

NDPA

NORTH DAKOTA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

WINTER newsletter | 2016



North Dakota
Planning Association
serving North Dakota since 1973



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A PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



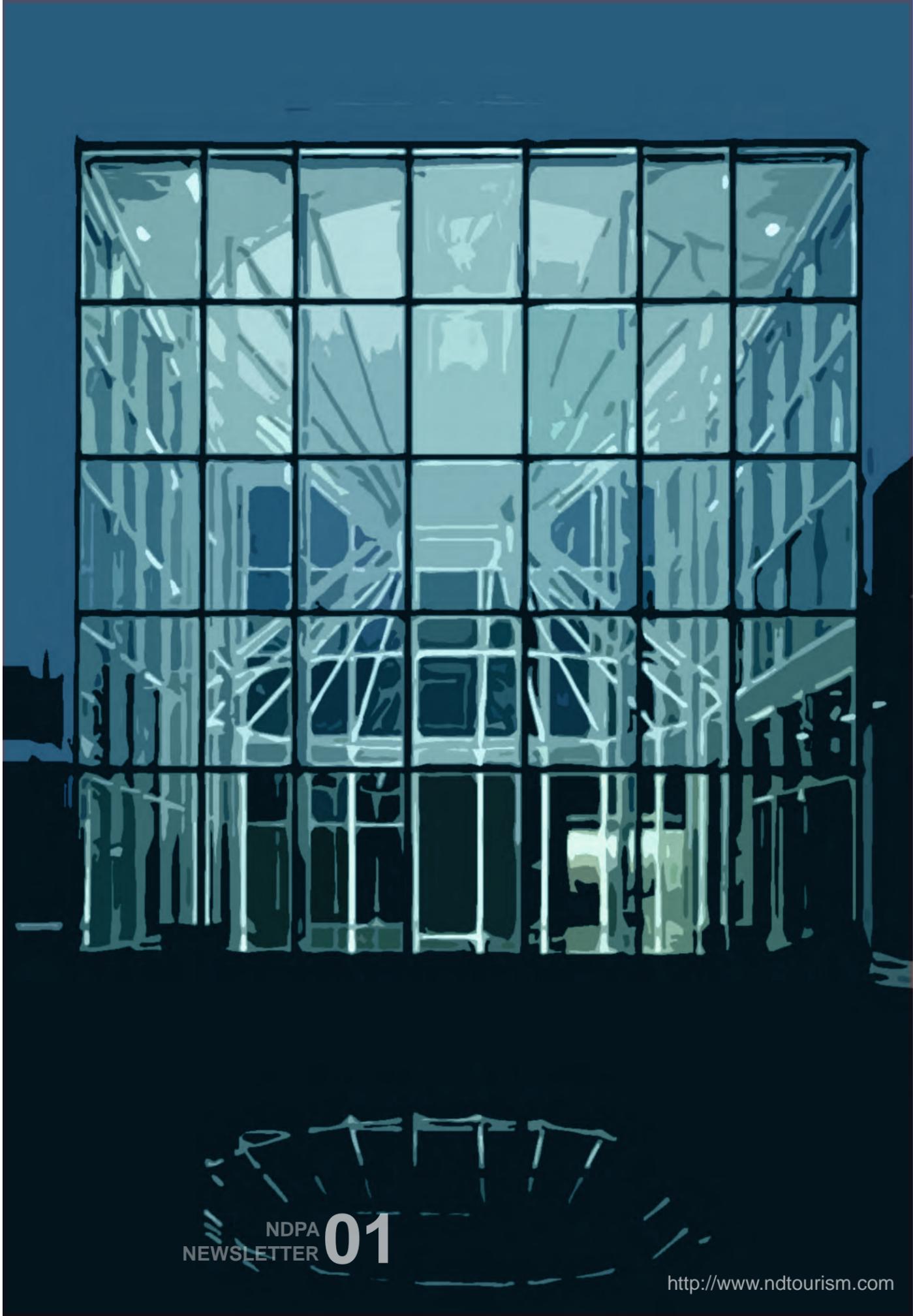
DONNA J. BYE

This past weekend I took a trip to Winnipeg, MB because I sit on the Board of the International Peace Gardens. The purpose of this trip was to begin planning the replacement of the iconic towers that exist on the US/Canadian Border. These towers have stood in place since the early 80's but because of the lack of soil/rock testing, the base was not built strong enough to handle such massive structures atop a high water table. <http://www.peacegarden.com/>

But this turned out to be only part of the reasons for my trip. I have realized over the 15 years in my planning career that we must get out of our offices and see how our ideas work in other cities and regions. We can't expect the World Wide Web to give us the feelings we can experience of being placed on a site, in the shade of a building or downstream from a major water body.

This adventure began by arriving on a Friday evening, during a spring rain. It was my first time in Winnipeg, MB and it proved to be a memorable one. The city was bustling with strings of lights draped through the sleeping plant material and across many of the street trees and public open spaces. A spaghetti of walkways lead you down many paths that proved interesting especially on arrival. These paths encourage walking and some provided a smooth surface for ice skating. <http://www.theforks.com/events/signature-events>

The people engaging in these spaces did not object to the cold, they adapted to it. And some embraced it. They were dressed for whatever type of weather the northern plains could throw at them. They were young and old alike, enjoying the outdoors.



NDPA Board of Directors:

President - Donna Bye
Vice President - Sandy Rohde
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Don Longmuir
Tim Solberg
Steven Zimmer

This is something not seen to this degree in North Dakota. I decided to spend the \$25 dollars to experience the snow and ice village. <http://thegreaticeshow.com/>

This area grabbed my attention like the north arctic wind does in the wintertime. As I walked through the gates of lighted ice sculptures, it felt like I was in another place. I did not care what the temperature was, I did not care if the wind was blowing, I only cared about what I was going to see next and what experience I could share with those back home.

The detail on the ice and snow sculptures was fascinating. Most of these were internally lit and at the break of sunlight, I couldn't wait to see that. So I engaged myself with the children around me. They were running and laughing, noses and cheeks red with delight. It truly was a magical place.

