

# YUTAN

*Nebraska*

**DOWNTOWN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

COMPLETED DECEMBER 2022



RURAL PLANNING

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# CONTEXT

## Context

### Regional Growth

The City of Yutan is located on the eastern edge of Saunders County, right next to the Douglas County line. The City of Yutan has a current population of 1,347 residents and is home to Yutan Public Schools. Saunders County is one of eight counties in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Five of those counties are in Nebraska and three in Iowa. Saunders County and all other Nebraska counties have seen an increase in population since 2010. As of 2020 the U.S. Census estimates that more 1 million people live in this MSA.

While the Yutan community has experienced this regional growth with a steady increase of residents, the original business district (Downtown Yutan) has not grown in the number of businesses nor the amount of commercial activity. This lack of commercial activity despite belonging to a rapidly growing MSA led the city's leadership to consider Downtown Yutan when planning the entire community's growth over the next decade.

### Partnership

For this reason, the DTR Plan was part of a larger, comprehensive effort of the city to adopt a series of updated planning documents that also includes a housing study and comprehensive development plan. The purpose of this planning effort has been to enable the community to maintain its identity while also capitalizing on the growth produced by the Lincoln and Omaha Metro areas.

In the Spring of 2021, the Council partnered with FIVE RULE Rural Planning (FIVE RULE), SSH Architecture (SSH), and the Olsson Studio to consider the overall layout, use, and condition of the public and private physical features in the area.

This plan considers the current condition of the built environment, offers observations about its current state and recommendations about improving the overall atmosphere and increasing the use of this district



April 21, 2021

**Request for Proposals:  
City of Yutan Downtown Revitalization Plan,  
Housing Study, and Comprehensive Plan**

To: Professional Planning and/or Engineering Firms

The City of Yutan, Nebraska has been awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) to complete a Downtown Revitalization Plan (DTR). Yutan has also received funding from the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) to conduct a Housing Study and create a new Comprehensive Plan.

To simplify the development of all three projects and to maximize public engagement, the City is issuing a request for proposals to combine and complete the projects as one process. The selected firm will work with community stakeholders, including the City of Yutan, downtown business owners, and the general public, to complete a DTR plan, Housing Study, and Comprehensive Plan by November 1, 2022.

The City of Yutan is a growing community located in Saunders County and is considered a part of the Omaha Metropolitan Area. The overarching goal of this project is to analyze current demographics and economic conditions within Yutan and to create a roadmap for Yutan's future that will guide the City in managing growth while retaining its rural identity.

**Project Scope:**

- Facilitation of a public engagement process to gather input from the community and to develop community-wide consensus on the needs of Yutan. Citizen participation should include public meetings, surveys, committees, and any other method designed to maximize the involvement of the City's residents.
- Coordination with key stakeholders, including but not limited to, the City of Yutan and its appointed boards, community business owners, and civic organizations.
- **Development of a DTR plan** designed to eliminate and prevent blighted and substandard conditions. In addition to meeting all conditions required by DED, the plan should include realistic goals in response to the needs identified during the public engagement process, strategies for implementing said goals, and cost estimates for any projects required to achieve plan goals.

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# CONTEXT

## Planning Tasks

The DTR Plan was completed through a series of tasks that are documented in the plan:

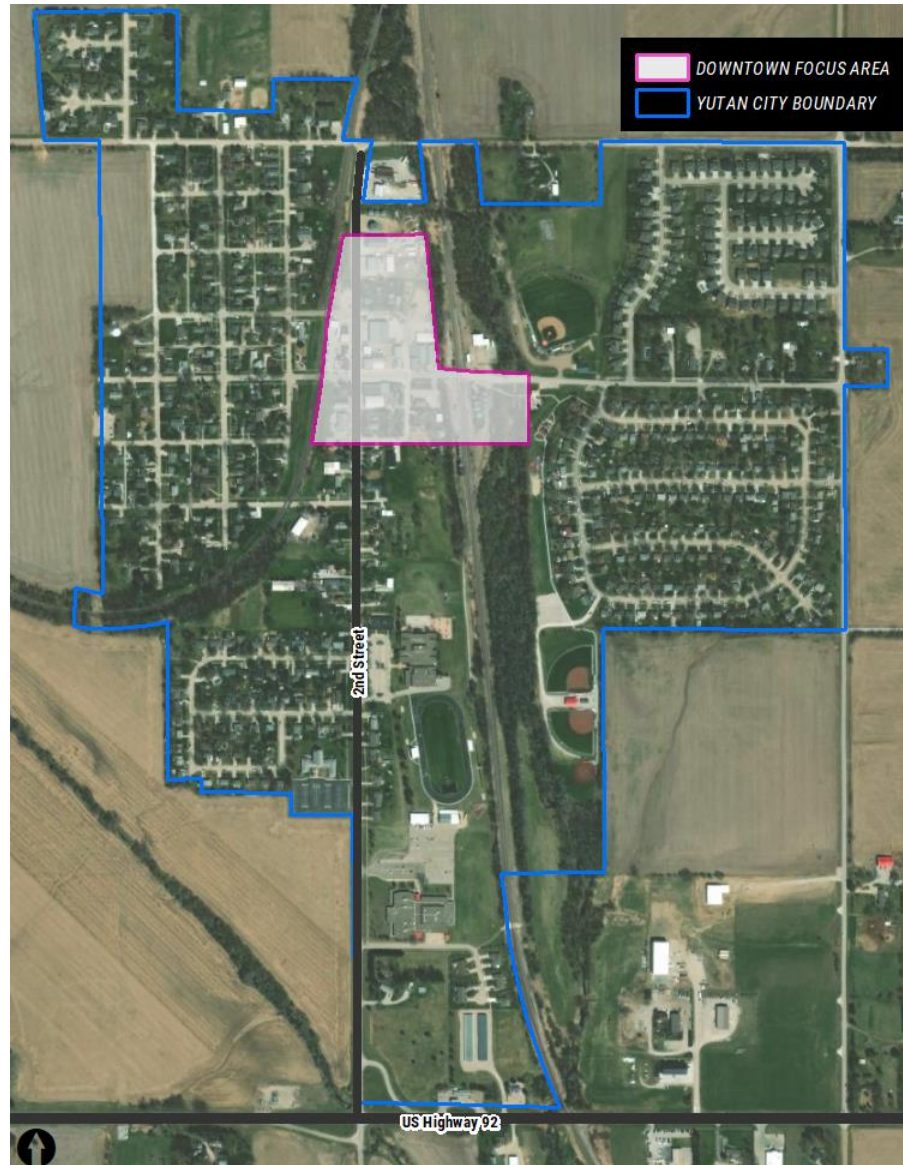
1. Reviewing Community Engagement Input
2. Experiencing Downtown Yutan
3. Creating a Connected Community Concept
4. Proposing Baseline Sidewalk and Building Improvements



