

City of Sidney



Appendix #5 Public Facilities

Comprehensive Development Plan 2012

Sidney, Nebraska.....Small Town Values.....Big Time Opportunities

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City Office Building

The City of Sidney Office building is located at 13th and Jackson. The City office houses all general administration activities including all accounting, bookkeeping, city management, city clerk-treasurer, utility payments, planning, zoning, public services, human resources, economic development, GIS, and public services director. The public transportation department recently moved to their new department on Illinois Street.

The City offices have sufficient space, but the city council chambers does not provide sufficient seating for issues attracting a large number of residents. Expansion of the Council Chambers would be helpful to accommodate larger crowds at city council meetings as well as provide more space for employee meetings.

The council chambers could be expanded by utilizing the room to the south of the council chambers and the break room to the west with the existing uses utilizing other space in the building..

The City office building also lacks sufficient storage space. The basement storage is overloaded and is a potential fire hazard. The City could evaluate electronically storing some documents. This would allow for the disposal of paper documents that we are permitted to be shred if cataloged through electronic means. This would require an additional staff person to download, catalog and store documents on a regular basis, though.

The city council chamber's could also use a better recording and video system for broadcasting of the public meetings

The facility does have adequate parking space as there is abundant street parking available in addition to the existing parking lots. The facility is a ground level facility and does not have any ADA issues expect for the city council bench which would need to be adapted if a disabled person takes a council seat.

Handicap Accessibility

The City has continually improved handicap accessibility in the community since the passage fo the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed in 1990. The City continues to improve or replace public infrastructure in adherence to ADA requirements for street, sidewalk, intersection and other public area projects. All new building permits or remodeling are made to strictly follow building code compliance issues by the Chief Building Official.

The City has upgraded all but two public buildings to meet ADA standards. One of the buildings not in full compliance is the former Carnegie Library Building which is currently leased to the Chamber of Commerce. This building is on the historic register and has been in its current use for over 40 years. Though a public owned building, it does not handle regular city business.

The Sioux Villa housing authority office building also is not handicap accessible. This structure was built in the 1940's and will require an entry way remodel to become accessible. This will require partial removal of a block wall and installation of a ramp, along with an automated door. This remodel has been put on hold due to budget constraints, but is on the City's five-year plan.

Solid Waste Collection

The City of Sidney provides solid waste service to the community. The City at one time utilized private entities for this service, but it cost the city more than it was receiving in revenue whereas the present public operation is self-supporting.

Sidney is also expanding a new cell at the landfill. This will provide enough capacity to serve the city for the next 29-34 years. The landfill is open on Saturdays in spring through fall from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. The compost pile, tree limbs and beneficial landfill are open 7 days a week., 24 hours a day.

Solid waste collection received a good 85% satisfaction rate on the community survey with every part of town being within 2% of this rating level. This rating is a significant improvement from the 73% rating it received in 2004.

Many residents would like to have grass clippings picked up at residential properties. The City has considered placing separate grass clipping dumpsters in residential areas, but the current system seems to work well with individuals responsible for bringing to the city compost pile, which is open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, monitored by video camera and recorded. This arrangement keeps sanitation pickup costs down.

Several residents commented on the cost for service being too high. There were many comments regarding days of service with some wanting more pickup days while others would like to see fewer pickup days if that would reduce the cost. Several other survey responders would like to see fees based on the amount of garbage.

There were also many comments regarding trash being spilled or trash cans be left tipped over. Other would like to have the landfill open for more hours. Others commented on cleaning up the landfill.

There were some recycling comments in this section including want the types of recycling expanded and having home pickup.

There were many positive comments as well including they think the service is good; people like the employees service; and they like the free dump days.

Recycling Efforts

Recycling in Sidney is a joint effort between the City of Sidney and local volunteers with Keep Sidney Beautiful. The City provides recycling through drop-off points throughout the city. The City has also received several recycling grants in the past decade.

Recycling received a poor 55.8% satisfaction rate in the community survey, which is slightly lower than the 2004 survey. The satisfaction rate was very consistent throughout town as each part of town was within 1% of the community average. Many of the unsatisfied comments may not necessarily be directed at the current services, but to express a desire for more types recycling or expanded recycling service.

Many residents would like curbside recycling pickup with some even offering to pay for the service. Sidney did provide this service for five years. However, this service became cost prohibitive and too labor intensive. Although it may reduce participation, the volunteer effort has worked well as many residents are highly dedicated to recycling.