And of course as many of us have, an exercise tracker can be your best friend. This gave me a lot of steps that is proof fun can be exercise. I recently relocated my office closer to the downtown of Minot, ND. It is too far to bike or walk from home but it gives me reasons to dress appropriately for walking to and from meetings instead of driving. As a steward of the earth and a landscape architect in another life, I want to reduce my impact on our planet. I want to find ways that trend to the positive instead of the negative. Be part of your surroundings, not just a view from afar.

Best regards,

Donna J. Bye
Chief Resilience Officer

INTRODUCING

Bethany Brandt-Sargent

AS WESTERN
CENTRAL CHAPTER
VICE PRESIDENT

BETHANY Brandt-Sargent is the newly elected Vice President for the Western Central Chapter (WCC) of the APA. She is a transportation planner at KLJ, primarily working on urban and suburban corridor studies, interstate and interchange projects, and occasionally a comprehensive plan. Bethany has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from NDSU and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

During her term as Vice President, she hopes to work on the Young Planners Initiative. As a rural chapter, with no accredited planning school in its geographic service area, the WCC of APA often has trouble attracting and retaining top young talent that wants to work in rural and small urban communities. This initiative hopes to provide solutions and strategies to address this issue.

Outside work, Bethany spends most of her time with friends and family. She loves playing cards and board games, hosting dinner parties, reading, and entertaining her two cats, Mabel and Maude.



Bethany Brandt-Sargent

NDPA CONFERENCE INFORMATION

THE CITY OF BISMARCK

WILL HOST THE 2016 NORTH DAKOTA PLANNING
ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR

SEPTEMBER 15TH

AT THE

RAMKOTA HOTEL

THE CONFERENCE WILL BE IN CONJUNCTION
WITH THE NORTH DAKOTA LEAGUE OF CITIES
CONFERENCE.

Read on to see how the City of Bismarck is preparing for the upcoming conference and about current activities in the city that may be of interest to other planners in North Dakota. The planners in Bismarck look forward to hearing about initiatives in other cities and counties around the state at the conference!

2016 WESTERN PLANNER & MONTANA ASSOC. OF PLANNERS JOINT CONFERENCE

Landscapes, Landmarks, and Leadership

This year's event will take place **August 10- 12,**
2016, at the Civic Center in:

GREAT FALLS, MONTANA!

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Email plannersconference@greatfallsmt.net to confirm your interest in presenting by March 7, 2016, and please fill out and submit the form by April 18, 2016. Download the forms online at:

<http://westernplanner.org/conferences/2016-conference/>

**REGISTRATION TO 2016
WP/MAP
CONFERENCE TO OPEN SOON.
CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR
UPDATES**

WWW.WESTERNPLANNER.ORG

RESPONDING TO THE BAS IS EASY!

The Census Bureau provides multiple free, user-friendly methods for responding.

1 PAPER OPTION

BAS participants can request free paper maps from the BAS website

2 BASIC DIGITAL OPTION

The Geographic Update Partnership Software (GUPS) is a free, customized GIS tool that will be available during the 2016 BAS. It was specifically developed for people who do not have GIS training or are not experienced GIS users

3 ADVANCED DIGITAL OPTION

Experienced GIS users can update boundaries in their own GIS. The Census Bureau provides free GIS files in shapefile format on its website, along with digital update guidelines.

Find forms, information, and materials about the BAS online at:

www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/bas.html

U.S. Census Bureau conducts Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY AND ANNEXATION SURVEY?

The Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) is the primary way that local, county, and tribal governments ensure that their legal boundaries – and consequently, their official population counts – are correctly recorded with the federal government. Every year, governments use the BAS to update their legal boundaries and official names.

In the BAS, governments report official name changes, (dis)incorporations, and (de)annexations. Governments can also update boundaries, features, and landmarks for:

- Cities, town, boroughs, and villages (incorporated places)
- Townships and towns (minor civil divisions)
- Counties (or county equivalents)
- Consolidated cities
- Roads and other applicable linear features

This **voluntary** survey is an important opportunity for you to ensure that the U.S. Census Bureau has the correct boundary and legal name for your government. The Census Bureau will use the boundary information you provide to report data from the:

Population Estimates Program (PEP)

American Community Survey (ACS)

And other Census Programs and surveys



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

HOW DOES THE BAS BENEFIT YOU?

Legal boundaries determine your government's population count every year in the American Community Survey and the Population Estimates Program. Many government agencies and other groups use population counts to determine the allocation of funds. Responding to the BAS ensures that your local government has the best data available for its decision-making processes, and that it receives all the of the funds for which it is entitled.

In addition, the boundary records are publicly available and used by many other federal agencies, researchers, and the public. Because the U.S. Census Bureau is responsible for tracking America's legal boundaries and population data, geographic updates that you provide ripple out in numerous important ways.

Accurate boundary records directly affect the quality of life in your community.

WHEN WILL YOU BE CONTACTED?

The Census Bureau is e-mailing an annual response letter to all federally recognized American Indian tribes with reservations or off-reservation trust land, governmental counties (and equivalent), incorporated places, consolidated cities, and governmental Minor Civil Divisions (MCD's) in December of 2015 and January of 2016.

All BAS respondents that wish to submit boundary changes, corrections, or feature updates must follow respondent guidelines.

The Census Bureau must receive responses to the 2016 BAS before **March 1, 2016** to be included in the Population Estimates Program and the American Community Survey.

Boundary and Annexation Survey Schedule:

DECEMBER:

The Census Bureau e-mails annual response information to BAS contacts with instructions for participation.

Accurate boundaries allows the Census Bureau to count your community's residents accurately.

MARCH 1:

(FIRST DEADLINE). Legal boundary updates (not including nonlegal boundary corrections) sent by this date are included in the next Population Estimates Program and American Community Survey shapefiles and population estimates.

Your participation in the BAS helps the Census Bureau continue to produce accurate data, which directly affects the quality of life in your community.

An accurate count helps the federal government allocate more than \$400 billion in federal funds annually for programs and services - including education, housing, health care services for the elderly, job training, transportation, and more.

MAY 31:

(FINAL DEADLINE). Boundary updates sent by this date will appear in the next year's BAS shapefiles.

