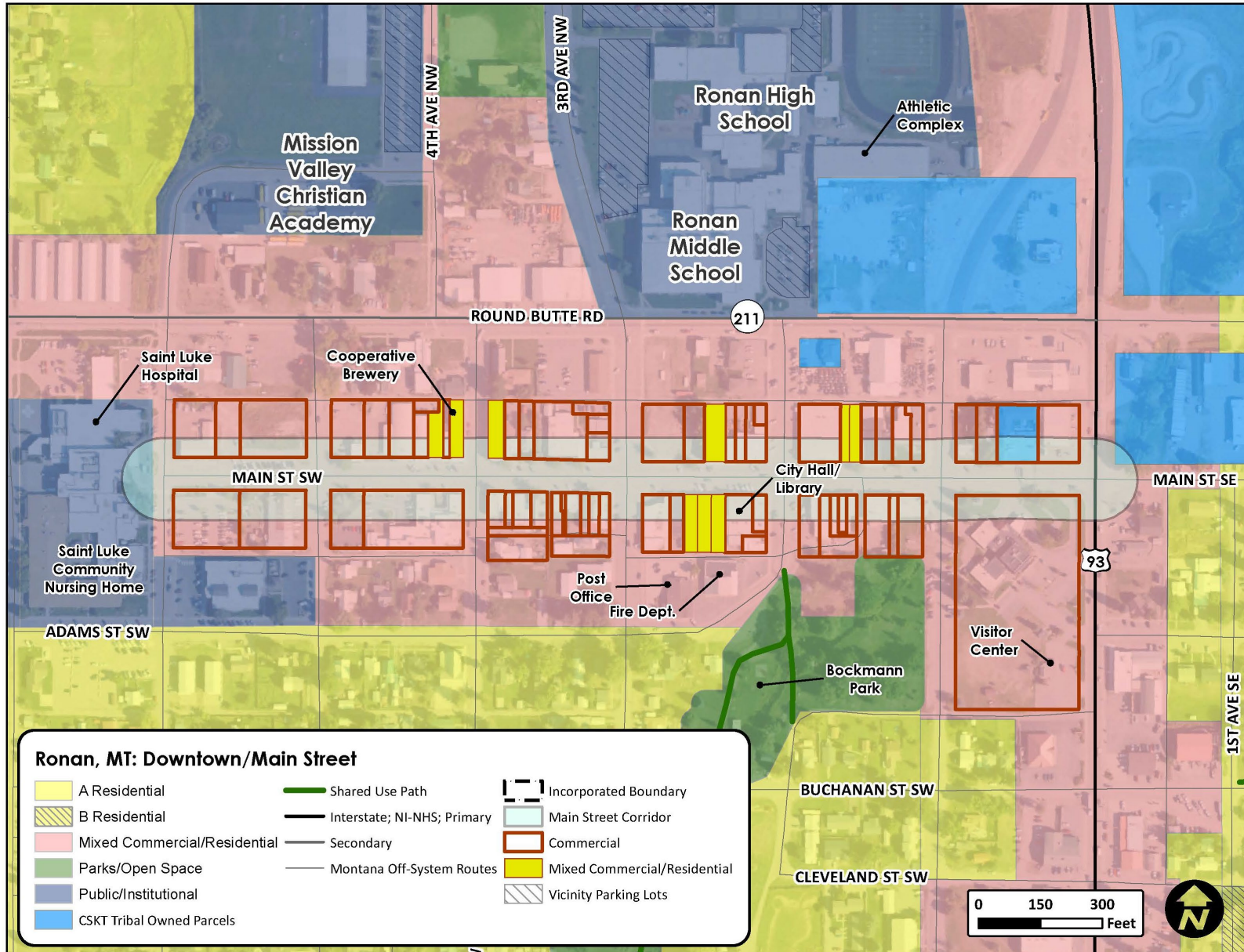




FIGURE 14 – MAIN STREET RONAN ELU/FLU AND EXISTING MAINSTREET PARCELS, HOUSING, SIDEWALKS, AND PATHWAYS





## Landscape / Streetscape Plan

### Community Infrastructure Design Guidelines and Recommendations

As a related extension of the FLU plan and design standards development, the consultant team analyzed Main Street existing conditions and developed recommendations for revitalizing Downtown's streetscaping and community connectivity. The 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 and 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., City 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:

Design guidelines ensure a unified aesthetic for the entire streetscape and include multimodal transportation system infrastructure, street and public space furniture, signs (wayfinding), materials (hard and soft scaping), and plantings. The sub-headings below provide guidelines for Main Street recommended improvements and/or upgrades to the various physical elements of the corridor. Public input was weighted heavily to inform the following list of potential Main Street design improvements.

#### *Sidewalk upgrades*

- Long term: Widen sidewalks (change angle parking to parallel - allows for better mobility, sidewalk cafes, displays, sidewalk sales, more planting, etc.)
- Lighted/signalized crosswalks in strategic locations (High School, Hwy 93 both directions, etc.)
- Curb bulbs at major intersections w/ raised crosswalks
- Consistent curb cuts
- Add missing sidewalks (west end, north side)
- Connections to Trail system, Schools, and Key Community Amenities/Facilities

#### *Street Amenities*

- Street furniture (benches, trash, dog bags, bike racks, etc.)

#### *Street planting*

- Trees in sufficiently sized tree pits (where sidewalk with can accommodate minimum 36" width by 6' pit)
- Street tree stormwater planters
- Where sidewalks can't allow street trees, add raised planters
- Street poles that accommodate hanging baskets, banners

### Street Lighting

- Pedestrian scale lighting (street lighting isn't even sufficient for the road at present)

### Wayfinding (Informational Signage)

- Directional signs - pedestrian scale at corners
  - Historical markers, points of interest, maps
- Directional signs – vehicle scale at strategic locations

### Main Street Typical Sections: Recommended Complete Streets Alternatives

The following four (4) graphics (**Figures 15, 16, 17, and 18**) show street scape typical sections and present various streetscape options for incorporating multi-modal (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle) complete streets design elements. Based on the existing conditions analysis, stakeholder input, stated goals and needs, and adherence to Montana Main Street Program guidance.

Alternative 1 represents the primary recommendation for a streetscape/Main Street redesign. All four alternatives presented use the basis of the existing 80-foot width of Mainstreet to arrive at the concept level variations shown for streetscape redesign (standard width of 80 feet across the street from building envelope to building envelope). It is advised that the community weighs the alternatives presented here (or variations thereof) based on further analysis of overall project cost and specific needs and/or aesthetic or functional preferences. Note that Alternatives 1-3 incorporate variations that incorporate designated bike paths, whereas Alternative 4 removes bike paths in lieu of wider sidewalks. The vehicular streetscape layouts for each alternative are identical; 11 ft drive lanes with 8 ft curbside/end to end parking. This 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 recommended Alternative 1 typical section / street layout has the following capacity for vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic per hour, shown in Table X below.

