

HAMLET OF MONARCH GROWTH STUDY REVIEW

2024

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LETHBRIDGE COUNTY

HAMLET OF MONARCH GROWTH STUDY REVIEW

Part 1

Overview

From 2018 to 2020, Lethbridge County created a series of hamlet growth studies for each of its hamlets. These studies were originally prepared by the Oldman River Regional Services Commission on behalf of the County. The purpose was to analyze the existing conditions, demographics and available lands of each hamlet to determine strategies to encourage and support its residential and economic viability. The studies also analyzed present and future servicing needs along with identifying logical areas to support growth with and/or surrounding the hamlet.

The Lethbridge County Municipal Development Plan (MDP) identified that planning for future hamlet growth areas is desirable within its land use management strategy. The MDP is a long-range statutory document providing a framework of policies for decision makers regarding future growth and development opportunities. As part of the growth policies in the MDP, one of the County's objectives is to sustain the hamlets within the County and continue to protect agricultural land uses by encouraging residential development in and around the hamlets. In particular, the MDP outlines the following policies:

- The County shall support hamlet growth provided appropriate servicing provisions exist to facilitate expansions.
- The County shall, where required, undertake servicing master plans and the development of infrastructure required to facilitate growth.

To ensure that the hamlet growth studies remain relevant guiding documents, they are to be reviewed every five years to evaluate growth and development within the community and any new strategies needed to accommodate changing community context.

1.1 Intent

This report reviews how the Hamlet of Monarch has changed since the original Hamlet Growth Study was published in June 2018.

1.2 Objectives

- Review how Monarch has changed in the past 6 years, and how effective the growth study was in guiding its long-term growth and vitality.
- Examine any changes to existing land use and how development has progressed in the infill area outlined in the previous growth study.
- Compare population and development changes in Monarch against the resident survey to ensure the needs of the community are being met.
- Identify opportunities for expansion of municipal services/ community resources.
- If there are substantial changes, create a set of recommendations on how Lethbridge County can adapt the Hamlet Growth study to encourage the sustainable and prosperous growth of Monarch.



Figure 1 – Old Monarch Water Tower

Part 2

Changes Since the Last Growth Study

2.1 Population Growth

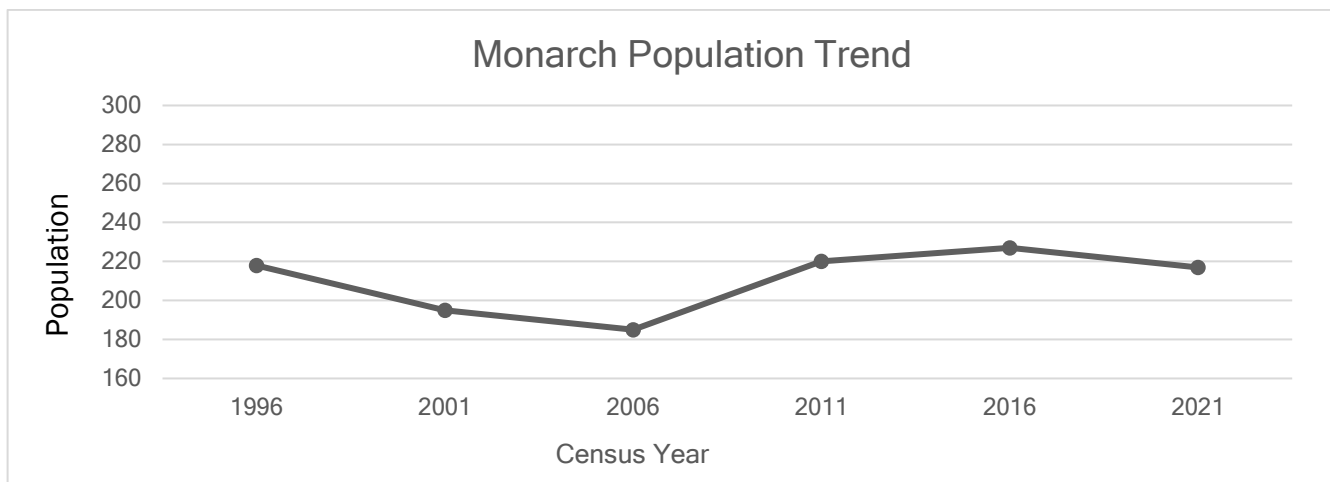
Since the last growth study, Monarch's population has declined from 227 in the 2016 census to 217 in the 2021 census, with the average rate of decline being -4.4%. However, it should be noted that much of the residential development in Monarch was initiated after 2021, meaning that recent changes to growth are not captured in this data set. If we consider the 9 new residences added after the census data was collected, combined with the average household size of 2.5 people, Monarch's population is likely closer to 230 - 240 people.

Between the two censuses, the number of private dwellings remained the same at 98. Combined with new development, private dwellings have slowly increased to 107. Monarch remains the second largest hamlet in the County behind Shaughnessy.

