

*How is Governor Burgum's
Main Street Initiative
Shaping Up?*

NDPA

NORTH DAKOTA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

SUMMER newsletter | 2018



North Dakota
Planning Association

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Photo Credit: Williston Economic Development

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2

*President's
Message*

Scott Harmstead

4

*Demographic
Trends Shape
ND Plans*

David Sweeney

6

*Burgum's Main
Street Initiative*

Daniel Nairn

11

West Fargo 2.0

Larry Weil

14

*Prairie Planner
Spotlight*

Steve Josephson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SCOTT HARMSTEAD, AICP



THE POWER OF PREPARATION

For many of you reading this newsletter, your career revolves around Planning Commission/Planning and Zoning Board meetings. Rather than focus on what Millennials really want, new planning fads, or rare facets of planning, I thought it would be good to revisit the basis of current planning—preparing for Planning Commission meetings. Four points are provided below that you can rely on when evaluating any planning-related application:

1. Prepare a staff report. If you do not already prepare a staff report for each planning application that must go before your Planning Commission, it can be a very helpful tool not only for the Commission, but also for you. There is a plethora of resources out there if you need help in creating your first staff report or if you want to improve upon the format you currently use. If you are a member of the American Planning Association (APA), check out PAS Quick Notes #30 – Getting the Most Out of Staff Reports, or Planning Magazine's March 2017 issue, which has an excellent article titled The Better Staff Report. Another good resource is the Municipal Research Service Center's (MRSC) 8 Key Components of an Effective Planning-related Staff Report (note that MRSC is based in Washington State, but has great information that works across the nation).
2. Counsel with fellow staff. If you are fortunate to have fellow staff to bounce ideas/recommendations off of, do it. Some of you may have other planners in the office. If that is the case, find another planner who has little knowledge of the subject application (maybe it's someone involved in community development or long-range planning). If you don't have another planner around, try others in the office (Engineer, Auditor, Administrative staff, etc.). Those not in the planning profession can provide more of a layperson's perspective or a perspective from a different professional angle (i.e. transportation, financial, etc.), which can help prepare you for how your Planning Commissioners might react to the application.
3. Counsel with the Planning Commission Chair. It should be common practice to visit with your Planning Commission Chair in advance of each meeting. Provide the agenda to your Chair as early as possible so that he/she can have an idea of what is coming. Some of the questions he/she may have may be questions you want to answer in your staff report. Also, what a great opportunity to get a feeling for any political sensitivities that you might not be fully tuned into yet.
4. Discuss your recommendation with the applicant. Even before the application is submitted, it is important to be in communication with your applicant. After visiting with fellow staff and your Chair, and you have developed what you believe is the best recommendation, discuss it with the applicant. This includes providing the staff report to the applicant as soon as you can.

To boil this advice down to one takeaway—communicate. Stay in communication with your applicant, your Commission (through the Chair), and fellow staff. Don't feel like you must work in a silo. Remember that North Dakota Planning Association members constitute a varied network of planners and related professionals with different experiences and perspectives throughout North Dakota. I do hope you can reach out to your fellow NDPA members for advice when necessary.

Need advice from a fellow ND Planner? Reach out to [us](#)

For more on staff reports check out the following resources:

[Getting the Most Out of Staff Reports](#)

[The Better Staff Report](#) (APA Membership Required)

[8 Key Components of an Effective Planning-Related Staff Report](#)

2018 NDPA CONFERENCE

Join us for the annual NDPA Conference.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

ALERUS CENTER, GRAND FORKS

The North Dakota Planning Association is excited to continue our partnership with League of Cities and have the North Dakota Planning Conference the day before the League of Cities Conference at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks on Thursday, September 13, 2018.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS DEADLINE EXTENDED

Have a topic to present at the conference? The deadline to submit presentation abstracts has been extended. [CLICK HERE](#) for ideas and more information.

Tribal Planning and Western Planner Conference

The theme for the 2018 Tribal Planning and Western Planner Conference is "Building Partnerships through Understanding, Cooperation and Consultation."

**AUGUST 5-8, 2018
FORT HALL, IDAHO**

For more information visit:

<https://www.westernplanner.org/2018-conference/>

North Dakota Downtown Conference

The conference will focus on the positive impacts of healthy downtowns.

**OCTOBER 23-24, 2018
GRAND FORKS, ND**

For more information and to register:

<https://niddowntowns.com/nd-downtown-conference/>



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DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS SHAPE ND PLANS

By: David Sweeney

How are patterns of migration shifting across North Dakota? What should communities do to entice business growth and expand their workforces? How might demographic and economic shifts affect municipal taxation and spending? Data wonks of all stripes - demographers, economists, and their ilk - shared their insights at the third annual North Dakota Demographics Conference, conducted on March 20 in Fargo. The conference agenda included a keynote panel, several breakout sessions, and, for the first time, a poster session to promote peer research and planning tools.