TABLE 16 – NACTO MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITY CAPACITY ESTIMATE<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>4</sup> <https://nacto.org/publications/design-guides/>

FIGURE 15 – ALTERNATIVE 1 – BI-DIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES ON NORTH SIDE W/ RAISED & SEPARATED CURB

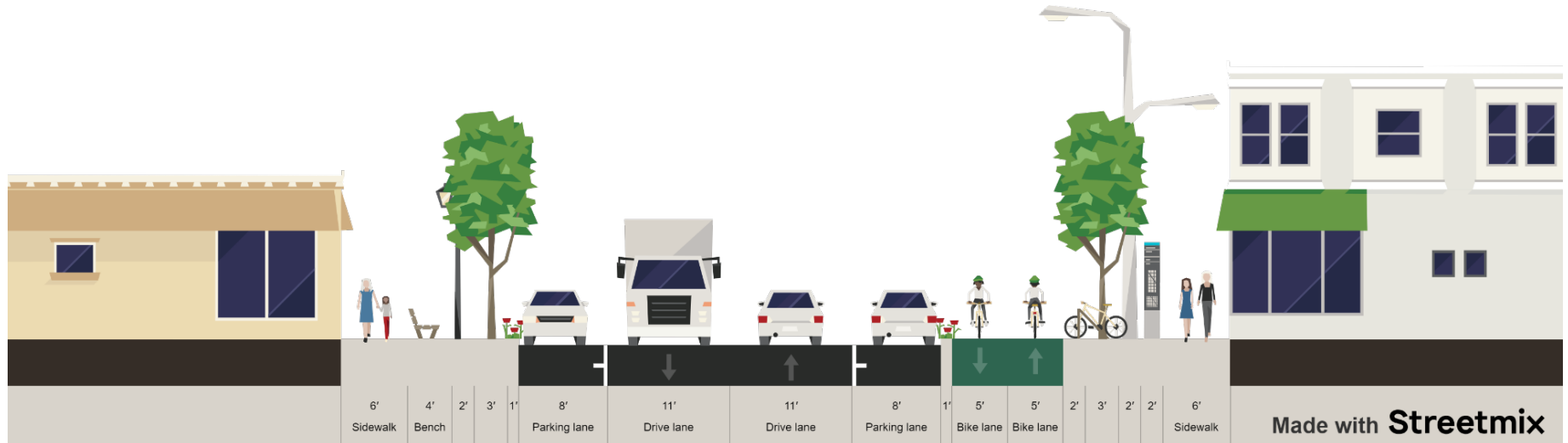


FIGURE 16 – ALTERNATIVE 2 – BI-DIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES SPLIT N/S W/ RAISED & SEPARATED CURB

