

Planning Document Review Technical Memorandum

North Sheridan Interchange

Sheridan County

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Wyoming Department of Transportation

and

Federal Highway Administration

**Prepared by:
HDR Engineering, Inc.**

North Sheridan Interchange Environmental Assessment

Planning Document Review Technical Memorandum

Section 1: Project Background

Project Overview

The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is studying improvements to the North Main Street/Interstate 90 (I-90) Interchange, also known as the North Sheridan Interchange. The project is located along I-90 in the City of Sheridan in Sheridan County, Wyoming.

The proposed project includes reconstructing and relocating the North Sheridan Interchange, improvements to I-90, and improvements to North Main Street. This is the first interchange serving Sheridan for eastbound vehicles on I-90. The project is needed to improve traffic operations and safety at the interchange and along the corresponding segments of I-90 and North Main Street. The existing interchange has sharp curves, steep ramps, and limited space for traffic to merge with I-90 traffic, all of which result in safety and operational issues on the interchange, along I-90, and along North Main Street. The selected location of the North Sheridan Interchange must be consistent with the FHWA access requirements for another interchange between the proposed North Sheridan Interchange and the port-of-entry interchange.

The project is being proposed to provide safe, direct regional access from I-90 to the north Sheridan area in support of local land use plans, to improve deteriorating segments of I-90 and North Main Street, and to comply with the FHWA's interstate access policy.

Study Area

Three distinct study areas were defined to correspond with the three types of improvements associated with the North Sheridan Interchange project.

The study area for improving or relocating the existing interchange extends from the center of the existing interchange to a point along I-90 approximately 1.5 miles west. The width of this area is one half mile on each side of I-90. This study area includes an area for the potential realignment of Decker Road, which is under consideration. The study area for improvements to the mainline of I-90 extends to approximately 1.5 mile east of the existing interchange and to approximately 2.0 miles west, within existing I-90 right-of-way. The study area for improvements along North Main Street includes the existing interchange south to Fort Road within existing WYDOT right-of-way. The limits were selected to represent the areas that could be directly or indirectly affected by potential improvements.

The City of Sheridan has identified the north Sheridan area as a primary growth area, and a large tract of land west of Decker Road was annexed into the City. The City has developed plans for the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park (583.1 acres), and a subdivision plat for development of the *Wrench Ranch Phase I Master Plan* (186 acres) has been approved. These developments are likely to generate different future traffic patterns as they are built out. Additionally, the West Corridor is a planned north-south transportation route that will traverse the western part of Sheridan. The West Corridor was proposed in a citywide traffic study conducted by the City in 2001. It is intended to provide new roadway capacity independent of the proposed North Sheridan Interchange improvements. Funding for the West Corridor has not been identified.

Proposed Alternatives

WYDOT developed and screened a range of alternatives as part of the North Sheridan Interchange Environmental Assessment (EA). As described in the *Alternatives Technical Memorandum* (HDR Engineering 2012), after screening WYDOT has two remaining build alternatives—Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4—that will be carried through the EA for further analysis in addition to the No-Build Alternative.¹ More information on these alternatives can be found in the *Alternatives Technical Memorandum*.

Alternative 1: No-Build: This alternative represents the conditions if major improvements are not completed as a result of this study. This alternative would not improve the existing geometric deficiencies, regional connectivity shortcomings, or deteriorating roadway segments within the three study areas. See Figure 1.

Alternative 2: Rebuild at the Existing Interchange: This alternative would construct a tight diamond interchange about 750 feet north of the existing interchange, and within the same general interchange footprint. The crossroad would connect with Decker Road using a free-flow T-intersection. The existing interchange would be demolished in order to build the new interchange. This alternative would include demolition of residences (including rental properties) and, potentially, relocation of a small business. This alternative would necessitate acquisition of land from the KOA tent site as well. See Figure 2.

Modified Alternative 4: Diamond Interchange Close to Decker Road: This alternative would construct a diamond interchange about 2,300 feet west of existing Decker Road and about 4,560 feet northwest of the existing interchange. The “straight through” alignment of Decker Road would be eliminated and traffic would flow along a realigned North Main Street/Decker Road that would cross I-90 perpendicular. The existing North Sheridan Interchange would continue to carry traffic until construction of the proposed interchange is complete. Right-of-way from currently undeveloped land would be needed. No residential or commercial relocations would be necessary, but it would necessitate acquisition of land from the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park site. See Figure 3.

¹ Alternatives at Decker Road and farther north of Modified Alternative 4 were considered, but were screened out because they did not meet purpose and need. These interchange locations were not included in the analysis.

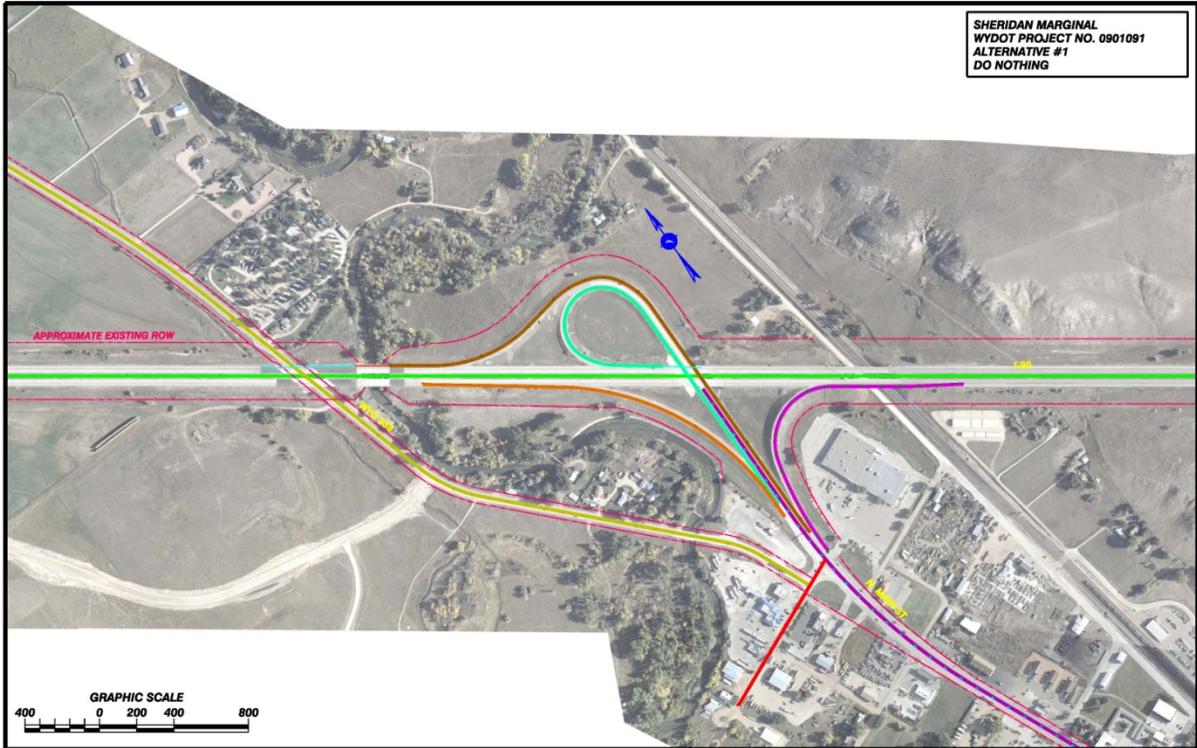


Figure 1: Alternative 1: No-Build. This alternative would not improve the existing geometric deficiencies, regional connectivity shortcomings, or deteriorating roadway segments.

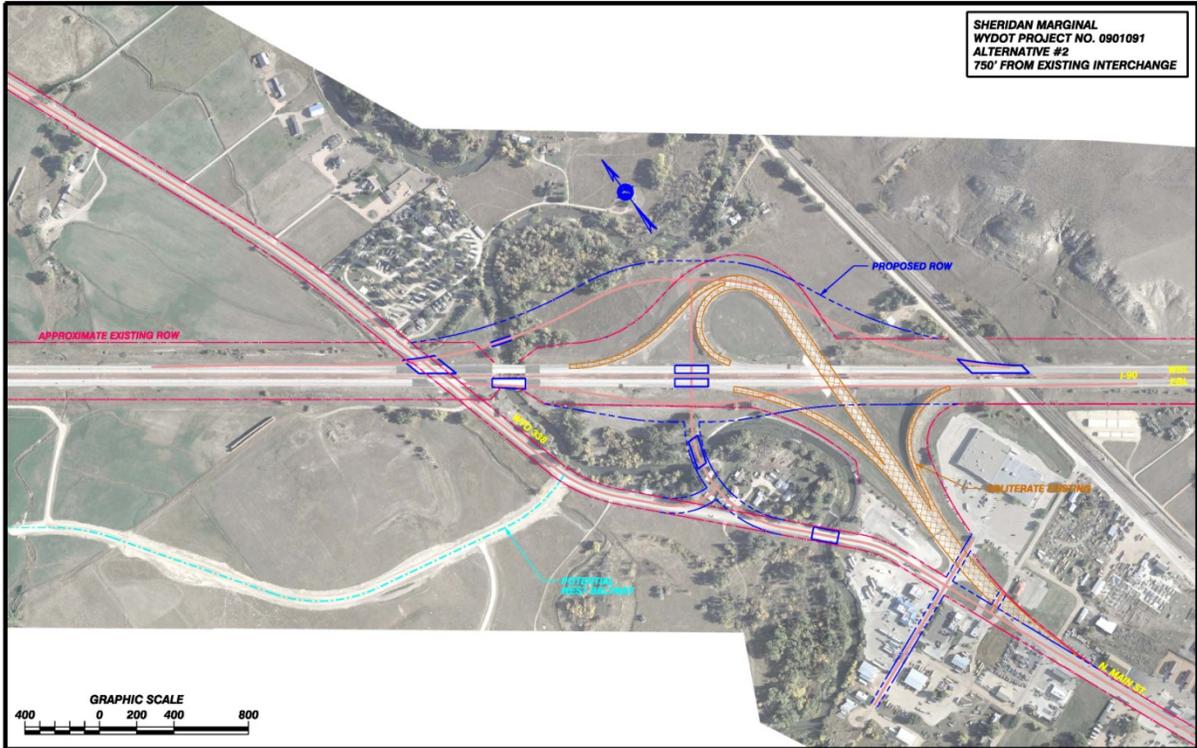


Figure 2: Alternative 2: Rebuild at the Existing Interchange. This alternative would construct a tight diamond interchange about 750 feet north of the existing interchange, and within the same general interchange footprint. The existing interchange would be demolished in order to build the new interchange.

