

# Executive Summary



## I. Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Sidney Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) is the City's official document that outlines the community's vision and strategies in several areas such as community services and facilities, housing, economic development, land use, and infrastructure. The Plan has several roles in shaping the quality of life of residents and business owners.

It was developed over a 14-month interactive process that consisted of reviewing the existing comprehensive plan for continued relevance and analyzing existing conditions.

This Plan integrates the ideas presented to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee by over 1000 residents in the community. All layers of the community were involved including 200 high school students from all three of Sidney's public and private schools.

The Plan will be used by City officials and the Planning Commission to evaluate land use changes and make

capital improvement decisions. It will be used by City staff and their respective departments to promote planning and development and other important initiatives. It will be used by citizens, neighborhood groups, and developers to help build, brand and revitalize neighborhoods.

### Plan Themes and Initiatives

Several ideas and thoughts surfaced during this Comprehensive Plan update. These major Plan themes are:

#### Downtown Revitalization

Sidney's downtown plays a vital role in promoting social interactivity and the community's quality of life. According to the Plan survey, residents selected the downtown footprint as its number one priority for future attention. The revitalization of the downtown can only happen if properties are maintained and City officials adopt new tools that require timely solutions. It is anticipated that the newly incorporated Sidney Alive, working alongside city officials and the newly formed Shelby County Land Reutilization Corporation (commonly known as the Land Bank), will be an effective catalyst to help spur revitalization.



Tools like the already existing Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) program, Downtown Redevelopment Districts, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Special Improvement Districts (SID), the Revolving Loan Fund, Façade Grants, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other grant/loan programs could be utilized to encourage innovative redevelopment efforts.

In addition, the market analysis prepared for this Plan (See *Chapter: Economic Growth*) indicates that residents and consumers are spending their money outside the community. It is hoped that City Officials will use this Plan in cooperation with business and property owners to reverse this trend.

## Neighborhood Revitalization

Due to declining manufacturing jobs, the housing bubble and “Great Recession,” and the increased options for folks to live along the I-75 corridor, Sidney has witnessed an unprecedented number of foreclosures, some years as high as 300 per year, for almost a decade or more (See Map: *Housing Foreclosures*). This has contributed to high turnover and depressed property values in some neighborhoods. This in turn aided in the conversion of owner occupied residential properties into rentals and brought with it a variety of other issues that some residents believe are incubating additional health and human safety issues.

There are a variety of properties throughout the community that may be neglected and in need of repair, many of them rental properties (See Map: *Neighborhood Conditions*). The City should continue to work with property owners, landlords, and neighborhood groups to maintain their properties and meet code requirements. In many cases, additional property and nuisance abatement from City officials could alleviate the problem. Also, more grassroots and neighborhood building efforts could be encouraged.



## Aggressive Property Maintenance Enforcement

Many residents indicated a strong desire to see their neighborhoods receive additional code enforcement attention to abate property maintenance and other nuisance issues.

A variety of tools will need to be either developed or properly staffed to help improve the taxable value of the City’s greatest assets- its residential, commercial, and industrial properties. It is estimated that lost revenues, estimated to be in the millions of dollars, would otherwise be used to fund the Sidney school district and community infrastructure has evaporated

due to declining property standards. Poorer kept properties, in the simplest terms, cost everyone more. The slackening rents these properties can demand have become increasingly a petri dish for social ills that are exhausting to city services.

To improve this situation, city officials could pursue the adoption of ordinances that require all vacant and/or rental properties to be registered and inspected. Many communities in Ohio effectively use these tools to protect their neighborhoods and downtowns. Using these tools in unison with Shelby County’s new Land Bank should be particularly useful.

## “Activate” the Riverfront

Since Sidney was first settled, the Great Miami River has been a valuable asset to the communities situated on or near it. In 2016, the Great Miami Initiative was developed by 18 communities to help elevate the placemaking and tourism benefit of this asset. These communities recognized the potential to maximize riverfront investment and economic development by approaching the river corridor as a unified, connected, regional place.



Branding will be a first step to more fully harnessing the river as a recreational asset that increases tourism and improves the quality of life of

city residents. Canoe liveries, bicycle shops with bike rentals, shops that sell running shoes, restaurants, taverns, upscale housing and a host of other ideas can transform what the river can mean to Sidney moving forward. See the illustration at the end of this chapter for an idea of what this asset could look like, if planned properly.

### Promote Pedestrian Connectivity

The key to improving the quality of life for residents in cities is the presence of infrastructure that promotes activity. Improving pedestrian connectivity opportunities for residents is a goal of the community. Connectivity can be improved by repairing existing sidewalks, reducing existing sidewalk gaps, utilizing other multi-use path systems, and by simply providing more bike racks. This would help to reduce vehicular traffic and encourage healthy modes of transportation for pedestrians and cyclists to a variety of destinations. Connectivity within existing and new neighborhoods

should be preserved, promoted and better linked to Canal Feeder Trail and its future expansion along the Great Miami River. The City should look to develop a pedestrian master plan to help further this activity.