Dealing with the Public During a Large Infrastructure Project

The Challenges, Pitfalls and Ways to Improve your Communication Skills

By: Mark Lyman

WHEN you put together a large project (really, anything that involves change in your community), nothing is ever as perfect as you would like it to be – or as bad as the naysayers say it is going to be. The reality is somewhere in the middle. Often, this reality includes the good, the bad and the ugly. Yet what matters to most leaders and the general public is less about what the “ugly” really is and moreso about how people were communicated with and listened to during the project.

Over the last two-and-a-half years, the City of Minot has prepared for and started a three-year urban revitalization effort in our downtown. The highlights include replacing all water mains, sanitary sewer lines, storm water pipes, roads, sidewalks, street lights, and associated streetscape elements in the downtown. Pretty much everything within the public right-of-way will be new. This is no easy task, considering the 200+ businesses that would be impacted within the 26 city blocks that would be under the knife between 2015 to 2017. And, as with any large infrastructure upgrade, the rumors about the project started flying before the engineering team even had a chance to start design - not to mention the stories that would come during the first year of construction.

No joking, here is how one business owner within the project footprint described where they received their latest piece of news.

“I was speaking to a guy who was sitting in

November 12, 2015, the finished intersection at Central Avenue and Main Street, at the heart of downtown Minot, featuring concrete roads, new street lights, park benches, and pedestrian bump-outs.

a electrical company truck in our back alley, and he was talking to a guy running a jackhammer (on a separate project not connected to this one!), who was talking to someone else on their jobsite, that they overheard someone at a morning safety meeting that the City Engineer told our employees that the team from the other project downtown was going to be moving to a different part of the project on the other side of downtown for the next two months and weren't going to finish this year the part of the road that they already started on!”

Sounds like the game telephone we used to play when I was a kid! And it only takes one or two people sharing the “same” story for your message to get completely lost. Often, the message can be turned so far around that it would be laughable if it weren't for the fact people tend to believe their neighbor's third-hand piece of news versus what the city officials and public information officers are saying.

“ And it only takes one or two people sharing the “same” story for your message to get completely lost. ”



November 17, 2015, construction crews finish one of the final concrete placements to connect First Street SE to Central Avenue. In 2015 more than 32,500 square yards of concrete were used to form roads and sidewalks, the equivalent of 668 trucks.

So, how do you combat the rumors? Dispel the half-truths? Defend against the ugly comments?

How do you share the good news from a positive angle, without losing your credibility with the unsure majority in the middle of the love-it-versus-hate-it spectrum? Let's start with basic tips that can help you navigate through challenges and pitfalls, using the already mentioned Downtown Infrastructure Improvements Project in Minot as a case study.

1 Allow yourself plenty of time prior to the first shovel being turned or first road closure sign being placed to communicate directly and repeatedly with your key audiences.

This includes not just the people that already like the project, city leaders and the general public, but with those that you are more than likely going to disagree with, those who are on the fence about the project, and those who are in the heart of the upcoming project. As the public information officer for the Downtown Infrastructure project, Odney was hired as part of the engineering team, to work during the design phase in communicating key messages and project updates. This is one of the first times that a specific public information emphasis was placed on a large project in our region as early as the design phase.

This proved to be widely successful in allowing constant communication with businesses and downtown leaders during the long process of design. This decision also set the stage for better communication in the first year of construction because the impacted parties already knew us and were appropriately prepared for the project.

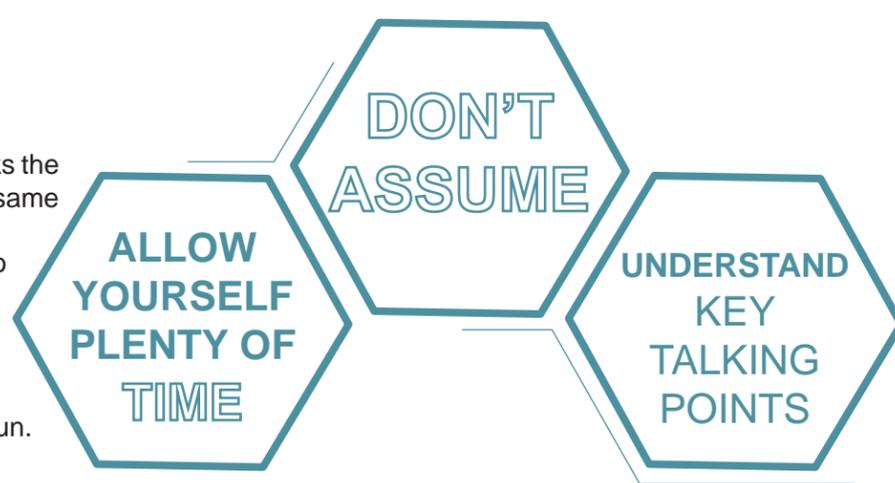
2 Don't assume that because you told one person the relevant news one time that they will remember and believe what you told them.

Some of the strongest proponents of Minot's downtown revitalization are the Downtown Business and Professional Association board members (for full disclosure, I am one of those board members, trust me when I say we are a diverse group with our own opinions!). That's not to say the board always agrees with every aspect of the project, but they do support and understand the “why” behind the project and are willing to take the short-term pain in order to have the long-term gain. This trust and understanding was gained, and continues to be nurtured and cultivated, by Odney's presence at board meetings and downtown membership meetings, as well as participation in downtown-wide events like the annual Wine Walk, the lighting of the Christmas tree, and others. Remember the marketing rule of thumb; people need to see it or hear it 7 to 10 times before they start to remember what you are sharing with them. Hardly a week goes by, even during non-construction months, where I am not sitting down with a board member reviewing the latest information and emphasizing the important, positive aspects of the finished product.

3 Take the time to write down and understand your key talking points.

The basic responses to the frequently-asked-questions should roll off your tongue. You, the organization you represent, your co-workers and others within your circle should all know these key answers and should answer them in much the same way. This eliminates confusion

and allows you to go back to a person who asks the same question more than once and give the same answer. In Minot's downtown there are a number of newer businesses and many who have been downtown for 20+ years. They all deserve to hear the answer to their basic questions in the same manner. Repeating these key messages in the same fashion will make your job easier in the long run.