Table 1

Census Population and Growth

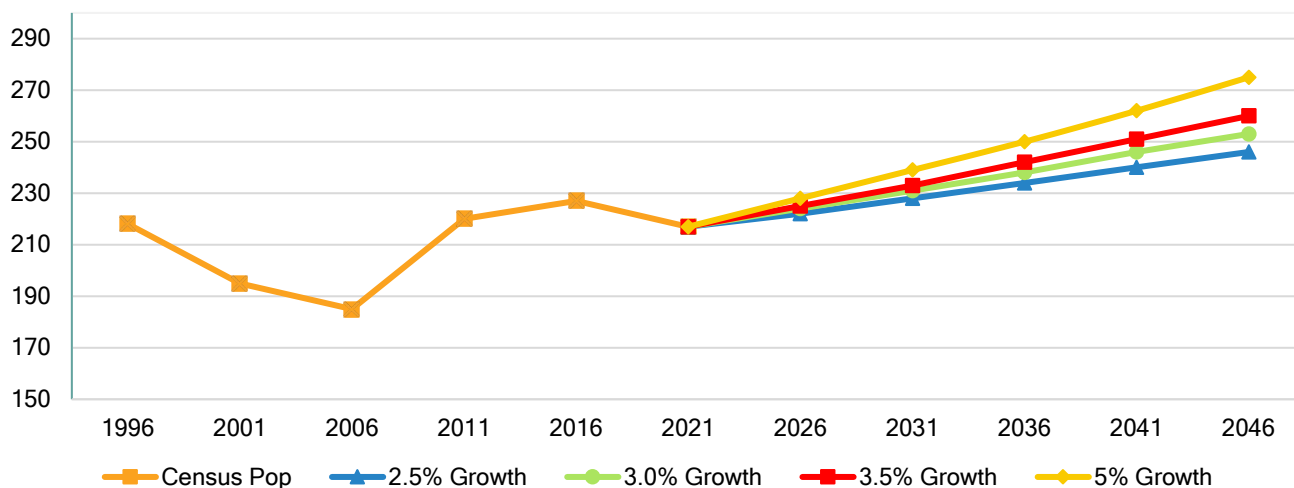
	2021	2016	2011	2006	2001	1996
POPULATION	217	227	220	185	195	218
5 YEAR TOTAL GROWTH (OR DECLINE) %	-4.4%	3.2%	18.9%	-5.1%	-10.6%	-
NO. OF PRIVATE DWELLINGS	98	98	90	79	89	-



In the last growth study, population growth rates were expected to range from 2.5% to 3.0%, assuming development and growth were not actively promoted. In 2021, the population had dipped to 217, following historical trends of Monarch's population ebbing and flowing around 200 people. The following table is an updated version of Monarch's growth projections, taking into account the slight dip in population numbers.

Table 2
Updated Growth Projections

Year	2.5% Growth	3.0% Growth	3.5% Growth	5% Growth
2021	217	217	217	217
2026	222	224	225	228
2031	228	231	233	239
2036	234	238	242	250
2041	240	246	251	262
2046	246	253	260	275



If we consider the estimated 2024 population (conservatively as 230 people), this will mean that there was a growth rate of 2% between 2021 and 2024, which is more in line with the growth study's projections.

2.2 Residential Assessment

The Hamlet of Monarch Growth Study found that the current residential housing stock was largely dwellings that appeared to be from the 1960s to 1980s. This older stock is now balanced out by several new homes constructed in the past few years.

These houses tend to be detached site-built dwellings and are largely concentrated in the northern part of the hamlet along Empress and Railway Avenue. There is also a small cluster of new development in the south along Eastman Avenue.

According to the survey results of the Monarch Growth Study, residents prefer to see more investment into the aesthetic qualities of their community. This includes less vacant lots and the appearance of well-maintained residences. The ongoing development in Monarch is likely viewed as a positive change in this regard.

2.3 Commercial/ Industrial Assessment

Commercial/ Industrial activity in Monarch has changed very little since the Monarch Growth Study was conducted.

- Monarch still does not have the population threshold to support commercial activities. This means that the community's desire for local commercial uses like a convenience store or gas station have yet to be fulfilled.
- There have also been no significant changes to lands designated as Hamlet Commercial, with the exception of a small subdivision for utility usage. There have also been no designations to Hamlet Industrial.
- There was briefly a small presence of some home-based businesses in Monarch, but all have since ceased activity.
 - In 2020, an online therapy/ counselling service was applied for.
 - Another application was made for a contracting company on the same parcel in 2021.
 - An artisan business was also applied for in 2021.

To the north of the hamlet, the industrial rail-related business along the CPR rail-line continues to operate. In 2020 it rezoned to a Rural General Industrial district in order to expand their operations. So far this has led one new development in 2021 to add storage. Several conflicts with community members have led to adjustments to operations in order to minimize impacts to residential life.

2.4 Community Services

- The Hamlet of Monarch Community Association continues operating the community hall, a private school (Providence Christian) and a church (Bethel Reformed Church).
- There has been a small loss of land designated as Hamlet Public/Institutional due to a subdivision of County owned lands to create residential lots.