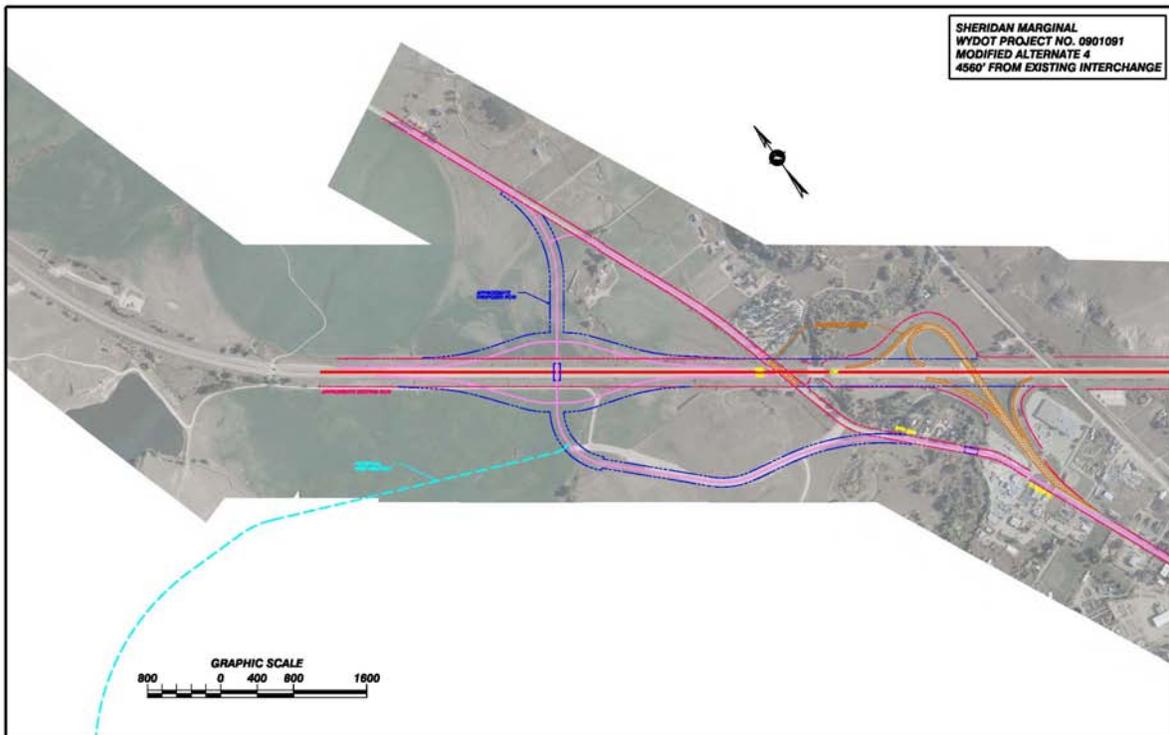


Figure 3: Modified Alternative 4: Diamond Interchange Close to Decker Road: This alternative would construct a diamond interchange about 2,300 feet west of existing Decker Road and about 4,560 feet northwest of the existing interchange. The existing North Sheridan Interchange would continue to carry traffic until construction of the proposed interchange is complete.

Section 2: Methodology

For the analysis described in this report, local land use and master plan documents were obtained and reviewed to determine how land use principles, objectives, and guidelines written in the planning documents and shown in plan maps and figures would affect or be affected by the project. This report discusses several planning elements: viewsheds, transportation, future land use, and zoning as discussed in the available planning documents. Each element is addressed in a separate subsection.

The *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* (December 2008) was reviewed, but the City of Sheridan requested that the following plans be given the most authority during the EA analysis:

- *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* (May 2009)
- *North Main Area Master Plan* (July 2009), which was adopted as an amendment to the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*
- *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan* (November 2009)

To better understand proposed developments north and west of existing interchange, the following plans were reviewed:

- *Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan* (November 2009)
- *Sheridan High-Tech Park Conceptual Plan* (February 2010)

The *Sheridan Pathways Master Plan* and *Sheridan Parks and Recreation Master Plan* were reviewed to identify existing proposed trail and pathway connections and their relationship to the alternatives under consideration.

The *City of Sheridan Municipal Code* was reviewed for zoning descriptions and the zoning map was reviewed to identify the zoning designation of parcels potentially affected by the project.

Section 3: Existing Conditions

Visual Quality and Aesthetics

The physical elements of a landscape form visual patterns that can strongly influence a person's response to that landscape. Physical elements include landforms and vegetation, water and wildlife features, and man-made modifications, such as residential and commercial development. These elements are viewed from the foreground, middleground, and background. Foreground landscape units are those immediately visible and which define the local character of the area. The foreground is defined as the area within half a mile of a viewer. The middleground is defined as views within 0.5 of a mile to 4 miles of a viewer, and background views are 4 miles or more away from the viewer.

A viewshed is often established as a means to protect a particular view by limiting development or creating guidelines for how development can occur within the viewshed. A viewshed is the view from a particular vantage point, which has scenic quality or aesthetic value. The City of Sheridan has designated viewsheds that it believes should be protected as part of the *North Main Area Master Plan*, but

protecting viewsheds is also discussed in several planning documents. The City is developing a viewshed plan.

Physical Elements

The general landscape along I-90 near North Main Street consists of agricultural land and open space/riparian areas with views of the Big Horn Mountains in the background.

Man-made elements within the viewshed include farm buildings, scattered residences, scattered commercial buildings such as hilltop hotels, transportation facilities such as rural roads and railroad tracks, aboveground transmission lines, post and wire fencing, and small businesses adjacent to and along I-90.



View toward the northwest from I-90 with a portion of undeveloped land at Wrench Ranch in the foreground.



View of the Big Horn Mountains from I-90.

Plan Review

The following information is related to identified viewsheds or goals for protecting high-quality scenic areas found within the local planning documents.

North Main Area Master Plan

According to the *North Main Area Master Plan*, among the most striking features of the area are its views and vistas. The area has been called the “Frame of the Bighorns.”

To conserve views, this plan identifies viewsheds and calls upon the City to consider them as part of subsequent master planning and to require plans to maintain long- and short-range views. (See Figure 4.) It is understood that this action could include limiting density, maintaining sightlines by limiting building heights, and maintaining open space in viewshed areas. The plan defines the following viewsheds in the area:

- Long-range views to the west (to the Sheridan Veterans Administration Medical Center [VA Medical Center] and the Bighorn Mountains)

- Close-in views of Goose Creek and other riparian areas
- Tree stands and other vegetated areas along gateway corridors
- Agricultural fields and open vistas

The following are key principles for protecting the visual resources found in the plan:

- Limit development on sites that are highly visible from I-90 to maintain visual character.
- Limit building heights, prohibit ridgetop development, and maintain open views to the VA Medical Center and Bighorn Mountains, to the west.
- Designate open space in viewsheds, cluster development, and limit overall development and density.
- Retain natural vegetation character along gateway areas.
- Avoid removing stands of trees and other vegetation along major roadways and corridors.
- Maintain views to Goose Creek along I-90 and Decker Road, and enhance the riparian character through rehabilitation and revegetation.

Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan

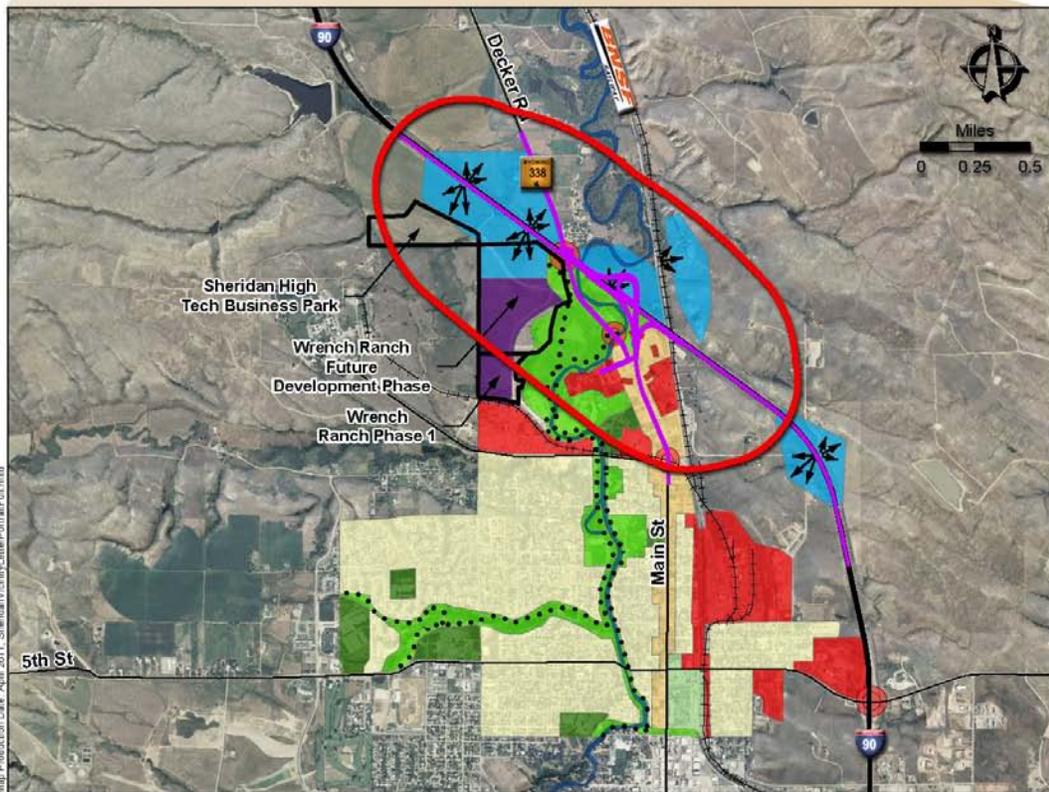
The *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* recommends avoiding the potential for the visual impacts of heavy industrial uses by limiting the location of such uses to “(a)way from developed communities and residential areas, such that noise, vibrations, and visual impacts will not disturb existing or future uses.”

Sheridan County Land Use Plan

According to the *Sheridan County Land Use Plan* (Issue 5: Agriculture), agriculture and ranching are a primary source of the highly valued visual quality of the county. The plan’s “Big Idea” number 5 is to conserve views of the Big Horn foothills. The plan says, “Continue the Big Horn Foothills Resource Conservation Area (established in 1982) to protect the unique foothills visual quality and tourism resource, maintain traditional agricultural uses, protect wildlife habitat, and allow aquifer recharge to occur. Minimize adverse effects on wildlife habitat and aesthetic resources.” The goals and policies in this plan that are related to visual quality and this “Big Idea” follow.

- Goal 2.8: The County will maintain its scenic quality and night skies.
 - Policy 2.8 a: Protect visual quality of the county, including hillsides and ridges. Key natural landscape features including bluffs, ridgelines, escarpments, major drainage features, rock outcroppings, valley walls, and other scenic topographic features should be protected.
 - Policy 2.8 b: Avoid development that is visually intrusive when viewed from major public right-of-way. Design techniques, such as architectural design, site design, and native landscapes are techniques to protect the scenic nature of different areas in the county.

- Goal 6.1: The County will recognize and reinforce individual community characteristics.
 - Policy 6.1 c: Improve community gateways and corridors. Enhance and protect the aesthetic quality of community gateways and other highly visible corridors through appropriate site design measures.



Map Production Date: April 2011; Sheridan\city\cattle\poma\FUL.mxd

Legend	
	Study Area
	Future Mixed Use
	Interchange Area
	Commercial Node
	Alternative 1 Alignment
	Railroad Historic District
	Trails
	Viewshed Line
	North Main Enhancement Corridor
	Open Space/Parks
	Neighborhood Residential Area
	Service Commercial/Light Industrial
	Viewshed

Data Sources: Imagery (USDA and NRCS 2009 NAIP), Future Land Use (City of Sheridan, North Main Area Master Plan, Centennial Collaboration), Alternatives (HDR Engineering, Inc.)

Figure 4. Viewsheds as defined in the North Main Area Master Plan

Transportation and Traffic

Transportation facilities within the study area include I-90, Decker Road (State Highway 338), North Main Street, Higby Road (County Road 123), Fort Road (State Highway 337), Canfield Street, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

The existing North Sheridan Interchange provides the northernmost access from I-90 into Sheridan. North Main Street, which has direct access to I-90, is the major north-south corridor in the city. It serves the northern area of Sheridan, as well as the historic downtown, which has many active businesses.

Decker Road intersects North Main Street, but there is no north direct connection from I-90 to Decker Road. Decker Road has been identified by the county as an important primary and secondary access route. It serves agricultural and rural residences north of I-90, provides access to the Tongue River Reservoir and two coal mines, and is used to gain access to coal bed methane operations in the area.