### Improve Public and Private Partnerships

All of the issues that residents indicated during this planning effort that are important to address, from the property blight and the heroin problem, to improving the schools/parks and providing more recreational activities for teens and seniors will require additional due diligence by and between the public and private sectors. The level of communication that helped to build Sidney's finest assets like Tawawa Park and public spaces in the downtown must be renewed and strengthened.

### Beautify the Corridors

The Plan supports the community's vision to reduce vehicular congestion, increase pedestrian linkages, improve the visual appearance of gateways, and increase the safety of its commercial corridors, namely Michigan Street (SR 47), St. Marys Avenue (SR 29), Wapakoneta Avenue, and Russell Road. This Plan highlights methods that can be applied to these

corridors and other roads (Ohio, Fourth and Main Avenues) in the community where "road diets" and "complete street" concepts could apply (See Chapter: Connectivity). Also important is modifying the zoning code to disallow or limit the use of billboards.

### Improve the Gateways

Sidney is simply blessed to have four interchanges on I-75. For many folks not familiar with the community, this is their first impression of how the community treats its residents. These areas are critical in marketing the community to the rest of the world and should be properly beautified. Every community has a brand, and its gateways help to promote it.

### Heighten Community Planning Resources

Economic development and community planning are vitally important to the future of Sidney. These important activities should be properly integrated and have additional resources allocated to them so that they can be as proactive as possible.

Although Sidney experiences a net inflow of over 5,000 people on any given work day, the fact is these folks leave the community to return home. Cities in Ohio are

financed largely on income taxes and benefit the most when people both work and live in the community. In this vein, it is extremely important that City officials take the necessary steps to invest in the assets that attract and retain residents, beginning with the neighborhoods and schools.

A good indication of a community's overall appeal may be on how well it retains its residents in the professional and management professions. In this regard, Sidney (23% of workforce in professional and management occupations) and Piqua (20%) fair worse than the communities of Troy (30%) and Tipp City (40%). However, as Sidney continues to reinvest in its "Quality of Life systems" like its neighborhoods, downtown, riverfront and recreational programming, it is hoped that this trend will improve.

The new energy provided by Sidney Alive, Land Bank, Sidney-Shelby County Economic Partnership and the City's planning department should help to play a role in coordinating these efforts along with City staff, business officials, and other stakeholders.

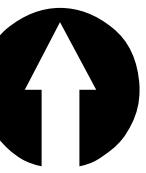
## Ensure Effective Community Services to Support Growth and Revitalization

Like most communities incorporated for almost a century, certain elements of the City's infrastructure are in need of replacement and repair. Sidney officials continue to dedicate resources to tap a new water source and systematically improving miles of roads and thousands of linear feet of water, sanitary, and storm sewer lines. Reducing inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the City's sewer system is equally as important to make sure the City meets Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permits. All of these activities are increasingly more expensive to repair, all while the City's resources are tightening.