2.5 Parks and Recreation

The Hamlet of Monarch Growth Study mentioned that the state of the playgrounds in Monarch were underserved. Since then, upgrades have been made to the playground located on County owned land. In 2022, Lethbridge County replaced and constructed new equipment, added tables, seating areas, a bike rack and garbage cans to improve the usability of the site. Upgrades were also made to the basketball and tennis courts. Feedback from residents indicate a high level of satisfaction in these changes.



Figure 2 - Monarch Playground Final Design

2.6 Confined Feeding Operations (CFO'S) – Proximity and Effects

There have been no changes to the feeding operations around Monarch. Existing feedlots in the area have also not expanded their operations, as the area around Monarch is a CFO exclusion zone.

Part 3

Growth and Land Use

From 2019 to the present, Monarch has had small but steady growth in development. **Map 1** displays this growth through the different categories of development permits Lethbridge County issued in this 5 year period. Data was derived from surveying both applications located in and around Monarch. Standalone waiver applications were not included in this survey.

In this 5 year period, the County received:

- 12 applications for residential uses. This includes 11 new residences (typically single detached site-built dwellings and one moved-in dwelling), as well as 1 application for an addition to an existing home.
- 7 applications for accessory uses (largely pertaining to shops/sheds and detached garages).
- 1 Application for a commercial/ industrial use (storage bins for the rail-related business).
- 3 Applications for home-based businesses (both Home Occupations 1 and 2).
- 2 Applications for demolitions.

Diagram 1 - Development by Types of Uses

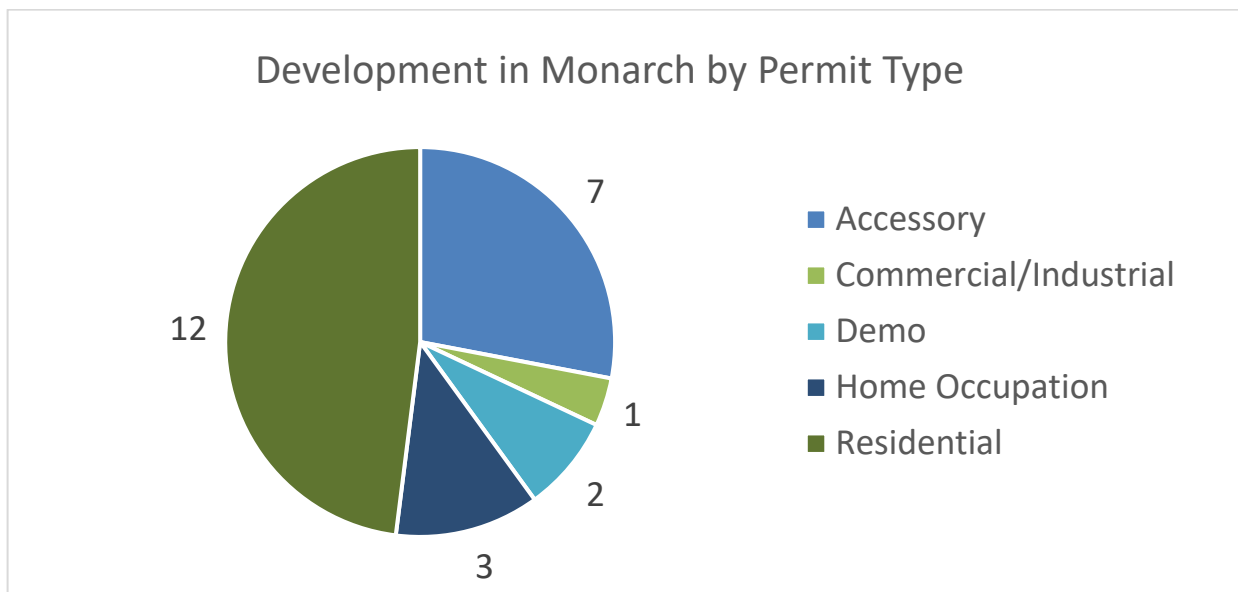
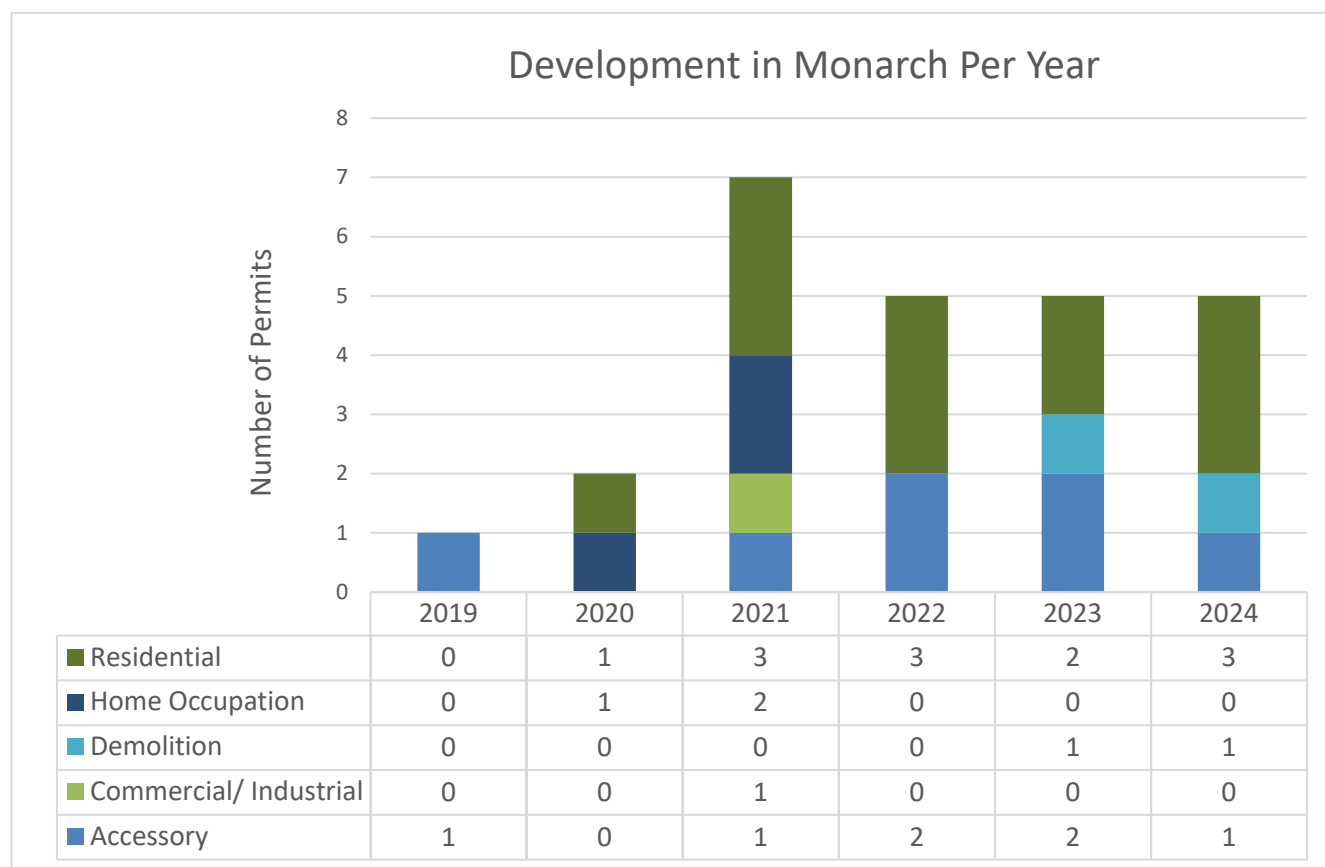