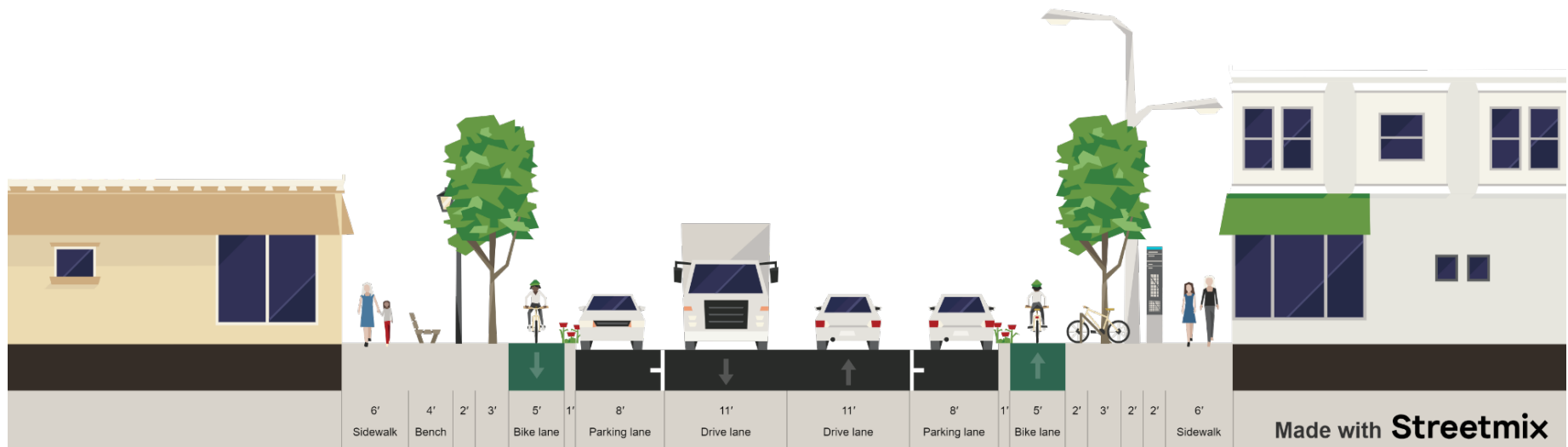


FIGURE 17 - ALTERNATIVE 3 - BI-DIRECTIONAL BIKE LANES SPLIT N/S - ON STREET/NO CURB SEPARATION FROM TRAFFIC

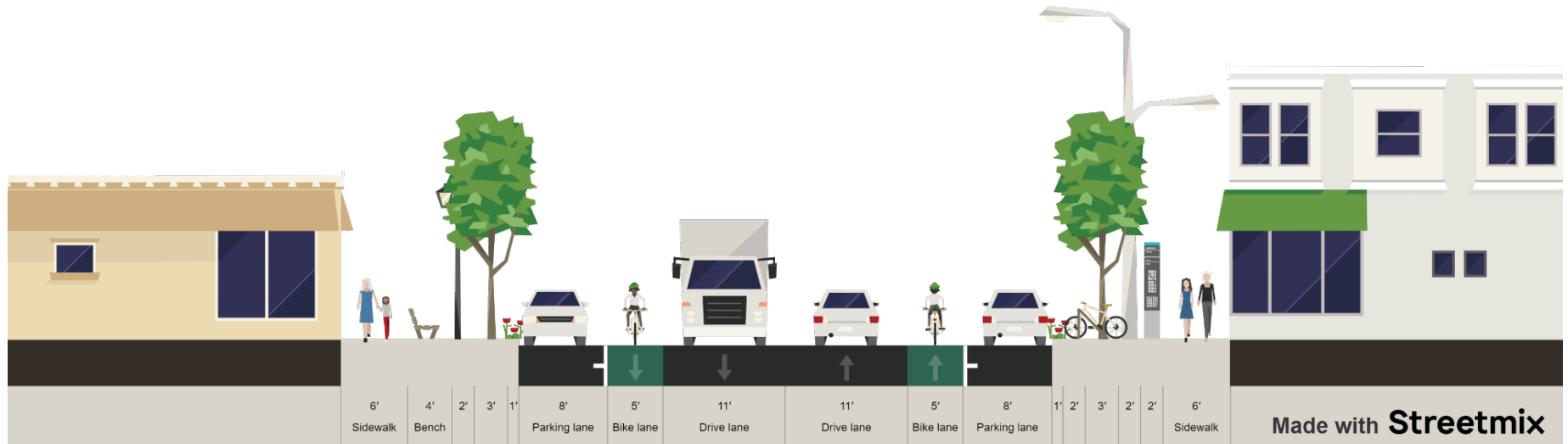
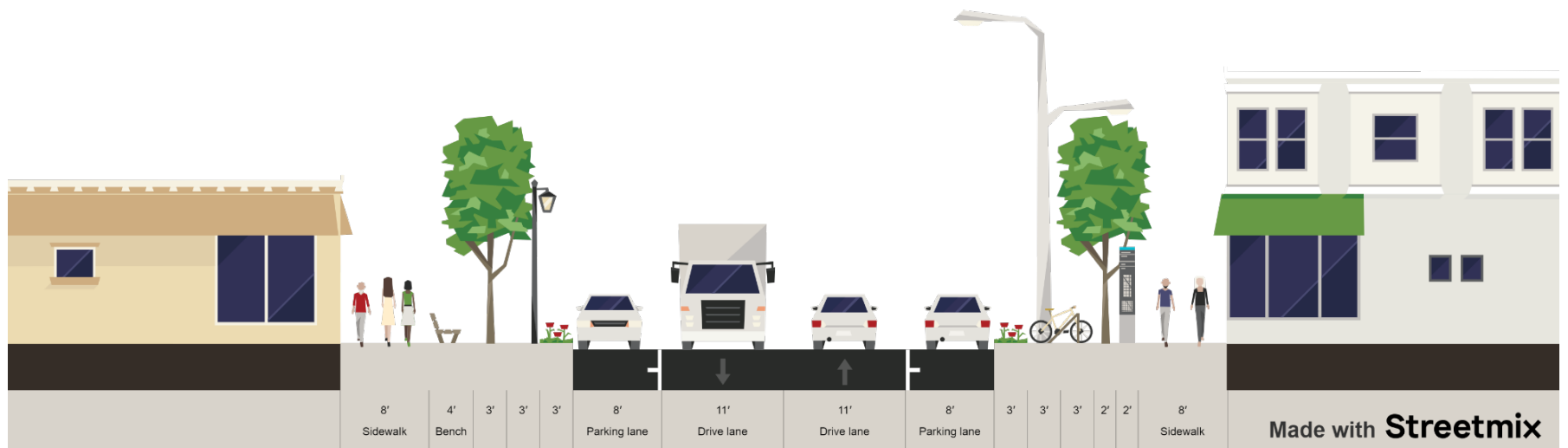


FIGURE 18 - ALTERNATIVE 4 - WIDENED SIDEWALK-SCAPE AND NO DESIGNATED BIKE LANES





## Main Street Design Recommendations to Enhance Tourism and Economic Development

### Public Spaces

- Event space - take a vacant lot, add a small stage and amenities
- Public art

### 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
- Locally sourced materials
- Habitat planting - in stormwater planters and larger tree pits, plant for pollinators, native birds
- Daylight the creek

### Economic Development

- Facade improvements
- Design guidelines
- Encourage outdoor dining (on wide sidewalks)
- Load zones

**Figures 19 through 27** 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 in the following renderings, have combined stakeholder input and the consultant team's facilitation of the Downtown Master Plan / Main Street Plan's vision, goals, and objectives developed throughout the public engagement and existing conditions analysis processes.

The following is a priority list of recommended Main Street revitalization project improvements, which are depicted in the conceptual renderings:

- Crosswalk Infrastructure
- Improved Intersection Traffic Control
- Parklets
- Public Parking
- New Sidewalk & Improvement/Widening of existing sidewalks
- Bike Paths
- Street Trees
- Waste Receptacles
- Seating
- Wayfinding
- Bike Racks
- Street Lighting(Pedestrian)
- Art Murals
- Public Gathering & Event Spaces / Pocket Plaza / Outdoor Amphitheater or Band Shell
- Raingarden Buffer

FIGURE 19 –MAIN STREET SITE PLAN W/ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS (CONCEPTUAL)