4 Celebrate, appropriately, your successes and milestones during the project.

With approximately fifteen city blocks to finish completely upgrading in one construction season, there was plenty of work to get done in downtown Minot in 2015. About three months into the project we saw the first completion milestone being attained on Central Avenue. And even though the construction for the entire year was only about halfway done, we needed to show the public that the project was reaching milestones. An appropriate response was made, in the form of an informal news conference, or media availability on-site, near the recently completed portion. It would have been too much to do a ribbon cutting for just a few blocks of new road, but to do nothing at all would miss the chance to share an important milestone, reiterate key messages, and reassure the public that the project was continuing forward. Think of this as applying a Goldilocks theory to celebrating milestones; not too big, not too small, but just right. The type of milestone, within the context of the greater project, should determine the type of celebration associated with this success.

5 Telling the truth doesn't mean sharing everything, and it doesn't mean that everyone is going to be happy.

This can be a touchy one. I am not advocating that a communicator should ever lie to the public, just that there are times when you don't have to share every detail with everyone. Within the footprint of the downtown revitalization project there is a local meat processing plant. This one-man shop handles

a variety of requests, including turning meat into sausage links. The old saying of "laws are like sausage, it's better not to see them being made" can apply here. Construction is like sausage, and most people aren't concerned about the nitty gritty details. They simply want to see you working hard and feel confident that you will hit key milestones. Don't feel like you have to share specific details just because you have the information, and don't expect everyone to automatically like the realities of how hard and unpredictable construction can become when you tell them about a delay or a problem.

6 Respond evenly to your critics, with facts and basic information to share about the project.

You are never going to get through a project the size of a downtown revitalization without having some serious critics of your efforts. And while it would be "easier" in the minds of some to simply ignore the naysayers, don't get caught in the trap of pushing them aside as the vocal minority and dismissing completely the chance to share your key messages. There is still benefit in keeping the flow of information going to people you feel are constantly sour about your project. You likely won't walk away from this conversation having won over their hearts, but you will have continued to maintain their respect in your attempt. Many times during our downtown Minot overhaul, businesses and community members simply needed to vent for a few minutes. Be a good listener and realize that while they may be your critic now perhaps over time the constant positive message you



An artist rendering of what the Main Street and Second Avenue South intersection could look like when finished.

CELEBRATE SUCCESSES AND MILESTONES

share, based on basic information regarding the efforts and key milestones, will bring them into the neutral camp. Regardless of what is said by someone who is critical, don't take it personally and don't allow it to skew the likely reality that there are far more people who support your project, and are simply less vocal about their opinions, there are people in the more vocal minority who have a hard time finding something to like about the project.

telling the truth doesn't MEAN SHARING EVERYTHING

To recap, there are lots of opportunities to improve how large-scale projects are viewed by the public and community leaders. Take advantage of these chances to share your key messages, stay above the fray when it comes to conversing with your critics, and remember the power of repetition. I hope these tips and reminders come in handy, and remember to support your local downtown!

RESPOND EVENLY TO ... CRITICS

Mark Lyman is a marketing consultant and public relations specialist with Odney, out of their Minot office. He is the public information lead for the on-going Downtown Infrastructure Improvements Project in the Magic City. Odney is a full-service communications consulting company headquartered in Bismarck, with additional offices in Fargo and Minot, N. D., as well as Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. They specialize in the tourism, healthcare and energy industries for clients across the Midwest. With 45 communications professionals, the Odney staff is highly trained in market research, public relations, media relations, social media, media planning, public affairs, design, advertising and interactive development. Since joining Odney in 2011, Mark has served as the City of Minot flood recovery public information officer (PIO), the PIO for the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection Project/Phase 1/ Fourth Avenue North Floodwalls, the PIO for the Minot WTP HMGP Flood Protection Project and handled other clients and responsibilities. Mark brings an extensive background in journalism, public relations and public information to his position as a marketing consultant with Odney

“ The basic responses to the frequently-asked-questions should roll off your tongue. You, the organization you represent, your co-workers and others within your circle should all know these key answers and should answer them in much the same way. ”

Community Spotlight: Bismarck, ND

By: Daniel Naim, AICP

The City of Bismarck will be the host city for the 2016 North Dakota Planning Association conference on September 15 at the Ramkota Hotel. This provides an opportunity to highlight some current activities in the city that may be of interest to other planners in North Dakota. Consider this an opening volley in the exchange of ideas and experiences that will occur, and planners in Bismarck look forward to hearing about initiatives in other cities and counties around the state.

“**BISMARCK** is transitioning from a big town to a small city.” This is a phrase that is often heard around North Dakota’s capital city these days, from the Chamber of Commerce to the halls of city government. By the numbers, it’s really hard to dispute. The metropolitan area population hit the 100,000 mark in 2006, and less than a decade later the region is a quarter of its way to the next hundred thousand. Building permit activity in the city literally doubled between 2011 and 2012 and remained as high for three years. While North Dakota awaits the shifting winds of global market forces, development has recently settled back into the steady pace Bismarck enjoyed for decades. All signs point to continued healthy – if not quite as frenetic – growth in the future.

Planners, engineers, architects, and the development industry understand that a city is more than just larger population and more buildings. Cities are complex systems. Fortunately, the City of Bismarck is prepared to thoughtfully engage the inevitable change that is occurring, rather than either blindly embracing it or wishing it away. Bismarck residents have enjoyed a friendly atmosphere, easy commutes, natural amenities, and a high quality of life for many years. Elected officials are taking intentional steps to preserve what is good. At the same time, the growth offers tremendous opportunities

for established businesses and entrepreneurs alike, as well as enhanced cultural and artistic amenities for everyone to enjoy. The purpose of this Community Spotlight is to feature some of the initiatives and programs currently underway in the City of Bismarck to navigate this transition from a big town to a small city.