Diagram 2 - Development in Monarch Per Year



The majority of growth occurred after 2021, where the number of permits grew from 1 - 2 per year in 2019 and 2020 to 5+ permits in 2021 and onwards.

This new development has resulted in an estimated \$4,420,000 being invested in the community over the last 5 year period. Accessory uses made up \$269,000 of this total, while commercial/industrial made up \$750,000. The remaining \$3,401,000 comes from residential development. Most of this investment happened after 2021 alongside the rise in permit applications.

3.1 Infill

ORRSC determined residential infill opportunities through both occupying existing vacant parcels and creating new subdivisions. 17 lots were determined to be vacant and 11 parcels were eligible to be subdivided. The total infill potential could range from 17 lots (with no subdivision) up to 52 (a combination of existing vacant lots with new subdivided ones). 4 lots from could also be created from underutilized commercial lots. Since then, Monarch has experienced infill in both vacant lots and through subdivision.

Infill of Existing Vacant Lots

- 4 of the 17 vacant residential land titles highlighted in the 2018 growth study have been filled by new residential development.

New Subdivisions

- In total, 5 new subdivisions have allowed for 9 new parcels, 8 of which are new residential lots. One of these new subdivisions was a rezoning and subdivision of County owned land (Plan 9611179) which has allowed for 4 new residential lots. The other four subdivisions were of privately owned land. See **Map 2**.
 - 5 of these parcels have new residences.
 - 3 parcels are currently vacant.
 - 1 parcel is designated as Hamlet Commercial and is dedicated to utility usage.

While the hamlet has experienced both types of infill, this has only had a very minor impact on the number of empty lots in the community. The 13 pre-existing vacant lots combined with the 3 empty lots created through subdivision brings the net total of vacant lots down from 17 to 16. Trends show that subdivided lots tend to be filled before existing vacant lots. See **Map 3**.

Despite this, development in Monarch has so far met the expectations of residents who indicated that they would prefer existing vacant lots to be filled before the hamlet is expanded. These lots also tend to be larger than the average residential lot, staying consistent with the preference for larger lot sizes.

3.2 Expansion

ORRSC determined that outward expansion would happen to the west of Monarch in 5 phases. Phase 1 already has one residence in its area, a dwelling that has existed since before the original growth study. Expansion into this area is still a high possibility but not an immediate necessity in the coming years, as there is still room for infill within the existing hamlet boundaries. This will also depend on if private landowners wish to subdivide their properties in the future, which would create even more space for infill and push back the need for expansion.