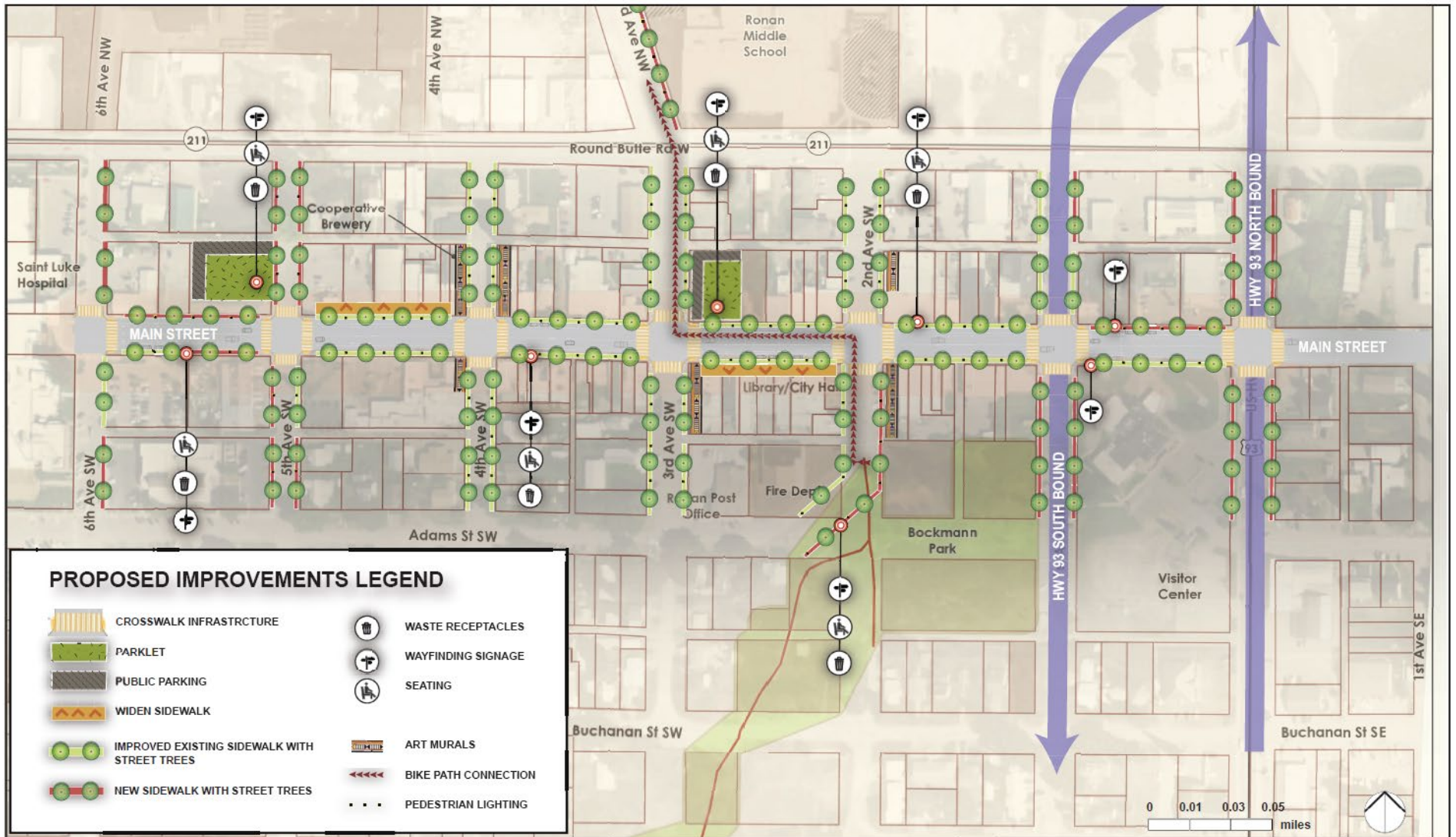




FIGURE 20 – PLAN ENLARGEMENT AT WEST END OF MAIN STREET (CONCEPTUAL)

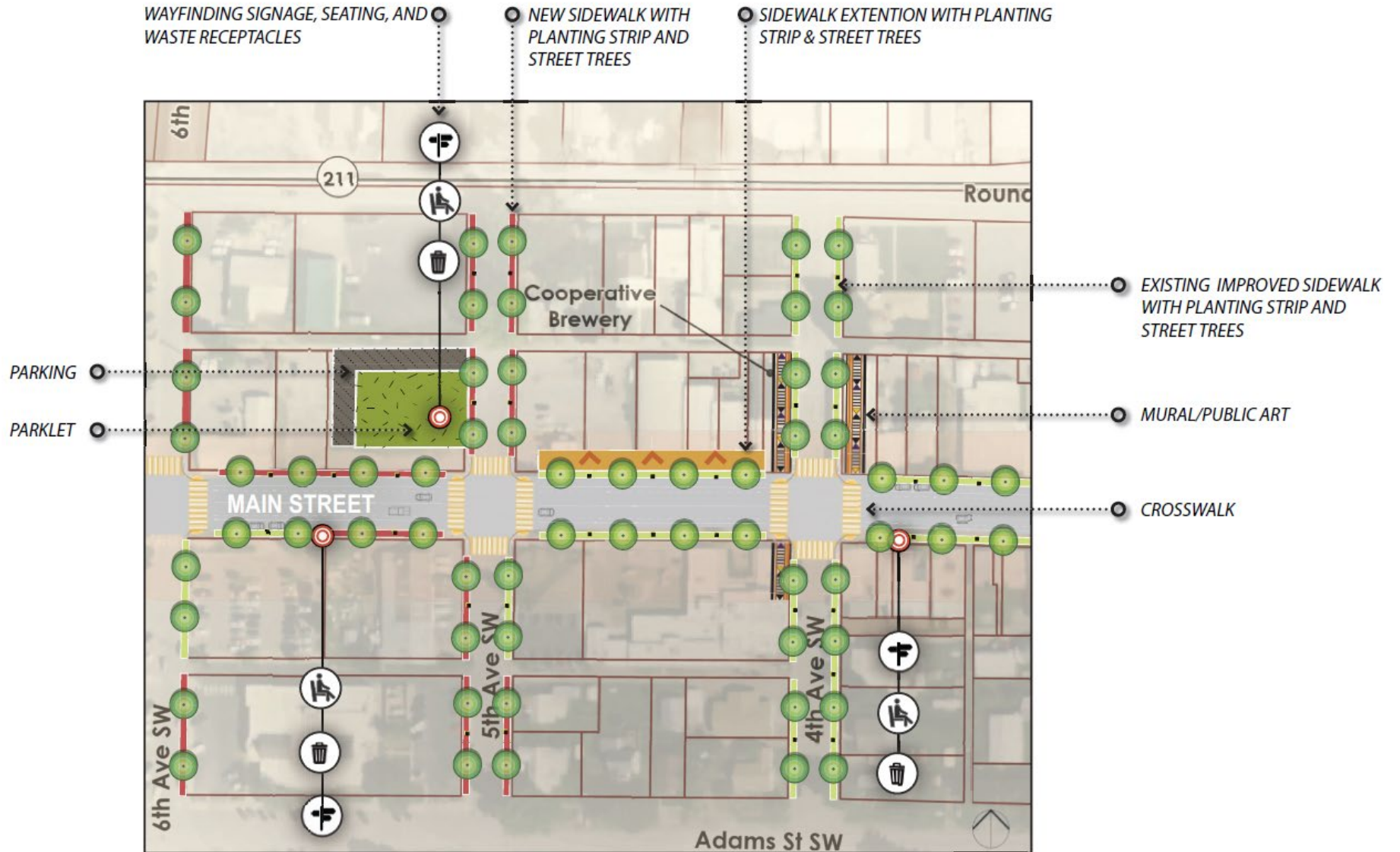
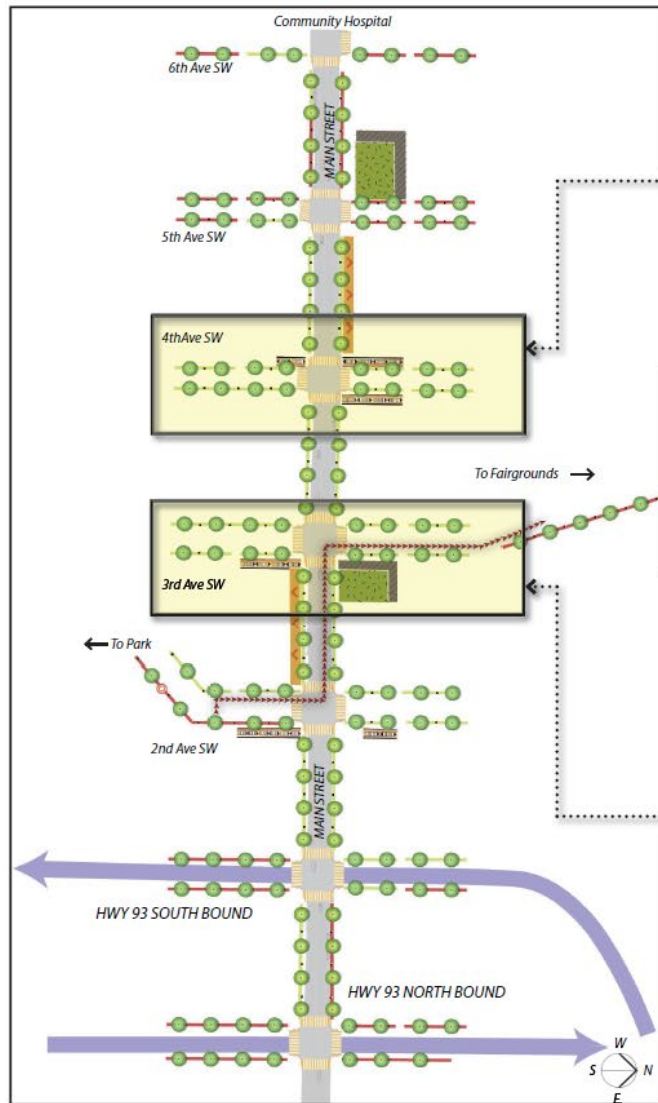