The West Corridor is a planned north-south transportation corridor through the western part of Sheridan. The West Corridor was proposed in a citywide traffic study conducted by the City in 2001. It is intended to provide additional roadway capacity independent of the proposed North Sheridan Interchange improvements but would also provide access to I-90. The specific I-90 tie-in for the West Corridor has not been identified in adopted City plans, but the location for a transportation corridor south of Fifth Street has been identified in City plans. The North Sheridan Interchange should be located so that it would not preclude an additional interchange for the West Corridor tie-in. Funding has not been identified for construction. Traffic and safety analyses were performed for the project. More details on the capacity and safety analyses are available in the *Purpose and Need Technical Memorandum* (HDR 2012b).

Plan Review

Plans that affect the development of transportation facilities within the study area include the *Sheridan Transportation Plan* (November 2009), the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* (adopted 2008), the *North Main Area Master Plan* (July 2009), the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* (adopted May 2009), the *Sheridan Pathways Master Plan* (May 2007), and the *Sheridan Parks & Recreation Master Plan* (May 2009). Each plan contains goals, objectives, and/or statements that are relevant to this EA.

Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan

The *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* “outlines Sheridan County’s vision and goals for the future and provides guidance for staff and elected and appointed officials to determine directions and make choices about short- and long-range needs.” The comprehensive plan builds on the direction of Sheridan County’s 1982 comprehensive plan and the *Vision 2020 (Growth Management Plan [2001])*, jointly prepared with the City of Sheridan.

The plan addresses nine issues that affect Sheridan County: 1) fiscally responsible growth planning and fiscal responsibility; 2) utilities provision and fiscal responsibility; 3) property rights; 4) workforce housing; 5) agriculture; 6) open lands; 7) commercial and business location planning; 8) transportation planning; and 9) historic preservation.

Chapter 7, Transportation System, contains the county road network map and the county trails map and the goals and policies related to developing and maintaining a connected, safe transportation system with multiple modes. The following excerpts from the transportation goals and policies of the comprehensive plan are relevant to this analysis; note the similarity to the transportation goals and objectives in the *Sheridan Transportation Plan*.

- **Goal 5.1:** The transportation network will be well connected and coordinated with adjacent land uses.
 - Policy 5.1 a: Construct a well-connected road network. The future roadway network illustrated on the county road network map is based on past and ongoing transportation planning efforts. Those efforts will guide decisions concerning road types, specific placement, speeds, and widths, including ongoing planning for the future West Corridor and Upper Road.
 - Policy 5.1 b: Coordinate land use and transportation planning. The County will plan its future transportation system to complement and encourage development patterns adopted as a part of the future land use plan.
- **Goal 5.2:** Urban areas will have “complete streets” to accommodate motorized vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.
 - Policy 5.2 a: Accommodate all transportation modes. Ensure that all new streets provide for efficient and safe movement for all transportation modes (i.e., vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians).
 - Policy 5.2 b: Extend pathways in communities. Extend the pathways system for bicycles and pedestrians to encourage transportation and recreation travel consistent with the Sheridan Pathways Master Plan.
- **Goal 5.6:** The County will support planning and extension of a regional nonmotorized trails and pathways system.
 - Policy 5.6 a: Coordinate to implement and extend the *Sheridan Pathways Master Plan*.
 - Policy 5.6 b: Plan for and establish a regional multiuse trails system.

The *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* identifies Decker Road as both a heavy truck corridor and as an alternative cross-county route. Sheridan County designated Decker Road as a Heavy Truck Corridor, acknowledging Decker Road as the principal access to industrial land and energy production areas serviced by commercial trucks.

Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan

The *Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* is intended to provide guidance for City and County staff and elected and appointed officials to determine directions and make choices about land uses in the Joint Planning Area (JPA) for the City of Sheridan and Sheridan County. As stated in the introduction to the plan, “The City and County jointly prepared the plan to encourage cooperative planning, efficient provision of services, and consistent and compatible decision-making. It is a product of discussions and values of participants in the planning process and it reflects what the public values for the future of the area.”

The plan is a tool for long-range guidance to property owners, citizens, and decision makers to help the City and County protect and conserve natural resources, groundwater quality, and agricultural lands outside the urban areas irrespective of jurisdiction (city or county). The following goals are related to transportation:

- **Goal 3.2:** The City will identify and preserve planned utility and transportation corridors.
- **Goal 4.1:** The transportation network will be well connected and coordinated with adjacent land uses.
- **Goal 4.2:** Urban areas will have “complete streets” to accommodate motorized vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.

North Main Area Master Plan

The Transportation Framework of the *North Main Area Master Plan* outlines improvements and enhancements to the transportation system serving the North Main area. Transportation goals from previous Sheridan plans were incorporated into this plan. The plans incorporated were the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*, the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Comprehensive Plan*, the *Sheridan Pathways Master Plan*, and the *Sheridan Parks & Recreation Master Plan*. The plan states, “In the course of preparing this master plan, North Main business owners expressed concerns that moving the interchange could have negative impacts on existing businesses or hinder our chances to bring new business to North Main. The North Main Neighborhood Association (NMNA) believes that if the interchange must be moved, it should be kept as close to North Main as possible.” The plan contains “one possible option for relocating the interchange north of its current location” that meets that criteria and their objective of providing “continuity and easy access to the North Main area.” Figure 5 shows the location of proposed in the master plan as one possible option for relocation.

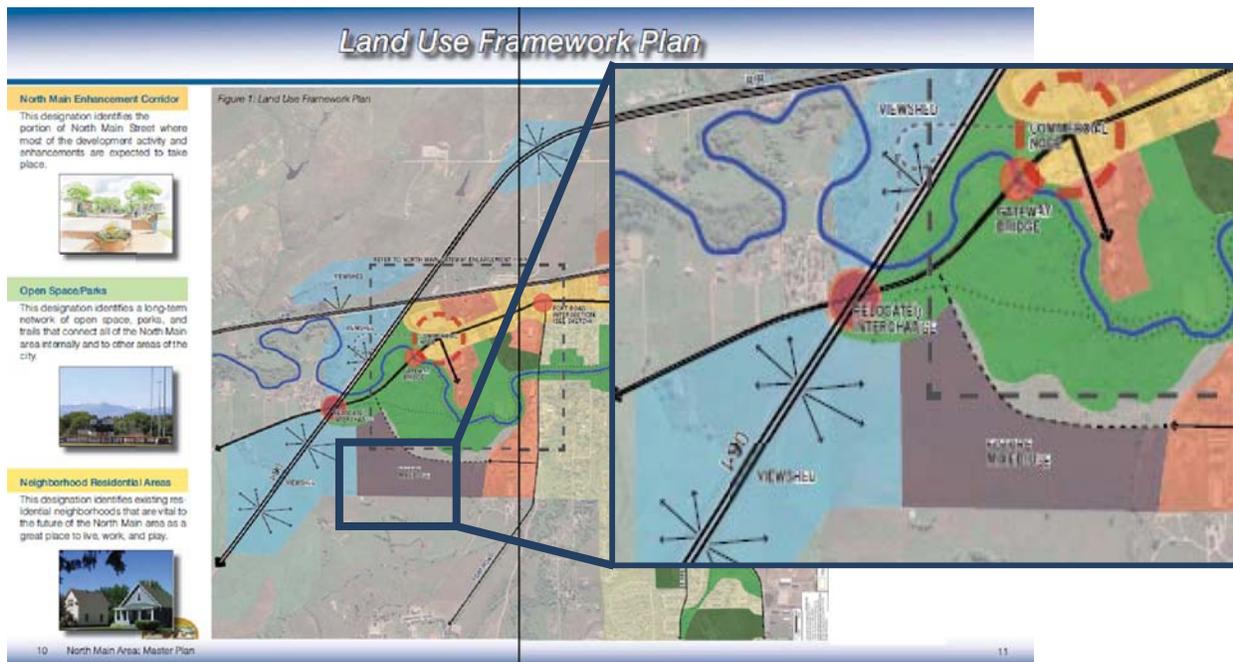


Figure 5. Possible interchange location identified in the *North Main Area Master Plan*

The interchange option identified by NMNA is Alternative 3, which does not meet the project purpose and need. There are 1,050 feet between Alternative 3 and Modified Alternative 4. Modified Alternative 4 was developed to be as close Decker Road as possible while still meeting design safety standards. (See *Alternatives Technical Memorandum* for a discussion of the alternatives.)

The gateways section of this plan discusses the “North Gateway to Sheridan from I-90 [that] builds on the large open spaces surrounding the town that have become part of Sheridan’s identity over time.” Designated open space along Goose Creek, development of the former port- of-entry site, and landscaping/raised median provide consistency as Decker Road transitions into North Main Street at Canfield Street.

- Goal 4 An Enhanced Transportation Network: North Main residents recognize that a vibrant environment must offer its visitors and residents a variety of transportation options. We will develop an appealing, consistently maintained North Gateway Corridor into Sheridan, accommodating safe multimodal travel.
 - Improve multimodal access to North Main from other parts of the community (auto/pedestrian/bicycle)
 - Safe and attractive pedestrian environment along Main Street and secondary corridors

The plan implementation section of this plan includes the following transportation action:

- T1: Monitor and Participate in I-90 Interchange EIS process: “ ... WYDOT will be undertaking a preliminary design and environmental review process for the I-90/Main Street interchange. It is vital that NMNA leadership and members as well as City staff and officials remain fully engaged in this process, to ensure that the outcome of the WYDOT process fully considers and incorporates the concepts for the North Main Gateway Area contained in this plan.”

Sheridan Transportation Plan

This plan was completed after the City and county comprehensive plans were completed to allow their broad visions of multimodal transportation to be captured. Goals, objectives, and strategies were developed using public input gathered during the planning process to reflect the values of the community related to transportation. The plan does not create a specific list of future transportation projects but creates a framework to guide and inform future transportation decisions.

The plan states, “As the specific projects and desires are developed, this plan will serve as the lens through which each project is examined. There will undoubtedly continue to be disagreement about specific locations and local vs. city-wide interests. The purpose of this document is to capture and define the transportation values that are widely held by the entire community and ensure that controversial decisions are informed by those values as specific projects are reviewed.”

The following goals, objectives, and strategies are relevant to the transportation and traffic analysis conducted for the project:

- Goal M4: Economic development impacts will be considered when evaluating transportation projects.²
 - Objective M4.1:– An economic impact study will be incorporated into the feasibility study for major transportation projects in/adjacent to downtown Sheridan or other key commercial locations.
 - Objective M4.2: Provide transportation investment to support development of activity centers and districts.

- Goal M8: The transportation network will be memorable, comfortable, context sensitive, and aesthetically pleasing.
 - Objective M8.1: Utilize the gateway transportation corridors near interchanges to create an attractive and welcoming first impression for visitors.
 - Strategy M8.1.1: Utilize enhanced roadway design features in the public right-of-way such as street side and median landscaping and entry signage and wayfinding to create attractive entry features.
 - Strategy M8.1.2: Work cooperatively with WYDOT and private landowners to create green belts and entry signage near interchanges.
 - Objective M8.2: Utilize the public right-of-way to provide locations for public art installations.
 - Strategy M8.2.2: Expand the public art program in Downtown Sheridan to include other commercial districts and gateway corridors.
 - Strategy M8.3.1: Ensure that transportation projects are sensitive to and document the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, and historic values of the area.
 - Strategy M8.3.2: Design transportation facilities that fit and reflect the character of the neighborhoods and districts through which they pass.

- Goal D6: I-90 Interchanges will be located and designed to provide short, direct, and attractive access to existing commercial districts.
 - Objective D6.1: Ensure that visitors and residents of Sheridan are able to easily access the North Main, Downtown, and Coffeen commercial districts.
 - Strategy D6.1.1: Design interchange access that supports direct connections to the North Main, Downtown, and Coffeen commercial districts.

- Goal W1: The pedestrian network will connect neighborhoods to local and regional destinations.
 - Objective W1.1: Create a pedestrian connectivity plan.
 - Strategy W1.1.1: Identify missing links in the pedestrian network between neighborhoods and local and regional destinations.
 - Strategy W1.1.2: Prioritize pedestrian improvements that provide access to schools, parks, and other public buildings.