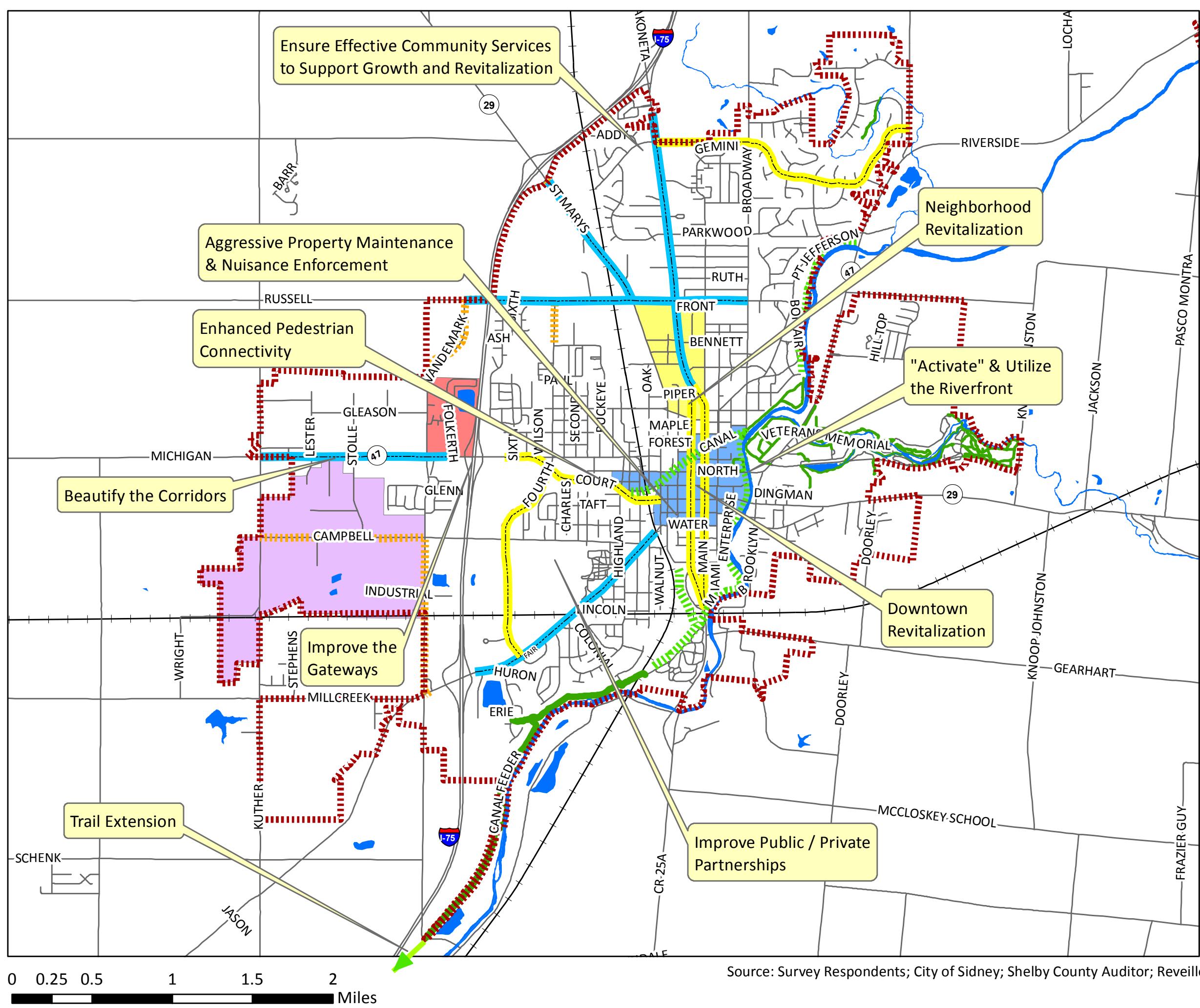
One of the most important issues on the minds of residents is the continual improvement of city roads. In November 2014, voters in the City of Sidney approved a 0.25 percent increase to the municipal income tax, with the proceeds from this increase being used exclusively for the "construction, reconstruction, resurfacing and maintenance of streets, alleys, bridges, and related curbs and gutters" within the City. The city expects to spend more than \$15 million solely for street improvements during the five-year period the additional 0.25 percent income tax is being collected.

Because infrastructure costs money, it is important that the City continue to reach an optimal economy of scale through population growth. For the city to properly market its residential growth areas, as well as to improve service levels to selected neighborhoods, City officials will need to build a third fire station.

Lastly, as the City continues to age, city officials will possibly be faced with performing a return on investment (ROI) analysis on which areas of the community should be improved. This is a possibility in the future, especially if the community continues to experience population loss, which may be evidenced by the upcoming 2020 Census.



## Planning Themes



## Plan Solutions - Connectivity

Before



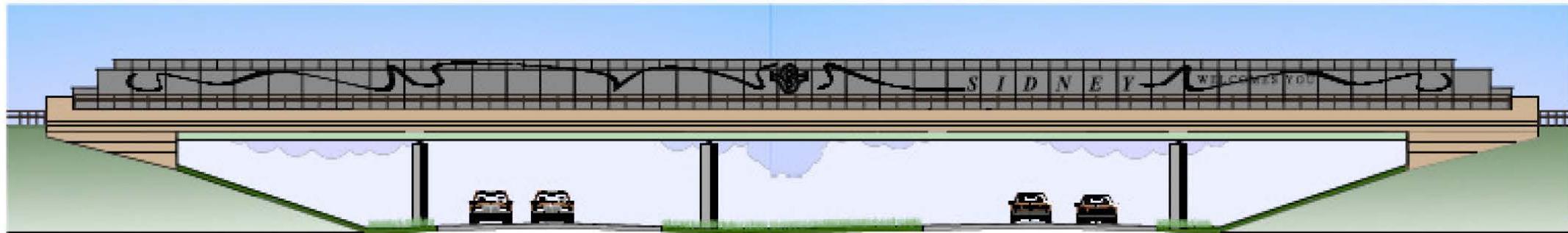
Trailhead @  
Johnston  
Drive

Water Trail

After



## Plan Solutions - Gateways



Sidney, Ohio  
I-75 and Michigan Street  
BRIDGE ENHANCEMENTS  
December, 2016