Many residents would like to see the City accept more recyclables, especially cardboard and glass. The City is considering adding cardboard but is not planning at adding glass at this time. Others would like to see drop off points for electronics and chemicals.

Others comments include would like more information about the recycling program; would like a recycling drop-off point on north side; inconvenient/too much work; too much recyclables in landfill; and would like to see bottle recycling machines;

Water System

The satisfaction rate of the City's water system improved to 84.3% in the 2010 community survey from the 72.7% rating in 2004. Water service ranked highest in the central part of town with an 87% satisfaction rate and lowest in the north part of town (77.3%). The south part of town had a 83.6% rating.

Sidney operates a municipal water system. The City currently has 15 wells that supply water for the community. Wells 1 through 9, which are located in the Brule formation, have nitrate contamination issues. However, the new well field northwest of town has exceptional quality which allows the city to blend the two systems to meet EPA standards.

The City began chlorinating the water due to problems that surfaced about 10 years ago. The City plans to continue chlorinating the water as it is more proactive in the event some type of contaminant leaks into the system. It also prevents the notification hassle, public concern and misunderstanding from potential/prospective residents who may see news articles on water notices.

The water system has capacity in excess of 3,000,000 gallons. While this is sufficient capacity for existing needs, additional storage in the vicinity of the Interchange may be needed in the future. Such a facility would address pressure problems on the south edge of town. It would also help accommodate more growth in the future.

Sidney has invested millions of dollars in the City's distribution system. Major distribution lines were upgraded from two new well development fields in the early 1990's and in 2005. The Fort Sidney and the 14th and Osage projects were recently completed. However, the City still has many distribution issues that need addressed as the water system still has some dead ends, undersized mains, and undersized service lines that need to be addressed.

Many residents expressed their water bills are too expensive and/or they do not like the supplemental fee while many wondered when the fee will expire. The bonds for the Northeast well field will be completed in 2012 (water/ sewer older bond); the airport water project will expire in 2013; and both the Northwest well field and the land purchases for well field will expire in 2022.

There were many comments regarding water pressure, especially on the south side of town. The amount of water pressure in a home is primarily determined by the by the vertical distance between the water level in the storage tank and the outlet. Thus homes on higher elevation will have lower water pressure than homes on lower elevations receiving water from the same water source unless water pressure pumps are utilized.

Low water pressure can also be due to home-related issues. Many modern faucets and fixtures have flow restrictors that limit the amount of water that can pass through. Restricted or blocked water lines or multiple fixtures running simultaneously can also reduce pressure.

The City is examining ways to improve both the flow and pressure in the water system, especially in the southern part of town.

Many residents disliked the taste of the city's water and the chlorine in the water.

Waste Water Treatment

The City operates a new wastewater treatment 2-basin sequential batch reactor (SBR) system that was built and went on line in the summer of 2010 bringing the city in to full compliance with EPA and DEQ processes. This includes an influent pump station that includes a bar screen and grit removal; 2 aerobic sludge holding tanks, a dewatering building that houses the controls for the SBR's, belt filter press and blowers for sludge tanks and SBR's.

The City is also installing lift stations to address some elevation issues. The City also has many sewer mains that will need to be replaced. If regulatory changes are mandated for chlorides additional upgrades will need to be made to system.

Storm Water Drainage

Storm Water Drainage only received a 54% satisfaction rate on the 2010 community survey. However, this is a significant improvement from the 37% satisfaction rate in 2004. Satisfaction with storm water drainage was consistent throughout the town ranging from a low of 51.6% in the central part of town to 59.2% in the north.

The improved satisfaction rate is likely due to the many storm drainage improvements the City has made in the past decade. The City installed a storm drain system installed along Hickory Street for the downtown area in 2006, which greatly enhanced the drainage area that frequently caused flooding in previous years. In many areas of the downtown, however, there remains inadequate storm drain inlets or under-sized drainage flow pipes to handle flash flood storms.

Several residents commented that storm drainage has improved especially in the downtown and the UP underpass, but there were many comments about the need for further improvement especially in the downtown area, the UP underpass, Seventh Avenue, the Deer Run neighborhood, by the Catholic Church, Parkland Boulevard, Quince Street and 19th to 23rd Avenues. There was also concerns about proper platting as there are drainage issues in new neighborhoods.

The City does have a storm water drainage study and understands where the primary trouble spots are in the downtown and other problem areas, but the cost of completely eliminating downtown flooding is significant.

There are many locations that need inlets and drain tubes installed that the city is looking at completing. A major project under consideration is in the Verde Lane drainage open canal area.