# FOCUS AREA

## Focus Area

### Downtown Yutan Defined



# MIXED USE DISTRICT

## Mixed Use District

### Current Land Use Inventory

The focus area is roughly a 6 block, 20-acre area occupied by seven different land uses, two vacant lots, and five acres of railroad right of way.

The biggest user of land within the target area is commercial uses, which is appropriate in a downtown area. The second biggest user is residential in nature with most being single family residences.

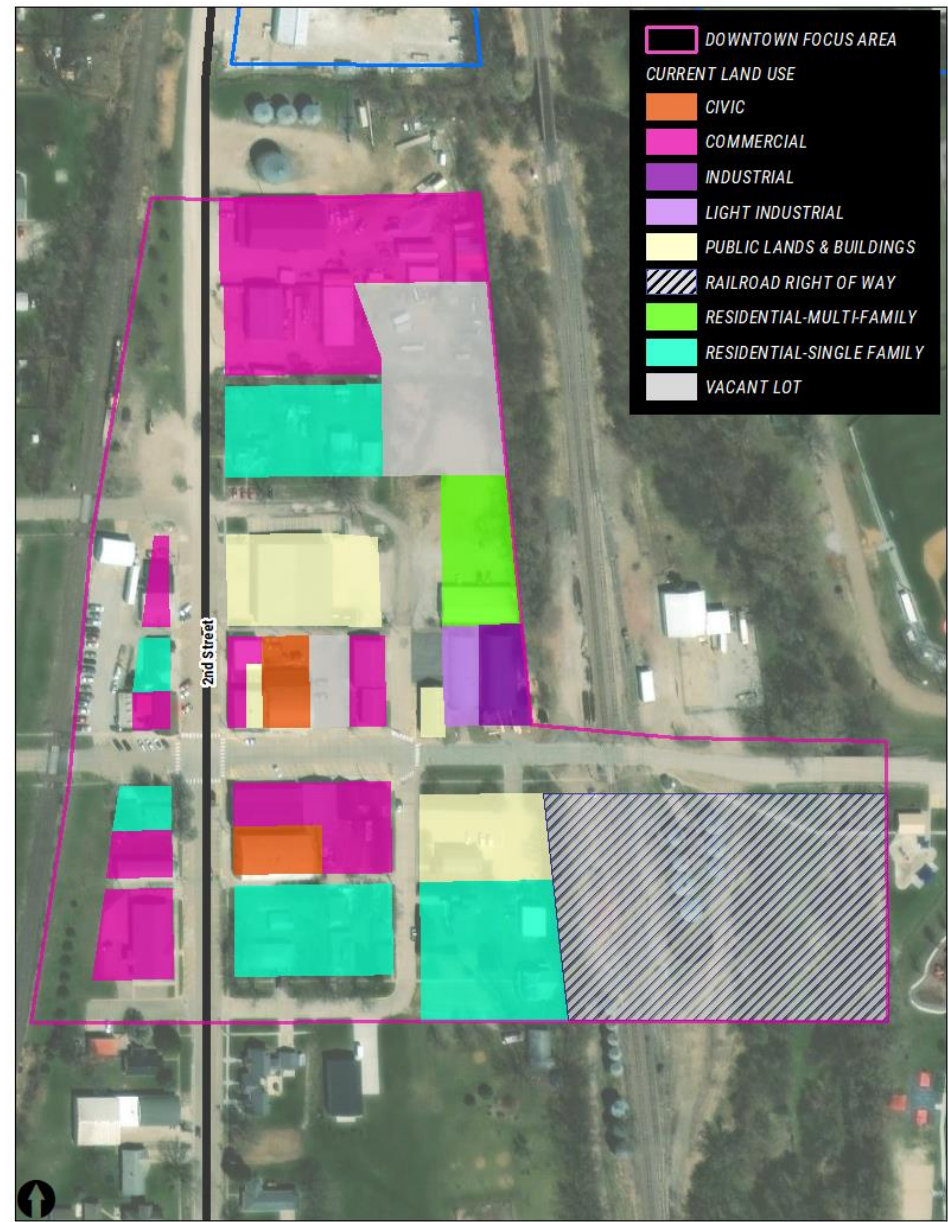
Residential, especially multi-family residential structures can complement commercial uses. This is true when those commercial uses provide the types of goods and services that contribute to daily life such as groceries, financial services, and healthcare.