Monarch's average number of persons per dwelling unit has also climbed from 2.3 in the 2016 census to 2.5 in the 2021 census. Meanwhile, the average number of dwelling units per acre has risen from 2.1 to 2.3 after recent residential development (largely due to infill through subdivisions). This is still considered very low density in terms of land use, but also represents a small amount of densification within the community since 2018.

If the average number of persons per dwelling unit stays the same at 2.5, it will take until 2046 (21 years) at 5% growth to generate enough population demand to fill in all 16 vacant lots. Alternatively, a slower growth rate of 2.5% could take until 2066 (41 years) for all lots to be filled (assuming no more vacant lots are created).

3.3 Future Municipal Services and Infrastructure

A lack of significant population growth and expansion means there is little to no demand to enhance existing municipal services with Monarch (aside from servicing new residences and subdivisions).

WATER: Monarch is still serviced via domestic potable water line from the City of Lethbridge. The water is allocated under the County's own water license. Since the last Growth Study, the water tower that previously served the community has been decommissioned and removed by the County and replaced by the county with a water vault/ground storage facility. Under Municipal Development Plan Policy 9.8, new developments are required to be serviceable by local infrastructure services.

- The 9 new subdivided lots can all be serviced by Monarch's waterline, as well as the 1 residence on the northwest boarder of the hamlet. See **Map 4**.
- 2 of the 10 new parcels do not have direct service to the water line (as of August 2024).
 - 1 of these parcels currently has a new residence being constructed on it and will likely have direct service in the future.
 - The other parcel is the one dedicated for utility use.

SEWER: Lethbridge County still has a sewer lagoon (2 cells) located to the east of the community. Wastewater effluent is discharged into the surrounding land using a new diesel-powered pumping unit maintained by the County. Monarch is serviced by wastewater lines throughout the community that feed into this lagoon. Residential development is not intended for this area, and the nearby land is currently leased out to a nearby feedlot for agricultural use.

- 4 new parcels do not have service to Monarch's sanitary lines (as of June 2024).
 - 3 of these parcels have new residences being constructed on them and will likely have direct service in the future. See **Map 5**.

- The other parcel that does not have direct service is the area designated for utility use.

DRAINAGE: There is still no formal (i.e. piped) municipal storm water drainage infrastructure system in Monarch. The community continues to rely on drainage naturally being directed to the coulees and Oldman River basin. No major drainage issues have resulted in a need to change this.

ROADS: The majority of local municipal roads within the hamlet are paved and may be considered in overall good condition. All new residences have access to these roads, either directly or via alleyway.

- One new gravel road has been created through a subdivision of County owned lands, which adds a connection from Victoria Avenue to Empress Avenue.
- In the survey, residents requested sidewalks, which has not been implemented.

OTHER: While not a municipal service, many residents surveyed for the growth study were dissatisfied with the lack of accessibility to cable/ high speed internet services. In 2022, the governments of Canada and Alberta announced a historic broadband partnership to invest up to \$780 million to provide high-speed Internet access to Albertans in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. At present, Monarch has not been selected to receive this program, though it is projected that 97.7% of Alberta will be connected to high-speed Internet by 2026, and 100% by 2030.