When there is flooding in the downtown area, much of the damage is caused by vehicles creating wakes that pushes water onto commercial and residential properties. The City attempts to discourage vehicles from driving through flooded areas but this requires a great deal of manpower redirect traffic.

Natural Gas

Natural Gas is available through Sidney The City participates in the Nebraska Choice Gas program.

Electricity

The City maintains its own electrical distribution system. MEAN supplies 74 percent of the power Sidney distributes. WAPA supplies the remaining 26 percent. MEAN is obligated to supply all of Sidney's needs through a 30 year contract that is not purchased from other sources.

The City maintains its own power plant for back-up standby power for MEAN and is part of the contractual arrangement.

Electricity received a high 86.9% satisfaction rate on the community survey. Satisfaction rates were especially high for new resident who gave electricity service a 93.8% satisfaction rate.

The city's electric system has issues typical of most electrical systems. The overhead distribution system and most of the power poles are more than 60 years of age. Many poles are decaying below ground level.

Residential loads in some areas of town are outgrowing the capacity of the wire feeding those areas. Due to the ever increasing loads, the main breakers in the power plant are nearing their limits. These are being addressed as quickly as time and finances allow.

The City has also been dealing with an outstanding right of way issue with the primary feed into the south side of Sidney.

The City has made significant investments within its system. The electrical department has completed a third of a three stage upgrade project. The City has increased our north substation transformer which will protect customers from a major outage if a large storm hits the City.

The city also started a large "overhead to underground" conversion project in the area mostly south of Toledo Street. The project is nearing completion, but does not include removal of the old overhead system. The second stage of this project is the Valley View area. Since this is an older subdivision without alleys, maintenance is very difficult in this area and small outages are common. The underground system will help alleviate these problems. The survey contained many comments of frustration with the delay in the underground wiring project. This is understandable as the project can be tedious at times due to multiple elements involved in the process.

Many residents commented on an increase in temporary outages and surges. With the overhead electric system there will be power outages and "bumps" on the line due to weather, rodents, birds, and trees. The City does install rodent/bird protection as deterrent, regularly trims trees, and continues to install devices on the lines to keep surges and dips to a minimum. With the sensitive electronic devices in use in today's world, momentary interruptions are more noticeable than in previous times. As more lines are converted underground and as the substation is upgraded, these problems will be reduced.

Despite having some of the cheapest electrical rates in the country, many residents also commented on the cost of electricity being too high while some complained about the electric department having new equipment. Energy prices are expected to rise nationwide in the coming decades. Thus, residents, especially those concerned about the cost of electricity, will need to undertake energy efficiency and conservation efforts in their own home.

There were a few persons wanting the city to utilize more wind power. The City does utilize some green energy sources such as hydroelectric and wind power. Sidney buys more power than required from MEAN's Kimball wind farm and MEAN has a goal of attaining 10% of its power from wind energy. At one time Sidney bought a significant portion of WAPA's available power which has a large green portfolio, but with the growth on the front range, the WAPA availability continues to shrink.

However, Nebraska has many unique policies, laws and systems that make it difficult for Sidney to cost effectively implement more wind energy.

Law Enforcement

Sidney has a fourteen member police force along with two civilian employees. Due to budget constraints, the police force has been downsized including a long absence without a police chief that has finally been filled.

The department provides police services 24/7, including Code Enforcement and Animal Control services. The ratio of officers to citizens in Sidney is 2.08 officers per 1,000 citizens. This ratio is slightly above the Nebraska average of 2.01 officers per 1,000 citizens, however it is slightly below the national average of 2.2 officers per 1,000 citizens for cities with a population of 2,500 – 9,999 citizens (Data derived from a 2003 IACP study).

The department receives over 9,000 calls for service per year on average and pulls an average of approximately 1,200 cases per year. The crime rate in Sidney is well below the average for the rest of the United States, due in no small part to the dedication and proactive stance of its officers, relationships with the community and support from not only City government, but also the citizens and businesses of Sidney.

Law enforcement received a good satisfaction rating on the community survey. The overall community gave the police an 85.3% satisfaction rate which ranged from 81% in the north to 86.5% in the south. The police received a very high satisfaction rate among new residents (91.3%).

The survey had many positive comments that complimented the performance of the police while others were concerned about some of the officers and their actions.

The survey indicated several persons are worried about speeding and the safety of children while others felt the police were to strict on enforcement.

Many residents commented on the need for stronger enforcement of drugs.