To improve the level of commercial activity, the city should consider replacing some single-family structures [as they become vacant or uninhabitable] with commercial services or multi-family residential structures.

**Yutan Downtown Focus Area Current Land Use Inventory  
Fall 2021**

	Lots	%	Acres	%
COMMERCIAL	15	41%	4.92	23%
CIVIC	2	5%	0.65	3%
INDUSTRIAL	1	3%	0.37	2%
PUBLIC LANDS & BUILDINGS	4	11%	2.07	10%
LIGHT INDUSTRIAL	1	3%	0.28	1%
RESIDENTIAL-MULTI-FAMILY	1	3%	0.84	4%
RESIDENTIAL-SINGLE FAMILY	9	24%	4.00	19%
RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY	1	3%	5.78	28%
VACANT LOT	3	8%	2.06	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20.97</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FIVE RULE Rural Planning



## MIXED USE DISTRICT

### Land Use Types

Forty-one (41) percent of the lots in the target area are occupied by commercial uses.

- Most provide goods and services needed for daily life, which is a primary contributor to **daily commercial activity**. These businesses include:
  - ~ Restaurants: BBQ Mann Barbecue; Yutan Kitchen, Rusty Rooster
  - ~ Coffeehouse: Derailed and CO
  - ~ Personal Care Services: Creative Hair Works, Hair Corner
  - ~ Financial Services: First State Bank Nebraska
  - ~ Healthcare: Makovicka Physical Therapy
- A small percentage of these commercial service providers and retailers are more **specialty** related and can also **attract additional visitors** to the downtown. These businesses include:
  - ~ SERVPRO
  - ~ Perkins Painting
  - ~ Thompson Masonry
  - ~ Storm Soapery & Market
- Eleven (11) percent of the lots in the target area have public or civic services that also attract foot traffic and routine trips to the area. These uses include:
  - ~ Yutan Activity Center (a School property)
  - ~ Yutan City Administrative Office
  - ~ Yutan Fire Department
  - ~ Yutan Public Library
  - ~ Gathering Place Church
- One active industrial property is in the area as well.
  - ~ A pallet manufacturing facility is located on the east end of the area.



# MIXED USE DISTRICT

## Current Layout

The graphic below shows the way the uses in the focus are arranged. The bulk of commercial services and retailers are clustered together on the southeast corner of the area. The public and civic uses are scattered across the area with the Activity Center at the south edge, the Fire Department at the north edge, and City Hall, Gathering Place Church, and the Library in the middle of the area.





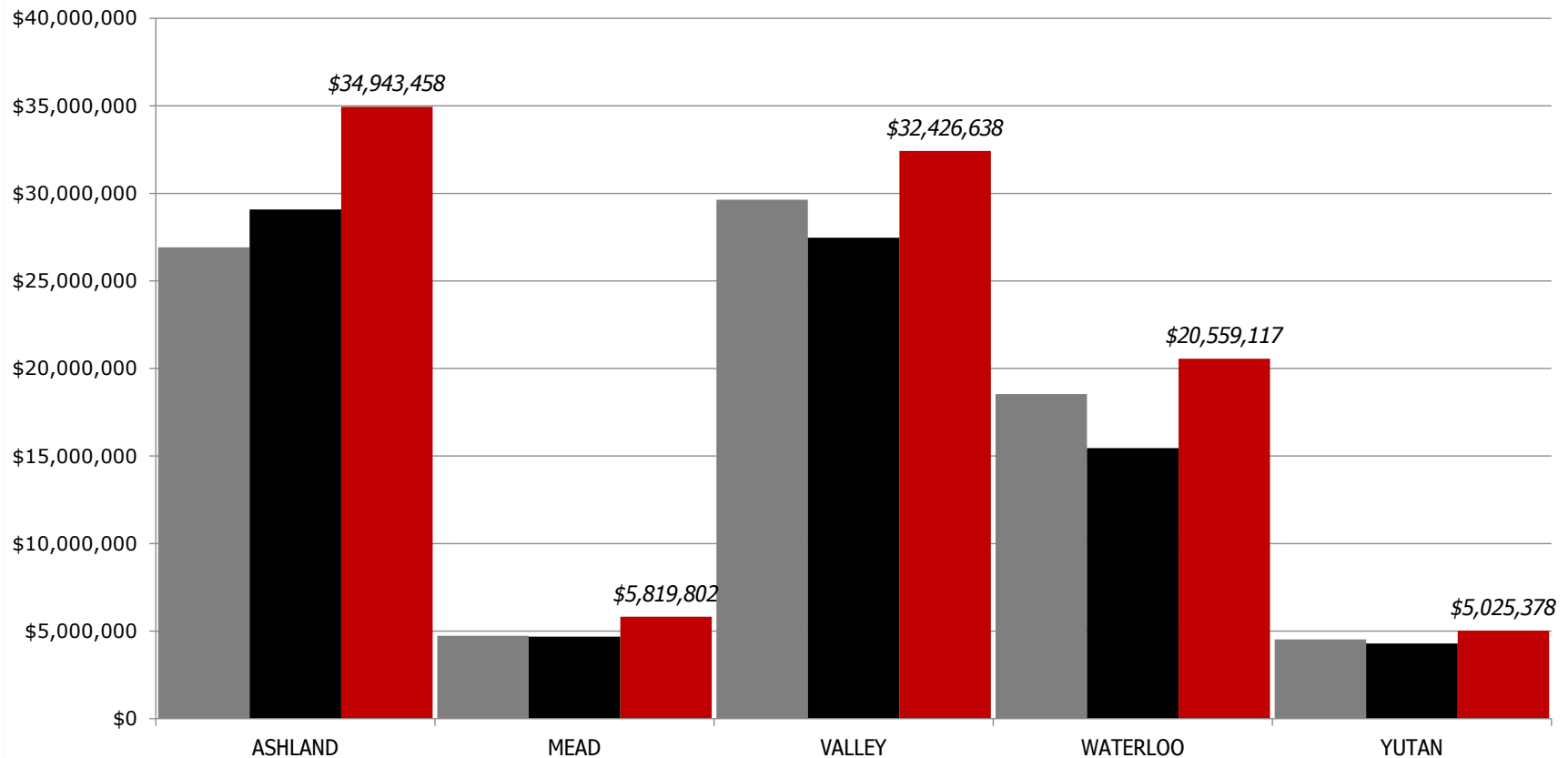
## COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