Part 4

Analysis

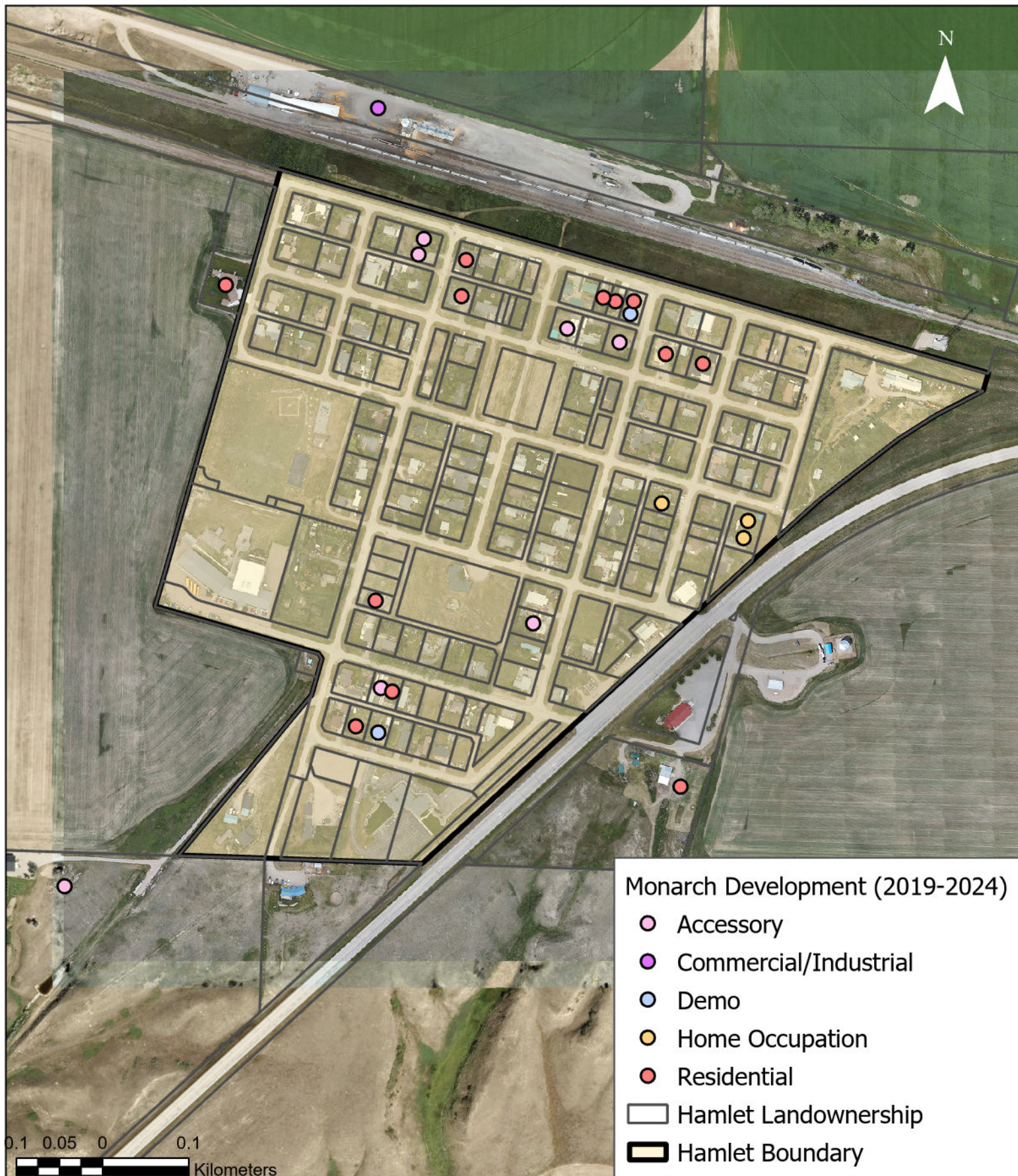
While not immediately relevant to Monarch in its current state, the 2018 Hamlet of Monarch Growth Study is still applicable as a long-term plan for outward expansion. Development in Monarch so far has aligned both with the Hamlet of Monarch Growth Study and the Municipal Development Plan.

- Steps taken by Lethbridge County have touched on many of the opportunities/concerns voiced in the Growth Study and resident survey, including:
 - Improving water utility infrastructure and park spaces.
 - Preserving larger lot sizes while promoting efficient land use.
 - Encouraging development that supports quiet enjoyment and meets the needs of the community.
- Growth in Monarch will likely depend on overall growth in the region and continued support to community services and resident needs.
 - As urban municipalities grow, Monarch may become an attractive option for is smaller size, larger lot sizes and proximity to other communities.
- Existing empty lots and subdivisions have accommodated the small increase in private dwellings since the 2021 census.
 - There is also still opportunity for residential infill as noted in the 2018 Growth Study. However, this will be up to the private owners of these lots to initiate this growth.
 - The number of current vacant lots means that there is no immediate demand for new subdivisions or expansion.
- Infill should remain the preferred method of growth in Monarch in order to promote the sustainable use of land and encourage density. This aligns with policy 9.1 and 9.2 of the Municipal Development Plan.
- Historic low population growth likely means that creating new Hamlet Commercial parcels is not a high priority, and current growth trends show that Monarch's population is not likely to grow large enough to support commercial activity in the coming years.
- If this growth trend continues, there will only need to be minor adjustments to existing utility infrastructure to accommodate growth in the next few years.