Some residents are concerned about the cost of law enforcement and/or believe there are too many cops while others suggested combing the police and sheriff departments.

The police department has moved four times in the past 25 years and is currently housed in a remodeled former fast food restaurant that is not ideally suitable. The 2,100 square foot building has been upgraded several times, but it does not present the desired image or accommodate the desired needs of the police department and no longer meets the space, operational or security needs of the Department.

The building is overcrowded, poorly laid out, and working conditions do not support efficient operations. Additionally, the overall appearance of the facility, inside and out, does not portray the level of professionalism maintained by and expected of the department, the City and the community. Nor does it properly communicate the successful and progressive posture for which the City of Sidney is generally recognized.

The building no longer provides sufficient space for efficient operations. Police operations are hampered by the lack of space and outdated interior design. The interior design does not allow for an acceptable level of security for employees, visitors, arrestees, evidence, weapons and storage of supplies.

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The current facility does not provide adequate office space for the existing personnel, let alone additional staff in the future and the options for remodeling or repurposing the available space is very limited and would in all likelihood, not be cost-effective.

- ◆ Sergeant's Office – Currently both Sergeants share an office that is approximately 10'x12' and contains two desks, two computer workstations and filing cabinets. This area is extremely overcrowded and is not an efficient or ergonomic work area. The Sergeants also utilize this area as storage for ammunition and personal equipment.
- ◆ Investigators' Office – Currently two investigators share one office area that is adequate in size but lacks privacy. The cases the investigators work oftentimes require privacy, even from the other investigator in order to provide the level of comfort needed for a victim, confidential informant or other person to freely be open and honest in their conversations.
- ◆ Squad Room – The current Squad Room is a multi-purpose area serving as: the office space for eight officers and the Code Enforcement Officer to complete police reports and conduct their daily business; a break area containing a refrigerator, microwave and sink; a locker area to provide officers with a small storage area for personal equipment; and general storage of surplus equipment, supplies and miscellaneous items. The officers are currently forced to use wall hung file holders to store miscellaneous documents such as supporting documents, training materials and department correspondence.
- ◆ Office Layout – The actual offices do not allow for privacy due to physical layout and lack of sound dampening material. The Interview/DUI room is directly adjacent to the Sergeants' and Major's Office which requires persons in those offices to restrict the level of sound when the Interview/DUI room is in use.

There is an inadequate amount of storage space in the current building for Records, Evidence, Supplies and Weapons/Ammunition.

- ◆ Records – Prior to implementing the new Records Management System (RMS), all police reports were produced in hard-copy format and necessitated physical storage. As the department ran low on storage space, the previous administrator purchased two storage buildings that are located on the west side of the lot to store archived police records. This manner of storage is unacceptable due to the fact the storage buildings are not climate controlled, are only secured via a padlock and are not alarmed. Police Records, by their nature, are sensitive documents and must be securely stored and maintained at all times. Additional, more current records are stored in the Administrative Assistant/Records Clerk's office area in shelving and filing cabinets. This area is not truly secure either.
- ◆ Evidence – Currently all evidence is stored in a small room in the basement of the current facility. This location is not ideal due to the possibility of water damage from flooding or leakage from the bathrooms directly above the evidence room. Additionally, the area is too small for the amount of evidence the department is required to maintain.
- ◆ Supplies – Currently departmental supplies are stored in various locations throughout the facility due to the inefficient interior design. There is not a central location for the storage of uniforms, duty equipment, vehicle maintenance supplies or office supplies. This disparate storage solution is inefficient and makes it very difficult to have a complete and accurate inventory of supplies and equipment.
- ◆ Weapons/Ammunition – Currently all weapons and ammunition are stored in a closet off the squad room. This area is inadequately sized for the volume of ammunition and weapons the department has in inventory.

The current floor plan of the police department facility does not provide adequate security for personnel, equipment and records. The administrative offices, Sergeants' office and Investigators' office are completely open to the public entrance of the facility. The Administrative Assistant/Records Clerk office area is only separated from the public entrance by a four foot high counter. Additionally, the Interview/DUI room is also completely open to the public entrance

Office Space – While the department wishes to and will maintain an openness to the public, department employees must also be provided with office space in which work may be completed without the concerns of unauthorized persons overhearing conversations or gaining unauthorized access to department personnel, equipment, records and/or weapons.