Over the last decade, North Dakota's economic fortunes have been tied to variable production and employment in the oil and gas sector. During the national recession and recovery, North Dakota's economic surge bucked every trend. Rural communities, especially agricultural communities in the Midwest, tend to be losing population, but North Dakota was a major outlier. In terms of net-migration, the principal component of growth, nearly every county benefitted during the oil boom. In 2012 alone, counties in the Bakken region added 100 migrants for every 1,000 residents. "There are ludicrous things that have gone on," said Professor David Flynn, from the Department of Economics at the University of North Dakota. "The Williston workforce was increasing 2 percent every month – how on earth can you plan for that?"

Drilling and rigging created thousands of jobs. Once the oil apparatus was operational, though, many jobs disappeared. Population declined across the Bakken, partially negating the gains from the boom. The influx of young workers was a gift to North Dakota, Flynn says, but only one half of the equation: Now, how can we keep them here?

That's the million-dollar question. Workforce attrition showed us this: work is not the principal determinant of locational choice. What ultimately matter are qualities of place – urban or rural amenities – and the mental and emotional associations we form about the places we live – "this is home."

More broadly, globalization and technology are

decoupling the longstanding live-work linkage, giving more workers the freedom to choose where they want to live. If your workspace is the Internet, your locational choice is limited mainly by the size of your paycheck. For every state and city that wants to grow its economy, the talent pool is deeper, but competition for workers has expanded. That's why community planning is a critical aspect of economic development.

One strategy to attract a 21st Century workforce is to provide 21st Century communities. The Main Street Initiative is explicit in this regard – "these efforts will help create vibrant communities poised to attract and retain a 21st Century workforce, helping North Dakota compete and succeed in a global economy", states the website. People tend to want to live in communities that provide a suite of opportunities to live, shop, and play, and achieve their personal and professional goals. This is certainly true for the two largest American demographics, millennials and baby boomers.

Baby boomers have always exerted tremendous influence on markets and city planning. They've affected every housing trend as they've moved through their life cycle, including the apartment boom of the 1960s and 1970s, then the explosion of "move-up" single-family homes in the 1990s and 2000s. Now, they're in the market for smaller homes that require less maintenance, and communities that provide a bundle of desirable attributes.

Millennials have similar preferences, and North Dakota has a lot of them. Of the 50 states, North Dakota ranks second in the proportion of population aged 20-24 (Alaska), said Kevin Iverson, the Census Office Manager for the Department of Commerce. They're concentrated in North Dakota's largest cities, which are all growing. At one extreme, Fargo added 46,000 people from 1990-2016, Iverson said.

North Dakota's strength is its youth. But millennials are also the most likely group to migrate, Iverson said. Indeed, the 20-24 age group consists primarily of college students, many of whom come from out of state (often Minnesota). North Dakota won't retain

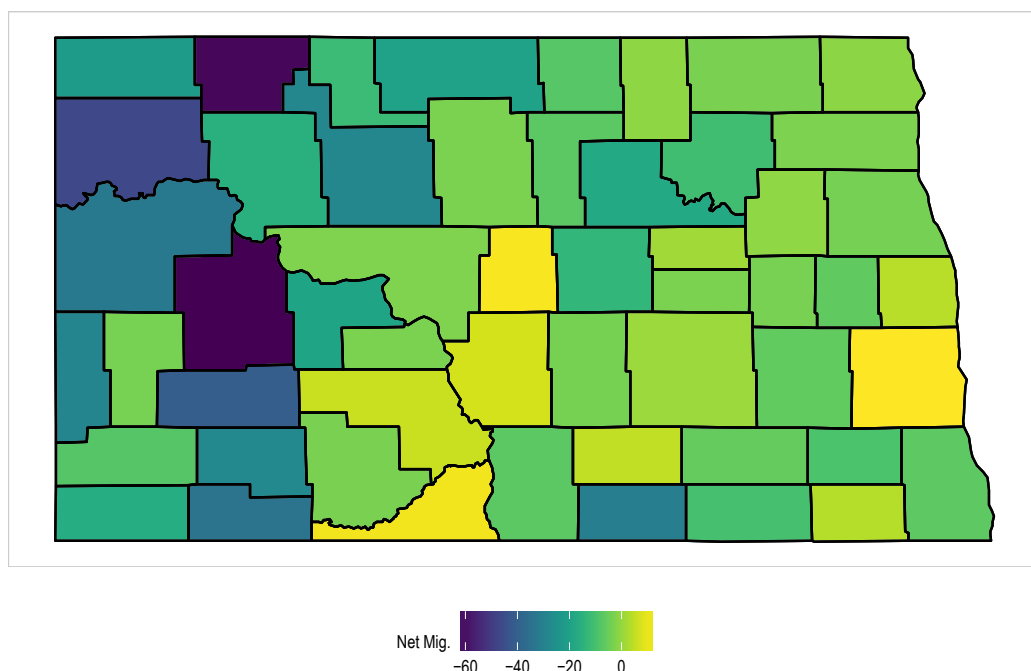
every graduating student, clearly. Our college and university towns should provide amenities that are attractive to students, but we can also plan, design, and promote our communities toward returning alumni and older millennials. Older millennials are a good group to target, since they earn more money and pay more taxes. They're also more likely to put down roots and have children.