Appendix

Chart 1 – List of Development in Monarch, 2019-2024

Municipal Address	Permit Number	Development Type	Description	Cost of Development	Year
100081 RGE RD 240	2019-014	Accessory	Addition to existing shop	\$6,000.00	2019
311 ALBERTA LN	2020-053	Home Occupation	Home Occupation 1	\$0.00	2020
412 Queens Ave	2020-116	Residential	Residence with attached garage	200,000	2020
101049 Range Road 24-0	2021-044	Commercial/industrial	8bin feedmill	\$750,000.00	2021
235039 HWY 3A	2021-071	Residential	Additions to residence and shop, no permits	\$126,000.00	2021
306 PRINCESS ST	2021-110	Home Occupation	Home Occupation 1 (artisan)	\$0.00	2021
421 EMPRESS AV	2021-111	Residential	Moved-in residence with attached garage	\$200,000.00	2021
311 ALBERTA LN	2021-124	Home Occupation	Home Occupation 2 - contractor (fences, decks, etc.)	\$0.00	2021
314 RAILWAY AV	2021-174	Residential	Residence with attached garage	\$265,000.00	2021
108 EDWARD ST	2021-194	Accessory	Residential accessory structures with setback waivers	\$0.00	2021
325 EMPRESS AV	2022-017	Accessory	Detached garage with size and height waiver	\$100,000.00	2022
420 RAILWAY AV	2022-061	Residential	New Residence with attached garage and detached garage	\$400,000.00	2022
310 RAILWAY AV	2022-068	Residential	Residence with attached garage	\$300,000.00	2022
210 GEORGE ST	2022-095	Residential	Residence and Accessory Building Setback Waiver, Chicken Coop with Setback Waiver	\$0.00	2022
412 QUEEN AV	2022-145	Accessory	Roof mounted solar array	\$25,000.00	2022
108 EDWARD ST	2023-027	Accessory	Accessory Building (shed)	\$8,000.00	2023
203 EMPRESS AV	2023-044	Residential	Single Detached Dwelling with attached and detached garage	\$510,000.00	2023
407 EASTMAN AV	2023-152	Demo	Demolition / Removal of Existing Home	\$0.00	2023
417 EDWARD ST	2023-161	Residential	Single Detached Dwelling	\$275,000.00	2023
406 ALEXANDRA ST	2023-166	Accessory	Accessory Building	\$60,000.00	2023
302 RAILWAY AV	2024-033	Demo	Demolition of Existing Home	\$0.00	2024
217 EMPRESS AV	2024-043	Residential	Single Detached with Two Decks	\$300,000.00	2024
411 EASTMAN AV	2024-085	Residential	Single Detached Site-Built	\$300,000.00	2024
118 ALEXANDRA ST	2024-117	Accessory	Accessory Building (Shop)	\$70,000.00	2024
302 RAILWAY AV	2024-124	Residential	Single Detached Site Built with Garage	\$525,000.00	2024



Map 1: Development in Monarch by Permit Type

Created by: Hannah Laberge, Planning Intern

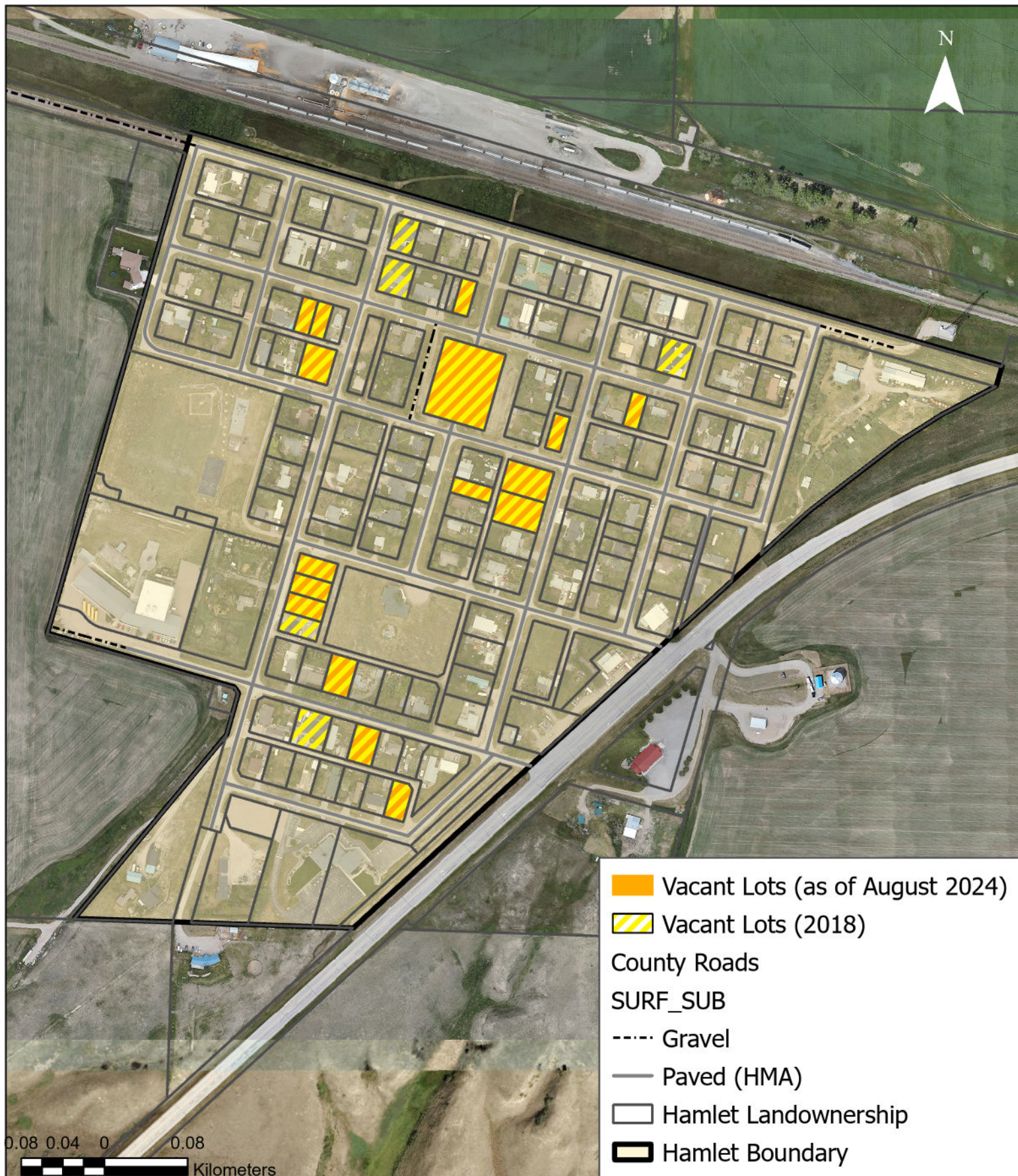
Data Source: Lethbridge County Development Permit Applications (2019 - 2024)



