

I have only been Mayor of the City of Sidney for less than a year, but I served on the Sidney City Council for 6 years prior, and I can say that the largest concern that my administration has is for its citizens. A simple singular concern that encompasses so many avenues.

The City of Sidney and its neighboring communities are experiencing growth on an unsubstantiated rate, and we are all struggling to keep the priorities that make up the epitome of the small Montana Town. Safety, affordable living, and community activities are what draws people to live in our communities over the larger boom towns that North Dakota is offering. We are a place to raise a family, not just work and sleep.

In order to maintain this type of community the City of Sidney and its neighbors are working diligently to bring in more police, and even federally funded units such as the DEA and the FBI. As Mayor, I know that having a safe community that my citizens can walk freely in is important to my constituents. Since Sherry Arnold's tragic murder it has been an up-hill battle to get the feeling of safety back to the community, but with the collaboration of all agents; local, state, or federal, we are finally getting back to that feeling. Maintaining that safety in a place that can easily get out of hand fast, is imperative to the entire nation. Keeping the agents that are stationed here to aid in this is required.

Housing is a constant discussion being had for the area. Affordable housing is almost non-existent, and if it is affordable it is not livable. Apartments are what is being developed mostly in Sidney, but they are not the answer. Even with new apartments going up to help with the constant need, the price gouging is not going down. To rent a two bedroom apartment in Sidney you could be paying upwards of \$2,050.00 per month. This causes multiple people to pile into the same apartment, just so they can afford to live there. The shelters in Sidney are also constantly overloaded due to people not being able to afford the establishments currently provided. I believe the answer is to develop more single family homes, to help equal out the housing costs in this area. Single family homes also urge people to buy, not rent, increasing the long term citizens of the area. This will bring in families, not just workers, which will increase the number of workers in the area for non-oilfield jobs and bring more a consistent population.

Housing is not the only large cost in the area at the moment. We are also experiencing a higher cost of living than that in other areas. The increase in big money oil jobs has caused price gouging on all fronts, including groceries, gas, recreational activities, and basic living needs. The high paying jobs has increased the per cap income in Richland County by 29.5 % since 2012. This means that rates are being forced to increase based off of target rates as provided by the state. When rates increase the cost to provide goods increases, and prices are raised. Most of the base citizens in the City of Sidney do not make oil field wages. They are still expected to pay the higher rates everywhere from the pump to the grocery line. This is causing many long term citizens who would have taken their lasts breaths in Sidney to pack up and move to more affordable communities.

Higher wages also makes getting long term employees hired next to impossible. The City of Sidney starts their public works department laborers at \$18.00/hour, which is a pretty good wage until you compare it to the average non-educated oil field position starting wage of \$25.00. How do small businesses afford to pay the increase in wages that is demanded due to the oil boom? They raise their prices, which in turn cancels any increase in wage that is possible. The City of Sidney gave a 3% Cost of Living wage increase to all its employees this year, but we also had a 200% sewer increase, which canceled most of the employees monthly wage increase.

If you look at the impact the oil boom has on the basic citizen in the Sidney and its surrounding area it is substantial. They are now in a daily struggle to maintain their way of living in order to stay in their home town. The City of Sidney does not want to lose its citizens, or replace them with new ones. We want to focus on expanding the City and its area while maintaining everything our predecessors fought for. We want to see the old mingle with the new to create a better place to live. We do not want to be the bedroom community for the Bakken Oil Boom, we want to be its hometown. In order to accomplish any of this, we need everyone to see the area as we see it: the best place to live. We cannot accomplish this if we do not get help. The Bakken is about utilizing its natural resources, and people need to realize that we cannot capitalize on the Bakken Oil Boom until we utilize the surrounding areas.