If North Dakota's workforce is going to expand, we'll have to grow from outside-in. We can't make enough babies to do it on our own, said Sandy McMerty, the Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Commerce. The low unemployment rate is a testament to that – it's been hovering around 2.6 percent in 2017 and 2018, indicating an undersupply of workers compared to available jobs. This makes prospective firms skittish, since they know they'll need to bid up wages to satisfy their own labor needs and provide a living wage. Flynn says it's important for North Dakota to frame economic opportunities the right way. "If you want to start cheerleading for North Dakota," he said, "stop talking about low unemployment."

Even when times are good, there's a tendency for North Dakotans to adopt an outlook of "agrarian fatalism," said Brad

2016 County Net Migration Rate

Net Migration per 1,000 people



Dark blues and greens depict the high rates of out-migration that followed the boom.

Map courtesy of David Flynn

Gibbens, Deputy Director for the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota. There's a general sense, typified by native farmers, that we are prisoner to our demographics and economics. "It is the way things are," we say. We tell ourselves, even if growth returns to 2012 levels, people might not consider a long-term stay because they remember the recent boom-bust. There's a hardened rationality here. Growth attracts workers, but not always residents.

Newcomers will move here because they appreciate North Dakota's Legendary spirit and sense of place – its pastoral panoramas and vibrant communities. Others will come because they grew up here, moved away, and want to rediscover their roots. McMerty knows how to pitch the prairie to these folks: "North Dakota is one of the last authentic landscapes in the country – with room to grow."



Dave Sweeney has worked as a community planner for SRF Consulting Group since 2015. His primary role is to help communities create long-range land use and transportation plans. He holds a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Iowa. He is a regular bicycle commuter.

Burgum's Main Street Initiative

A REPORT ALONG THE WAY

By Daniel Nairn, AICP
Planner
City of Bismarck

Over the first year of North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum's term of office, a set of concepts labeled the "Main Street Initiative" has begun to take on a discernable shape. The initiative was conceived as a centerpiece of the governor's campaign for public office. On the campaign trail, Burgum, along with his running mate Brent Sanford, often touted its three pillars: healthy, vibrant communities; a 21st century workforce; and smart, efficient infrastructure. After winning the election, Burgum and Sanford clearly established these principles as an important tenet of their governing philosophy.

As the Main Street Initiative was rolled out, a common response from commentators, including many in the state legislature, could be characterized as anticipatory reservation. While the vision was indeed attractive, and many throughout the state have admired Burgum's work through the Kilbourne Group in spurring revitalization of downtown Fargo, questions remained about how the vision would be incorporated into statewide policy and practices in a tangible way. Are the successes of North Dakota's largest city scalable to the state's other metropolitan areas, let alone the over 300 incorporated cities in the state with fewer than 5,000 residents? As implied with the word "initiative," its true nature would be revealed through the actions and outcomes it produces.



Image credit: North Dakota Department of Commerce

While the source of the initiative is within the state government, the primary actors will inevitably be local and across the spectrum from public to private sector. This is where the main streets are, after all. This is also a realm that planners are intimately aware of and operate in on a regular basis. Many of the specific elements of the initiative – from facilitating infill development and designing active streetscapes to reducing pressures of low-density outward growth – will be familiar to the profession. There are certainly echoes of earlier and established movements, such as Smart Growth and New Urbanism, however with perhaps a greater emphasis placed on fiscal responsibility and entrepreneurship.

Early implementation of the Main Street Initiative has been primarily an exercise in organization, education, and inspiration. The Governor's office has worked to build collaboration across various state agencies, in particular the Department of Commerce and the Department of Transportation, as well as with statewide organizations such as the North Dakota League of Cities, the North Dakota Association of Counties, and the Greater North Dakota Chamber of Commerce. Representatives from these entities and others have engaged in regular communication, with staff assistance from a central point person designated within the Department of Commerce: Holly Holt, Director of Strategic Initiatives.

The conversations are arranged into topical "work processes," such as community investment or workforce development, that cut across the traditional silos of state agencies. A new student advisory council for high school students is in the process of being formed, which will allow youth from the state to offer constructive feedback for the Main Street Initiative. Attracting youth back to a community after they leave for college has been a perennial issue for many North Dakota communities. Ms. Holt's response: "the first step is to just ask them what they want."

The signature event of the initiative has certainly been the Main Street Summit, which was held in Bismarck in February of 2018. Keynote speakers, including planner Chuck Marohn from Strong Towns, shared their experiences and advice from across the nation. Probably the most striking feature of this event (to me, at least) was the attendance. Over 700 guests came to the capital city for the summit - about 1 out of every 1,000 people in the state - a clear testimony to the level of support, or at least sheer curiosity, the Main Street Initiative had garnered in the first year.