FIGURE 21 – MAIN STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS – STREET LEVEL PERSPECTIVE RENDERINGS (CONCEPTS)



VIEW A | FOURTH AND MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST



VIEW B | THIRD AND MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST



FIGURE 22 – VIEW A: FOURTH AND MAIN ST. (LOOKING WEST)



FIGURE 23 - VIEW B: THIRD AND MAIN ST. (LOOKING EAST)

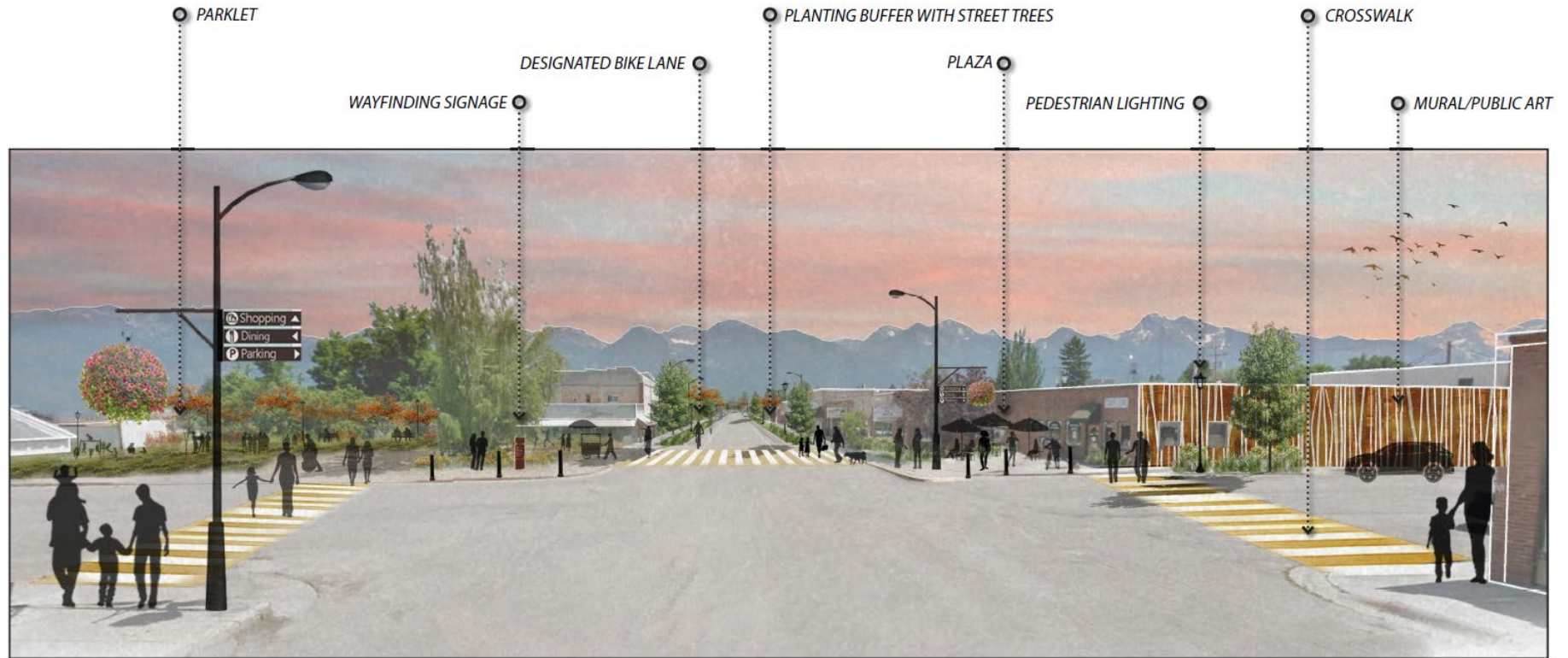




FIGURE 24 – VIEW C1 BEFORE AND AFTER: (THIRD ST. AT MAIN STREET LOOKING NORTH ACROSS MAIN STREET)





FIGURE 25 - VIEW C2 PROPOSED: THIRD ST. AT MAIN STREET (LOOKING NORTH ACROSS MAIN STREET)







FIGURE 26 – VIEW D1 BEFORE AND AFTER: (MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST ACROSS INTERSECTION OF 1<sup>ST</sup> STREET / REALIGNED HWY 93)





FIGURE 27 - VIEW D PROPOSED: MAIN STREET (LOOKING EAST ACROSS INTERSECTION OF 1<sup>ST</sup> STREET / REALIGNED HWY 93 SOUTHBOUND LANES)





## 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 non-profit 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: Development customer service, and business succession training programs, focused consideration will be given to programs that encourage a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs/industries.
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 will be 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 Economic Development Strategy 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 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 will be critical. This area is founded and continues to sustain 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 non-motorized 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

### State Level Grants

- The Montana Historic Preservation Grant
  - Can be used for both planning and construction related to preservation of historic sites, 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, and outreach and project development.
- The Montana Main Street Program
- Department of Natural Resources Renewal Resource Grants (DNRC-RRGL)
  - These are for planning/construction of water and sewer projects that can be used if you need infrastructure improvements/updates related to growth of downtown or ongoing economic development.
- Montana Coal Endowment Program (MCEP)
  - For planning/construction of water, sewer, solid waste, storm sewer and bridges.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - There are a wide range of uses, particularly for planning and construction uses for community facilities if Ronan can show areas of LMI impact.
- Transportation Alternatives (TA) (for construction of non-motorized infrastructure including sidewalks, recreational pathways, ADA accessibility projects, etc.
- Strategic Investment Grants
  - Supports a wide variety of arts-related activities and opportunities:
  - 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

IJA 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 are listed below:

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)
  - Large, community-wide transportation projects
- Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment (ATII) Program
  - Large, community/regional non-motorized transportation projects (pathways, bike-lanes, sidewalks, connections between communities or within communities that support non-motorized 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 non-motorized 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 all kinds of economic 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.



## ACTION PLAN WORKBOOK (IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

*In progress. Complete version to be included after final public comment period, as appendices document in the final report.*

To ensure that the finalized economic development plan meets EDA guidelines (opening the door for future EDA funding opportunities), the consultant team adhered to the following strategy and deliverables related to the 5-year Economic Development Strategic Plan and 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 in the final plan.
- Development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) goals, objectives, and activities to include prioritization of those goals for years one through five of the plan.
- Final 5-Year Economic Development Plan that includes 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.