² Goal M4 and M8 are addressed in the *Socioeconomic Technical Memorandum* and under Visual and Aesthetic Resources Assessment in the EA.

- Strategy W1.1.3: Develop pathway links to pedestrian activity centers such as parks, schools, commercial areas, and other features.
- Goal B1: The bicycle will be a practical and safe transportation choice for residents and visitors.
 - Objective B1.2: Build on combinations of existing and planned commuter and recreational facilities to provide access to all major activity centers and destinations.
- Goal B5: The bicycle network will connect neighborhoods to local and regional destinations.
 - Objective B5.1: Incorporate bicycle facility designs into new development and street construction projects – linking to adjacent facilities.
 - Objective B5.2: Improve bicycle access near activity centers, schools, and neighborhoods to improve circulation.

Sheridan Pathways Master Plan

In conjunction with Transportation Alternatives Coalition (TRAC), the City developed the 1997 *Sheridan Pathways Project Master Plan* for the development of pathways in and around the city. This master plan has served as a blueprint for Sheridan to implement a pathway system to serve the citizens of the city and the immediate area surrounding it. Since 1997, there has been almost universal support for the pathway system.

The updated plan (2007) states that walking and bicycling can be an integral part of a balanced transportation system. Most trips within Sheridan include some amount of walking, and the Big Goose Creek, Little Goose Creek, and Goose Creek valleys exhibit a relatively flat topography that is attractive for bicycling. During all but the coldest months, residents can use nonmotorized travel to accomplish many tasks. Trails, pathways, sidewalks, bike lanes, and paved shoulders can be used rather than cars and trucks, which is attractive given the rise of energy costs. Sheridan has approximately 5 miles of hard-surface multiuse trails that meander through and connect multiple park facilities.

This plan reiterates the *Vision 2020 Growth Management Plan's* (*Growth Management Plan* [2001]) call for “pedestrian-friendly development” that encourages walking by providing amenities for pedestrians to reduce automobile dependence.

Sheridan Parks & Recreation Master Plan

In May 2008, Sheridan began the process to establish its first *Parks & Recreation Master Plan* to guide maintaining, updating, and expanding the community’s park and recreation system. This plan gives the City direction to provide a successful parks and recreation system well into the future. The plan will help the City meet the needs of the community and enhance access to parks and recreation resources. When considering trails and multipurpose pathways, this plan recognizes the *Sheridan Pathways Master Plan*.

Goal 2 of this plan is “Connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, natural areas, the downtown, and the region.”

Land Use and Zoning

This analysis is provided to comply with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). 40 C.F.R. 1506.2(c) requires consideration of “possible conflicts between the proposed action and the objectives of Federal, regional, State, and local (and in the case of a reservation, Indian tribe) land use plans, policies and controls for the area concerned.”

The study area is located in the City of Sheridan and unincorporated Sheridan County; the project infrastructure would be constructed on land within city limits. Approximately 64 percent of the county is in private ownership and more than half of the land in private ownership is used for agricultural purposes. The majority of the developed land in the county is located in incorporated cities and towns, and particularly in Sheridan (Sheridan County 2008). The urban limits of Sheridan are generally noted by the Sheridan Area Water Supply Boundary, which is the limit of City-provided water and sewer infrastructure.

The northern area of Sheridan adjacent to the interchange is mainly commercial, and includes Kmart, Common Cents truck stop, McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, multiple gas stations, and several hotels. Farther south along Main Street are a rental business, repair businesses, a lumber yard, a tire shop, and other small businesses.

North and west of the North Sheridan Interchange are several rural residences and active agricultural fields. A large tract of the Wrench Ranch area (Phase 1, 186 acres) located in this area was annexed into the City and has been identified in local planning documents as a future growth area for Sheridan. It is being considered for a combination of commercial and residential developments. (See the description of the Wrench Ranch development area in this memorandum). Adjacent to the Sheridan city limits, west and south of the proposed project are lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service and VA Medical Center.

Sheridan County and the City of Sheridan collaborated to develop a comprehensive plan and zoning regulations to help guide the future development of the north Sheridan area: *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* (2008), *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* (2009), and the *North Main Area Master Plan* (2009), which was adopted as an amendment to the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. These documents contributed to more specific planning efforts for the *Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan* and the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park, which are described briefly below.

Plan Review

Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2008)

One major emphasis of this plan is to provide long-range guidance to property owners, citizens, and decision makers on land use issues such as where and how residential, commercial, and industrial development should occur. It also includes policies to protect and conserve resources, such as riparian areas and agricultural lands. The plan seeks to sustain natural and scenic resources and environmental quality.

The comprehensive plan addresses nine issues that affect Sheridan County land use and zoning:

1) fiscally responsible growth planning; 2) fiscally responsible utilities provisions; 3) property rights;

4) workforce housing, 5) agriculture; 6) open lands; 7) commercial and business location planning; 8) transportation planning; and 9) historic preservation.

According to this plan, the North Sheridan Interchange study area is within the Sheridan Joint Planning Area and the Sheridan Urban Service Area.

The Wrench Ranch area is shown as a Special Planning Area on the west side of I-90, and a Commercial area is shown north of the study area on the east side of I-90. A future Commercial Center straddles I-90 between the Special Planning Area and the Commercial area. Subsequent to the adoption of the *North Main Area Master Plan* (2009) the comprehensive plan was amended and the Commercial Center was removed (City of Sheridan 2010).

The plan maintains the historic distinction between city and county levels of service by guiding urban development in communities and their growth areas, which helps implement desired development patterns that are efficient and fiscally responsible. Sheridan County recognizes that a number of planning issues, such as transportation, water planning, land management, and efficient service provision must be addressed at a regional level.

The following are brief summaries of relevant sections and goals found within those sections that can be affected or that can affect land use near the project.

- **Chapter 3, Future Land Use Plan**, contains the land use plan's "big ideas," the future land use plan map (Figure 2 of this plan), a description of the land use categories, development and design principles, and land use goals and policies. The plan's intent is not to predetermine all specific land uses for individual parcels, but to guide location and type of future development to provide a balanced mix of jobs, housing, and other community activities while allowing flexibility for a mix of uses.

Outside of communities and growth areas, the future land use plan map identifies locations where low density residential is appropriate and where agriculture/resource areas and important resource conservation areas will continue to be the predominant pattern. The proposed Sheridan Urban Service Area boundary, shown on the map, is roughly based on the 2001 sewer service boundary. This corresponds to the area within which the City will provide municipal water and sewer service, and within which lands are appropriate to develop as urban neighborhoods and commercial centers and business parks. The Sheridan Joint Planning Area is the study boundary within which the City and county jointly plan for future growth and conservation.

- **Chapter 6, Services and Facilities**, contains the goals and policies related to providing services and facilities in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner and in a way that helps to implement the desired development patterns shown in the amended future land use plan map.

Sheridan County is primarily responsible for road and bridge maintenance and construction, public safety, environmental quality oversight, and some social services. The plan strives to

maintain the historic distinction between city and county levels of service by guiding urban development into communities and their growth areas, which is explained and reinforced in Chapter 3 of the plan.

- **Chapter 7, Transportation**

- Goal 5.1: The transportation network will be well connected and coordinated with adjacent land uses.
- Goal 5.2: Urban areas will have “complete streets” to accommodate motorized vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Goal 5.5: The county will ensure that new development provides adequate transportation improvements to accommodate needed services.
- Goal 5.6: The county will support planning and extension of a regional non-motorized trails and pathways system.

Within this chapter, the plan identifies Decker Road as a heavy truck corridor and as an alternative cross-county route. The plan also discusses on-road trail connections, including a segment along I-90. It references the *City Pathways Master Plan* for trail connections, with a connection area planned along Goose Creek.

- **Chapter 9, Regional Cooperation**, contains the goals and policies related to addressing regional issues cooperatively. Sheridan County recognizes that a number of planning issues, such as transportation, water planning, land management, and efficient service provision, must be addressed at a regional level. Further, the county recognizes that the success of the comprehensive plan depends on continued cooperation between county, city, state, and federal agencies, and private and nonprofit entities among others.

Specifically, Goal 7.1 of the comprehensive plan states, “The county will continue to jointly plan for orderly growth at the edge of the City of Sheridan.” This section also includes policies to continue joint planning for the unincorporated lands within the Urban Service Area and to address consistent development standards.

- **Chapter 11, Sheridan Joint Planning Area**, introduces the Sheridan Joint Land Use Plan, the Sheridan Planning Area, and directions for land uses and growth within the joint planning area. The intent for the Sheridan Joint Planning Area is to define a compact pattern of future growth with urban neighborhoods within an Urban Service Area and a feathered residential transition around the city where clustered development patterns and conservation at the edge of the city transitions into agricultural areas.

Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan (May 2009)

As noted above, the *Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* is intended to provide guidance for City and county staff and elected and appointed officials to determine directions and make choices about land use. The intent is to define a pattern of future growth with land use patterns deemed desirable by the

public involvement process. It repeats many of the land use policies of the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*.

The plan established directions and policies for land use planning to help guide how and where the community should grow within the Joint Planning Area:

- 1. Designate an Urban Service Area, a location for urban development.** Future development will occur as compact pattern of urban neighborhoods (like those existing in Sheridan today) and future commercial “centers” (as an alternative to “strip” linear commercial development along major roads), as well as light and heavy industrial areas.
- 2. Support infill and redevelopment in the city.** Promote quality infill development and mixed-use redevelopment within the city in strategic locations, such as the North Main area.
- 3. Attain quality neighborhoods and commercial centers.** Ensure that new neighborhoods and commercial centers are high quality, walkable, livable places with a mix of activities.
- 4. Ensure that development will be efficient to serve.** Promote future urban development in areas where it can efficiently be served with municipal water and sewer.
- 5. Provide opportunity for a feathered residential edge.** Allow residential development with 2- to 5-acre and larger lots between city neighborhoods and outlying agricultural areas, where the future land use plan shows county low density residential. Clustered development is encouraged.
- 6. Protect natural resources.** Provide stewardship for resources that are important to sustain the region and that people value such as water quality/creeks, riparian corridors, wildlife habitat, mineral resources, hillsides, and ridgelines, as described in the Natural and Scenic Resources chapter.
- 7. Develop an efficient and multimodal transportation system.** The transportation system will be coordinated with future growth and land use and designed with “complete streets” and multiple modes to serve the urban area, as described in the transportation chapter.
- 8. Coordinate planning.** The City and county will continue to work together to implement this plan.

According to this plan, the North Sheridan Interchange study area is within the Sheridan Joint Planning Area and the Sheridan Urban Service Area.

In this plan, the *Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan’s* land use intent is the same as in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*. As in the comprehensive plan, a future commercial center straddles I-90, but it was removed with the adoption of the *North Main Area Master Plan*.

Chapter 3 lays out specific goals for achieving the intended land use plan and the previously stated plan directives. The following goals are relevant to the EA analysis:

- Goal 1.1: The City of Sheridan will maintain a compact development pattern.
- Goal 3.2: The City will identify and preserve planned utility and transportation corridors.
- Goal 4.1: The transportation network will be well connected and coordinated with adjacent land uses.
- Goal 4.2: Urban areas will have “complete streets” to accommodate motorized vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Goal 4.3: The City will ensure that new development provides adequate transportation improvements to accommodate needed services.

The draft plan was certified and recommended for approval by the City of Sheridan Planning Commission at its meeting on January 26, 2009. Subsequently, the plan was amended as previously noted with the adoption of the *North Main Area Master Plan*.

North Main Area Master Plan (July 2009)

For the purposes of this plan, the North Main area extends to the city boundary to the north, I-90 to the east, 5th Street to the south, and Highland Avenue to the west.