The online presence of the initiative is www.mainstreetnd.gov. Beyond establishing some basic principles and local case studies, the site includes a few features that may be useful for planners in North Dakota. The Community Dashboard, first released as a beta version, then as a complete product in May of 2018, provides easy access to and visualization of government data for cities throughout the state. The numbers can be placed in a meaningful context by comparing your own city to other North Dakota peer communities. Which major city in North Dakota has the most feet of local, paved roadways per capita? (Go check it out for the answer). Eventually the tool will allow community leaders to add and edit their own economic development indicators onto the dashboard. The site also hosts a database of funding opportunities, from federal grants to state-enabled incentives, that may be available for local governments, a collection that was previously only available to organizations willing to utilize a paid listing service.

These tools are provided to create a common language out of data, allowing advocates to present a message in a way that is difficult to refute or ignore, and ultimately allowing local and state officials to make sound decisions based in fact.

The Governor's office is being deliberately slow to craft state policy. While this may frustrate some

FARGO MAIN AVENUE DESIGN PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS INITIATIVE'S POTENTIAL

By David Sweeney



On May 8, Fargo-Moorhead residents turned out for a public input meeting to discuss the reconstruction of a ten-block segment of Main Avenue (US 10). What began as a simple highway reconstruct in 2016 has evolved to incorporate several options, including a 5-Lane alternative and three reduced-capacity alternatives. Along the way, the local conversation about corridor function has evolved, too, from prioritizing the operations of existing and projected traffic volumes through the corridor to designing a more pedestrian-friendly corridor that allows for wider sidewalks and reduced vehicular speeds. The emphasis on a more “complete streets” approach can be traced to the spirited involvement of local businesses and neighborhood groups, who have taken their cue from the Capitol’s Main Street Initiative and from their involvement in Fargo’s downtown master plan – Downtown InFocus.

Originally, the reconstruction project was scoped to consider two options: a no-build alternative versus a 5-lane alternative. Gradually, committed involvement from corridor business owners and other citizens spurred interest in a reduced-lane design, which would free up more space for parking and pedestrians. This momentum culminated with economic analysis, which identified properties along the project area for potential infill and redevelopment and forecasted 20 and 30-year sales receipts and property taxes under the 5-lane alternative and the reduced-lane alternatives.

It turns out that planning for pedestrians produces

a big bang for the buck. The 3-lane option would generate \$29 million in property taxes over 20 years, per the study, while the 5-lane option would produce \$8 million. The price tag for construction of all build alternatives is approximately \$13 million, so selecting a reduced-lane alternative is a substantial return on investment. Because the forecasted property tax increase is a public benefit, it’s directly comparable to the public cost of construction – essentially, the project pays for itself (and then some) under the reduced-lane alternative. But private businesses would also benefit through increased sales, largely through expanded opportunities for redevelopment and increased foot traffic. These benefits could lead to additional investment in Downtown over time.

A preferred design alternative has not been chosen yet. The City of Fargo and North Dakota Department of Transportation will provide input prior to a final decision. However, if the last public meeting is any indication, there is strong public support for a reduced-lane corridor. By emphasizing walkability, community vitality, and data-driven methods, Fargo’s Main Avenue project highlights the potential for the Main Street Initiative to fulfill its promise – vibrant communities built on smart, efficient infrastructure – one street at a time.

Alternative Main Avenue designs under consideration:

- 5-lane section
- 3-lane section
- 4-lane section (2+1 with two-way left turn lane and parking on one side)
- 5/4/3-lane hybrid

who occasionally launch all-style-and-no-substance missives about the initiative, the patient approach has a certain compelling wisdom to it, specifically: how do you know what local communities want until you ask them? It also happens to be the case that the cycle of the biennial legislative session affords the administration time to carefully develop content before the 2019 lawmaking machinations begin.

The Governor has embarked on a tour of Main Street listening sessions, from Grand Forks to Beulah to Cannonball, with the intent of hearing from locals on what issues rise to the surface of their attention. The visits also let staff evaluate existing policies and programs for how they actually work on the ground, and what potential changes might improve their efficacy. Of course, it's quite possible that planners reading this have ideas about how the state government can make their own jobs a little easier. Jace Beehler, Policy Advisor in the Governor's Office, has agreed to field any comments at jabeehler@nd.gov. Take advantage of being in a state where you can share an idea with a real person, rather than be ferreted away by an algorithm.

One new policy with perhaps the closest association with the Main Street Initiative may be the Urban Grants Program from the North Dakota Department of Transportation. It is a competitive grant open to larger cities, allocating a pot of funding with a focus, according to the prospectus, "inward toward the established community rather than outward expansion," with an additional preference given to projects that support revitalization of the core of the community. The first round of winners has not yet been revealed, but the suggested projects include a range of multimodal, safety, and quality-of-life improvements to urban transportation systems.