### Downtown Activity

#### Economic Activity

An important consideration for this planning document is determining if attracting the through traffic on Highway 92 would be beneficial to the community. And, if so, what can the City of Yutan do that would connect highway traffic to their core business district and increase the amount of commercial activity happening inside downtown Yutan?

**NET TAXABLE SALES, YUTAN AND NEARBY COMMUNITIES**



# YUTAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

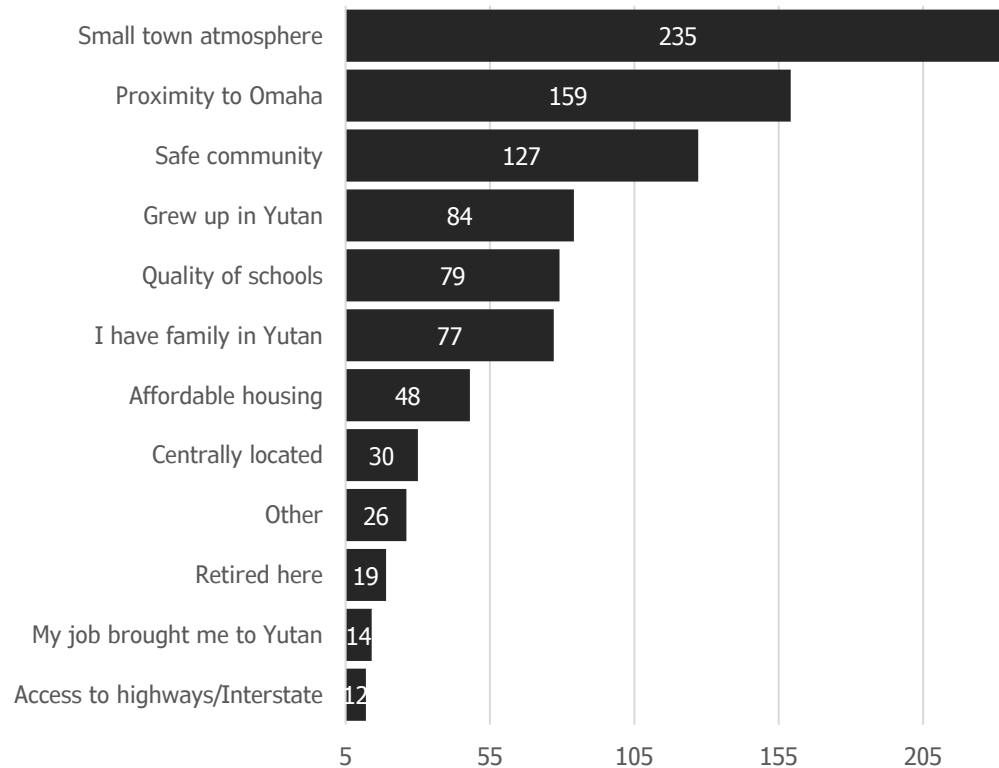
## Yutan Public Schools

### Community Unity

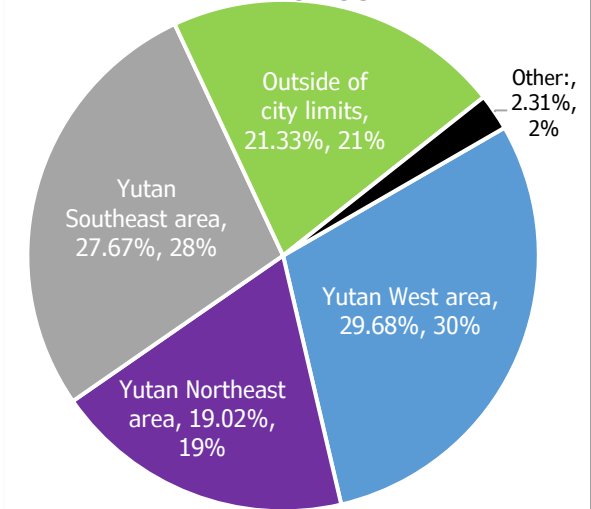
As part of the overall planning process, residents were asked to complete a survey. Most residents who completed the survey lived within the city and respondents also work outside of the community and said its proximity to Omaha is one of the main reasons they live in Yutan. Having most residents work outside of town challenges for the community to define its identity and develop an overall sense of unity and membership.

Seventy-nine respondents claimed that the school was within their top three reasons for living in Yutan.

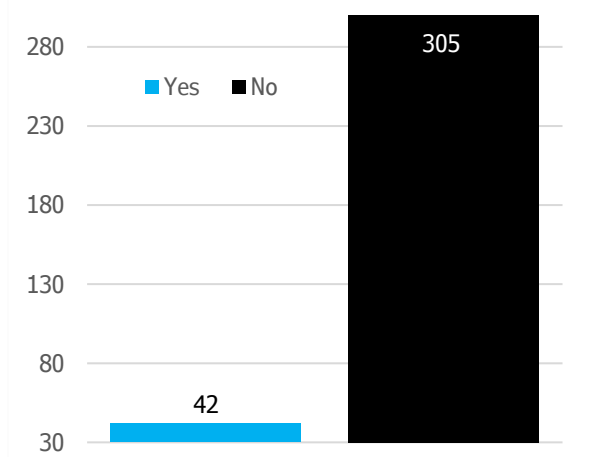
**TOP THREE REASONS FOR LIVING IN YUTAN**



**WHERE DO YOU LIVE?**



**DO YOU WORK IN YUTAN?**



# YUTAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Yutan Public Schools (School) appears to be a shared source of community membership and pride. It is a major draw for residents and visitors alike.

The School's enrollment surpassed 500 students in the 2020/2021 academic year and is an important asset for residents and anchor for visitors.

The School is located just north of Highway 92. Visitors pass by the school when traveling from the Highway to the downtown area.

Improving the connection from the School to Downtown Yutan is an important factor in the City's ability to increase the amount of commercial activity.

Improving the connection also presents an opportunity for the school to host more events if the number of services offered to attendants could be increased.

Services commonly desired by attendants at school events include:

- ~ restaurants (2 in the downtown)
- ~ coffee shops (1 in the downtown)
- ~ gas stations/convenience stores (0 currently in the downtown), and
- ~ variety retailers (0 currently in the downtown).



(a) Downtown Yutan  
(b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Street connection  
(c) Yutan Public Schools Campus