The purpose of this plan is to provide an overall coordinated concept for the North Main area, within which private and public investment decisions can be made over time. WYDOT’s plan to rebuild North Main Street was the catalyst for developing the plan. Its intent is to revitalize North Main, create new housing, enhance existing neighborhoods, and create new job opportunities. The plan has five elements that contain the implementation strategies for the plan’s goals: land use, open space, transportation, gateways, and viewsheds. The NMNA is the body working to implement the master plan. The *North Main Area Master Plan* was adopted as an amendment to the *Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*, which is discussed later in this memorandum.

The land use framework plan features five types of places: North Main Enhancement Corridor, Open Space/ Parks, Neighborhood Residential areas, Service Commercial/ Light Industrial areas, and Viewshed areas.

The framework plan shows the area north and south of I-90 and west of Decker Road as viewshed (see Figure 4), which affects land use in that area. A viewshed is defined as “important views that should be protected as development is planned.” The area north of the existing North Sheridan Interchange is also designated as viewshed. A future mixed-use area is located south of this viewshed area and west of Decker Road. The area along Goose Creek is labeled as open space/parks.

The existing interchange is part of the gateway node. According to the plan this is “an enhanced commercial gateway node, located along Main Street at the location of the current entry to Kmart (Canfield Street). The potential realignment of Main Street with Decker Road creates an opportunity to enhance access to commercial properties in this location, creating new opportunities for commercial development along North Main frontage. ... This configuration will form a new, enhanced ‘gateway’ into the North Main commercial area, attracting visitors from the Interstate and new investment with improved access and appearance.”

When exiting I-90, the plan describes the North Main area as the frame of the Big Horn Mountains that welcomes visitors.

The plan also discusses relocation of the existing interchange, which is shown in Figure 5. The NMNA believes that if the interchange must be moved, it should be kept as close to North Main Street as possible, and to that end, the master plan shows a concept for relocating the interchange to provide an “entryway” to the North Main area. This concept includes realignment of North Main Street and Decker Road to provide access to the North Main area.

Linkages between North Main area, downtown, and the activity center are important for developing a mixed-use core.

The following are specific goals and guiding principles for land use in the North Main.

- **Goal 1: Vibrant Neighborhoods and Business Areas.** North Main will be a vibrant area of mixed-use development, with safe neighborhoods and thriving businesses.
 - Increase housing options.
 - Establish predictability for residents and property owners regarding the status of land uses within neighborhoods and business areas.
 - Promote compatible infill and redevelopment.
 - Stabilize and enhance existing neighborhoods.
- **Goal 2: Welcoming and Connected Green Space.** Open space and recreational neighborhood parks will be located and connected throughout the North Main area that provide safe and accessible play and relaxation areas for families and children.
 - Build on the city’s network of parks and open space.
 - Extend the trail system along Goose Creek to improve connections between North Main and the rest of the city.
 - Improve connections between North Main’s neighborhoods and its parks and open space areas.
- **Goal 3: A Unique and Identifiable Image.** North Main is the frame of the Bighorns. We will create an authentic western aesthetic, with green space and park-like settings – an oasis to draw and welcome travelers and a signal they are somewhere special. Reflect the pride and character of North Main Street by giving North Main an equal character and small-town treatment to that of downtown.
 - Clearly identify North Main gateways.
 - Establish a standard of high quality design for new buildings and parking.
 - Continue and reinforce design treatments along North Main Street.
- **Goal 5: A Strong Retail/Mixed-Use Core.** North Main residents recognize that creating a strong retail/mixed-use core within the downtown will be an incremental process that relies heavily on the goals and guiding principles above to create an environment that projects a positive image and attracts future investment.
 - Retain existing businesses.

- Attract new and complementary businesses.
- Use public investment to leverage private investment.
- Enhance private employment opportunities.
- Strengthen linkages between North Main and the downtown and other activity centers.

Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan (November 2009)

The *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan* does not create a specific list of future transportation projects, but it creates a framework on which to base future transportation decisions. The City and county comprehensive plans define transportation to include cars, bicyclists, walkers, and public transit users, and this plan is based on that view of transportation. Goals, objectives, and strategies were developed to reflect the values of the community related to transportation.

The goals and objectives of the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan* link land use and transportation by coordinating the transportation network with adjacent land use, encouraging the development patterns in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* and the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. The plan notes that transportation facilities should be compatible with the type and intensity of the land uses. As presented in Objective M8.2, when considering transportation facilities, economic development impacts, and environmental, scenic, aesthetic, and historic values should be considered. The facilities should fit and reflect the character of the neighborhoods and districts through which they pass, and transportation corridors should be used to create attractive and welcoming impressions for visitors, including enhanced roadway design features and greenbelts and entry signage.

Goals and objectives of the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan* that are related to linking land use and transportation include the following.

- Goal M2: The transportation network will be coordinated with adjacent land uses.
 - Objective M2.1: The City will plan its future transportation system to compliment and encourage development patterns adopted in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* and the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*.
 - Strategy M2.1.1: Transportation decisions will be consistent with, and support, City land use goals. (See the *North Main Area Master Plan* and *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*.)
 - Strategy M2.1.2: Ensure consistency between land use and the transportation plan so that transportation facilities are compatible with the type and intensity of land uses.

Goals and objectives related to economic development impacts, environmental, scenic, aesthetic, and historic values are discussed in the transportation plan review section of this document.

Sheridan Pathways Master Plan

This master plan directs decision-makers to plan for pedestrian-friendly development by developing designs that encourage walking by providing site amenities for pedestrians. It also states that developing pedestrian-friendly environments may reduce automobile dependence.

Sheridan Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Land use is addressed by Goal 2, which states: “Connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, natural areas, the downtown, and the region.”

Wrench Ranch Phase I Master Plan

As shown in Figure 6, the Wrench Ranch Annexation includes 585 acres of land northeast and northwest of the existing interchange and Alternative 2. The ranch’s annexed land surrounds Modified Alternative 4. The ranch was annexed into Sheridan in March 2009 (Ordinance #2065, ANX 7-08-1363), under the *Wrench Ranch Phase I Master Plan* (186 acres), which calls for the following uses: light industrial, mixed use, commercial, open space/parks/detention areas, and future open space or right-of-way. The master plan states that “the Guidelines, Standards, and Regulations of the Master Plan were written with the intent of complying with the City of Sheridan Gateway District Ordinance (Ord. 2066) ...” The Gateway District is considered the zoning designation for Phase 1 of Wrench Ranch, and the master plan stipulates the locations of the uses allowed in this district. According to the ranch’s annexation master plan, “The Wrench Ranch Annexation extends the northern boundary of the City of Sheridan. The Vision of the Annexation includes the creation of a visually cohesive, integrated pattern of development that is both northern gateway to Sheridan, an extension of a city thoroughfare and an understandable northern terminus of the city.”

The subdivision in this master plan has not been approved pending development of a viewshed plan (Thompson, 2010). In September 2011, however, Wrench Ranch area developers donated land and had a subdivision approved by the City of Sheridan for a complex, Sheridan Baseball Academy Doubleday Park (Doubleday Park), south of and adjacent to I-90 and west of Decker Road (shown in Figure 7). Documents prepared as information for this subdivision action show that Wrench Ranch area developers intend additional phases north of Phase 1, and future development on the east side of I-90.

Sheridan High-Tech Park Conceptual Plan

In addition to the *Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan* previously described, the City has opened the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park at a 38.5-acre site that is adjacent to the VA Medical Center. The site was transferred to the City in a land swap with Wrench Ranch area developers. The business park was subject to the Gateway District zoning regulations and required approval of a master plan. A plan was approved by the City council on July 6, 2010. The business park was subsequently sold to the Sheridan Economic and Education Development Authority (SEEDA) (Forward Sheridan 2010). A manufacturing company from Colorado, Vacutech, opened a new 40,000-square-foot facility on 5 acres of the park in December 2011 (Sheridan Press 2011). The Sheridan High-Tech Business Park is subject to Sheridan’s Gateway District zoning regulations and approval of a master plan was required.

Zoning

Zoning in the study area is guided by the Sheridan Municipal Code (Appendix A Zoning) and the Rules and Regulations Governing Zoning in Sheridan County.

City Zoning around the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 2, and Modified Alternative 4

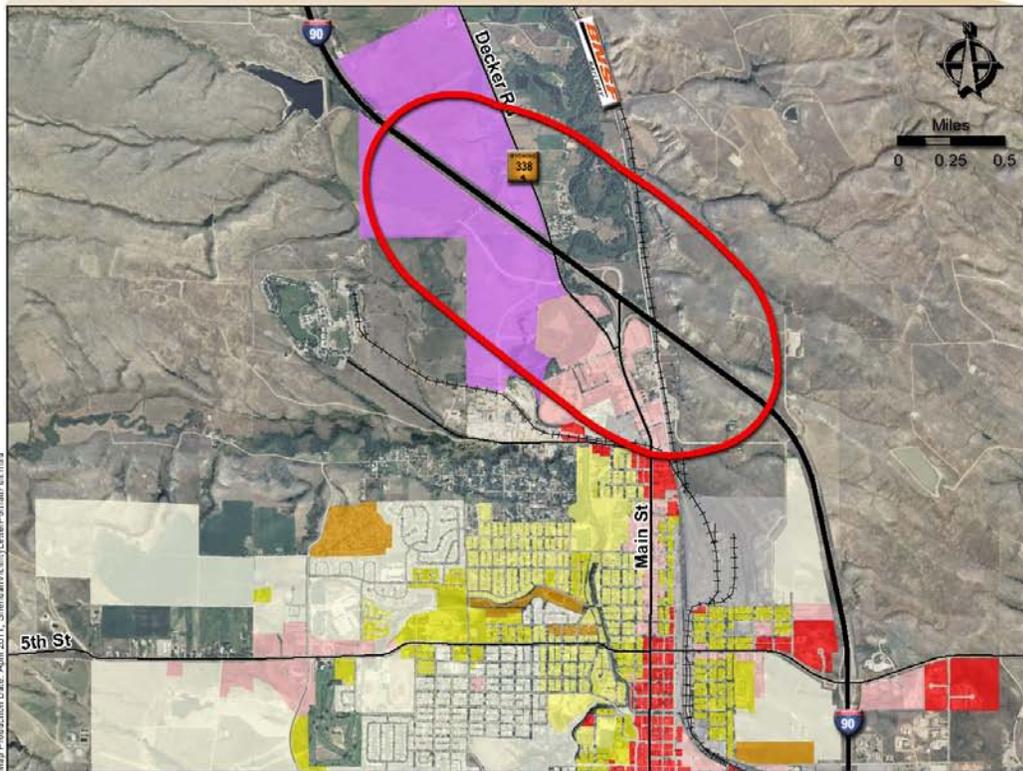
The study area³ southeast of I-90 and the existing North Sheridan Interchange structures includes a portion of the city. This portion of Sheridan is within the B-1 zoning district. (See Figure 8.)

The B-1 district allows residential uses that meet the requirements of the City's R-3 and R-4 zoning districts, as well as retail businesses, public garages, offices, banks, restaurants, commercial schools, bakeries, and laundry/dry cleaning establishments.

The area annexed northwest of the existing interchange (Wrench Ranch Annexation) is zoned as Gateway District. The district may be applied to any land located along or near a major entrance into the city, primarily I-90, Main Street, 5th Street, Brundage Lane, Big Horn, or Coffeen Avenue (Ord. No. 2066 §§ 1, 3-16-09).

The purpose of the Gateway District is "to create a mixed use district that constitutes a natural social and economic part of the community and encourages development that preserves community character, natural space, and scenic vistas of gateway areas by requiring adequate open space, context sensitive design, and appropriate land use." This district requires the development and approval (by the City council) of a master plan prior to subdivision or the issuance of any building permits, and review by the Design Review Board for architectural design, landscaping, and other standards.