The North Dakota Streets program offers a similar option for communities of under 5,000 population. Although this program is not new, there have been some revisions this year. The matching grant allows enhancements, such as sidewalks and lighting, along state routes, which often still run through the center of small towns throughout the state. The ND Moves Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is also underway, which will include an interesting component allowing communities to implement demonstration projects, such as temporary curb extensions or parklets, to test public interest and functionality of various streetscape improvements. Consider it a beta version of infrastructure.

Within the state Department of Commerce, the Renaissance Zone program has the most obvious overlap with the Main Street Initiative. Although hardly a new program, it did face an important test during the Governor's first term in office, with various bills intended to either eliminate or scale back this targeted locally-driven tax incentive. The state legislature eventually decided to keep the program in place with a few new assurances that all political subdivisions formally support their own community's Renaissance Zone. The City of Bismarck, which had a program in perhaps the most precarious position, garnered the necessary support to extend it after closing a long-standing Tax Increment Financing district that had generated opposition in recent years.

In this respect, Burgum's initiative is different from another famous governor-led initiative, Maryland Governor Glendening's Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation in the late 1990s, even while aimed at a fairly similar outcome. Certainly, Maryland's Glendening engaged in extensive public outreach and had to build consensus with his own state legislature, but the objective was always to create a basket of state policies that one could point to and say, this is smart growth in Maryland. In retrospect, some of these policies, such as farmland preservation, have been evaluated as a success. Other objectives, such as urban revitalization and affordable housing, have been less successful, even compared to states that intervened much less in traditionally local matters. The North Dakota Main Street Initiative approach seems to be much more focused



Photos credit: Aaron Weber, Office of the Governor

on grassroots development of solutions tailored to the unique needs of each community.

Of course, there very well may be an agenda of new North Dakota state policies on the way. As important as public outreach and collaboration are, ultimately there's a reason the initiative is emanating from the Governor's office rather than a non-profit or citizen group. Given the posture of the Main Street Initiative, some changes on the horizon may actually be the devolution of certain decisions currently under state control down to local communities. (If I may interject with a humble suggestion: over ten years after Donald Shoup published the *High Cost of Free Parking*, one of APA's most popular and influential books, and on the cusp of a revolution in autonomous vehicles, we are still the only state that prohibits local governments from using price as a means for allocating scarce on-street parking resources).

It's admittedly a challenge to discern which actions should be classified under the Main Street umbrella and which are occurring through their own momentum. However, that's not necessarily an important question to ask. The initiative seems to be self-consciously framed as a catalyst for a complex and emergent order, rather than a new institution with a defined structure imposed from the top down. If some community leaders watch a session of the Main Street Summit online and decide to run with it on their own, that counts too.

Daniel Nairn, AICP
is a planner with the
City of Bismarck



WEST FARGO 2.0: A NEW VISION LOOKING BACK

By Larry Weil
Community Development Director
City of West Fargo

The city of West Fargo has been a growing community for a number of decades. During the 1990s the “City on the Grow” was growing at a rate of about 2.2 percent per year, reaching a population of 14,940 by 2000. Much discussion took place about what the community wanted to become when the comprehensive planning process occurred in 1999. The city became a more favorable location for development after 1992 when the Sheyenne Diversion Flood Control Project was completed. Its remaining undeveloped land, which was north of Interstate 94, was developing at a faster pace than previously anticipated.

The 2000 Comprehensive Plan considered mid- to long-range development south of I-94. However, development pressure in the early 2000s advanced the City’s commitment to growth through infrastructure projects. The City experienced rapid growth in the next decade with its population increasing to 25,830 (73% gain), and the developed land area doubled during that period. The City completed an update to the Future Land Use Plan in 2005, and updated its comprehensive plan again in 2007. By 2016 the population was estimated to be over 35,000 inhabitants.