Concurrently, the key goals, objectives, and strategies identified in the finalized Downtown Master Plan reflect the work accomplished within the 5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan and the Action Plan incorporates the following strategy and deliverables for the Downtown Master Plan:

- Robust and inclusive community participation (as previously outlined).
- Final map products and Illustrative design concept visualizations.
- Infrastructure development concepts and final preferred development alternative guided by the MMS approach.
- Final FLU plan and community/streetscape design recommendations and standards to guide implementation of new Downtown Master Plan projects.
- Comparative analysis of economic growth scenarios developed from the 5-Year Economic Development Strategy 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 project development.



## ADOPTION

A public meeting and presentation will be held with Ronan public boards (DATE PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 2024, TBD). 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).





## APPENDICES

### Public Survey Template

*In progress. To be completed / included in the full draft report.*

## Public Engagement & Survey Summary

### 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)



### 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](https://inputcentral.com/ronan).

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## 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.



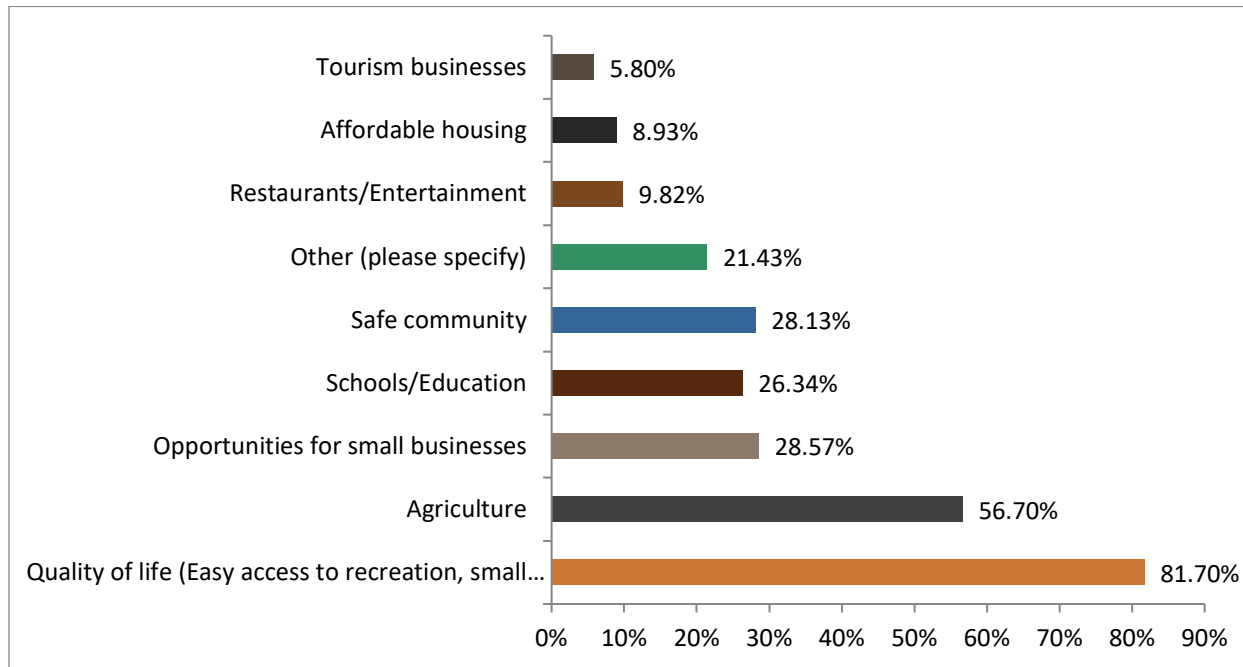
## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