³ Alternative 2, and Modified Alternative 4 would be constructed on land within city limits; however, the study area extends into land within Sheridan County.



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Legend	
	Study Area
R-1 Residence District	Range of uses characterized by single family dwellings and supporting uses such as public parks, libraries, churches, home occupations, agricultural, with lots larger than 8,000 sq. ft.
R-2 Residence District	Uses permitted in the R-1 Residence District plus two-family but no more than four-family dwellings plus private clubs. One-family lots > 4,500 sq. ft.; 2-family lots > 3,000 sq. ft./family; 3&4-family lots > 2,500 sq. ft./family.
R-3 Residence District	Uses permitted in the R-2 Residence District plus multi-family dwell. and aparts, hospitals, educational instit. and associated bldgs. 1-family lots > 4,000 sq. ft.; 2-family lots > 2,000 sq. ft./family; multi-family lots > 800 sq. ft./family.
R-4 Residence District	Mobile and manufactured home parks, and associated structures incidental to these uses.
B-1 Business District	Any use permitted in the R-3 and R-4 Residence Districts plus any retail business, public garage, offices, banks, theaters, personal services, dry cleaners and associated structures incidental to these uses.
B-2 Business District	Any use except those uses listed in the Sheridan Municipal code. The disallowed uses are largely manufacturing and related uses that produce potentially noxious and dangerous outputs.
GD Gateway District	Mixed use area with a master plan that encourages development that preserves community character, natural space and scenic vista gateways.
9A Higher Education District	Districts set aside for colleges, universities, and post secondary trade and other education institutions. Rezoning requests will require a master plan.
M-1 Industrial District	Any use not in conflict with any City of Sheridan ordinance. Location of certain manufacturing uses to be approved by the board of adjustments. Residential lot sizes follow the requirements of the R-3 Residence District.

Data Sources: Imagery (USDA and NRCS 2009 NAIP); Zoning (City of Sheridan)

Figure 8. City Zoning Designations in the Study Area

County Zoning around No-Build Alternative, Alternative 2, and Modified Alternative 4

Portions of study area northeast of the existing interchange and along I-90 are in unincorporated Sheridan County and land use is subject to the regulations of two zoning districts: Commercial C-1 and Urban Residential UR.

The Commercial C-1 zoning district allows wholesale and retail commercial businesses, shipping depots, loading docks, animal hospitals and boarding facilities, woodworking and cabinet shops, service stations, auto repairs, warehousing, etc., and the activities allowed in the C-2 and C-3 zoning districts.

The Urban Residential Dwelling UR zoning district allows dwellings designed or used exclusively for residential purposes, including mobile homes.

Section 4: Project-Related Impacts

Visual and Aesthetics

Visual impacts were assessed by alternative. A description of visual impacts and impacts to identified viewsheds are found in the following discussion.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would have no effect on the identified viewsheds or existing visual resources and aesthetics within the study area.

Alternative 2

Construction of Alternative 2, located 750 feet north of the existing interchange, would result in removal of trees and riparian vegetation from the foreground and middleground overlooking Goose Creek. This would allow for the building of a new bridge over Goose Creek for North Main Street to travel under the interstate, the widening of the eastbound off-ramp over Goose Creek, the building of a new bridge over Goose Creek for the westbound on-ramp, the widening and/or building of a new bridge over Decker Road for the westbound on-ramp, and the widening of North Main Street over Goose Creek as necessary.

Alternative 2 would be located in the foreground viewshed at the existing interchange defined in the *North Main Area Master Plan* for the bluff on the north side of I-90 and in an areas designated as open space to protect the views associated with Goose Creek. See Figure 4.

Current middleground views of agricultural lands west of Decker Road are expected to continue until this land, which is proposed for urban uses in the long term, is developed. However, the views from I-90 associated with the riparian vegetation open space along Goose Creek would be permanently and substantially changed with the introduction of a bridge over the creek and connecting roadways.

Views of the new interchange from west of Decker Road would be possible from I-90 and for adjacent residences on Decker Road, especially when riparian vegetation along Goose Creek is removed for

construction⁴. Views from the VA Medical Center are expected to remain unchanged. The new interchange would also be visible east of the existing interchange because of the loss of riparian vegetation, but no more visible than the current interchange. Because the land along Goose Creek is lower than the surrounding land, some of the visual impact would be lessened.

Current background views of the Big Horn Mountains from I-90 and residences along Decker Road are expected to remain unchanged. Depending on the regulations put in place by the City as part of its viewshed planning efforts, the background views could be partially blocked by structures in the planned Wrench Ranch development area or the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park.

Short-term negative impacts would be expected, including storage of construction equipment in view of the highway and ground disturbance associated with demolition of the mainline bridges for the existing interchange and construction of the new interchange.

Modified Alternative 4

Construction of Modified Alternative 4 would result in the removal of a few trees in the fringe areas near Goose Creek to allow for widening of the eastbound on-ramp over Goose Creek and widening of North Main Street over Goose Creek, as necessary. Earthwork would be required on the south side of I-90 for construction of the Decker Road overpass.

Modified Alternative 4 would be located within the viewshed west of Decker Road, which is defined to protect agricultural middleground views and Big Horn Mountain background views from I-90. Sensitive viewers would be those at the VA Medical Center and residents on Decker Road.

The new North Sheridan Interchange structure would be more visible in the middleground view from I-90 west of Decker Road because a new bridge spanning the mainline interstate would be needed. The overpass would be approximately 30 feet above the existing ground surface. The permanent background views of the Big Horn Mountains, however, would remain unchanged by the project.

There is potential for the views to be partially blocked by development at the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park and the planned development of Wrench Ranch. The City has enacted zoning regulations that restrict the heights of buildings in these designated viewshed areas. The residences along Decker Road may have restricted foreground and middleground views associated with the overpass structure. As noted in the Cultural Resources section, the view toward I-90 from the VA Medical Center and from the historic structures at the Wrench Ranch development area would be permanently changed, but not adversely affected by the interchange structure over the I-90 mainline. See Figure 9.

⁴ Additional visibility analysis was completed as part of the economic analysis completed for the project. Visibility maps can be found in the *Visibility Technical Memorandum*.



Figure 9: Digital rendering of the appearance of I-90 after construction of Modified Alternative 4 from the historic Wrench Ranch area buildings.

Short-term negative impacts would be expected, including storage of construction equipment in view of the highway and ground disturbance associated with construction of the interchange. After the construction of the new interchange is complete, short-term impacts would also include demolition of the existing interchange and rehabilitation of that site, which has the potential to enhance the North Main area depending on how the site is developed. As project design continues, there is an opportunity for the site to be integrated into the city's gateway vision and redevelopment efforts; these efforts could include design enhancements for the new interchange.

Mitigation

Incorporation of visually pleasing design features as part of the interchange may offset negative impacts associated with removal of riparian vegetation (Alternative 2) or the sight of the new interchange from local residences (Modified Alternative 4). WYDOT is committed to minimizing impacts to the natural landscape by blending the appearance of an interchange structure with its surrounding landscape using concrete texturing and color.

Enhancement opportunities

Beyond its standard commitment to minimize the visual impacts of interchange structures, WYDOT will work closely with Sheridan County and the City of Sheridan to identify opportunities to reclaim or

redevelop the existing interchange area in a manner that is consistent and beneficial to the gateway vision of the *North Main Area Master Plan*.

Transportation and Traffic

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not change the interchange location, so no new transportation impacts would occur. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the trail, pathway, or pedestrian connection goals stated in any of the plans. It provides short direct access to existing adjacent commercial uses as noted in *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan*, and the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. The No-Build Alternative does not provide direct access to Decker Road to enhance the heavy truck or industrial access identified in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 does not meet the trail, pathway, or pedestrian connection goals stated in any of the plans. It does provide short direct access to existing adjacent commercial uses as noted in *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan*, and the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* (See Figure 10).

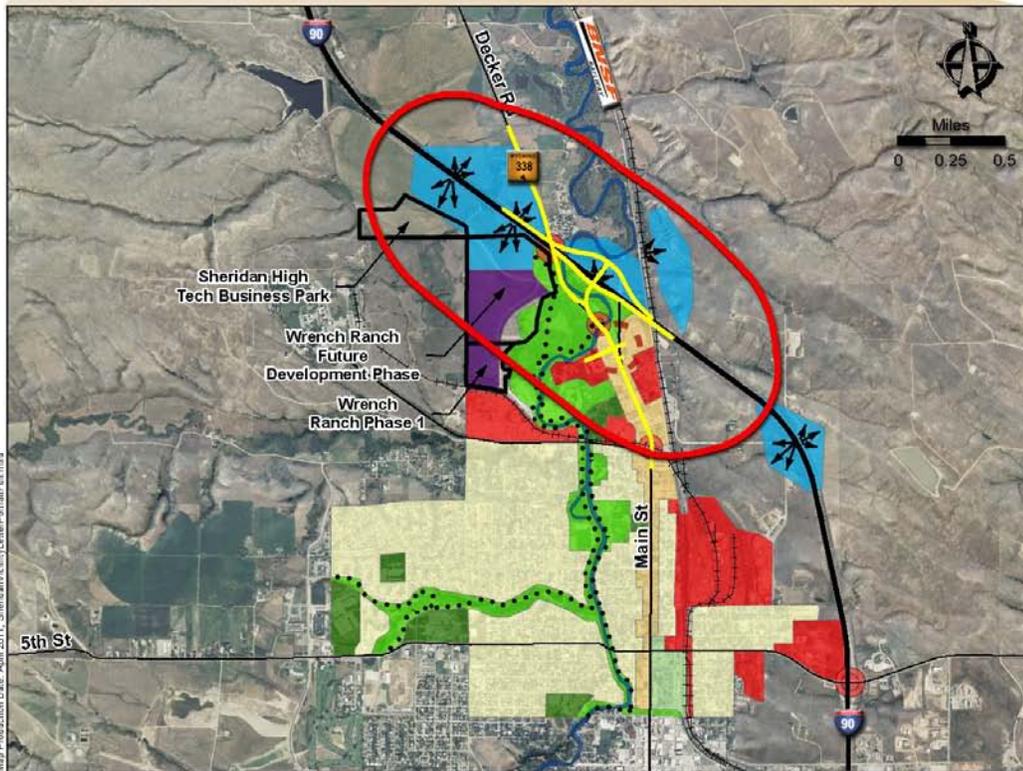
This alternative was developed in response to feedback received at the first public meeting, as supported by the NMNA, to locate a new interchange as close as possible to the existing interchange location. This alternative does not provide direct access to Decker Road, however, which was identified in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* as supporting heavy truck or industrial access. Vehicles exiting at Alternative 2 would have to travel under I-90 to gain access to northbound Decker Road.

Modified Alternative 4

Modified Alternative 4 would provide a direct connection northward from I-90 to Decker Road, which was identified in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan* as supporting heavy truck or industrial access (See Figure 11).

Modified Alternative 4 provides short direct access to existing adjacent commercial uses as noted in *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan*, or the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. The *North Main Area Master Plan* noted Decker Road as a possible interchange with I-90, citing that an interchange in this location would provide continuity and ease of access to the North Main area. Alternative 4 was modified due to the City approval of Doubleday Park under Alternative 4, therefore Modified Alternative 4 was developed to locate a new interchange as close as possible to Decker Road because an alternative at Decker Road does not meet the purpose and need for the Project.

Modified Alternative 4 does not meet the trail, pathway, or pedestrian connection goals stated in any of the City's planning documents.