Engagement

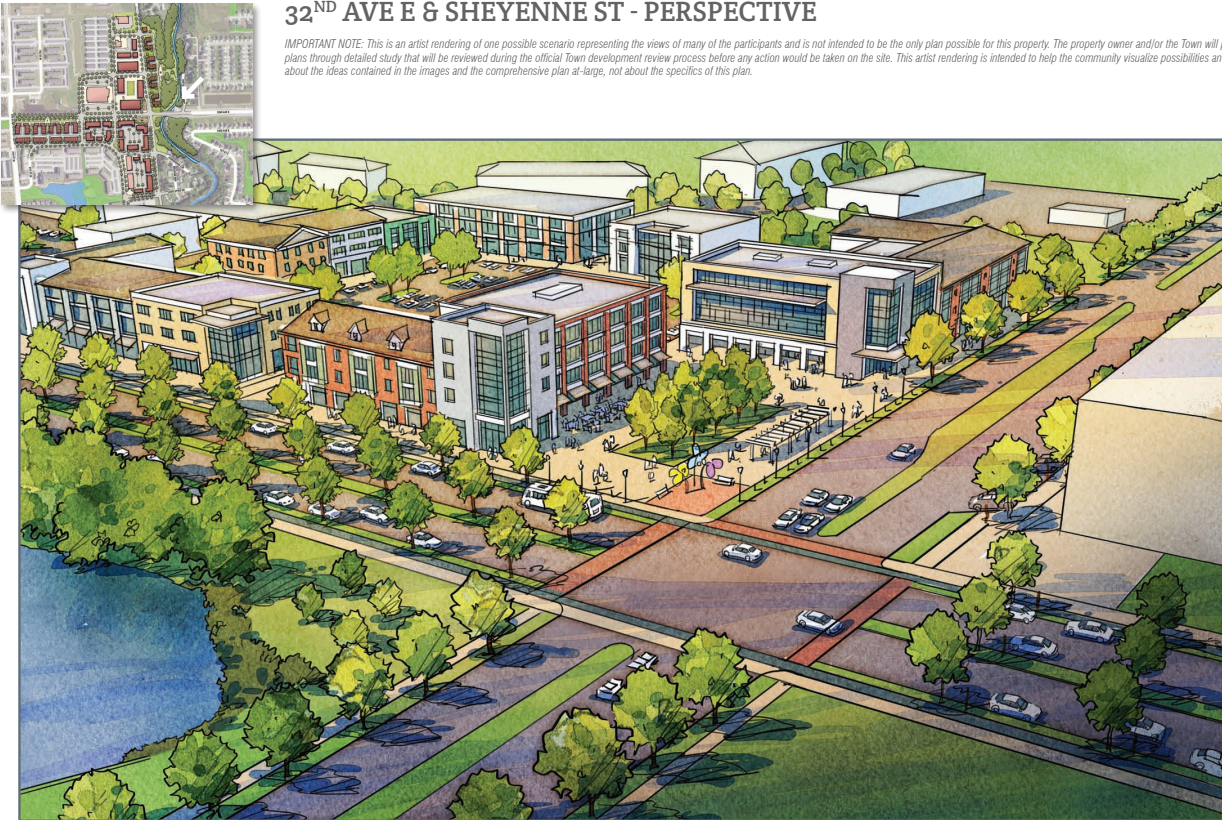
City leaders determined in 2016 that it was important for the community to develop a new comprehensive plan, to provide a vision for the community going forward. With the extensive growth and changing demographics of the community, it was essential to undertake a community engagement process unlike anything previously experienced.

The City contracted services with Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC) who brought a focused and multi-faceted public engagement process to the table. The new planning effort was named West Fargo 2.0. To get people to attend public meetings/events, the City utilized an array of in-person and online tools including word of mouth, eye-catching printed materials, several media outlet announcements, a project Facebook page, and a strong web presence (www.wf2point0.com). The website, which included various tools such as a map-based tool, surveys, and discussion forums, remained active throughout the entire process with more than 2,500 visitors and more than 5,500 individual visits. The team also used the project’s twitter account to share information on the project.



32ND AVE E & SHEYENNE ST - PERSPECTIVE

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an artist rendering of one possible scenario representing the views of many of the participants and is not intended to be the only plan possible for this property. The property owner and/or the Town will produce actual development plans through detailed study that will be reviewed during the official Town development review process before any action would be taken on the site. This artist rendering is intended to help the community visualize possibilities and create a platform for dialogue about the ideas contained in the images and the comprehensive plan at-large, not about the specifics of this plan.



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There were several opportunities for the public to get involved. These opportunities included a kick-off meeting, two visioning interactive workshops, several stakeholder focus group meetings, City Commissioner and Planning and Zoning Commissioner interviews, a multi-day Planapalooza™ (design charrette), a West Fest Community Event parklet with tent and tables, an informational meeting with the Homebuilders Association, two presentations with area AARP events, two draft plan public informational meetings, and final adoption hearings before both City Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission. To involve community residents and businesses that could not attend the meetings, an online interactive tool was utilized via the project website.

A New Vision

It was evident throughout the plan development process that the community citizens were looking for some significant changes. The suburban-type development patterns had been practiced for several decades. However, going forward the community is ready to embrace urban development practices, such as walkability, connectivity, mixed-use, and hidden parking. The community vision is to be “a complete, sustainable, and prosperous city that plays a pivotal role in the metro by providing a high quality of life for its citizens and a thriving economy.”

TPUDC helped the community establish guiding principles, which are critical to the City’s current and future quality of life. The core philosophy and vision expressed by the citizens is embodied in the principles, which include the following: Healthy, Vibrant, Authentic, Balanced, Welcoming, Connected, Fiscally Responsible, Engaged, Bold, Proactive . In the future, the local context and approach for achieving these goals may change. However, the guiding principles will endure for generations.