# SUB-COMMUNITIES

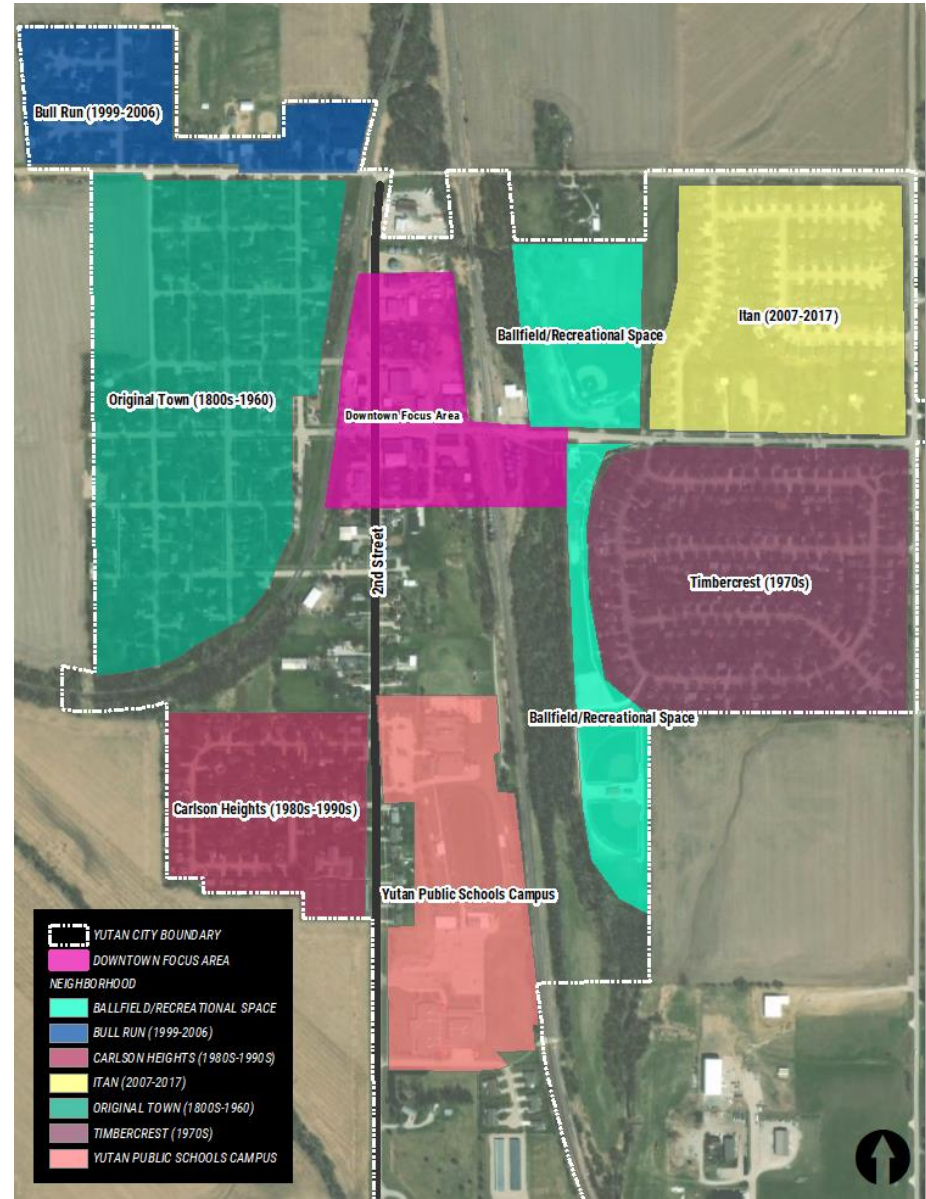
## Yutan Community Components

The City of Yutan has numerous components that are important assets of the community including:

- 1) **US Highway 92**, connecting it to nearby employment centers and metro areas,
- 2) **Yutan Public Schools**, offering high quality youth education opportunities,
- 3) **City of Yutan**, serving residents with parks and recreation facilities, and
- 4) **Distinct neighborhoods**, providing access to housing.

### US Highway 92

The Downtown Focus Area (Area) located approximately 3/4 of a mile north of US Highway 92. The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) recorded an average annual daily traffic count of 7,945 vehicles passing by Yutan on this highway in 2020.