Map 2: Vacant Lots and Subdivisions

Created by: Hannah Laberge, Planning Intern

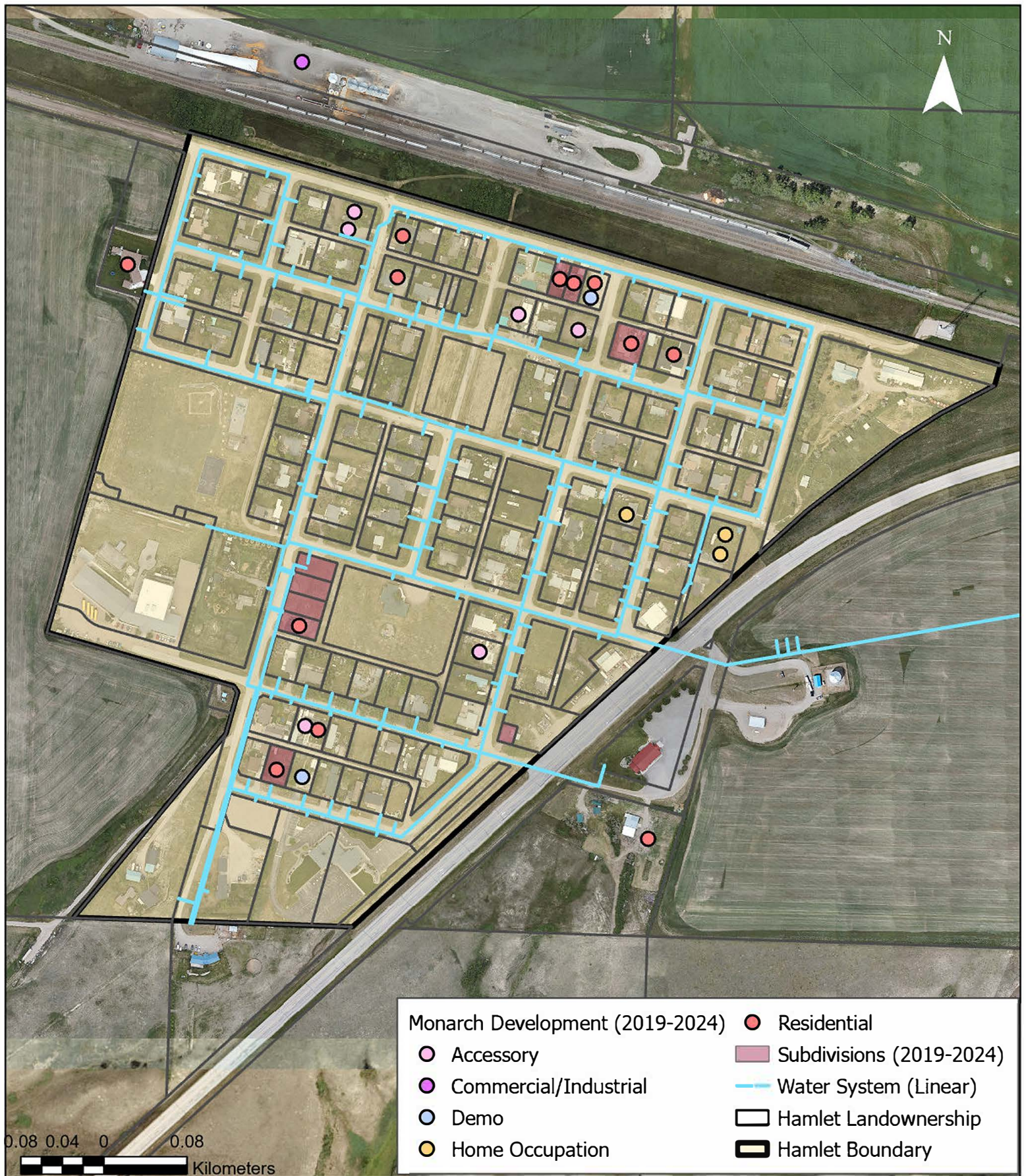
Data Source: Lethbridge County Development Permit Applications (2019 - 2024)



Map 3: Vacant Lots in 2018 versus Vacant Lots in 2024

Created by: Hannah Laberge, Planning Intern

Data Source: Lethbridge County Development Permit Applications (2019 - 2024)



Map 4: Water Utility Infrastructure

Created by: Hannah Laberge, Planning Intern

Data Source: Lethbridge County Development Permit Applications (2019 - 2024)



Map 5: Sanitary System Infrastructure

Created by: Hannah Laberge, Planning Intern

Data Source: Lethbridge County Development Permit Applications (2019 - 2024)