West Fargo 2.0 provides several strategies for advancing the community which include the following: Grow the Economy, Strengthen Neighborhoods and Expand Housing Choice, Provide Quality and Coordinated Parks and Recreation Services, Promote Transportation Choice and Mobility, Provide Reliable Services and Municipal Transparency, Protect and Enhance Cultural and Natural Resources, Increase Community

Resiliency, and Establish Downtown as a Cultural Center for West Fargo. Each of the strategies includes information, ideas, and recommended actions.

The comprehensive plan sets forth a new framework for growth in West Fargo with ideas and examples of how to accomplish growth in a manner consistent with the vision and guiding principles expressed by the community. A Conservation and Growth Map is established to identify areas of the community where growth should occur, and where new development and redevelopment should be concentrated when opportunities arise.

West Fargo 2.0 lays out an action plan, which is a blueprint for implementation for decision-makers. There are clearly defined projects and action items, which identify public and private investment opportunities for a healthy and sustainable community. A series of livability measures will enable the City/stakeholders to track progress on a few key indicators and hold elected officials accountable for implementing the plan.

More than anything, West Fargo 2.0 is an exciting magazine-style document that stakeholders are interested in reading. It is the result of an innovative and all-inclusive public engagement process that West Fargo can be proud of. It is West Fargo's blueprint for a bright future!

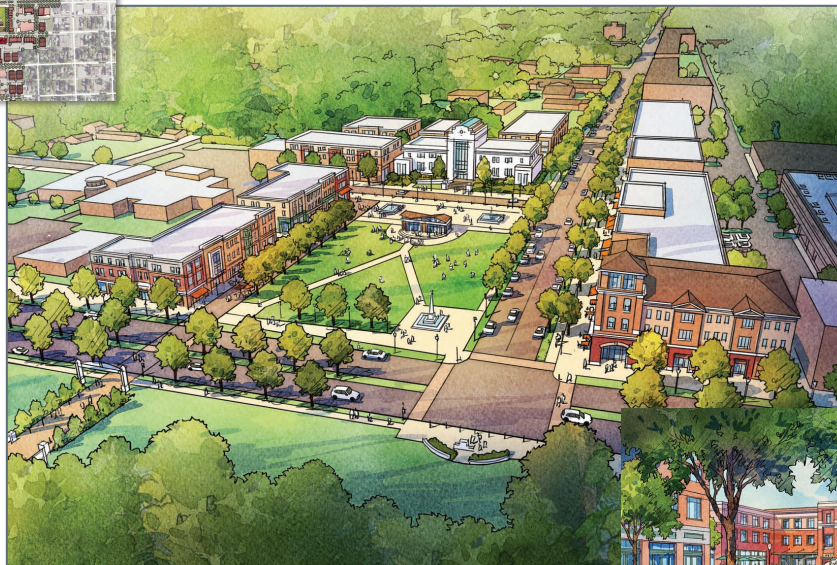
Change has been a constant variable for West Fargo and is likely to continue. With a purposely guided vision, residents and businesses will have the opportunity to be part of West Fargo's prosperity. West Fargo 2.0 represents a call for the community to harness the strength of the past and capture future opportunities to plan for a city that is redefined as a place to live, work and play.

KEY PLAN



WEST FARGO DOWNTOWN - PERSPECTIVE

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VIEW NORTH ALONG SHEYENNE STREET

As the main community gathering space for local residents, West Fargo's downtown could provide a much needed location where people could meet daily or for special occasions. This rendering demonstrates the possibility of the downtown to become just that, creating a mixed-use area where day-to-day services are available, along with office space and some additional housing located above retail. Parking would be provided behind buildings or in a parking garage creating a more walkable and attractive streetscape, while still being easily accessible by car. Wider sidewalks and a separated bike lane would improve the welcoming atmosphere for pedestrians and cyclists alike.



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Larry Weil has been with the City of West Fargo since 1990 and serves in the capacity of Community Development Director. He has a Masters Degree in Community and Regional Planning. Since early in his planning career in the early 1980s, he has been active with Western Planning Resources, Western Central Chapter of the American Planning Association, and North Dakota Planning Association. He has served on the boards in different capacities and continues to serve as a board member for WPR and NDPA.

STEVE JOSEPHSON, AICP

PLANNING & ZONING DIRECTOR

STARK COUNTY



Describe your roles as planner for the City of Dickinson and Stark County.

I am the Stark County Planning and Zoning Director. I was hired as a full-time Stark County employee in January 2017. Prior to 2017 I was staff planner with the City of Dickinson with 50 percent of my time spent as Stark County Planner.

Among my duties as Stark County Planning and Zoning Director are the following:

- Serving as Zoning Administrator for Stark County;
- Scheduling requests for zoning map amendments, conditional use permits, subdivision plats, variances and zoning code amendments for public hearing before the Stark County Planning and Zoning Commission;
- Preparing staff recommendations for the Planning and Zoning Commission and County Commission;
- Reviewing building permits for zoning compliance;
- Counseling residents and other county customers regarding zoning and land use issues;
- Developing amendments to the Stark County Zoning Ordinance;
- Serving as liaison with the City of Dickinson on planning-related issues;
- Investigating zoning code violation complaints and, if necessary, sending code violation letters as well as working with property owners to resolve violations;
- Serving as Floodplain Manager for Stark County.
- Assisting the County Commission and county agencies as needed.