- ◆ Interview/DUI Room – The Interview/DUI room is located in the public access area of the facility and is not secured in any way. The non-secure nature of the Interview/DUI room presents many issues, some of which are:
 - o Subjects that are under arrest for DUI need to be in a secure environment while being tested and evaluated.
 - o Subjects under arrest and being interviewed should be in a secure environment while being interviewed to lessen the likelihood of escape and/or presenting a danger to officers.
 - o Some subjects being interviewed, even though not under arrest should be in a secured area that prevents unwanted contact between other involved persons.

An additional problem that the combined Interview/DUI room presents is when officers are investigating a DUI and there is a need to interview someone at the same time or multiple people need to be interviewed at the same time, the interview must be conducted in another part of the building that is not designed to conduct or equipped to record interviews.

The overall appearance and condition of the current facility is not representative of the progressive and professional atmosphere of Sidney. The facility is approximately 30+ years old and was converted from a fast food restaurant into the current police department. Portions of the building are in disrepair and the building has had structural issues in the past, specifically the west exterior wall on the south end of the building separating from the rest of the structure.

The layout of the building and parking lot does not appear to lend itself to expanding the facility by adding on office space. Due to these issues, I don't believe renovating the existing facility would not be a cost-effective approach.

New Law Enforcement Facility Requirements

To meet the department's current needs and allow for future growth, a facility of approximately 6,600 – 7,500 sq. ft., three times the size of the existing facility, is required. This size of building would allow ample room to accommodate current staff and allow for expansion in the future with the following features:

- ◆ Records – Adequate room for proper, secure records storage and provide adequate office space for the Administrative Assistant/Records Clerk.
- ◆ Lobby – Adequate lobby area that is open to the public but secured from the remainder of the facility to ensure department personnel, records, evidence, weapons and nondepartmental personnel are secure.
- ◆ Office Space – Individual office space for department administrators, supervisors and investigators adequately sized and optimally located for their functions within the department.
- ◆ Squad Room – Large enough to provide each officer with their own desk area and file storage and accommodate a briefing table and three computer workstations with capabilities to provide each officer with an individual personal computer workstation.
- ◆ Training Room – Dedicated training room large enough to host approximately 20 – 30 attendees and equipped with LCD projector, screen and whiteboards. This would allow the department to host training classes for the regional law enforcement community at a secure facility as well as conduct in-house training.
- ◆ Break Room – Dedicated break room equipped with refrigerator, sink, microwave and break table off of the Training Room.
- ◆ Interview Rooms – Two dedicated interview rooms that are equipped with audio/video recording devices and sound dampening material.
- ◆ IT Room – Dedicated server/IT infrastructure room that is secured and designed for housing such equipment necessary to support a Local Area Network (LAN).
- ◆ Restroom/Locker Room – Provide staff with locker rooms containing athletic sized lockers for the storage of uniforms and equipment and shower facilities for decontamination prior to going off shift, if needed.
- ◆ DUI Room – Dedicated DUI investigation room designed specifically for conducting DUI investigations and accommodating DUI equipment including audio/video recording capabilities.
- ◆ Temporary Holding Room – A secure temporary holding room for arrestees that would provide a location for officers to secure a prisoner when needed.
- ◆ Weapons/Ammunition Room – A secure location to store weapons, ammunition and munitions adequately sized to accommodate the department's weapon/ammunition inventory.
- ◆ Garage/Work Bay – Provides a secure location out of the weather to search vehicles, perform routine maintenance (cleaning, replacing bulbs, wipers, etc). This area would also serve as a secure "Sally Port" that would allow officers to transfer arrestees from their vehicle to the facility completely inside a secure environment.

New Law Enforcement Facility Requirements, continued

- ◆ Storage Areas – Two large storage rooms for office and cleaning supplies as well as surplus equipment
- ◆ Workout Room – A room to accommodate cardio and strength training equipment accessible to staff 27/7.
- ◆ Evidence Room – A secure room for the storage of evidence that will allow adequate space and organization as well as provide a work area for officers to properly package and submit evidence with modern “pass-thru” temporary evidence storage.

In addition to the above physical characteristics, the facility would be equipped with surveillance cameras at strategic interior and exterior locations viewable over the department’s LAN, covered parking for department vehicles, building-wide overhead paging and keypad/proximity card secured exterior doors and lobby door. Each room with the exception of the Holding Room and Weapon Storage should be equipped with LAN network drops to accommodate computer workstations and the future option of a VoIP phone system.

Ideally the new facility would be centrally located, geographically, with the City with easy access to all portions of the City and major highways and streets. Given the geographical makeup of the City, a location in or around the Legion Park area would be ideal, providing ready access to main arterial streets and highways. Additionally, the location would need to be easily accessible to the citizens as well as visitors.