THE FOOTPRINT INITIATIVE

The City of Bismarck’s mayor Mike Seminary launched what he calls the “Footprint Initiative” shortly after taking office as mayor in 2014. The initiative includes a range of policies intended to enhance density and quality of life at the same time, recognizing that a more compact footprint of development improves housing affordability and allows efficient provision of government services. Following this direction, the City Commission reduced street width requirements for new residential subdivisions from 40 feet to 32 feet, while maintaining on-street parking on both sides. The narrower streets are expected to reduce speeds on local streets, allow more room for attractive greenspace in public rights-of-way, reduce stormwater runoff, and reduce construction and maintenance costs. The Commission also adopted a policy to formally require developers of new subdivisions to extend dedicated rights-of-way and easements to the edges of their property,

TYPICAL MAIN AVENUE PLAN



Downtown Bismarck Subarea Plan
City of Bismarck Bismarck-Mandan MPO, December 2013

<http://www.bismarcknd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20796>

as needed. This is intended to prevent developers from boxing out their competitors who happen to own the adjoining parcel, which should facilitate a more logical and incremental pattern of growth.

Several other policy changes are in the pipeline. Reduced off-street parking requirements for retail establishments are slated for a public hearing. These changes may reduce the area needed for new commercial development, as well as open up infill opportunities within existing underutilized parking lots. The Community Development Department is also preparing revisions to the zoning ordinance to allow accessory dwelling units, under certain conditions, on existing residential lots. This can be an ideal housing option for residents at certain stages of life, including seniors who wish to have an independent household in close proximity to family members. The City also intends to re-evaluate setback requirements, minimum lot sizes, and any other standards that may be hampering opportunities for infill development.

These changes require careful attention to public amenities and community design to be politically feasible, and ultimately to lead to a more livable city. Humans need to experience nature. If yards are getting smaller, having a park nearby becomes even more important. The City of Bismarck has recently entered into an agreement with the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District to require a neighborhood park in all new residential developments – with the goal of creating a park within a half mile walk of every home. The first few parks created under this policy are currently in the planning stage. The City also has a tradition of aggressively pursuing street connectivity. Cul-de-sacs are not allowed, except by waiver, and the Planning Commission can required multi-use paths to break up long blocks and allow an alternative route for pedestrians and cyclists. The Bismarck Fire Department carefully monitors secondary access requirements to ensure that no isolated home or business is cut off from emergency services. As a result, residents receive the benefit of a well-connected street network.

“The initiative includes a range of policies intended to enhance density and quality of life at the same time...”

Peace Park in downtown Bismarck is the setting for summer Music in the Park events.



The City of Bismarck completed a new parking garage in 2014 to support city/county offices, nearby hospitals, and public events at the historic Belle Mehus auditorium.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Even amidst a statewide economic slow-down, steady growth is expected to continue for years to come. The City of Bismarck Growth Management Plan and the Fringe Area Road Master Plan are the two primary planning documents addressing the outward growth of the city, and both were updated in 2014. At the same time, the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) updated the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to establish regional transportation goals and objectives, as well as potential improvement projects eligible for federal funding. The fortuitous timing of all three of these plan updates allows city officials to envision land use and transportation together.

The Growth Management Plan projects growth over the coming decades and designates specific land use areas, known as “development blocks,” served by roadway corridors to accommodate this projected growth. The plan does not envision the development blocks as strict land use monocultures, recognizing that a certain mixture of uses within an appropriate scale can be a desirable outcome. A phasing plan encourages the growth to occur incrementally outward from the current city boundaries,

rather than jumping over available land that could be serviced more economically.

One challenge faced by a growing community is what to do when the city limits reach existing rural subdivisions. The Growth Management Plan introduced the concept of “Build-Through Acreage,” which is currently an option to consider as rural subdivision plats are submitted to the City Planning and Zoning Commission for review. Subdividing existing rural residential lots into smaller urban lots is very difficult and, in many cases, undesirable for the residents who are accustomed to a rural lifestyle. For many years, rural plats have included future sublots, known as “ghost platting,” with the expectation that subdivision is triggered when urban services become available. However, this approach has achieved very limited success over the years. Under the Build Through Acreage approach, subdivisions near city limits are encouraged to reserve a substantial portion of land for future urban development, as well as land for open space and recreation. This is clearly communicated to the rural homeowners to set reasonable expectations from the beginning. As the land is urbanized in the future, the rural and urban portions of the subdivision can coexist.

A DOWNTOWN RESURGENT

Planners in the City of Bismarck anticipate robust internal growth at the core, along with the conventional external growth on the periphery. A Bismarck Downtown Subarea Study was completed in 2013 in cooperation with the Bismarck-Mandan MPO, and an implementation task force is keeping pace with an aggressive timeline for putting the plan to action. In the Fall of 2015, the Bismarck City Commission approved a new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to support a major mixed-use redevelopment near downtown, known as 5South. This project will include a new hotel adjacent to the City’s remodeled event center, a possible downtown campus for the University of Mary, and hundreds of residential units above ground-floor retail and services. The plans feature high-quality urban design and streetscape elements, and the development will function as an integral connection between downtown and the existing Kirkwood Mall.

The City of Bismarck’s Renaissance Zone program and Downtown Design Guidelines have evolved over the last several years. The local and state tax incentives available through this program have clearly caused renewed vibrancy of the downtown and walkable fringe areas, a fact that is obvious to anyone comparing

the state of the district before and after the program began. At the same time, planners and downtown interests want to make sure that new projects add to the attractiveness and functionality of the downtown. Design review began about ten years ago, and the city approved comprehensive downtown design guidelines in 2015. The committee is open to contemporary design and new ideas, as long as they respect the context of the whole downtown. Through this review process, architects receive substantive feedback to improve the quality and cohesiveness of their designs.

Several other improvements are underway. A stretch of Main Avenue through the heart of downtown will be put on a road diet starting in the Spring of 2016. The current four lanes of travel will be reduced to three, a move that is expected to simultaneously improve traffic safety while opening up opportunities for future pedestrian facilities. The diet will be temporary, as engineers monitor the outcomes and allow the public to see if they like the changes. There are also plans to open up downtown one-way streets to two-way traffic and create a new pedestrian overpass over the railroad tracks near the historic depot, which will likely feature a plaza in the place of an existing parking lot.