*To be included in the full draft report appendices.*

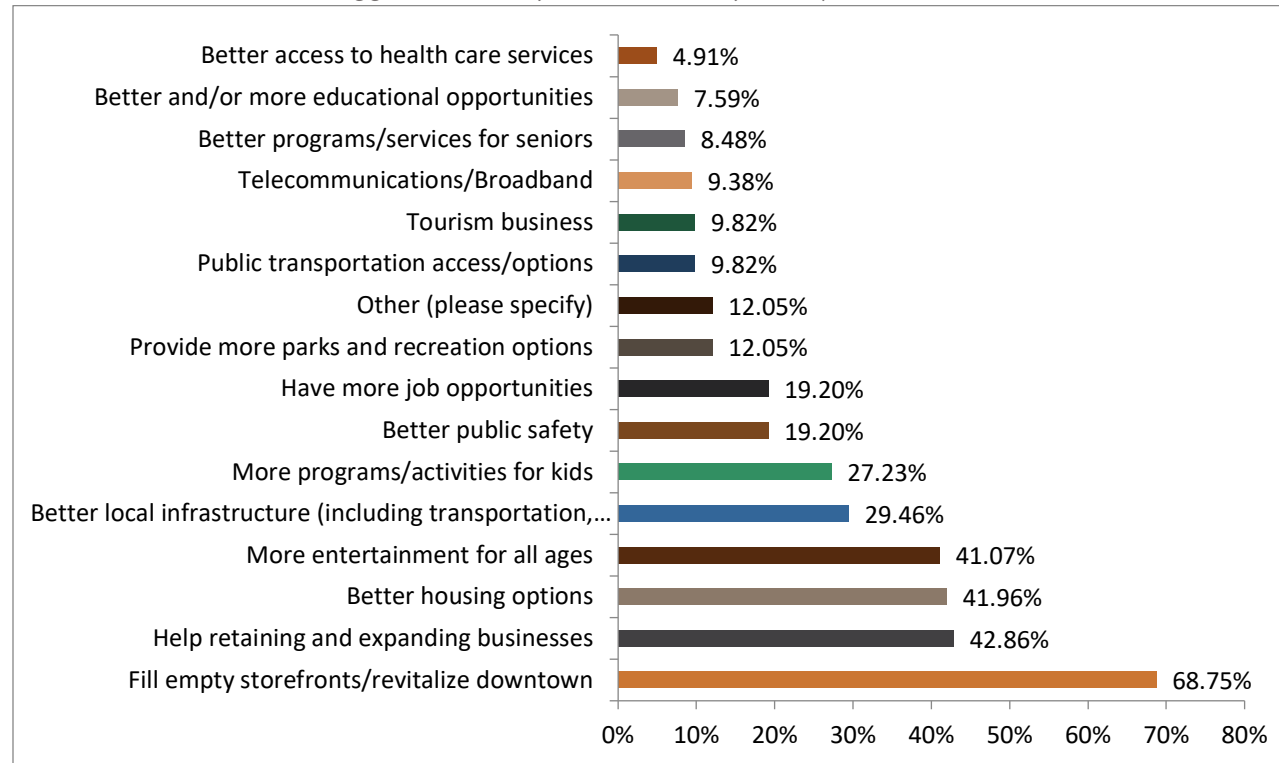




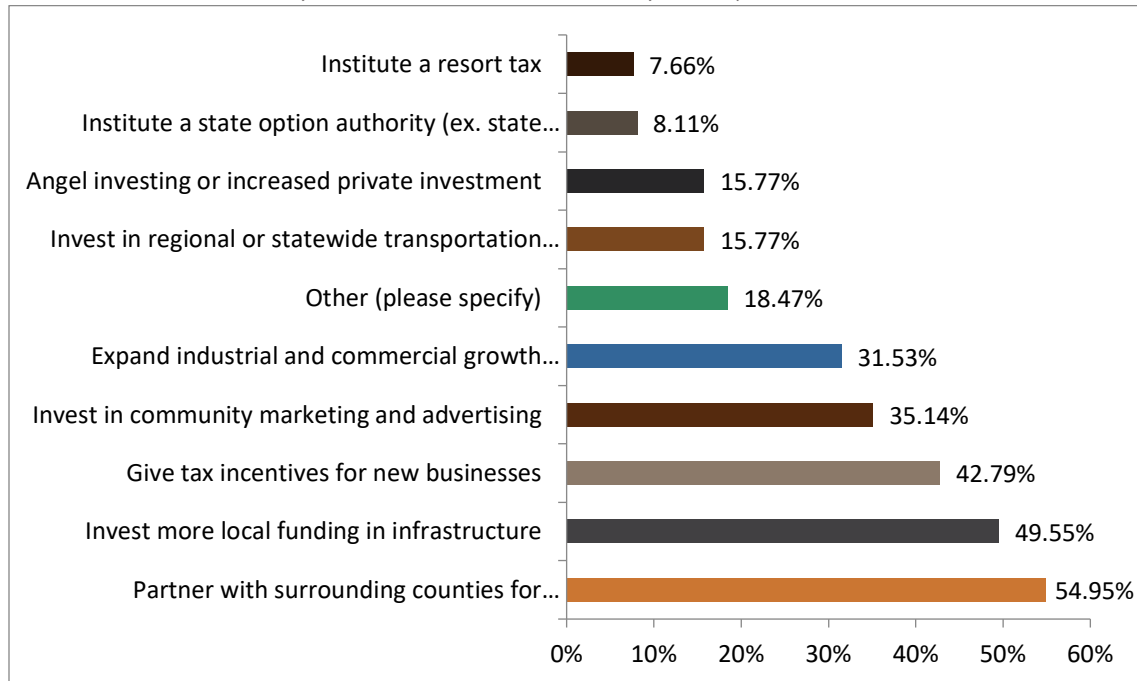
Question 3: What are the greatest assets in your area? What makes your community stand out? List your top 3.



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

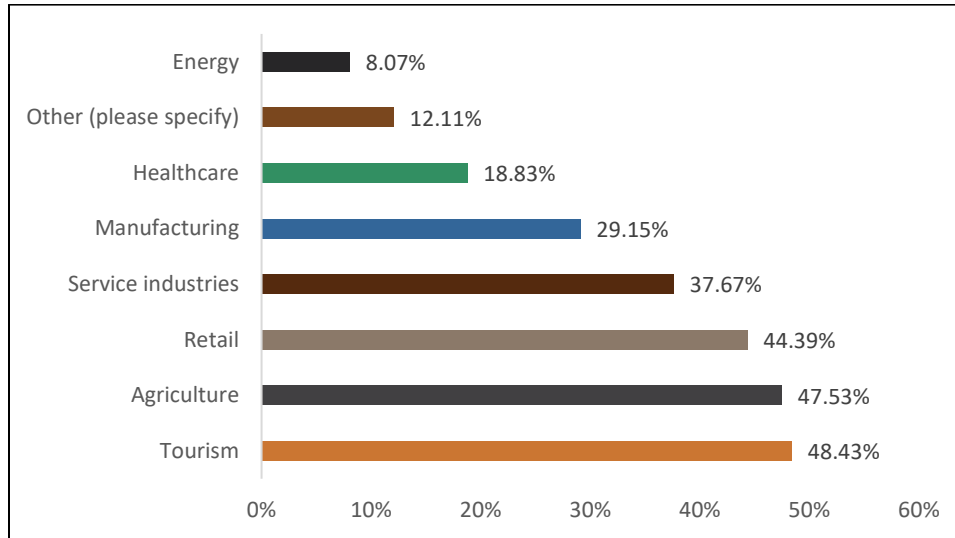


Question 5: How would you meet those needs? Pick your top 3.



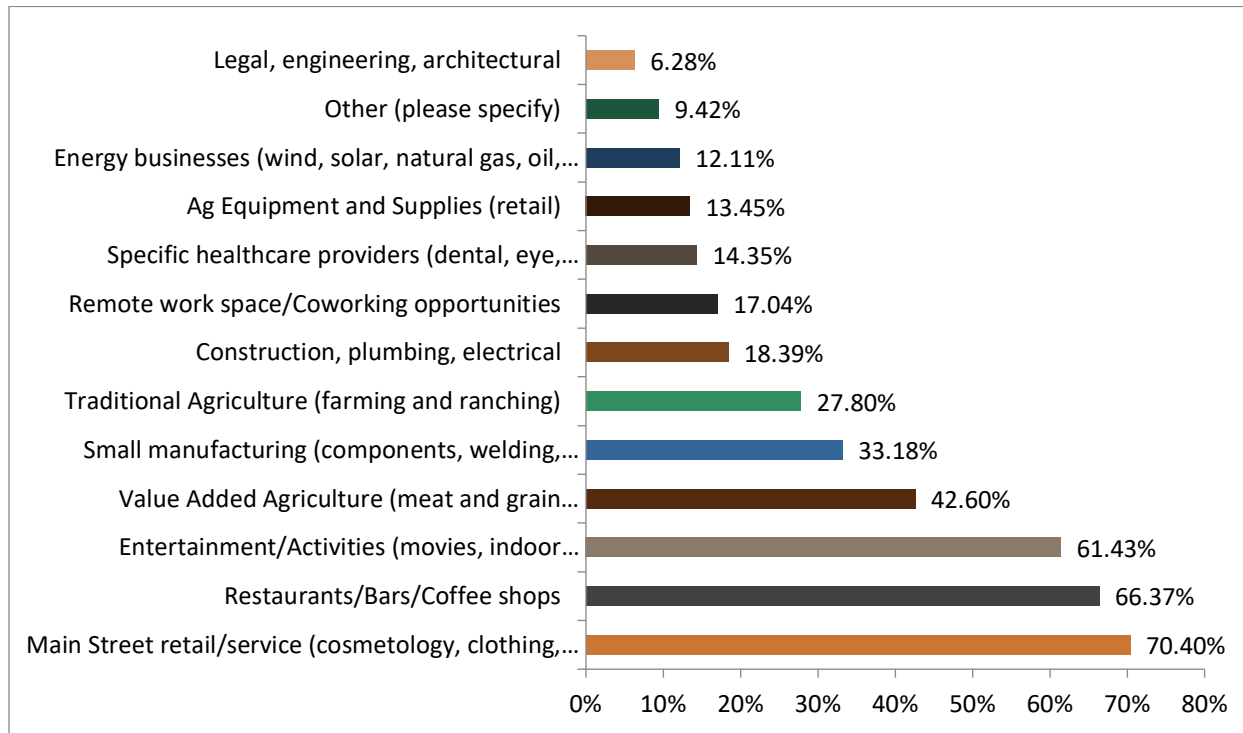


Question 6: Which business industries have the most growth potential in your area? Pick your top 2.