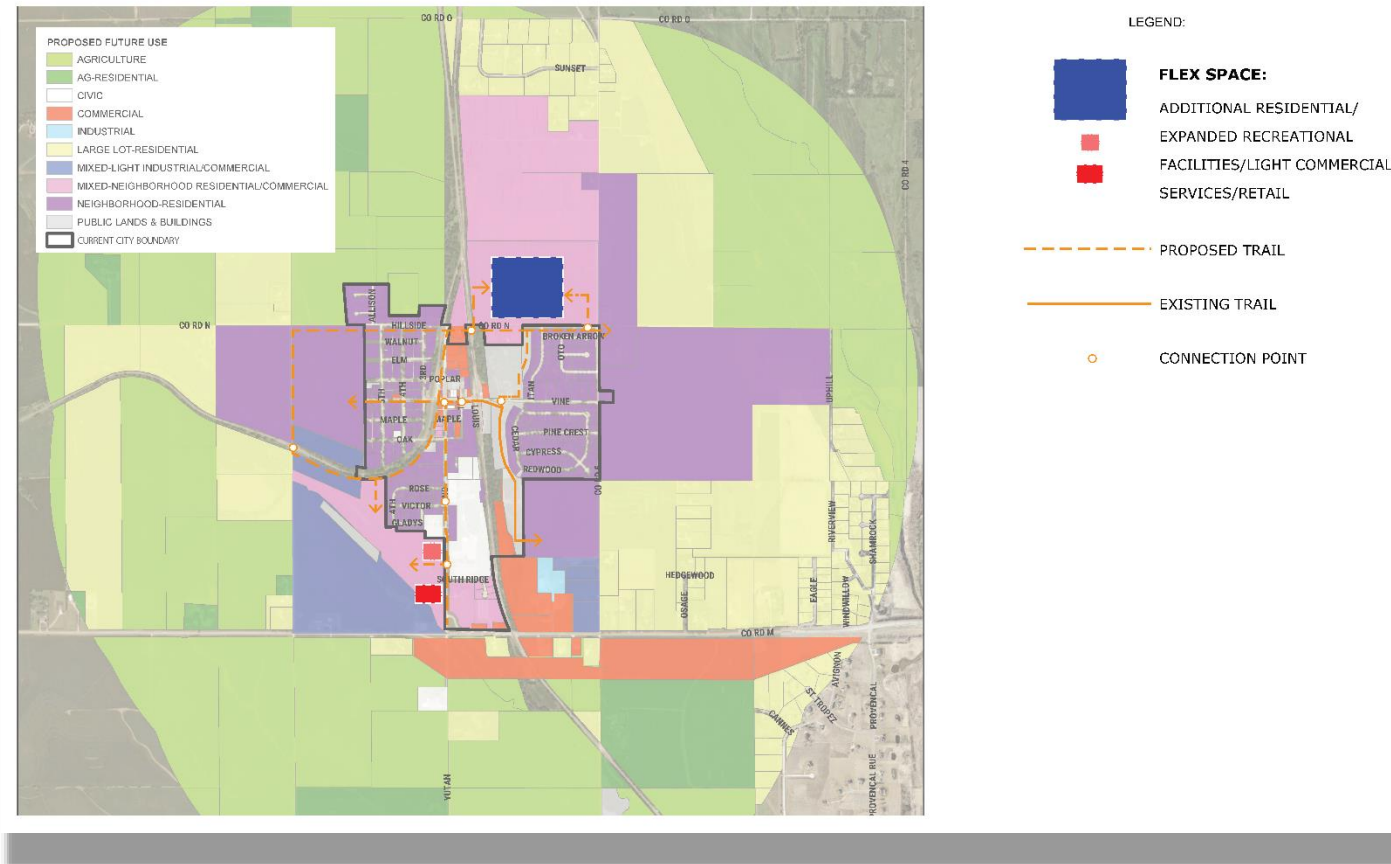
# CONNECTED COMMUNITY

## Connected Community

The following graphic on page 14 is a compilation of observations and recommendations taken from the comprehensive plan:

- ~ the community's request for a community center, trail system, and swimming pool.
- ~ the local unmet housing demand.
- ~ and the need to connect the downtown business district with not only residents, but also those potential customers attending school events, utilizing the splash pad, or passing by on the highway.

The graphic was developed by landscape designers at the Olsson Studio, Lincoln, NE and proposes a trail system that utilizes the existing sidewalk network. It also suggests that distinct connection points be recognized and installed that will help residents and visitors alike see that they are in a community that has several amenities to offer.



# STREETSCAPE

## Downtown Streetscape

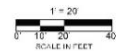
Downtown Yutan is a tidy, well-maintained district. The buildings and public infrastructure are generally in good condition. The graphic below was produced by landscape designers with Olsson Studio, Lincoln, NE. It suggests streetscape improvements that would enhance the experience for those working and conducting business in the downtown.



- LEGEND:
- 1. PAVED SIDEWALK
  - 2. LIGHT POLE
  - 3. LANDSCAPE BED
  - 4. STREET TREE
  - 5. EXISTING TREE
  - 6. RAILROAD CROSSWAY
  - 7. BRIDGE
  - 8. SPLASH PAD

### FIVE RULE YUTAN YUTAN, NE

STREETSCAPE



the **olsson** studio  
601 P Street Ste. / Lincoln, NE 68508  
O 402.474.6311 / olsson.com

# BUILDING STOCK

## Buildings

### Existing Building Stock

For a city of its size, location and age, the Yutan downtown district building stock has a unique array of architecture based on the age, design characteristics, types of construction and exterior finishes of the buildings.

- ~ There is a mix of early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century structures as well as one structure that appears to have been constructed within the last ten years. Exterior finishes vary between masonry, wood, stone veneer, concrete block, structural steel panels as well as imitation vinyl and steel clapboard siding.