In order to support the current and future needs of policing in Sidney, appropriate facilities need to be designed and built. The cost effectiveness of altering the current facility or another building to accommodate the department is wrought with hurdles and due to the unique requirements of a police facility

The new facility should be designed to be cost effective to maintain and durable enough to withstand constant 24 hour use. This need for high quality components and furnishings and the need to design a facility that properly reflects the progressive and professional attitude of Sidney will form a significant financial investment for the City.

Fire Department

Sidney has a 47 member volunteer fire department with 13 emergency medical technicians. The volunteers save the City over \$1 million annually compared to having a paid fire department.

The fire department has adequate space and the equipment is in good condition. Most of the equipment has been upgraded and a ladder truck was recently added to accommodate fighting fires at some of the larger buildings constructed in the community. The fire department also serves the rural areas around Sidney and has a mutual aid agreement with the smaller communities in the area.

The fire department received the highest satisfaction rating on the community survey with a 97.8% rating. The fire department received many complimentary comments.

There was some concern about the way some emergency responders drive in their personal vehicles. Some persons commented on the expense of having a fire department while others were concerned about the cost of equipment and questioned the need for some newer equipment.

Animal Control

On the community survey, residents rated animal control as poor in the north part of town (54.3% satisfaction rate) to fair (72.4%) in the south part of town. Overall, animal control received a satisfaction rate of 67.8%. However, persons who have lived in the community for 10 to 19 years had a higher satisfaction of animal control efforts (79.9%). Animal control was rated lowest by senior citizens (58.8%).

There were many residents concerned about loose dogs and cats and persons not obeying leash laws in the community. Some residents expressed disappointment with having a limit on the amount of pets. Other residents would like a no kill shelter established in the community.

Library

The Sidney City library is located just east of the City office building.. The library received a 94.6% satisfaction rate on the community survey which is a big improvement from the already high level of 85% in 2004.

The library has sufficient space to provide current services, but the library board would like to expand the facility to enable new and improved services to the public.

The library received many compliments from residents on the community survey. Many residents commented that they would like the library to expanded, updated, to add more services and to receive more funding. Others commented they would like a greater variety of books.

Golf Course

Sidney owns and operates an eighteen-hole golf course in the southwest corner of town. The golf course has clubhouse which is run by a group of private investors operating the restaurant and lounge.

The public satisfaction rate is a very high 91.8% with strong support from every area of town. Support is especially high from new residents who have a 95.7% satisfaction rate.

Many residents requested restroom facilities. The City has already addressed this citizen request by adding a new restroom facility that can be accessed from either the front or back nine.

The course does have an aging irrigation system will eventually be very expensive to replace. In times of drought when heaving agriculture irrigation takes place upstream it places additional stress on the water wells serving the golf course.

Several persons commented on the fees being too high. However, as indicated on the community survey, there are many maintenance items and improvements needed which can be costly. A special development fee has been implemented on green fees and season passes to provide a stable source of funding for improvements from persons using the course.

Several persons indicated they did not think taxpayers should have to pay for the course or that it should be supported by users or that it should be private.

Some residents would like the course to be open longer and for more months.

Parks

Every survey area in Sidney rated the city parks as good. The satisfaction rate ranged from 84.4% in the north to 87.4% in the central part of town for an overall satisfaction rate of 86.6%.

The parks rated highest among persons 65+ who had an excellent 92.2% rating while households with persons under 18 only rated the parks as fairly good (79.7%). Persons who only lived in Sidney from 5 to 9 years also had a less positive view of the parks with a 76.8% satisfaction rate.

Persons age 65+ were the most satisfied with almost every park and recreation element. The only areas where other ages rated higher were with Legion Park (45-65); and the trail system and fishing pond which were led by households with 5 to 18 year olds.

Person with kids 0 to 4 had the highest dissatisfaction in a large majority of park and recreation elements. Exceptions included the cemetery (which seniors had both the highest satisfaction and dissatisfaction rates and lowest level of indifference); the trail system (65+); person age 19 to 29 led in dissatisfaction with the Angel of Hope and the Ball fields while households with children 5 to 18 led in dissatisfaction of the skateboard park and ice skating rink.

Persons living in Sidney for more than 10 years were much more satisfied with parks and recreation amenities than residents that have lived in the city for less than 10 years.