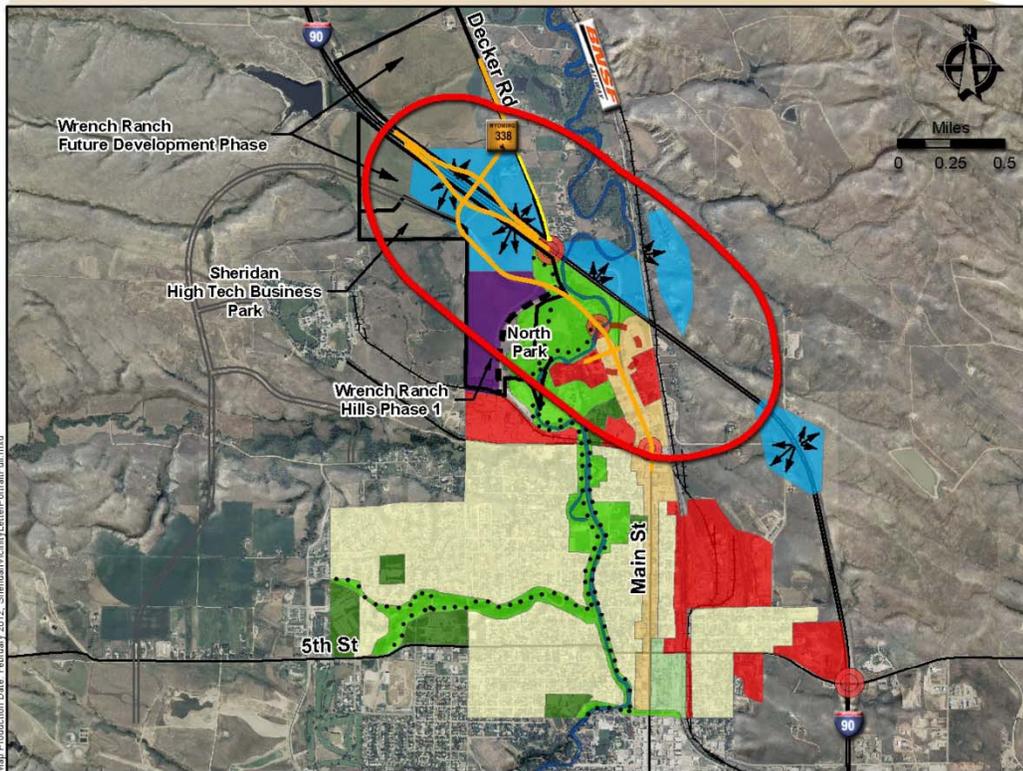
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Legend

Study Area	Interchange Area	Future Mixed Use	Trails
Alternative 2 Alignment	Commercial Node	Railroad Historic District	Viewshed Line
North Main Enhancement Corridor	Portion of North Main Steet where most of the development activity and enhancements are expected to take place.		
Open Space/Parks	Long-term network of open space, parks, and trails that connect all of the NorthMain area internally and to other areas of the city.		
Neighborhood Residential Area	Existing residential areas that are vital to preserve and enhance for the future of the North Main area.		
Service Commercial/Light Industrial	Areas that are appropriate for employment-oriented uses, such as light industrial or service commercial businesses.		
Viewshed	Views and vistas that should be protected as development is planned.		

Data Sources: Imagery (USDA and NRCS 2009 NAIIP); Future Land Use (City of Sheridan, North Main Area Master Plan, Centennial Collaborator); Alternatives (HDR Engineering, Inc.)

Figure 10. Designated Future Land Use Affected by Alternative 2



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Legend	
	Study Area
	Modified Alternative 4 Alignment
	Future Mixed Use
	Open Space/Parks
	Service Commercial/Light Industrial
	Viewshed
	Interchange Area
	Commercial Node
	Railroad Historic District
	Trails
	Viewshed Line
	New Local Road (Old Decker Road)
North Main Enhancement Corridor	Portion of North Main Steet where most of the development activity and enhancements are expected to take place.
Open Space/Parks	Long-term network of open space, parks, and trails that connect all of the NorthMain area internally and to other areas of the city.
Neighborhood Residential Area	Existing residential areas that are vital to preserve and enhance for the future of the North Main area.
Service Commercial/Light Industrial	Areas that are appropriate for employment-oriented uses, such as light industrial or service commercial businesses.
Viewshed	Views and vistas that should be protected as development is planned.

Data Sources: Imagery (USDA and NRCS 2009 NAIP); Future Land Use (City of Sheridan, North Main Area Master Plan, Centennial Collaboration); Alternatives (HDR Engineering, Inc.)

Figure 11. Designated Future Land Use Affected by Modified Alternative 4

Mitigation

No specific mitigation would be required for supporting planning policies, objectives, or goals.

Land Use and Zoning

Several rural residences and active agricultural fields are located north and west of the existing North Sheridan Interchange. Much of this area was recently annexed into the City, including portions of the Wrench Ranch development area, and it has been identified in the planning documents as a future growth area for Sheridan. The recently annexed Wrench Ranch area is being considered for a combination of commercial, light industrial, and mixed-use developments. In addition, Wrench Ranch developers donated land and had a subdivision approved (September 2011) by the City of Sheridan for Doubleday Park, south of and adjacent to I-90 and west of Decker Road. See Figures 6 and 7.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would result in no direct changes to land use or zoning in its vicinity. This alternative would not change or preclude any future land uses. Under this alternative, areas that would be vacated by Alternative 2 or Modified Alternative 4 would not be available for development of open space or for a gateway entry to the city.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would convert some undeveloped open land and some residential land to transportation right-of-way. It would not preclude and may support some of the recommendations or directives for future development as outlined in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*, the *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Plan*, or the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. See Figure 2.

An analysis by land use plan follows.

Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan/Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan

Alternative 2 would not preclude any of this plan's "big ideas" or the land uses shown in the future land use plan map of the comprehensive plan, and it would be in the same general location at the existing North Sheridan Interchange. It would reinforce the historic distinction between city and county levels of service by guiding urban development in communities and their growth areas, which are explained and reinforced in Chapter 3 of the plan. It would support the intent of the Sheridan Joint Planning Area to define a compact pattern of future growth with urban neighborhoods within an Urban Service Area and a feathered residential transition around the city.

The *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan* includes specific goals, actions to implement the community's values, and contemporary planning strategies. It also includes identification and planning for "industrial districts for future jobs and industry."

According to these plans, a commercial area is shown north of the study area on the east side of I-90 and a future commercial center straddles I-90 between the Special Planning Area (Wrench Ranch) and

the commercial area. A commercial center would “ideally develop with a mix of commercial and other compatible uses according to the plan.” However, the *North Main Area Master Plan* was adopted during the study of this project, as discussed below, and it redirects this commercial center to the existing North Main area.

Alternative 2 would not preclude commercial infill development, but it would not provide strong transportation and use linkages to the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park. Alternative 2 would serve land uses north of I-90 along Decker Road that lie outside of the immediate study area but that are important to the regional connectivity of the area.

North Main Area Master Plan

Alternative 2 relocates the existing North Sheridan Interchange to a location as close to the existing interchange as possible. It is not, however, in the location illustrated for a relocated interchange (gateway node) in this plan, which was intended to support the enhanced commercial gateway envisioned. See Figure 5.

Alternative 2 would be constructed in areas designated as open space and viewshed, which are protected in this plan. These designations were intended to support the riparian areas along Goose Creek, serving both as part of the community gateway envisioned, and as part of the network of parks and open spaces.

Although the *North Main Area Master Plan* advocates high-tech development north of the North Main commercial area, Alternative 2 would be located more than a mile from the development area of the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park and would not serve that development as efficiently as Modified Alternative 4 (See Figure 7).

Sheridan Transportation Plan

Alternative 2 supports the *Sheridan Transportation Policy Plan* because it is physically closer to the development in the North Main area, which is designated in the *North Main Area Master Plan* as a commercial node. It would maintain a coordinated network with adjacent land uses and support the land use in the *North Main Area Master Plan*. In particular, it would be located and designed to provide short, direct, and attractive access to existing commercial districts.

Modified Alternative 4

Modified Alternative 4 would convert undeveloped open land to transportation right-of-way. It would not preclude and may support some of the recommendations or directives for future development of the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*, the *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Plan*, or the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*. See Figure 3.

An analysis by land use plan follows.

Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan/Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan

Modified Alternative 4 would not preclude any of this plan’s “big ideas” or the land uses shown in the future land use plan map.

Modified Alternative 4 reinforces the historic distinction between city and county levels of service by guiding urban development into communities and their growth areas as described in Chapter 3 of the plan.

According to this plan, a commercial center (or node) is shown north of the study area on the east side of I-90 and a future commercial center straddles I-90 between the Special Planning Area (*Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan*) and the commercial area. A commercial center would ideally develop with a mix of commercial and other compatible uses. *The North Main Area Master Plan* amends this plan and redirects the commercial node to the existing North Main area. See Figure 5.

Modified Alternative 4 would not preclude the City from developing commercial uses in designated existing commercial areas and centers, and it would support the plan's direction for development in future growth areas as shown in the future land use plan map for land that was annexed in 2009.

Modified Alternative 4 is closer than Alternative 2 to the growth that is occurring in the area of the Wrench Ranch annexation and to the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park. See Figures 6 and 7.

The City of Sheridan provided maps to WYDOT showing which areas could be developed under what use according to the Gateway District zoning regulations. These maps (Figures 12 and 13) are provided and discussed under the *North Main Area Master Plan* in the following text. Potential developable areas may be limited because of WYDOT access requirements. Direct access to potentially developable areas from the state highway is controlled by WYDOT access requirements. For more information on access, refer to *WYDOT Access Manual 2005*.

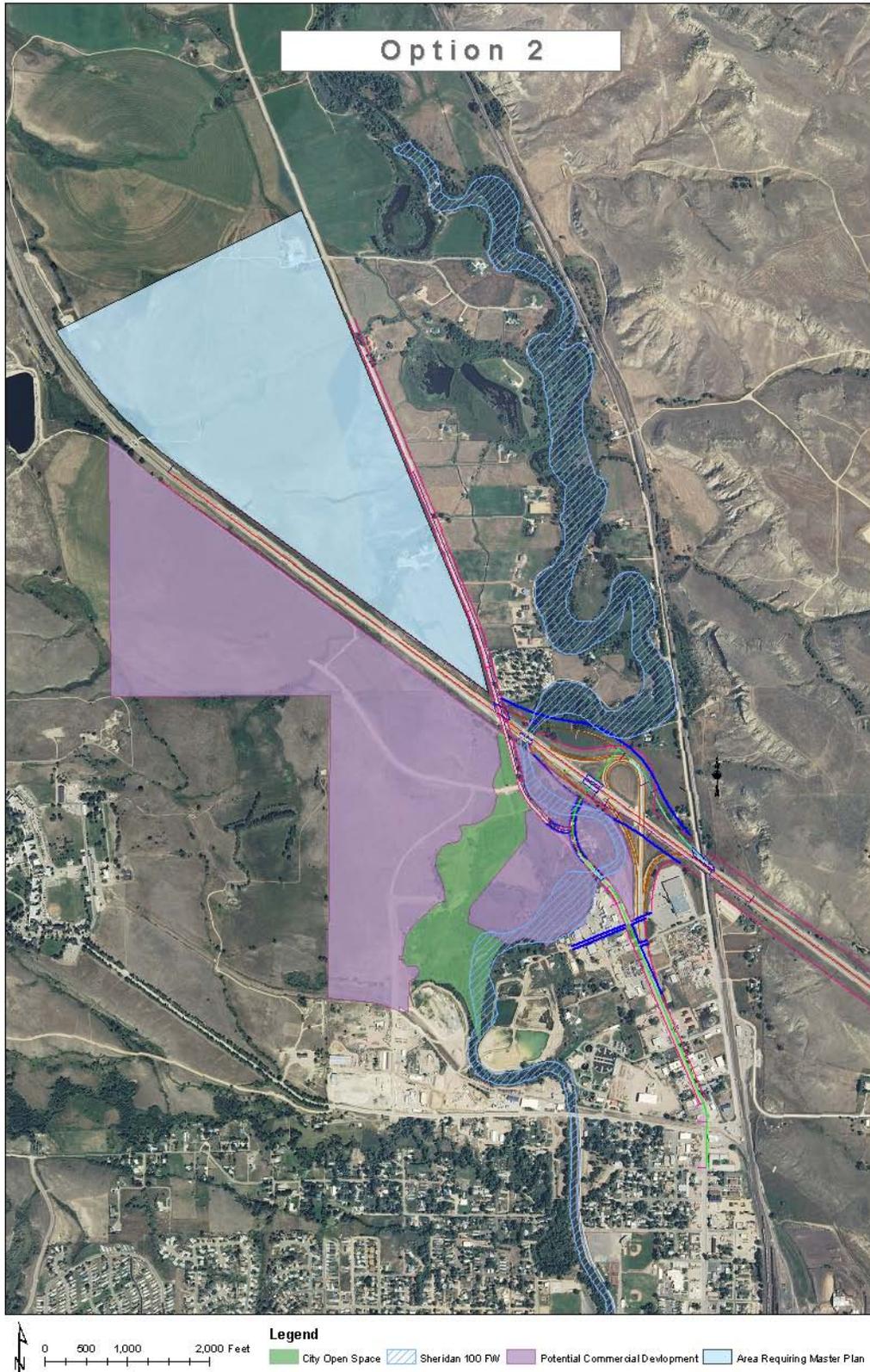


Figure 12. Areas identified by the City of Sheridan as developable under Alternative 2