Downtown Bismarck Subarea Plan

City of Bismarck Bismarck-Mandan MPO, December 2013

<http://www.bismarcknd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20796>

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT



While Bismarck may owe its very existence to the railroad line crossing the Missouri River, today the loud horn of a train is an unsettling experience for patrons simply wishing to enjoy a nice dinner and cocktail on an outside patio. In fact, studies have shown that train horns can negatively impact property values in proportion to their decibel levels. The necessary safety improvements to facilitate a Quiet Rail Zone through downtown have been approved and funded, and are only awaiting construction by the railroad company. The City Commission has also recently started requiring all parking garages along downtown commercial streets to use the ground floor for retail or other uses that bring life and activity to the street level.

Bismarck business interests have recognized the need to attract and retain young professionals, a demographic that has famously gravitated toward downtowns and surrounding walkable neighborhoods in recent years. These downtown

improvements, as well as projects like 5South, could serve as a catalyst for continued redevelopment of the surrounding area and vibrancy of the whole city.

Daniel Nairn, AICP is a planner for the City of Bismarck. He was previously employed as the planning director for Morton County, and as a regional planner with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission in Charlottesville, VA. He received a MA of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia, and a BA in Philosophy and Economics from the University of Delaware. Daniel, along with his wife and three children, live in Bismarck.

Downtown Bismarck Subarea Plan

City of Bismarck Bismarck-Mandan MPO, December 2013

<http://www.bismarcknd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20796>



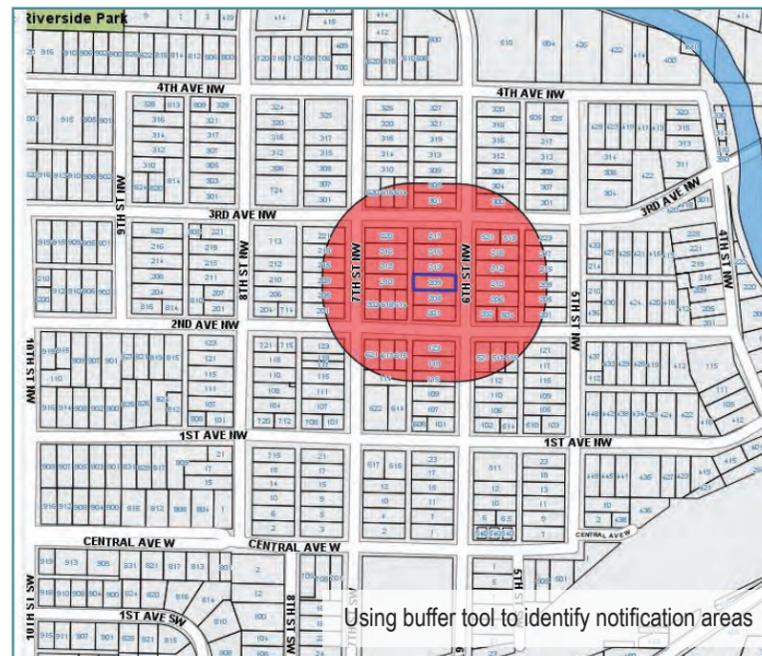
How GIS Has Helped Minot Increase Productivity

By: Aleesha Erickson

After the catastrophic flood of 2011, Minot experienced rapid growth due to rebuilding efforts and the oil boom that was taking place in the Bakken Region. New plats were coming in left and right (Minot has grown by roughly 7,000 parcels in the last 5 years) and permits and inspections soared. City departments were understaffed and inundated with work. There had to be a more efficient way to handle questions and decrease the amount of time spent answering phone calls and helping citizens with general requests.

At the time of the flood, the City had just created a GIS department but had not yet been staffed. Once the position was filled, staff began to create a parcel base layer. The City of Minot uses AutoCad software, therefore all information was in CAD format. Using Map3D we were able to make ESRI shapefiles of the parcels and utility systems (water, sewer, storm sewer) from CAD drawings. Pictometry International, an aerial imagery company, had just flown the city in 2010 to collect aerial photography and LiDar data, so imagery and 1-foot contours were also in our dataset. The aerial imagery was then brought into CAD and the parcel shapefile was overlaid to help rectify the accuracy of the parcel layer.

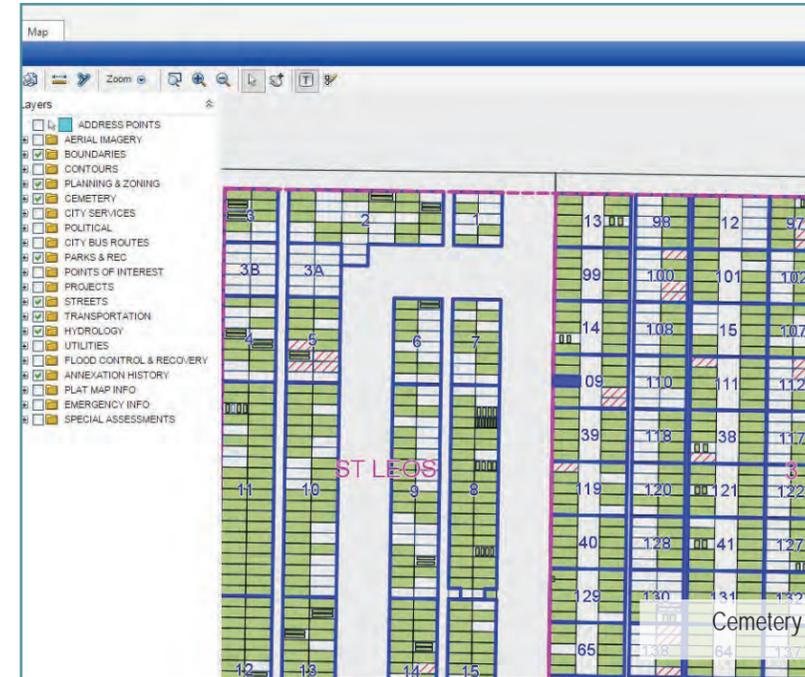
Once a more robust dataset was developed, the City purchased FacilitiesMap software to host both an internal and public facing GIS website (<http://gis.minotnd.org>). With this software we were able to develop a map for the public to retrieve the information they needed and also to create an internal site that allowed each department to make more individualized maps. The internal site also allows users to edit the data that is stored in an SQL Server database. Permissions for these



maps and editing data are controlled by login credentials.