- ~ The condition of most structures appears to be good to excellent. These buildings have been maintained well and do not have apparent structural deficiencies. Several buildings have been updated in the last few years and many more appear to have had exterior improvements in the last 10 to 20 years.
- ~ There are a few buildings and uses in the downtown district that may not enhance the downtown environment. Single family residences and industrial uses can detract from the experience for visitors and potential newcomers to the city.
- ~ Depending on the goals for commerce in the area, it may help to introduce incentives for changes in these uses to retail / commercial uses and structures



# BUILDING STOCK

## General Environment and Recommendations

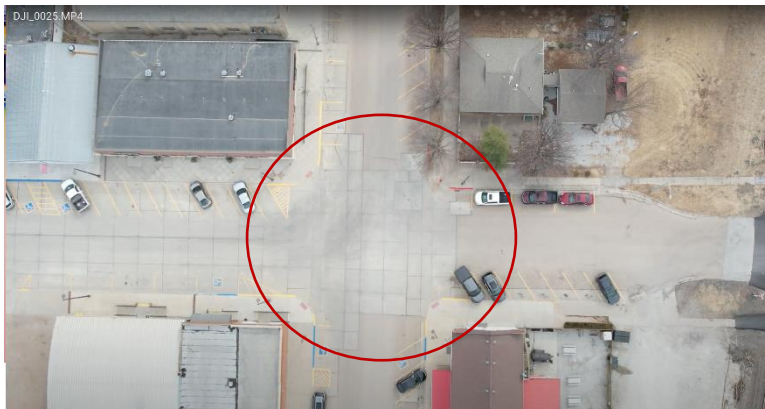
A noticeable design omission on most structures along Vine Street is the lack of awnings and canopies to provide cover for pedestrians, develop visible signage perpendicular to traffic and increase the depth of facades.

- ~ The Vine Street merchants might benefit from the introduction of awnings and canopies.



The corners of primary streets in the downtown districts almost always develop a **lasting first impression for visitors**.

- ~ The corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Vine Streets provides an opportunity to establish an excellent first impression. The buildings are generally in good condition and could represent the district very well.
- ~ Canopies and awnings added to the north and southeast buildings would make an excellent statement that would be inviting to visitors.
- ~ If space allows, adding street trees and / or shrubs would soften the streetscape.
- ~ Existing covered openings should be uncovered, and windows installed.
- ~ New openings for windows could be cut into currently solid walls to make the businesses appear to be more inviting.
- ~ Tastefully selected artwork on blank walls would provide interest for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.