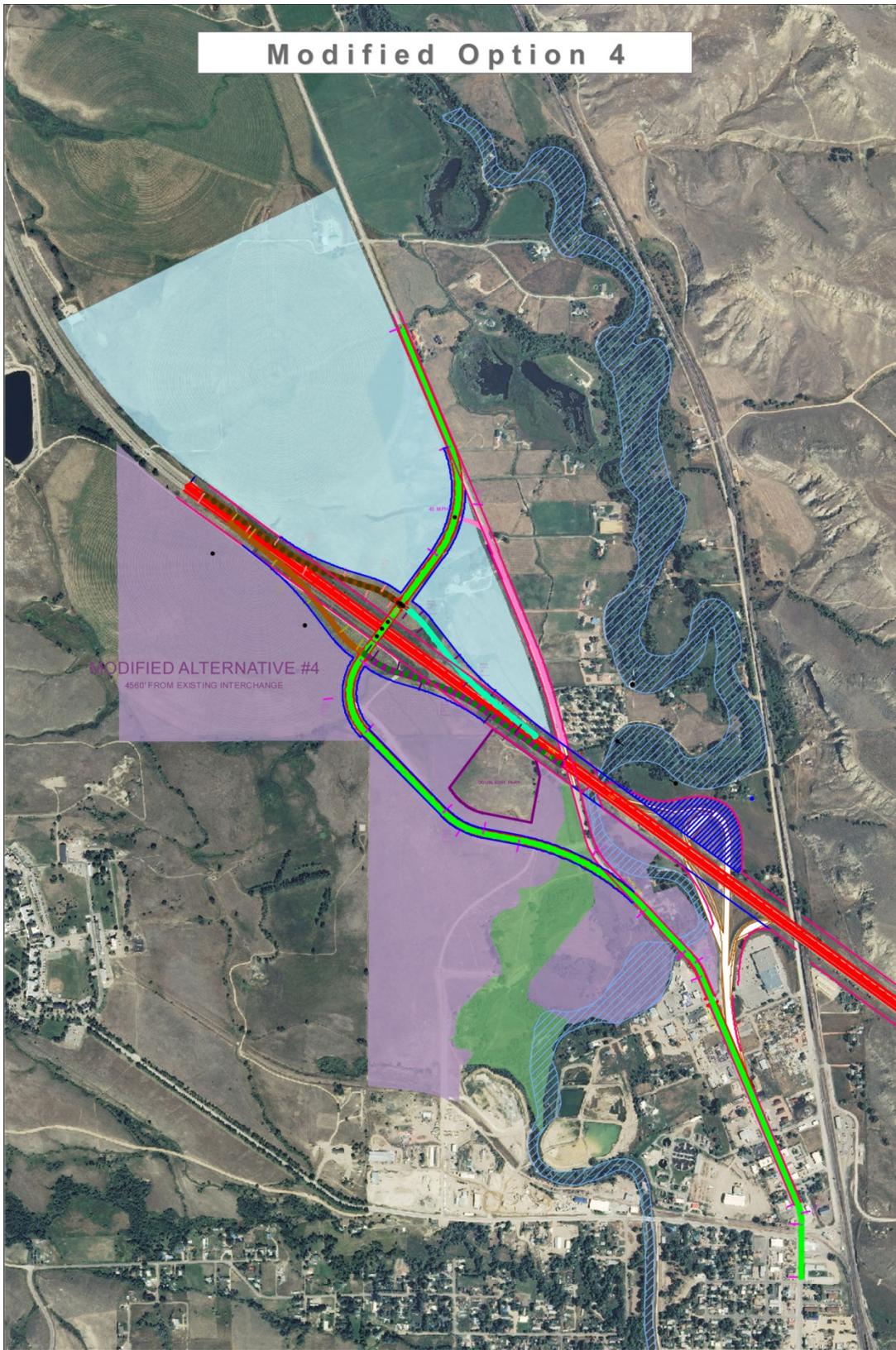


Figure 13. Areas identified by the City of Sheridan as developable under Modified Alternative 4

North Main Area Master Plan

Modified Alternative 4 would not maintain the existing location of the existing North Sheridan Interchange and would not be located as shown in the illustration for a relocated interchange (Decker Road) in this plan. However, in response to public input received and because the *North Main Area Master Plan* alternative at Decker Road does not meet purpose and need, Modified Alternative 4 was laid out to be as close to Decker Road as possible while still meeting design and safety standards, approximately 2,300 feet west of Decker Road. Modified Alternative 4 avoids the area newly subdivided land for the proposed Doubleday Park. See Figure 5.

The *North Main Area Master Plan* advocates a coordinated concept for the North Main area with the intent to revitalize the area, create new housing, enhance existing neighborhoods, and create new job opportunities through implementing strategies for land use, open space, transportation, gateways, and viewsheds.

Modified Alternative 4 would be located in an area that has been designated as viewshed, an area that under the Gateway District zoning designation would allow development if design guidelines are incorporated into the development. The first phase of the Wrench Ranch development is south of Modified Alternative 4, but it is adjacent to other annexed land on both sides of I-90. See Figure 6.

Modified Alternative 4 also would be located closer to the new Sheridan High-Tech Business Park, and the VA Medical Center than Alternative 2. Modified Alternative 4 would be located west of the open space areas along Goose Creek as well as the area envisioned as the gateway entry to the city. If Modified Alternative 4 was constructed, the land under the existing interchange would be available for a potential gateway area and would allow connections to the open space area along Goose Creek⁵.

Modified Alternative 4 would not be located in any area designated as open space and would not preclude the revitalization efforts of the City because the land under the existing interchange could be used to enhance those efforts. It would not preclude ongoing development efforts associated with the *Wrench Ranch Phase 1 Master Plan* such as construction of the Doubleday Park at the site donated and subdivided for it south of I-90 and west of Decker Road. Development at the Sheridan High-Tech Business Park could continue; a small portion of the parcel that has been designated for stormwater management would be acquired and the facilities would need to be reconfigured if this alternative is constructed. See Figure 7.

The zoning regulations enacted by the City control how land uses shown on the *North Main Area Master Plan* map would be developed. The City provided maps that show which areas could develop in the Gateway District and B-1 Business Districts. This is shown as potential commercial development in Figures 12 and 13.

⁵ Land would be vacated in accordance with WYDOT Operating Policy 19-2 Surplus of Real Property and Operating Policy 19-5 Abandonment or Relinquishment of Right-of-Way.

Sheridan Transportation Plan

Modified Alternative 4 would be located and designed to provide short, direct, and attractive access to existing commercial districts where possible. Visitors and residents of Sheridan would be able to gain access to the North Main area and the existing commercial node from I-90 using a safer connection. Signs would be provided to ensure that motorists unfamiliar with Sheridan are aware of services at the interchange and associated developments north and west of the existing interchange. Thus, Modified Alternative 4 would complement the development scenarios in the adopted land use plans.

Mitigation

Neither alternative would preclude “big idea” planning concepts but would be located in areas not specifically designated for transportation. Alternative 2 would be located in an area designated as open space. Design elements could be incorporated into the project to complement the proposed entryway into Sheridan. Appropriate signs would be provided to direct visitors to downtown Sheridan. Specific design details will be coordinated with the City of Sheridan and WYDOT as project design continues.

Modified Alternative 4 would be located in an area designated as viewshed, which is farther from the existing interchange than Alternative 2. Design elements could be incorporated to complement the Gateway District design guidelines and the viewshed. The land under the existing interchange would be vacated when the existing interchange is removed and could be incorporated into the City’s gateway and viewshed plans. Land would be vacated in accordance with WYDOT Operating Policy 19-5 Abandonment or Relinquishment of right-of-way. Appropriate signs would be provided to direct visitors to the existing commercial node and to downtown Sheridan.

Section 5: Summary of Findings

Visual and Aesthetics

Alternative 2 would be located in the foreground viewshed at the existing interchange defined in the *North Main Area Master Plan* for the bluff on the north side of I-90 and in an area designated as open space to protect the views associated with Goose Creek. From I-90, current middleground views of agricultural lands west of Decker Road are expected to be maintained until this land, which is proposed for urban uses in the long term, is developed. The views from I-90 associated with the riparian vegetation open space along Goose Creek, however, would be permanently and substantially changed with the introduction of a bridge over the creek and connecting roadways. Current background views of the Big Horn Mountains from I-90 and residences along Decker Road are expected to remain unchanged.

Modified Alternative 4 would be located within the viewshed defined in the *North Main Area Master Plan* for the area west of Decker Road, which is defined to protect agricultural middleground views and Big Horn Mountain background views from I-90. Sensitive viewers would be people at the VA Medical Center and residents on Decker Road. The Modified Alternative 4 interchange structure would be more visible in the middleground view from I-90 west of Decker Road because a new bridge spanning the mainline interstate would be needed. The height of the overpass would be approximately 30 feet from the existing ground surface. The residents along Decker Road may have restricted foreground and

middleground views associated with the overpass. The view toward I-90 from the VA Medical Center and from the historic Wrench Ranch farm buildings would be permanently changed but not adversely affected by the structure over the I-90 mainline. The permanent background views of the Big Horn Mountains would remain unchanged by the project.

Transportation and Traffic

The future traffic volumes under Alternative 2 or Modified Alternative 4 differ only slightly from the No-Build Alternative along North Main Street. The traffic analysis shows that the future construction of West Corridor reduces traffic volumes much more than the shift in interchange location. With the construction of the West Corridor, the traffic volumes are reduced by 2,000 to 4,000 vehicles, depending on location. Traffic would have to travel farther after exiting I-90 under Modified Alternative 4 than Alternative 2 to reach existing North Main area businesses, but the difference in travel time would be between one and four minutes depending on location of travel to/from I-90. Alternative 2 would not provide direct northbound access to Decker Road from I-90; Modified Alternative 4 would provide direct northbound access to Decker Road. Modified Alternative 4 would allow the existing interchange to remain open during construction, which would decrease travel delays and detours during construction. Alternative 2 would necessitate the closure of portions of the existing interchange to allow construction of the new structures, some of which would be built on a portion of the existing interchange's footprint; delays and detours on the I-90 mainline and remaining ramps would be expected during demolition and construction.

Land Use and Zoning

Both Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4 would convert some undeveloped open land to transportation right-of-way. Neither alternative would preclude, and both may support, the recommendations or directives for future development as outlined in the *Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan*, the *North Main Area Master Plan*, the *Sheridan Transportation Plan*, or the *Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan*.

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