PUTTING GIS TO USE

Parcel information is probably the most sought after information. It is relevant to developers, contractors, engineering firms, real estate agents, insurance companies, homeowners, and more. At first, this information was all being updated by one person. It was a very cumbersome process. The assessors would run a month-end report to show all ownership changes and then those changes would have to be manually updated in the parcel data. This process generally took about half a day to complete because we were recording around 500 ownership changes every month at that time. Then, once a month, the city council minutes were sifted through to find any zoning changes or other relevant data that needed to be updated. This was far too time consuming and the information was not that reliable. Eventually, using SQL Server and FME software, we were able to link to the Assessor's Vanguard database

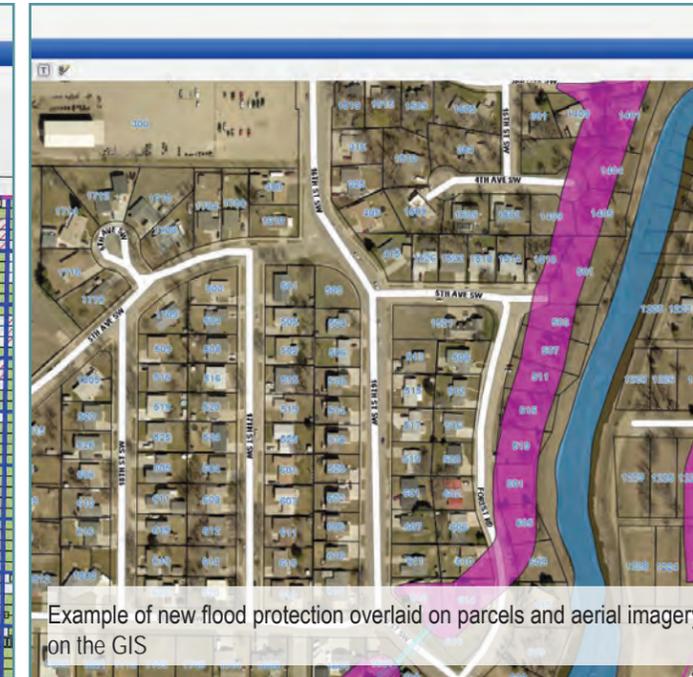


to populate current parcel information such as: owner, address, square footage, zoning, etc. This information is now automatically updated every night and is much more reliable and current, because it is being pulled directly from the Assessor's database nightly. By making this information available to the public, it has cut down on the amount of phone calls city staff receive and it also has allowed the public to access this information at a time that's convenient for them. Within the parcel data, the public can access hyperlinks to other relevant information, such as plat maps and the zoning ordinance.

Slowly, more datasets were developed and published for the public to access. There are now layers for future land use, parcels by zoning, renaissance zone, billboards, garbage collection days, city bus routes, parks and trails, annexations, and much more.

Most city departments are using the GIS map on a daily basis and are making requests for new information to be added. The Planning Department can easily identify a prospective property and instruct the GIS system to determine all parcels within the notification area around that parcel and generate mailing labels in a matter of minutes. A report can also be generated from this query that contains all the parcels along with their information. Staff are also able to present more useful information for official city meetings as well, because the GIS can provide excellent, accurate visualizations through mapping that anyone can understand. They have just recently started using the GIS to map all zoning violations as well.

The Public Works Department relies heavily on the GIS to aid in flood recovery efforts. By overlaying the proposed