Persons that have lived in Sidney for less than five years have the highest level of dissatisfaction for a large majority of parks and recreation elements. The exceptions included Memorial Gardens, the cemetery, and the tennis courts where persons who lived in Sidney 10 to 19 year had the highest dissatisfaction while person living in Sidney 5 to 9 years had the greatest dissatisfaction of the ice skating rink, north side park, the skateboard park and the arboretum.

Legion Park was the highest rated park with 87.7% of residents rating it as excellent or good. Some residents commented there are too many dog droppings in the park. Some residents commented on the need for more playground equipment for children over 6. Some respondents are concerned by alcohol use. Others would like more picnic areas.

Memorial Gardens were highly rated with 86.6% of residents rating it is excellent or good.

The Angel of Hope, a solace memorial in Memorial Gardens. received positive feedback with 82.3% of residents ranking it as excellent or good.

Greenwood Cemetery received high marks with 84.2% of residents ranking it as excellent or good.

Legion Field received pretty good ratings from residents with 82.2% of residents ranking it as excellent or good.

The **ball fields** have 81.2% of residents ranking it as excellent or good. Comments included they could be expanded; no alcohol signs ignored; more and better seating; too many rocks; and needs trees.

There is not strong support for an additional ballfield as only 35% of survey respondents supported such. However, only 29% oppose a new field.

The **trail system** received a good satisfaction rate with 80.7% of residents ranking it as excellent or good. However, north side residents are not as pleased with the trail system as only 72.4% rated it highly.

The City is largely divided on trail improvements. Many persons applauded the city for the planned trail extension to the Interchange while many others oppose this. Likewise, the town is divided on the extension of the trail system to the north side as only 50.2% support this while 28.7% oppose it. Not surprisingly support is much higher in the north side where 67.3% support this extension while less than half the persons in the remainder of town support it. Support for this is especially low among seniors as only 27.9% support it.

Many residents commented that the trail system is not needed while many others expressed the need for more trails. Many residents commented on there being too many dog droppings on the path. Improved lighting was requested by several persons.

The new **fishing pond** received fairly good feedback with 77.2% of residents ranking it as excellent or good.

The **community center** only received a fairly good rating as only 71.2% of residents ranking it as excellent or good and 14.1% ranking it as fair or poor. North sides residents did not rate the community center as highly as only 61.6% gave it a good or excellent rating. Many residents commented on the price to use the facility is too high. Several persons commented about wanting a swimming pool. Other comments included specific additional wants for the facility.

While the **horseshoe pitching area** only received 62.4% of residents rating it as excellent or good, the lower rating is largely due to significant indifference as only 6.9% rated it as fair or poor.

Only 9.4% rated the **shooting park** as fair or poor, but only 60.5% rated it a good or excellent due to significant indifference. Several persons indicated they are not aware of the location while others are not aware it is a public facility.

Only 8.2% rated the **arboretum** as fair or poor, while only 57.1% rated it a good or excellent due to significant indifference.

Only 53.4% of residents rated the **swimming pool** as excellent or good while 28.4% rated it as fair or poor. Less than half (45.1%) of north side residents provided a good or excellent rating. Many residents commented on the need for a new pool with many wanting an indoor swimming pool. Several persons think the existing pool is too small.

Many residents commented on the desire for an indoor swimming pool or an indoor/outdoor pool. Three-quarters of survey respondents (74.6%) supported an indoor swimming pool while only 13.6% opposed one. Support for a new swimming pool was especially high for households with kids (89.1% among 0 to 4 and 87% among 5 to 18) while only 53.8% of homes with persons 65+ support an indoor swimming pool.

Others would like the outdoor pool to be more along the lines of the water-park trend that other communities are taking. Some believe the existing pool is too small. Others would like the existing pool improved. Others would like longer hours.

Less than half (48.7%) of residents rated **the tennis courts** as excellent or good while 24.5% rated it as fair or poor. The tennis courts had the second highest level of indifference. Some residents would like a practice wall.

Less than half (45.7%) of residents rated **the skateboard park** as excellent or good while 20.9% rated it as fair or poor. The skateboard park has the highest level of indifference. Some persons believe the skate-park has not been well maintained.

Only 43.3% rated the **North Side Park** as excellent or good while only 35.4% of persons on the north side rated this park at that level. Over a third of residents (33.6%) rated this park as fair or poor while over half of the north side residents (51.6%) rated it as fair or poor. Some residents believed the park is forgotten or ignored and that it needs improved.

The **Ice Skating rink** received the highest level of dissatisfaction as 38.9% of residents rated it as fair or poor while only 39.2% of residents rated it as good or excellent. Several residents commented that the rink is too small while several persons think it is unnecessary.