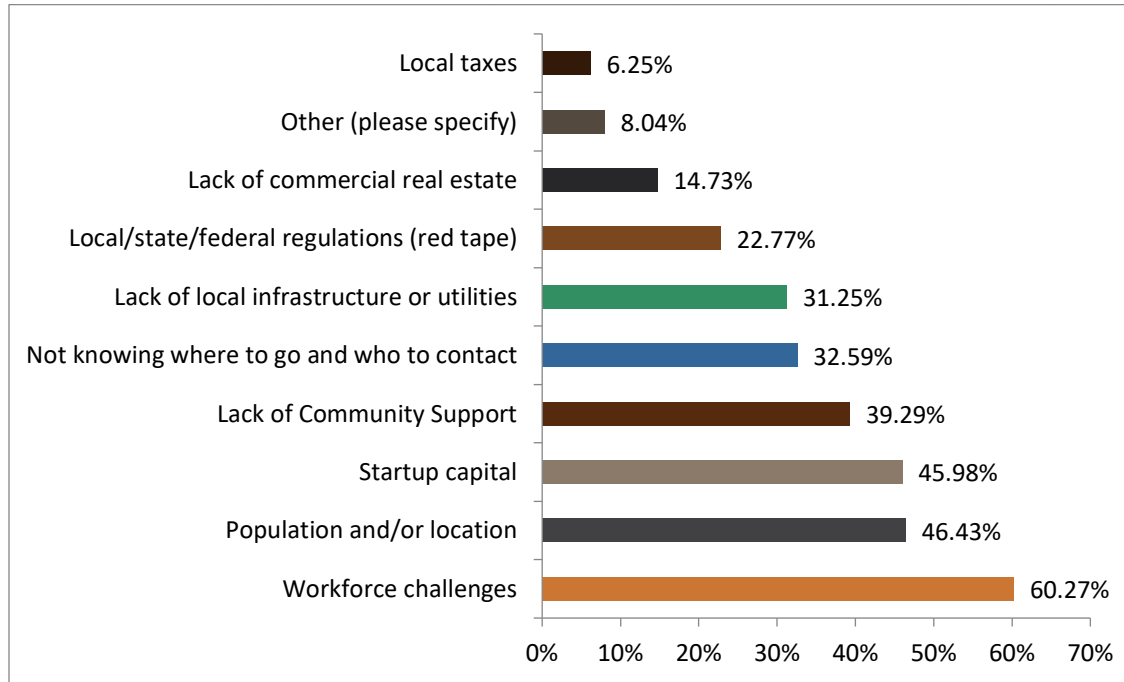




Question 7: Based upon your choices above, what TYPES of business would you like to see?

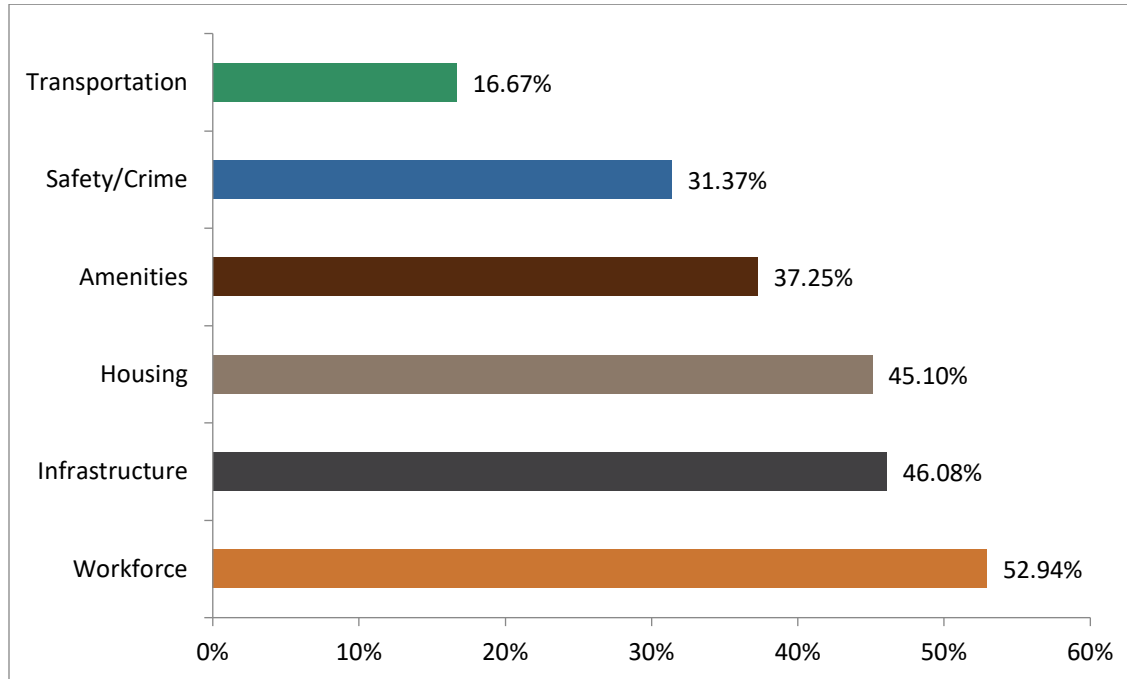


Question 8: What do you see as some of the obstacles for new businesses to open in your community?





*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.*





*Poll question: What is your vision for Ronan?*

***Community input was gathered  
and here's what we heard:***

Friendly for everyone!  
Make it walkable by  
fixing sidewalks.

More involvement  
from community  
members

A well-lit, welcoming  
downtown with  
maintained streets  
and sidewalks.

Take Main Street  
to new heights  
by adding new  
businesses.

Downtown revitalization  
and new businesses.

I'd like a sustainable growth  
plan that would create jobs  
that can afford to purchase  
homes in the area. Affordable  
housing is also key.

Sit down coffee shop  
for community

I would love for Ronan to be the go  
to downtown with robust downtown  
businesses that served as a gathering  
place for the community.

Bring businesses back to Main  
Street. Fix the roads and any  
sidewalks that are in disrepair.

Improved  
public splash  
pad at park

Improve safety on  
highway through town.

I would like to see a safe,  
growing community.  
Improving downtown  
shops/stores.





**Related Documents/Sited Documents (Tribal CEDS, Ronan Growth Policy, etc..)**

*To be included in the full draft report.*