# BUILDING STOCK

## Individual Suggestions

### 411 2<sup>nd</sup> Street



The structure appears to be an original design from the early 1900's but has likely been renovated many times.

Depending on the interior layout, the façade could be improved by renovating the corner entrance and adjacent south and east walls.

Larger expanses of glass on the south wall, corner entrance and south end of the east wall would develop an inviting storefront.

Canopies along the entire south and east walls with an emphasis at the entry would also add to the identity of the business.

### 114 Vine Street



An example of the original architecture from the early 1900's, this building appears to be in relatively good condition with very little exterior renovations.

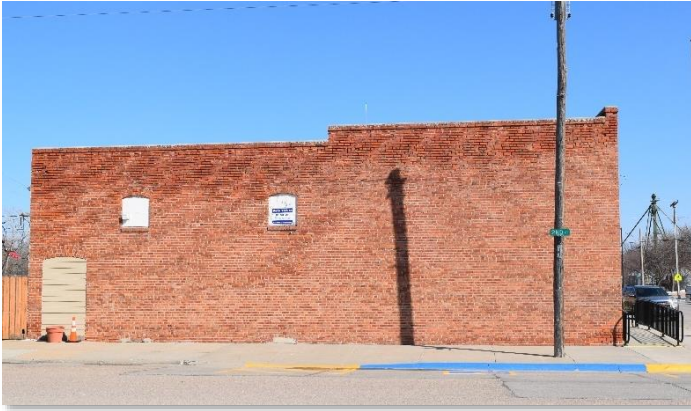
It is recommended that the masonry be inspected by a qualified mason and tuckpointed as soon as possible. The brick detailing appears to be moderately weathered, and the mortar is decaying.

The south façade could be improved by removing the siding above the windows to expose the original window frames that are likely encapsulated in the new framing and finish.

The window openings could be infilled with insulated panels to maintain energy efficiency but maintain the architecture.

An awning or canopy could be installed to improve the façade. The new thin stone below the windows might also be replaced with masonry that matches the original era of the building.

## BUILDING STOCK



The west side of the building is generally untouched except for the original openings being infilled. If possible, the openings door to match the original design.

Since this is a prominent façade on the primary **city corner**, ornamentation could be added to enhance the corner. There are many options for this improvement.

A “ghosted” advertising sign could be added, metal artwork could be installed, and, if space allows, a planter could be constructed.

### 109 Vine Street



This is an excellent example of a new structure designed to maintain the context of a downtown architecture.

It serves as a prominent anchor for downtown businesses and the developer should be commended.

The only suggestion considered for this building, as with others, is to add canopies at the storefronts.

### 201 Vine Street / 513 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

This building was previously a commercial building but has been converted into a private residence.

Since it is located on the primary corner, it might be beneficial to renovate a few items to commercial design elements.

Removing the white picket fence and installing a wrought iron fence with cedar picket infill panels would complement the residence in the commercial environment.



## BUILDING STOCK

### Use of Color, Material and Texture

All the structures in the downtown district could benefit from an evaluation of how color and texture are being used to enhance each building individually as well as the district as a whole.

The **Gathering Place Church** has been renovated to add a natural wood siding over the original vertical structural steel panels.

- ~ This works well with the brick veneer that was retained from the original design.
- ~ The natural wood will require routine maintenance but provides a welcome addition of texture and color from the natural wood siding.



The **Activity Center** has some very distinct and interesting architectural elements and textures on the west façade.

- ~ However, the monolithic color used across the entire façade hides the design elements.
- ~ Using the primary tan color as a base, darker tones could be used to accentuate the vertical masonry columns and masonry detail above the door.



Both buildings could also benefit from the addition of a canopy.

- ~ If the Gathering Place Church could re-install the original canopy, it could be painted a darker gray and it would tie in with the brick color.



# BUILDING STOCK

## Industrial Uses

Uses that are not congruent with the retail and commercial uses could be masked from view of pedestrians.

The City of Yutan could design fence and planting areas in right of way areas where street parking is not required.



## NEXT STEPS

### Next Steps

Upon completion of this study, the city leadership could select from the proposed projects in the previous pages and choose to apply for Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) Downtown Revitalization (DTR) project dollars to assist with funding that project.

Projects typically funded include building improvements, sidewalk repairs, and streetscape enhancements.

Yutan is in a unique situation whereas its downtown district is mostly intact and has not experienced the long-term neglect that many of its midwestern peer communities are working through.

Yutan also has several sub-communities built in different time periods in a manner that reflects the style of that period. Again, this differentiates the city from its peers as many of its peers saw the bulk of their housing stock constructed before 1950.

For these reasons, instead of pursuing traditional DTR funds that typically focus on different sectors of a downtown district, the City could pursue additional funding sources that will assist with becoming a connected community and directing residents and visitors to the downtown.

The City could also pursue DTR funds that would assist with making enhancements to the downtown that give visitors the impression that they are in a special place. Downtown Yutan is a special place, it is the core of this community.

Therefore, making investments in amenities that enhance the downtown and connect it to the rest of the community will be vital to the ability of Yutan to maintain its community identity instead of being absorbed into the growth of the metro areas that surrounds it.