While the **soccer fields** were not rated on the survey, there was significant support for lighting and restroom facilities as 64.2% of respondents supported this while only 12.2% opposed.

While households with persons under age 45 are supportive of soccer field improvements, households older than 45 are less supportive. In households age 45 to 64, only 53.5% supported these improvements while well less than half of senior citizens (38.9%) support these improvements. Other improvements residents would like include bleachers and concession facilities.

While only 56% of respondents are supportive of new **basketball courts**, only 16% opposed them. The strongest support came from the north side where 63% of respondents supported new basketball courts.

Others commented on wanting a **dog park**. Only 42% of residents supported a new dog park while 27% opposed it. Newer residents were more supportive as over half of persons living in Sidney less than 10 years supported it while persons living in Sidney over 20 years only had a 38.5% support level. Only 22.6% of persons over 65 years of age support a dog park.

There is very low support for a **cricket field**, with strong opposition to one. Only 14.8% of survey respondents supported a cricket field while 49% oppose it. Over half 55% of residents living in the community over 20 years oppose it.

Other recreational comments included several persons commented on wanting a roller skating rink. Many would like a place for teenagers.

Some people believe the town needs to maintain and improve existing facilities before developing new ones.

Strengths

- Sidney's Legion Park is one of the most attractive city parks in the Panhandle
- The City has continually improved handicap access throughout the city since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Sidney's solid waste collection is self-supporting
- Sidney has enough landfill capacity to serve the city for the next three decades.
- Satisfaction with the city's water system has improved significantly in the past decade
- Sidney's new water wellfield has excellent water quality enabling it to support water quality issues with other wells
- The City's new water treatment plant has brought the city to full compliance with EPA and DEQ requirements
- The City has alleviated the most severe storm water drainage
- Sidney has a very affordable and reliable electrical system
- The City has been making significant progress in updating its electrical system including an overhead to underground conversion project.
- The City utilizes some green energy sources such as wind and hydroelectric power.
- Sidney has a highly rated volunteer fire department that saves the City a significant amount of money
- Community residents are highly satisfied with the library
- The golf course is highly rated by Sidney residents
- Sidney residents are very satisfied with the city parks
- Sidney has an extensive trail system
- The community center provides
- The City has developed a new soccer field

Weaknesses

- The City council chambers are not highly suitable for large public audiences
- The aging Sioux Villa housing authority office is in need of handicap access and other improvements
- The City can not provide all the lawn disposal and recycling programs the residents would like at a price the residents would approve.
- The City has water pressure issues on the south side of town
- The investments made to develop a high quality water system will require residents to pay higher water bills for another decade.
- Despite the extensive investments in the city's water system, the city still has many distribution issues that need to be addressed including some dead ends, undersized mains, and undersized service lines.
- The City has some sewer mains that need upgrading
- The City has several storm drainage issues especially in the downtown area
- The overhead electrical distribution system and most of the power poles are over 60 years of age.
- Residential electrical loads in some areas of town are outgrowing the system's capacity.
- The police department offices does not present the desired image for the police department
- Animal control is not highly rated by residents and is especially unsatisfactory in the north neighborhood
- The library could be expanded to enable the expansion of services
- The golf course has an aging irrigation system that will be expensive to replace
- The swimming pool is aging and undersized
- The North Side park is in need of upgrades and improvements
- The soccer fields need lighting and restroom improvements

Opportunities

- Sidney has an opportunity to present Sidney as an active and engaging city to prospective residents
- A system of attractive parks, trails and green spaces can provide a positive first impression for visitors
- Sidney's City Hall has sufficient internal space to expand the council chambers without enlarging the city hall building
- Modern technology can enable Sidney to provide digital backup data for vital records
- The City may be able to financially afford adding cardboard recycling
- Developing a new water storage facility on the south end of town can improve water pressure issues and expand economic and development opportunities
- Sidney's electrical rates are much cheaper than other parts of the country
- Many Sidney residents believe an indoor swimming pool would make the town more attractive

Threats

- The storage of paper records threatens the loss of irreplaceable documents
- The storage of paper records in an overcrowded manner is a potential fire hazard
- If regulatory changes are mandated for chlorides additional upgrades will need to be made to the wastewater system
- Sidney's heavy reliance on coal powered electricity makes it vulnerable to increased electrical rates if carbon is taxed.
- The State of Nebraska has many unique policies, laws, and systems that make it difficult for Sidney to cost effectively implement more wind power.