I also spend 10 hours at the City of Dickinson where my duties are as follows:

- Serving as City Renaissance Zone Coordinator;
- Developing amendments to the City of Dickinson zoning ordinance; and
- Working on special projects.

"I recognize that many of the people seeking a rezoning, a variance, or a conditional use permit are having this experience for the first time, and possibly, for the only time in their lives; the public hearing process can seem confusing and intimidating. I try to find ways to help them navigate through this process with as little pain as possible."

What aspects of planning do you enjoy the most?

I'm not sure I can pick a specific aspect of planning I enjoy more than another. I do like new challenges and solving problems. I recognize that many of the people seeking a rezoning, a variance, or a conditional use permit are having this experience for the first time, and possibly, for the only time in their lives; the public hearing process can seem confusing and intimidating. I try to find ways to help them navigate through this process with as little pain as possible. If I had to choose I feel more comfortable working with zoning and current planning.

Is there a specific policy or zoning issue that made headlines in Stark County in the last year? What was the outcome?

This past year both the City of Dickinson and Stark County worked with Dickinson Theodore Roosevelt Airport Authority to create an airport overlay district. Both Stark County and the city amended their zoning ordinances to include similar airport overlay districts.

What has Stark County learned from the boom, decline, and re-emergence of oil and gas activity in western North Dakota?

To closely scrutinize development proposals, to improve the quality of new development, to continue to update the ordinances and processes during quiet times, and to preserve the role of agriculture.

What planning challenge(s) do you foresee for the County over the next 10 years?

It will soon be time to begin the comprehensive plan update. Part of that update should include the preservation of unique rural communities and exploration of new zoning techniques to preserve the rural and agricultural nature of Stark County. Energy exploration and production activities may come and go, but the nation and the world will continue to need agricultural commodities. Also, Stark County and the cities within the County should continue to seek a diverse economy as a means of avoiding the boom and bust cycles that plague Oil Patch communities.

What is the status of long-term planning projects in Stark County? (e.g. land use plan, transportation plan)

Currently there are no plans to update Stark County's comprehensive plan, but I'm hoping to lay the groundwork for that project. I'm working on updating data from the Stark County 2010 Comprehensive Plan as a prelude to a Comp Plan update. I also want to approach both the City of Dickinson, the Airport Authority and Stark Development Corporation regarding a revised airport area economic development plan. Also, we need to update the County's zoning map to reflect the zoning districts in the Zoning Code adopted in October 2012.

Among the possible zoning code amendments I plan to bring forward are the following:

- Medical marijuana;
- Accessory dwelling units;
- Changes to the floodplain overlay district;
- Accessory structures;
- Code enforcement procedures; and
- Zoning map changes to meet the districts in the 2012 Zoning Ordinance.

Describe your hobbies and interests, family, or anything else you'd like to share.

My wife Susan and I bought a house in Dickinson. We have a 25-year-old son who lives and works in Dickinson. I am a member of the Dickinson Queen City Toastmasters, I sit on the City of Dickinson Historic Preservation Commission, and I recently joined the Dickinson Concert Association board of directors. I like to read, see movies, listen to music, and follow current events. Susan has expressed the thought that lately I've been watching too many dystopian and post-apocalyptic movies and TV series. I enjoy recreational target shooting but lately I haven't had many opportunities to do so. I have a suspicion I will be drafted into gardening and lawn care by the rest of our family. We have a dog named Davey Jones and a cat named GC Kitty. I also enjoy traveling, especially to places I've never been to before. I hope to get to Devil's Tower and to Alaska in the near future.

Formed in 1973, the North Dakota Planning Association strives to be a forum for a diverse population across the state, region and county. It serves professional planners, economic developers, state agency staff and officials, region council board members, city and county planning board members, private individuals, businesses and utilities.

Over the years, the North Dakota Planning Association has provided a place for an exchange of ideas, educational opportunities, legislative information and lobbying activities, and kept its membership informed on the current topics of concern across the state.

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**North Dakota
Planning Association**

serving North Dakota since 1973

2018 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

In order to join the NDPA, or renew your membership for 2018, you may simply send a \$55.00 check made out to "NDPA" to NDPA, PO Box 1588, Fargo ND 58107 and include your contact information (name, email address, mailing address, phone number, title, organization name). Or you can go to the NDPA website and navigate to the Membership page, and click on the Join NDPA Today at the bottom of the page. This will open a membership application form which you can print and send along with payment to the address noted above, or fill in the form and submit the application by email. If you have any questions, please email joel.quanbeck@kljeng.com.

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