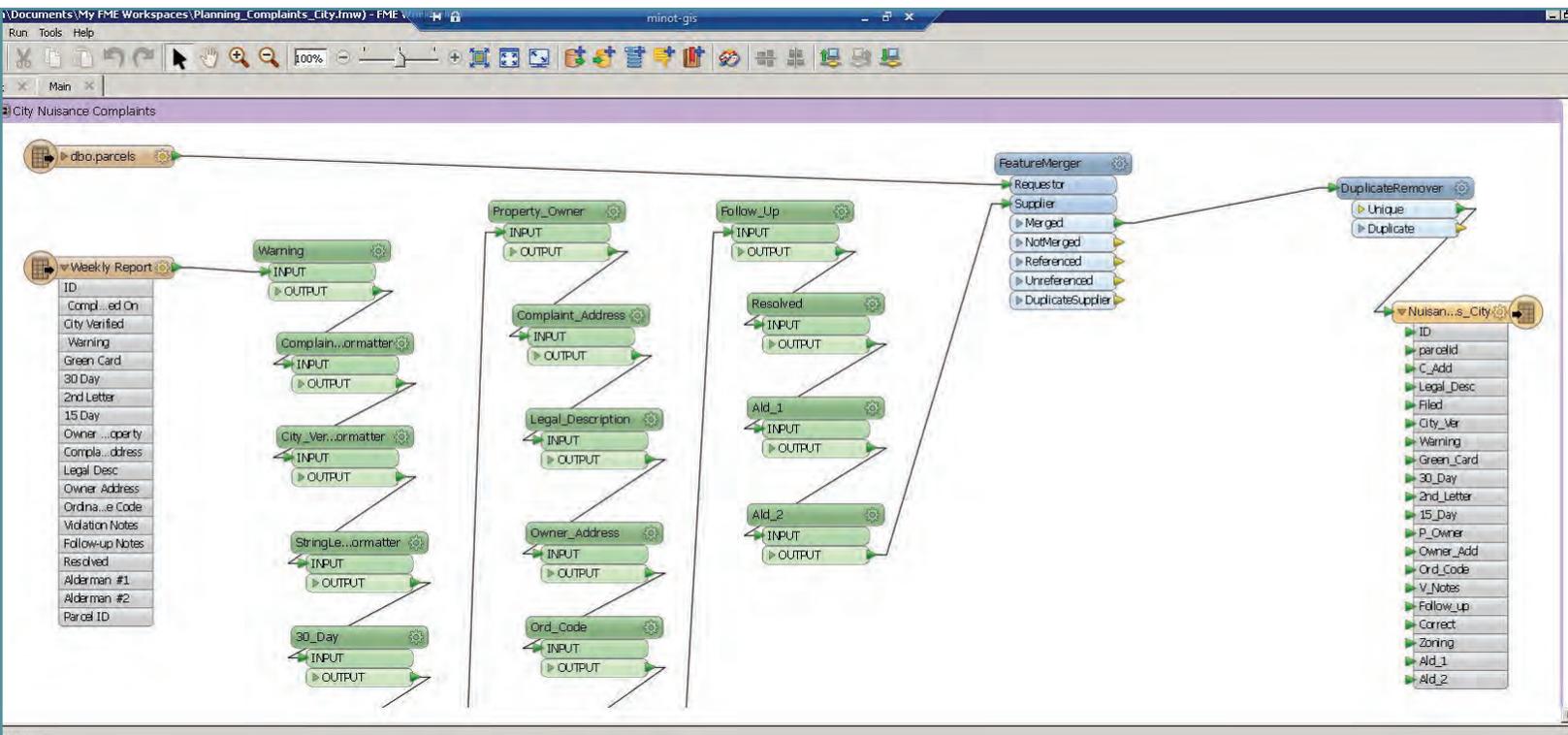


levees and floodwalls on the parcel layer along with the aerial imagery, the GIS can quickly determine all parcels affected by the new flood protection plan and create a report of these parcels along with pertinent information for each property. The GIS is used to track the properties that the City has purchased, and they are then mapped to a layer that shows the Street Department which additional lots they will need to mow in the summer.

Rosehill Cemetery has just completed the mapping of their burials and pre-need lots. The cemetery database is linked to the GIS and is updated monthly. Lots are color coded according to whether they have a burial or if they have been pre-purchased by someone. Either way, this information is available when you select the lot, making it possible for the public to search for someone and see roughly where their grave is located in the cemetery along with date of death and a few other pieces of information. This visual helps quickly determine which lots are available for purchase – especially if someone is looking to purchase a lot close to someone who is already buried in the cemetery.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Just having the GIS isn't enough if the public doesn't know it's there for them to utilize. The City of Minot has made some efforts to make the public aware of our GIS map. When the public comes in to the office, it is helpful to show them the GIS and how to use it to answer their questions. By telling them that they can access this map themselves, it may save them a future trip to our office if they can look on the map and access the information they are looking for.



Using FME for linking violations on GIS

A tutorial booklet was also produced and was handed out to contractors, developers, and others when they came into the office to pick up permits and such. The tutorial is available on the City's GIS Department website along with a couple of newsletters that have been produced. The newsletters helped show people how they could use the GIS to answer questions they might have such as where to vote, how people could determine hotels close to where they had activities planned, or where their house is in relation to the new flood protection plan. The newsletters were then distributed by email to realtors, insurance agencies, utility companies, and others to help spread awareness. A half page article in the local newspaper was also instrumental in making the public aware of the information available to them.

Realtor's offices have requested training demonstrations for their agents on how to use the GIS. Many are excited to know that they can get this information for themselves without having to make frequent trips to the city offices for information. In addition to realtors, several different Business and Information Technology classes at Minot State University have requested presentations for their classes.

THE NEXT STEP: ASSET MANAGEMENT

Currently the City of Minot is looking to use the GIS to manage municipal assets and data related to these assets. Asset data is critical in order to determine where there may be failing infrastructure or where the best and most cost-efficient work should be done in order to reduce maintenance costs. This will incorporate work orders, more efficient work order deployment, and the ability to edit information by workers who are out in the field.

Aleesha Erickson is the GIS Coordinator for the City of Minot, ND. Prior to doing GIS work, Aleesha worked for them as a Public Works Technician. Although GIS was not her intended career path, she has found quite a passion for it and enjoys being able to help others do their jobs more efficiently. When not immersed in databases and pretty maps, Aleesha likes to spend her time going to movies with her family and crafting.

“ MANY ARE EXCITED TO KNOW THAT THEY CAN GET THIS INFORMATION FOR THEMSELVES WITHOUT HAVING TO MAKE FREQUENT TRIPS TO THE CITY OFFICES FOR INFORMATION. ”

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE



CITY OF MINOT, ND

On June 22, 2011, flooding of the Souris River overwhelmed the City of Minot's levee system resulting in damage to 27% of the city's housing stock. During the same period, the Bakken Oil Fields economic boom brought hundreds of people to Minot, overwhelming the city's limited affordable housing options. Climate change and upstream land development suggest flooding may occur more frequently. In response, the City is launching a set of three integrated projects:

- 1 Reduce flood risk and improve water management
- 2 Build affordable and resilient neighborhoods
- 3 Foster economic resilience

HUD is awarding \$74,340,770 to the City of Minot

LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS TO RESILIENCE

The City of Minot has committed to a one-half cent sales tax to fund the local cost share for construction and implementation of the entire basin-wide flood protection plan, investing over \$337 million within 30 years.

<http://www.minotnd.org/422/National-Disaster-Resilience-Competition>

HUD Awards \$1 Billion Through National Disaster Resilience Competition

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro and the Rockefeller Foundation recently announced the winners of the \$1 billion National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC).

The competition took place in two phases, with final winners selected from previously announced 40 states and local communities designated as finalists. Finalists were then asked to submit specific projects that would advance their community's resilience plans. More than 25 federal agencies or offices, and 100 industry experts were involved in the implementation of the 16-month long competition.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Reduce Flood Risk and Increase Resilience – Implementation of a series of integrated approaches to reduce flood risk and increase community amenities, including: buyouts, open space restoration, greenway development, and more.

Build Affordable, Resilient Neighborhoods – Construction of new energy-efficient affordable homes away from high-risk areas but connected to transit, jobs, and services.

Foster Economic Resilience and Diversification – Construction and relocation of key institutions (including a new Center for Technical Education) to move them out of harm's way while creating sustained economic development opportunities.

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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<http://www.ndplanning.org/contact-us.html>

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**North Dakota
Planning Association**

serving North Dakota since 1973

2016 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

In order to join the NDPA, or renew your membership for 2016, you may simply send a \$50.00 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.

BECOME A MEMBER

Who should join?

- Planning Commissioners
- City/County Commissioners
- City/County Council Members
- Planners/City planners
- Community developers
- Local engineers interested in planning
- Building officials interested in planning
- Other professionals interested in planning

NDPA Disclaimer: The views expressed in the articles published in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the NDPA.

